



In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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Godly behavior from the Bible and Quran

[55:26–27] Everyone on earth perishes. Only the presence of your Lord lasts. Possessor of Majesty and Honor.

God is the only constant in this world and the next. No matter the time period or location in this world or even in the universe, God's presence is the only thing that is constant (2:115, 55:26–27). And just as He is constant so are His laws and the rules He sets for us on how to live our lives in a manner that best pleases Him.

The god of the Bible and the god of the Quran are one and the same God. From the time of Adam—the start of the human race—there has only ever been the one Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent God. From the beginning, God gave us specific words to utter (2:37), and guidelines for how to behave if we are to claim that we are His servants. Throughout His scriptures and His final testament, God advocates that we behave in a righteous manner.

In the Bible's Galatians 5:13, 16, 19–23 we are told that we are free to choose in this life how to be and how to live but we are advised not to “use [our] freedom to indulge in the flesh”; not to commit such sins as sexual immorality, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred,

jealousy, envy, or breaking up into sects or factions (Galatians 5:19–21). We see the same principles in Quran 5:5, 24:30–31, 2:102, 30:32. Galatians 5:21 also makes us aware that the people who choose to behave in such a way “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (as does Quran 10:27). In the same passage we are then told that the qualities we should endeavor to achieve, or rather, the qualities that stem from God are those of “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” This principle of freedom and consequent responsibility is also seen in the Quran.

Freedom of Choice

[33:72] We have offered the responsibility (freedom of choice) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were afraid of it. But the human being accepted it; he was transgressing, ignorant.

Absolute Freedom of Religion

[18:29] Proclaim: “This is the truth from your Lord,” then whoever wills let him believe, and whoever wills let him disbelieve. We have prepared for the transgressors a fire that will completely surround them. When they

scream for help, they will be given a liquid like concentrated acid that scalds the faces. What a miserable drink! What a miserable destiny!

The righteous strive to rise above their greed, envy, and arrogance. They strive to avoid gossip, slander, and boasting, and they strive to show mercy and honor their parents (Romans 1:28–31; Quran 25:72, 28:55, 104:1, 31:18, 2:83, 6:151, 49:12). These are behaviors that God encourages and appreciates in His servants.

[68:10–14] Do not obey every lowly swearer. A slanderer, a backbiter. Forbidder of charity, a transgressor, a sinner. Unappreciative, and greedy. Even though he possessed enough money and children.

*[57:23] Thus, you should not grieve over anything you miss, nor be proud of anything He has bestowed upon you. **GOD** does not love those who are boastful, proud.*

In Leviticus 19:11–16, 35–36 God goes on to list a number of other behaviors from which He enjoins us. The righteous strive to obey His commands.

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Leviticus 19:11–16 (NIV) “Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord. Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord.”

Leviticus 19:35–36 (NIV) “Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

[2:42] Do not confound the truth with falsehood, nor shall you conceal the truth, knowingly.

*[2:224] Do not subject **GOD**’s name to your casual swearing, that you may appear righteous, pious, or to attain credibility among the people. **GOD** is Hearer, Knower.*

[26:181–183] “You shall give full measure when you trade; do not cheat. You shall weigh with an equitable scale. Do not cheat the people out of their rights, and do not roam the earth corruptingly.

*[4:135] O you who believe, you shall be absolutely equitable, and observe **GOD**, when you serve as witnesses, even against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives. Whether the accused is rich or poor, **GOD** takes care of both. Therefore, do not be biased by your personal wishes. If you deviate or disregard (this commandment), then **GOD** is fully Cognizant of everything you do.*

As we can see, God’s system and laws for how to treat each other and how to

work righteous in this world have remained unchanged. Though the previous scriptures have been allowed to be tampered with, God’s guidance is clear for those who reverence their Lord.

As submitters to God, our duty is to set the example for those around us with our words and our deeds. Our behaviors and our utterances reflect upon God and His religion, so we must strive with every fiber of our being to observe God and set the absolute best example, lest we blaspheme against God and cause others to become averse to our Lord’s teachings.

[49:11] O you who believe, no people shall ridicule other people, for they may be better than they. Nor shall any women ridicule other women, for they may be better than they. Nor shall you mock one another, or make fun of your names. Evil indeed is the reversion to wickedness after attaining faith. Anyone who does not repent after this, these are the transgressors.

[29:46] Do not argue with the people of the scripture (Jews, Christians, & Muslims) except in the nicest possible manner—unless they transgress—and say, “We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you, and our god and your god is one and the same; to Him we are submitters.”

