

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

Monthly Bulletin of International
Community of Submitters

www.masjiduntucson.org



Published by Masjid Tucson
Zul-Hijjah 1434

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Thanksgiving: Gratitude for challenges

Thank God, we have another day to share with one another. We know that we cannot possibly encompass God's blessings. From the relief of taking a clear breath without congestion, to the feel of silk against our skin, to the support and presence of our community—our blessings are far and wide.

*[16:18] If you count **GOD's** blessings, you cannot possibly encompass them. **GOD** is Forgiver, Most Merciful.*

We can even find gratitude in the midst of hardship, and that can help us feel more content and at peace—ultimately increasing our submission and devotion to God.

Sometimes in life, we have difficulty staying in the appreciative mode. Solomon, a man whose faith was strong and given many blessings, prayed to stay appreciative:

[27:19] He smiled and laughed at her statement, and said, "My Lord, direct me to be appreciative of the blessings You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and to do the righteous works that please You. Admit me by Your mercy into the company of Your righteous servants."

It's usually easier to stay appreciative when there is talk of Thanksgiving, when we inhale the mouth-watering smell of garlic mashed potatoes, or see the abundant dishes on the dinner table. But to stay appreciative in the face of hardship may take a shift in perspective. I recently discovered a view that helped me make such shift. I was watching TV on a Saturday morning when I flipped to a man named Joel Osteen. He talked about being in the midst of illness, financial hardship, job difficulties, legal proceedings, family strife... hopefully not all by one person!

However, he pointed to the fact that God relieves our hardships. We know that God is Merciful. We say Bismillah-*ArRaheem*, that God is the Most Merciful, multiple times a day and at the beginning of virtually every chapter in the Quran. We know His Word is true, and His word about the Nature of things, is this:

*[65:7] The rich husband shall provide support in accordance with his means, and the poor shall provide according to the means that **GOD** bestowed upon him. **GOD** does not impose on any*

*soul more than He has given it. **GOD** will provide ease after difficulty.*

So, Osteen suggested that we actually thank God for the abundance, the ease that is ABOUT to come, now. Thank you, God for the illness that will be healed, the financial situation that will get better, the family situation that will be worked through, the job that will come, the economy that will get better. It is a radical thing, and it can come from our faith in God as the Best Planner, the Most Merciful and the Truthful One.

We may need to increase our faith in God to be able to have this perspective—that the good stuff is coming. One way to increase faith is through reading and reflection: for example reading God's different qualities in the Quran and meditating on them. Another is to use repetition. For better or worse, we know that repetition sticks in the brain. That is why healthy habits are so powerful and unhealthy habits nag us for so long. Repetition is like a coin, let's say a quarter, that rubs a groove in a smooth surface, say a wooden table. Each repetition makes the groove a little deeper. Then let's say your thoughts are little

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silver pellets, rolling on the table of your brain—pretty soon, they come across your groove and fall in, leading you down the same behavior or belief as before.

So if you repeat a phrase, a mantra, over and over—especially if you reflect on what you are saying—it creates a deeper and deeper groove, which faith can fall deeply into. That is why the Basmalah or Quranic prayers can be so powerful—you are reminding yourself that God is Most Gracious (and most Giving!) and Most Merciful. And when you are repeating with a singer with a lovely voice, MashaAllah, it can be even more powerful.

So what can come of being more grateful? Simply put, the Quran tells us:

[14:7] *Your Lord has decreed: "The more you thank Me, the more I give you." But if you turn unappreciative, then My retribution is severe.*

How does this work? Well, one aspect is when we are appreciative for something, we put more value on it—so we feel richer.

Another thing that can happen when we are grateful, is that our acceptance of things, our submission to God's will, expands. We are no longer fighting our life circumstances; we are in the flow with them.

An Indian mystic said: "When you are no longer in conflict with your life, you become serene and natural, you relax. Then, you float. The world is no longer against you, you can float in it."

We can also be in gratitude for the challenging things, for they help us grow. The English clergyman George Herbert said, "Storms make oaks take deeper root."

God knows us best, and we can trust Him to give us the right intensity of storm.

[2:286] **GOD never burdens a soul beyond its means:** to its credit is what it earns, and against it is what it com-

mits. "Our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or make mistakes. Our Lord, and protect us from blaspheming against You, like those before us have done. Our Lord, protect us from sinning until it becomes too late for us to repent. Pardon us and forgive us. You are our Lord and Master. Grant us victory over the disbelieving people."

