

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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Tests help develop our souls

Do the people think that they will be left to say, “We believe,” without being put to the test? We have tested those before them, for God must distinguish those who are truthful, He must expose the liars. (29:2-3).

We will certainly put you to the test, in order to distinguish those among you who strive, and steadfastly persevere. We must expose your true qualities. (47:31).

Consider the example of Moses—God informed him that he was made just for Him. God nevertheless sent him to one of His servants, a guiding teacher, to provide valuable lessons for him and the world to learn (18:60-82). God saved Moses from grievous consequences when he killed a soul and he was tested thoroughly and purified to trust God fully and not fear Pharaoh and his oppression (17:102; 20:40-41; 26:62).

We too have our tests of purification. To make our task easier, God has awesomely blessed us (and the vast majority of the world population yet to come), with the Quran (10:57-58; 44:2-4).

He also sent us a purifying Messenger of the Covenant to give us proof and explain things to us (5:19; 13:7). God shows us His proofs until we recognize them (27:93). True believers strive to magnify God constantly, remember Him during most of our day, every day, and recognize that God is running everything (3:191; 8:17; 23:84-9; 42:30). We thus remain and belong in God’s Kingdom and enjoy His grace and protection (4:103; 10:62-64).

God loves those who purify their souls (9:108; 35:18; 80:3). Since God is the source of righteousness and forgiveness and all good comes from God—really He is the One who continues to purify us per His perfect Plan, if we deserve it. If we choose to continuously submit absolutely to God alone, God in His infinite grace and mercy guides us to save us from committing major sins (16:93; 19:75-6; 28:56; 39:36-7; 42:13).

To improve our abilities to pass tests and develop our souls, we should count our blessings (14:34; 16:18) and rejoice in remembering God (10:58; 13:27-8).

Your Lord has decreed: “The more you thank Me, the more I give you.” But if you turn unappreciative, then My retribution is severe (14:7).

Our responsibilities are greater when God gives us signs to upgrade: our submission, our efforts to fulfill His laws for our own good, and our efforts to remember that God plans everything perfectly for the believers. It is essential that we strengthen our faith by steadfastly persevering so that we fear none but God (3:175, 9:18). In order to improve us, God allows Satan to test us based on our weaknesses. No harm ever touches the believers who have attained God’s approval (3:173)—they expect one of two good things—either victory or martyrdom (9:52).

Whenever we slip and step out of God’s Kingdom, we must repent immediately upon realizing it and continuously strive to make amends so that we remain eligible to be guided and protected by God. God loves the repenters and He commands the believers to repent a firm repentance (2:222; 66:8).

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Because human minds are far more developed now than say 1400 years ago, our tests are expected to be mostly mental (3:111,120,173). However, examples of physical tests could include injuries, difficulties, and health issues. We are given the example of Abraham (who never was an idol worshiper, 2:135), who was humbly hopeful of being forgiven for his sins by God. When he did get sick, he acknowledged that it was God who healed him (26:80). God provides the provisions for healing our bodies and souls (38:42; 16:69; 41:44, etc.).

God's tests are never unreasonable and He never burdens any soul beyond its means (2:286). Nor does He impose on any soul more than He has given it. Instead, God provides ease after difficulty. God also diverts evil and sin from us and thus its consequences (12:24; 19:96; 65:2-5, 7). God directs us to glorify and commemorate Him to come ever closer and closer to Him (73:8). We are to compete in righteousness (2:148; 5:48), and eagerly race towards forgiveness and Paradise (3:133) whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous. Let us compare this unimaginably beautiful and eternal reward with winning an Olympic medal. For a medal, humans invest years of tough efforts for physical development. Further, a gold medal and associated fame may create a tougher test with risks of pride and ego unconsciously becoming our god. In the Hereafter, the only value of a medal is how much we remembered and appreciated God or strove in His way due to that medal. In the long run, which is the more important race?

Our races towards righteousness, forgiveness and Paradise have to be only to please God, pursue His pleasure and observe all His commandments. It is not to impress or please even our

family of believers. God's Mercy provides not just one gold, silver and bronze winner for each race! If one decides to enter the race and steadfastly stays in it with sincerity and absolute faith in God alone, then God takes over and starts training him or her. Everyone is a winner although there will be different levels or ranges of "winning" (17:21).