[41:34] Not equal is the good response and the bad response. You shall resort to the nicest possible response. Thus, the one who used to be your enemy, may become your best friend.

As submitters we cannot afford to look lightly on the example that we set for the world through our lives and the way that we treat others, as well as the way we treat each other. We cannot afford to take our Lord’s teachings for granted, or use them only when it suits our motives or desires. Our Lord’s revelations are heavy (73:5). They are a guide for every aspect of our lives, and we are obligated to make the absolute effort to live our lives doing everything in a manner that would please our Lord. It is by example that we invite to the path of God; it is by our actions and deeds as

well as our words that we glorify God and the religion He has decreed for us, to save us. But, it is also by example that we repulse and mislead others from the path of God. So let us strive to uphold the covenant we have made with God by proclaiming that we are believers, and set the absolute best example in everything that we do or say, and in the manner that we live, so that we not only glorify and praise God with our words but with our very lives.

[17:38] All bad behavior is condemned by your Lord.

*[2:177] Righteousness is not turning your faces towards the east or the west. Righteous are those who believe in **GOD**, the Last Day, the angels, the scripture, and the prophets; and they give the money, cheerfully, to the relatives, the orphans, the needy, the traveling alien, the beggars, and to free the slaves; and they observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat); and they keep their word whenever they make a promise; and they steadfastly persevere in the face of persecution, hardship, and war. These are the truthful; these are the righteous.*

*[3:133–136] You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous, who give to charity during the good times, as well as the bad times. They are suppressors of anger, and pardoners of the people. **GOD** loves the charitable. If they fall in sin or wrong their souls, they remember **GOD** and ask forgiveness for their sins—and who forgives the sins except **GOD**—and they do not persist in sins, knowingly. Their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens with flowing streams; they abide therein forever. What a blessed reward for the workers!*

These are teachings that God has sent to us through all His messengers, and these are the commandments that He has given us to uphold both in the Bible and the Quran.

Stephanie

Ramadan—A Christian Perspective

Like all religious duties, Ramadan is a gift from God. It serves to bring us closer to God, to fulfill his commandments and to be appreciative of Him. This is how I understand Ramadan today, but it was not how I understood it before Submission. Earlier, Ramadan to me was the same as 'Lent' (a forty-day liturgical season initiating the most sacred part of the Christian year)—fast, be somber and pray extra.

Having been born into a Christian home, my knowledge about Ramadan was limited to what I saw of "Muslim neighbors". I knew that they had very strict rules about entertainment, had several do's and don'ts and prayed a lot during Ramadan. That is how I perceived Ramadan. I was not aware of the difference between cultural traditions and religious duties. However, embracing Submission has helped me understand the difference between the two. Not watching movies/TV, not going to the ball game, wearing extra conservative clothing, reciting Quran through the night (in Tarawee) and ending the fast with dates are not religious requirements—these are practices that traditional Muslims are predisposed to.

The days preceding my first Ramadan were very stressful. I was afraid of fasting considering that I had never fasted a day in my life before, but to my surprise it came to me with not much effort (by God's Grace). Yes, the initial few fasts were not easy, because of the new food timings. My body was used to the intake of food at regular intervals, but a few days into fasting and the body immediately adjusted to the new system, i.e., eating before dawn and after sunset. [Quran 2:286] **GOD never burdens a soul beyond its means: to its credit is what it earns, and against it is what it commits...** God does not want any hardship for us, He has created us and is well aware of what we can and can't do. So while it appears

daunting on the face of it, it really isn't difficult. Two to three days into fasting and the body immediately adjusts to the new system.

Before Submission I was not aware that fasting was a practice that was being followed from the time of Abraham.

[2:183] *O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.* Learning this gave me great comfort and reassurance that I was not abandoning any Biblical commandments; in fact I was now truly following what Jesus wanted me to and in the manner prescribed by God. *Bible Matthew 6:16-17 "Moreover when you fast, don't be like the hypocrites, with sad faces. For they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen by men to be fasting. Most certainly I tell you, they have received their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face.*

The first year of Submission was trying, what with new people, new worship practices and new systems to follow. God reassured me through different signs that I was on the right path, that I was indeed blessed to be able to fulfill His commandment. [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.* Seeking continuous support from God through meditation, and the strong support and love of the community helped me overcome my initial fear and biases.