[23:62] **We never burden any soul beyond its means, and we keep a record that utters the truth. No one will suffer injustice.**

So this sort of gratitude for challenges helps us accept things as they arise.

Again, Solomon:

[27:40] *The one who possessed knowledge from the book said, "I can bring it to you in the blink of your eye." When he saw it settled in front of him, he said, "This is a blessing from my Lord, whereby He tests me, to show whether I am appreciative or unappreciative. **Whoever is appreciative is appreciative for his own good,** and if one turns unappreciative, then my Lord is in no need for him, Most Honorable."*

Farshid

[ed. note: While Thanksgiving Day is celebrated in November in the USA, we should offer Thanks to God all the time.]

* * * * *

[2:152] *You shall remember Me, that I may remember you, and be thankful to Me; do not be unappreciative.*

[30:50] *You shall appreciate GOD's continuous mercy, and how He revives the land that has been dead. He will just as certainly resurrect the dead. He is Omnipotent.*

[56:68-70] *Have you noted the water you drink? Did you send it down from the clouds, or did we? If we will, we can make it salty. You should be thankful.*

[16:114] *Therefore, you shall eat from GOD's provisions everything that is lawful and good, and be appreciative of GOD's blessings, if you do worship Him alone.*

Only the Righteous Works...

God, out of his infinite Grace, enables whomever He wills to work righteousness because [18:46] *Money and children are the joys of this life, but the righteous works provide an eternal recompense from your Lord, and a far better hope.*

This is a tremendous gift, as righteous works are our means to salvation.

[18:110] *Say, "I am no more than a human like you, being inspired that your god is one god. Those who hope to meet their Lord shall work righteousness, and never worship any other god beside his Lord."*

[25:77] *Say, "You attain value at my Lord only through your worship. But if you disbelieve, you incur the inevitable consequences."*

[7:56] *Do not corrupt the earth after it has been set straight, and worship Him out of reverence, and out of hope. Surely, GOD's mercy is attainable by the righteous.*

[32:17] *You have no idea how much joy and happiness are waiting for you as a reward for your (righteous) works.*

These righteous works are outlined in Surah Al-Baqarah—The Heifer (2), and expanded in Surah 25.

[2:2-5] *This scripture is infallible; a beacon for the righteous; who believe in the unseen, observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), and from our provisions to them, they give to charity. And they believe in what was revealed to you, and in what was revealed before you, and with regard to the Hereafter, they are absolutely certain. These are guided by their Lord; these are the winners. Footnote: 2:3 Since the Contact Prayers are decreed five times a day, they constitute the prime source of nourishment for our souls. Along with all other practices in Submission, the Contact Prayers were originally revealed through Abraham (21:73, 22:78).*

[25:72-7] *They do not bear false witness. When they encounter vain talk, they ig-*

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nore it. When reminded of their Lord's revelations, they never react to them as if they were deaf and blind. And they say, "Our Lord, let our spouses and children be a source of joy for us, and keep us in the forefront of the righteous." These are the ones who attain Paradise in return for their steadfastness; they are received therein with joyous greetings and peace. Eternally they abide therein; what a beautiful destiny; what a beautiful abode. Say, "You attain value at my Lord only through your worship. But if you disbelieve, you incur the inevitable consequences."

Believers are encouraged to volunteer more righteous works because the rewards are reaped here and in the Hereafter. 1) These gifts are a means for growing our souls and attaining certainty; 2) perfect happiness now and forever; 3) we only taste the first death; 4) not only do we gain credit, God willing, but also our sins are turned into credits! 5) many many more! If you only knew [2:184]!

[2:158] *The knolls of Safa and Marwah are among the rites decreed by GOD. Anyone who observes Hajj or 'Umrah commits no error by traversing the distance between them. If one volunteers more righteous works, then GOD is Appreciative, Omniscient.*

[2:184] *Specific days (are designated for fasting); if one is ill or traveling, an equal number of other days may be substituted. Those who can fast, but with great difficulty, may substitute feeding one poor person for each day of breaking the fast. If one volunteers (more righteous works), it is better. But fasting is the best for you, if you only knew.*

[15:99] *And worship your Lord, in order to attain certainty. Footnote: 15:99 The practices of worship are our means of attaining certainty (Appendix 15).*

[27:89-90] *Those who bring good works (in their records) will receive far better rewards, and they will be perfectly secure from the horrors of that day. As for those who bring evil works, they will be forced into Hell. Do you not get requit-*

ed for what you did?