God starts rewarding us in this world as we progress and pass the admission tests—the series of which conclude with a final test (24:55). This is a polishing process, and it takes a lot of work to get a polished gem. He blesses us with signs, mathematical and otherwise, that we are under His protection and training. God wants us to continuously improve, be toughened and be purified spiritually. God wants to redeem us—by our choosing Him as our only Lord and Master during our life-long chance (35:37, 46:20, etc.). We know specifically that God is compassionate towards His worshipers who dedicate and devote their lives to God and serving Him (2:207, 9:111, 6:162, 25:77, 51:56, etc.). We need to continue to reverence God and implore Him, and *Ma Sha Allah*—God responds (2:186), as He did for Joseph (12:23-24), Job (21:83-84), Jonah (21:87-88), and Zachariah (21:89-90).

God, in His infinite mercy, regards the righteous works of believers as "loans of righteousness" to Him that He multiplies manifold for a generous recompense (57:11). He showers us with His love. If we reverence God, and trust Him, He makes everything easy for us. (The words "reverence" / "reverent" occur over 100 times in the Quran.) Even through the polishing process of tests, we must never despair of God's mercy (39:53). But we have to also remember that all our righteous works will be nullified if we try to hedge any of our stakes, reject faith or lose our priorities (5:5; 9:69; 11:15-6; 16:94,107; 17:18; 39:54, etc.).

Information on Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth lunar month in the Islamic calendar. Submitters (Muslims) all over the world fast each day of this month from dawn to the sunset.

Ramadan and Blessings

God revealed the Quran into Muhammad's memory during the month of Ramadan in the Night of Power (17:1, 44:3, 97:1-5). It was then gradually released from his memory in accordance with God's will and written down by him with the help of Gabriel over a period of 23 years. Therefore Ramadan is a very special month for Submitters.

Ramadan is the month during which the Quran was revealed, providing guidance for the people, clear teachings, and the statute book. Those of you who witness this month shall fast therein. Those who are ill or traveling may substitute the same number of other days. God wishes for you convenience, not hardship, that you may fulfill your obligations, and to glorify God for guiding you, and to express your appreciation. (2:185)

Although the Quran was revealed through Prophet Muhammad, fasting (and other practices of Islam) did not start with Muhammad. God teaches us in the Quran that they all started with Prophet Abraham. Muhammad was a follower of Abraham to whom God taught the religious duties the Submitters practice today (2:128). All the messengers and prophets who followed Abraham, including Moses and Jesus, observed these religious practices. They were also called Submitters. (2:132, 3:52, 5:111, 7:126, 10:84, 51:36, ...)

The religious practices instituted by God are blessings from God. If we can practice our religious duties as we are supposed to, we get many benefits. Furthermore, these practices allow us to be more conscious of God in our lives. They essentially constitute the nourishment required

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for the growth and development of our souls to make it to Heaven. They are for our own good, and to express our appreciation to God's blessings. God is in no need of any of our prayers and worship.

We have endowed Luqmaan with wisdom: "You shall be appreciative of GOD." Whoever is appreciative is appreciative for his own good. As for those who turn unappreciative, GOD is in no need, Praiseworthy. (31:12)

Fasting During Ramadan

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the obligatory duties for the Submitters. Since Ramadan is a lunar month and the lunar calendar moves through our Gregorian calendar, it makes Ramadan move through the seasons. Fasting allows us to learn self-discipline and restraint. It allows our soul to control our body and not our physical appetites and desires to control us. Fasting is therefore important for our salvation:

O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation. (2:183)

Lunar Islamic Calendar & Ramadan

A lunar calendar is a calendar that is based on phases of the moon. The only widely used purely lunar calendar is the Islamic calendar or Hijri calendar, whose year always consists of 12 lunar months (9:36). A lunar month is approximately 29.5 days, which is the time it takes for the moon to orbit the earth. Because a lunar month is, on the average, one day shorter than a solar month, a lunar year is 10-12 days shorter than a solar year. Therefore, the Month of Ramadan comes 10-12 days earlier each year. This way we get to fast when the days are very warm and long in summer as well as when they are cool and short in winter. This beautiful design by God is also a test for us to see if we will fast regardless of the length or temperature of the days of Ramadan.

When is Ramadan?

The Muslims during the time of Prophet Muhammad did not have the technological advantage we have today. They needed to see the crescent moon before they started fasting. God tells us that He rendered the sun and the moon as calculation devices (6:96, 10:5, 17:12, 55:5).

We have the technology to determine precisely when the different phases of the moon will appear for any given month, now or in the future, according to the design of God. So we don't need physical sighting of the moon to decide when the month of Ramadan will start or end. We can easily verify it for ourselves using the resources available for us. God has given us the hearing, the eyesight, and the brain, and we are responsible for using them (17:36).

What is an Islamic Day?

The Islamic day is the same as the Hebrew day. It begins at sunset and ends at the next sunset. In this system, the night comes before the day. Therefore, in some traditional Islamic countries, when they talk about, for instance, Friday night, they are in fact referring to Thursday night because that night actually belongs to Friday according to their definition of a day.

