O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.

Fasting is decreed to help us attain salvation. Thank You, God, for this wonderful gift You provided to us. God usually inspires me during Ramadan to do a self-evaluation through reading the Quran, meditation, and reflecting. This self-evaluation helps me recognize what I need to work on to be righteous in an attempt to attain salvation.

First, my physical body’s schedule, routine, and maintenance become disrupted. I go from an active day with a long uninterrupted sleep, rejuvenating my body to perform tasks the next day, to an active day with two spurts of about half the sleep, affecting my ability and how I perform tasks the next day. And there are actually some days during Ramadan with no sleep at all.

The first thing I always do when dealing with any of my struggles is implore God to help me. There is not too much I can do about being a little more sluggish and tired than usual, but one tactic I try is putting water on myself. When my eyes are telling me close down and rest, I go to the bathroom and throw water on my face and head. This seems to work at least for a half hour or so. Then of course there is also the power nap. I put my head down, close my eyes, and rest. But since I don't think it's a good idea to get caught sleeping on the job, it’s hard to get a power nap there. Essentially, somehow, someway God provides me with just the right amount of energy and strength to get me through the day. I feel like my self-evaluation lesson here is to keep a more constant remembrance that this physical world is only a temporary illusion.

Know that this worldly life is no more than play and games, and boasting among you, and hoarding of money and children. It is like abundant rain that produces plants and pleases the disbelievers. But then the plants turn into useless hay, and are blown away by the wind. In the Hereafter there is either severe retribution, or forgiveness from GOD and approval. This worldly life is no more than a temporary illusion.

Anytime you challenge yourself to go through something, you create a ripple effect, that impacts your entire body, mind, heart, and soul. If you use your mind to meditate on God, your body becomes relaxed, your heart is in a peaceful state, and your soul is growing.

Putting my physical body through the assignment of fasting definitely affects my heart with a more profound belief in God and the Hereafter, my soul with growth, and my mind to see things that I don't see as well when I'm not fasting. Not only does the physical body struggle during fasting, my state of mind seems to get tested just as much. I seem to find my patience more quickly removes itself during Ramadan. Here is an example of how a conversation could end up with one of my children.

Me: (Going into the kid’s room, softly asking) Hey buddy, would you mind helping me clean the kitchen so I can prepare dinner.

Kid: (Playing video games, answering) Yeah sure.

I go to the kitchen and wait. 30 seconds later no one has entered the kitchen yet.

Me: (Going back into the kid’s room, (Continued on page 2)
physical presence in the hereafter. This is especially true for those here in the American Southwest where May and June temperatures can be quite brutal. For me this presents the dilemma of the best way to explain to others how God helps during the fast to our companions and perhaps sometimes even our rebellious or lazy selves?

Looking at things from the perspective of another set of verses may help. God tells us: [94:5-8] With pain there is gain. Indeed, with pain there is gain. Whenever possible you shall strive. Seeking only your Lord.

Wait, this almost sounds like God wants us to suffer. May He protect us from being tricked in this by Satan as he has many people. Many Muslims believe the most miserable is the most righteous. The traditional Christian interpretation of some Biblical verses, especially in 1 Peter 4, is that suffering is for the glory of God. That concept has become an important part of much Christian philosophy. Interestingly when I read 1 Peter 4:12-13 I get quite a different meaning. Here are the verses from the King James Version of the Bible: Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

To me these Biblical verses have nothing at all to do with God but are all about idolizing Jesus. The Quranic principle is very, very different. The pain God speaks of in 94:5-8 is not at all the same. First, it is not suffering at all. Instead it might be compared to the pain of a strenuous workout, which while it may not be comfortable stresses the muscles to help them grow. And as the muscles grow and strengthen, so does the underlying skeleton. Thus, the pain actually helps the body grow. It is not the pain that God wants for us, but the growth.

The spiritual workout of fasting helps us grow a different kind of body, that of our souls. This workout truly is striving, seeking only God. God willing it will help us grow enough to be able to enjoy His physical presence in the hereafter.

Peace and may God bless our Ramadan.

Lisa
Ramadan

Ramadan is the month that entails intensive self-discipline and self-control. The essence of Ramadan is placing the soul over the body in compliance with the command of the Creator, not only in external forms but also in attitude and behaviour. Ramadan demands the highest degree of commitment and is designed to achieve physical, moral and spiritual reconstruction as well as self-purification.

Ramadan has a great leveling influence—no matter how rich or poor, influential or subservient, high or low, all stand on the same terms of human equality. No submitter is superior to another on account of social status or because of wealth, race or colour differences, but only on the basis of righteousness. [7:26] O children of Adam, we have provided you with garments to cover your bodies, as well as for luxury. But the best garment is the garment of righteousness. These are some of GOD's signs, that they may take heed.