Over the years I have come to appreciate God's system of fasting. It makes me feel lighter and healthier. [7:31] *... And eat and drink moderately. Surely, He does not love the gluttons.* Not only does

fasting have proven health benefits, but it also helps us keep God's commandment. Ramadan provides us with an opportunity to be more aware of God through regular Quran studies during the last ten nights and praise and glorification during the 'Night of destiny'. [Quran 18:28] *You shall force yourself to be with those who worship their Lord day and night, seeking Him alone. Do not turn your eyes away from them, seeking the vanities of this world. Nor shall you obey one whose heart we rendered oblivious to our message; one who pursues his own desires, and whose priorities are confused.* Submission allows for a personal experience through one on one dialogue with God. In addition, being with submitters who have no inhibitions talking about God is a great blessing, one I never had as a Christian.

My family still does not understand how I can fast for the entire month of Ramadan, as they perceive fasting to be a great hardship. For me it is not intimidating anymore, as I know that I am now following God's commandment. [2:183] *O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.* So while fasting may appear unnerving on the face of it, the fear and doubts are nothing but Satan's ploy to stop us from following God's commandments. [3:175] *It is the devil's system to instill fear into his subjects. Do not fear them and fear Me instead, if you are believers.* God guides each of us through our journey that we may be able to make it to the Paradise that is promised for those who follow His instructions. And fasting is a step in that direction.

RD

God willing for 2013

July 9 First day of Ramadan
August 6 Last day of Ramadan
(most of the Americas)

July 9 First day of Ramadan
August 7 Last day of Ramadan
(most of Africa, Asia, Europe)

More details at: <http://masjidtucson.org/>

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Is Beauty Only Skin Deep?

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. [7:26]

God has given everybody different qualities. He has also provided some people more than others. Some have become so self-indulgent that they spend time and money on whatever they think will improve their appearance. This kind of superficial beauty is worthless unless it is accompanied by other qualities. Those must include the correct perspective about who we are, who our Creator is, and what our real goal in this life is. We read in Sura Joseph about the temptation of physical beauty. Joseph fled the household of the person who had hired him and spent years in prison rather than succumb and violate God's laws. I recently heard from a former colleague who told me she was terminated because she didn't dress appropriately for the rich clients who use the services of her agency.

What happens when the youthful beauty this society values so much turns to gray hair, and there is no longer the youthfulness, vitality and vigor expected of youth? Believers know that the qualities of righteousness, steadfastness, and perseverance are the inner qualities that really matter. The other type of beauty is only skin-deep and may reflect an inner ugliness. How much better to match good

looks with an unfaded inner beauty. People can change their personality and way of thinking. God gives us steps in the Quran on how to do this. Quran talks about love towards others, joy, peace, long service and self-control. We need to be appreciative of all the blessings God has given us. Wives should have deep respect for their husbands, and husbands should have deep respect for their wives. Wives and husbands should fulfill their responsibilities in a patient and loving manner. This is inner beauty.

In Quran we are told that one's material possessions are temporary vanities of this world, and completely unimportant in the sight of God. The only thing that matters is righteousness, and this is the only thing that will make you better than someone else. People who are ruthless, materialistic and uncaring about their fellow-man often enjoy temporary success, by God's will. However, this is only in this world, and only temporarily. This outer garment is a vanishing entity. Yet, people spend an entire lifetime trying to improve it, protect it, beautify it. They spend little time nourishing their soul, the real person which will last through all eternity. Here are some verses from the Quran to reflect on:

Whatever you are given is no more than temporary material of this life. What God possesses is far better and everlasting, for those who believe and trust in their Lord. [42:36]

O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the

most righteous. God is Omniscient, Cognizant. [49:13]

You shall not covet the qualities bestowed upon each other by God; the men enjoy certain qualities, and the women enjoy certain qualities. You may implore God to shower you with His grace. God is fully aware of all things. [4:32]

Do not be impressed by their money or their children; God causes these to be sources of misery for them in this world, and their souls depart as disbelievers. [9:85]

"Use the provisions bestowed upon you by God to seek the abode of the Hereafter, without neglecting your share in this world. Be charitable, as God has been charitable towards you. Do not keep on corrupting the earth. God does not love the corruptors." [28:77]

He is the One who made you inheritors of the earth, and He raised some of you above others in rank, in order to test you in accordance with what He has given you. Surely your Lord is efficient in enforcing retribution, and He is Forgiver, Most Merciful. [6:165]

God has provided for some of you more than others. Those who are given plenty would never give their properties to their subordinates to the extent of making them partners. Would they give up God's blessings? [16:71]

The life of this world is no more than illusion and vanity, while the abode of the Hereafter is far better for the righteous.... [6:32]

Frank

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