Ramadan start and end dates

For determining the beginning and ending of Ramadan, you need to know the times of the New Moon and Sunset times at your location. For example, to calculate the Ramadan start date, compare the time of the New Moon with the Sunset at your location. If the new moon is before sunset, you should fast the next day, God willing.

Similarly, to determine the last day of fasting, compare the time of the next New Moon with the sunset at your location. If the new moon is before sunset, the month of Ramadan is complete on that day. Otherwise one needs to fast the next day.

For those who started the first day of Ramadan on July 20, 2012, the Night

of Destiny (Night of Power) will be, God willing, on Aug 14, 2012, starting at sunset. The Night of Destiny is the 27th night of Ramadan. (Start counting from July 19, the first night of Ramadan). You can visit Ramadan page at our web site www.masjiduntucson.org for more information.

Have a happy, peaceful and blessed Ramadan, and a wonderful Night of Destiny, God willing.

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Conference Report 2012

The 27th annual conference of the United Submitters International was held in Anaheim, California on July 13-15, 2012. It was right across from Disneyland, dubbed "the happiest place on earth." Certainly for those three days, the Anaheim Plaza Hotel lived up to that billing. What could be a happier place than the place where submitters from around the world come together for the purpose of commemorating God? The only thing happier will be reminiscing about the experience in Paradise, God willing.

The Friday Khutba was delivered by brother Jamshid. He quoted from Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see in the world." This is a challenge for us to live the message. We all want to see God's victory come, and our role is to be examples to the world. [3:104] *Let there be a community of you who invite to what is good, advocate righteousness, and forbid evil. These are the winners.*

We were then blessed with the joy of meeting all the submitters who were attending their first conference. It took so long for them to introduce themselves because there were so many of them! That's very exciting. This is how the message continues to

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spread, through the enthusiasm and passion of new submitters.

Over the three days we were given the chance to hear speeches from submitters old and new. There was a wide range of topics, all very well presented. The talks were informative, fun, heartwarming and inspirational. There is so much that we can learn from each other. God tells us to "listen." And whether the talk was about animals, the mathematical code, understanding how our brain works, or just hearing someone's personal journey into submission, there was wonderful information for us all. All of the talks, including the Friday khutba, were streamed and are still available on line. Go to <http://www.masjiduntucson.org/conference/video/> to relive the conference or enjoy it for the first time.

Zikr was done throughout the conference, but it was especially beautiful at night. God has blessed many of our community with beautiful voices, and it's always so inspirational to share in the commemoration of God. [15:98-9] *You shall sing the praises of your Lord, and be with the prostrators. And worship your Lord, in order to attain certainty.*

As always, Sunday noon came around too soon. Abdullah thanked everyone for coming. Over 300 people attended this year, with many of them traveling far to share in this wonderful experience. We know that God rewards us when we spend in His cause. [34:39] *Say, "My Lord is the One who controls all provisions; He increases the provisions for whomever He chooses from among His servants, or reduces them. Anything you spend (in the cause of God), He will reward you for it; He is the Best Provider."*

So, God willing, we will see everyone again in 2013, plus lots of new faces as the message spreads far and wide and God's victory comes ever nearer.

Lydia / Nargis

* * * * *

Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the Christians, and the converts; anyone who (1) believes in GOD, and (2) believes in the Last Day, and (3) leads a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve. (2:62, 5:69)

Indeed, those who submit themselves absolutely to GOD alone, while leading a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord; they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve. (2:112)

Be included in our email list for weekly reminders

We have been sending weekly reminders to submitters in our email list and it is a great success, praise God. The weekly reminder email is not very long. It usually consists of the topic of the week, and the corresponding link or links to get the information from. The reminder is sent every Thursday, God willing.

[51:55] *And remind, for the reminder benefits the believers.*

We would like every submitter, whether receiving our newsletters or not, to be included in the list. God willing you can join the list by sending an email to info@masjiduntucson.org and saying that you want to be in the weekly reminder list. If you want to make it a really short email, just write "weekly reminder" in the subject line and send it.

If you also include in the email the city and state that you live in, God willing we can compile this information and use it for the submitters without a community who are asking to communicate with other submitters in their area.

Please help us to help you and other submitters by joining the list and by being proactive, God willing.

[3:200] *O you who believe, you shall be steadfast, you shall persevere, you shall be united, you shall observe GOD, that you may succeed.*

[87:9] *Therefore, you shall remind; perhaps the reminder will benefit.*

Note: Your comments are also welcome and appreciated.