As much as Ramadan can be seen as an exacting procedure, it’s a gift for our souls, performed for a month every year to earn the pleasure of God. This annual exercise, consciously and voluntarily practiced, grows the soul. The righteous works wipe out the evil works (11:114). Fasting, particularly, is mentioned as a practice essential for our salvation. [2:183] O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation. When collectively undertaken one can see some ways how it can improve society and increase the quality of compassion in the community as a whole. As we experience hunger and thirst, God willing we’re more empathetic of our fellow beings’ plight. When we’re fasting we want to be on our best behavior lest we nullify the good to our soul. But, we shouldn’t just strive to be better while fasting; the positive effect on our character and conduct should last.

This month gives believers an opportunity to work on traits God wants us to observe like self-discipline, steadfastness, unity, fostering peace and mutual respect, etc. These are vital for our soul and material well-being. You need discipline to have strength for action.

Some people think that fasting is associated with mourning. This is certainly not true. The Quran makes it an instrument of moral, spiritual and physical regulation of the highest order. God says the act of fasting is a blessing and not a calamity. [2:185] 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.

Compliance with this Divine injunction fosters the sense of willing obedience to God’s commands which is a sign of firm and true faith. It brings forth the feeling that a submitter has to serve only One Master. The real intention underlying the restraints and restrictions that fasting implies is total submission to the will of God. If we’re practicing submission, it means we’re practicing obedience, compliance, surrender, acquiescence, deference, consent and assent (to our Creator). By abstaining from what God forbids and obeying whatever He commands, believers reaffirm through performance what they profess.

God has enjoined fasting to enable us to overcome obstacles and attain righteousness, and ultimately salvation (2:183-189). If we merely follow the outward regulations that govern fasting without imbibing its spirit, without glorifying God for guiding us, and without expressing our appreciation to Him (2:185), then we may not get anything out of the fast except the pangs of hunger and thirst.

I personally feel that one should be reverent during fasting, and use it to increase one’s devotion; it’s an opportunity to build our faith, piety, conduct and character. If we’re conscious of the Omniscence, Omnipotence and Omniscience of God through the fast, then this inculcates accountability in our life; God willing, we keep the Hereafter as our priority. If we sincerely believe and lead a righteous life, we will be rewarded by God in His infinite Mercy (34:4).

We must eat in order to survive. Eating is certainly not sinful from the spiritual point of view. But gluttony, eating or drinking too much, is harmful for the soul and the body. Both the Quran and the Bible warn us against this (e.g., Quran 7:31, Proverbs 23:2).

The fasting of Submitters in Ramadan is actually an exercise in self-discipline. For those who are heavy smokers or nibble food constantly or drink coffee every hour, it is a good way to break the habit, hoping that the effect will continue after the month is over. Seyam in Arabic means abstaining; i.e., abstaining from things that break the fast, from dawn until sunset, having first made the intention (niyyet) to fast.

The practice of fasting, as a key component of seeking salvation, has been part of Submission since the time of Abraham.

While Ramadan itself is not directly referenced in the Bible, we do see references to fasting. From the Old Testament:

Daniel 9:34 “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord God, and made my confession...”

Esther 4:16 “Go, gather together all the Jews... and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day...”

I Samuel 7:5-6 “And Samuel said, Gather all Israel... and they gathered... and fasted...”

Ezra 8:21-23 “Then I proclaimed a fast... So we fasted and besought our God...”

(Continued on page 4)
Happiness is Submission to God Alone

These are but a few ways to grow our souls, and there is always room for doing better. For example, how about using this month as a springboard towards greater implementation of God’s commands, spending more time in dedication and devotion to Him, and doing more Quranic study?

The month of Ramadan brings with it innumerable blessings. We have to perform our sacred duty to follow the Final Testament and to behave towards others in the manner that God wants us to behave with His creations. We follow the laws in Quran in being steadfast, reverent and working incessantly and selflessly to do righteous works to please God.

May God make us worthy to receive His Grace, Mercy and innumerable blessings. Let us praise, exalt, extol and magnify God this Ramadan and always.

Alim

Alcoholics Anonymous & Submission

I have struggled with compulsive overeating all my life. In the 1980’s I found my way into the rooms of Overeater’s Anonymous. That opened the doors to a revival of my spirituality. I found God again through the inspired writing of the “Big Book”.

Penned in 1932 by the first 100 founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, the “Big Book” contains concepts about God and being a “Submitter” that rang true for me even before 1989 when I read Rashad Khalifa’s translation of the Quran. The book contains concepts about making conscious contact with God throughout the day. It says we should pray for knowledge of God’s will and the power to carry it out. It says whatever occupies the majority of our thoughts is our god.

Idol worship is the basis for all addictions. I was idol worshipping food. I am a food addict. I must humbly but constantly rely on God to redirect my thinking to ways which will please Him. I must maintain contact with Him throughout my day. My contact prayers are my lifeline to God.

I have considered myself an aspiring submitter since then. I say “aspiring” because, as we all know, submission is a verb as well as a noun. Submission to God’s will is my aspiration. Unfortunately, I am not always a “Submitter.”

This article has been a long time in the making. What finally spurred me to put fingers to keyboard is the article in the February 2018 Submitters Perspective entitled “Quran and the 12 Steps”.

Thank you so much for the article.

Victoria

[Editorial note: the 12 step articles continue. See February and March 2018, with more to follow, God willing]