[16:30] *As for the righteous, when they are asked, "What do you think of these revelations from your Lord," they say, "Good." For those who lead a righteous life, happiness, and the abode of the Hereafter is even better. What a blissful abode for the righteous.*

[11:114] *You shall observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) at both ends of the day, and during the night. The righteous works wipe out the evil works. This is a reminder for those who would take heed.*

[25:70] *Exempted are those who repent, believe, and lead a righteous life. GOD transforms their sins into credits. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.*

Every person's interim in this world is unknown, and what a blessing this is! Remember back to taking university courses, or rushing a deadline at work. Most of the major work gets done around the deadline itself!

Is this the case when meeting God? Thankfully, no! God, out of His infinite Mercy and Wisdom, takes the pressure off of us. We do not have a deadline; we do not know when we're going to die. Imagine all the procrastination, postponing, neglect, panic, and mediocrity that we're avoiding by NOT knowing a deadline! Such is God's mercy upon us.

This lack of knowledge forces us to work righteousness now, and not procrastinate. For example, Salat is time-sensitive. It means our work is constant. It also means our only time for completing our Salat is now; we don't know what will happen next. With GOD is the knowledge of all things, He is Hearer, Omniscient.

[29:5] *Anyone hoping to meet GOD, (should know that) such a meeting with GOD will most assuredly come to pass. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.*

May God keep us working in His Kingdom to, God willing, make it back to Him. Praise GOD!

[90:4] *We created the human being to work hard (to redeem himself).*

To the second generation of Muslim (Submitter) Parents

I was sitting here thinking about the young adults of the mosque who were babies, but now are in their twenties and thirties. Here every Friday for Jumah, Quranic studies. I drop my eye glasses on the floor and they run to come pick them up. Or I left my Quran at home, they run to the shelf where the mosque keeps the Qurans and bring one to me. Yes, we've gotten older and they have too. But I just say "WOW! How good of a job the mothers and fathers have done with their Submitter babies." They grew up and became submitter men and women, praying, bowing, submitting to God alone. To those mothers and fathers who had to teach them without compulsion to the religion, I take my hat off to you. Most teenagers and kids rebel against their parents. Not these children. [40:8-9] *"Our Lord, and admit them into the gardens of Eden that You promised for them and for the righteous among their parents, spouses, and children. You are the Almighty, Most Wise. And protect them from falling in sin. Whomever You protect from falling in sin, on that day, has attained mercy from You. This is the greatest triumph."*

Their parents taught them a lot about God and teaching from the Quran that meant the most for their lives, like 57:20, 22:4. So to the parents of mothers, here is some wisdom from the Bible as well, since some were Christians before becoming submitters.

Her children arise and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her. [Proverbs 31:28]

A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come, but when her baby is born, she forgets the

Abeer

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ISSN 1089-053X

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anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. [John 16:2]

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. [Proverbs 1:8-9]

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. [Hebrews 12:11]

I also found a Christian pamphlet that had words on mothers:

Having children is God's system. God always intended there to be mothers. Since the first woman was created on earth (Eve), He gave the directive to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). The role of motherhood is God's gift both to a woman and to the world.

Preparing children to leave home.

We are told "a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Children are not only God's gifts to their parents but they are also God's gift to another spouse someday and to the world as a whole. In raising children, mothers teach their offspring the foundational truths of life so they, in turn, carry those truths and values into the world—by touching other's lives and paying forward the love they were shown in their homes.

Mothers [fathers] are not perfect.

The words "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). When teaching children the perfect things of God, mothers [fathers] are painfully reminded about their own imperfection. A mother teaches her child to be loving as God is perfectly loving. Yet she catches herself not practicing what she preaches. She insists that her children learn their memory work—knowing too well that she herself might fumble at reciting those very words. She reminds them their words and actions touch and influence other people.

Every day cherish your mother and father as the instrument God used to give you life and more importantly lead you to God Alone.

But above all else, I wanted to say something about my brothers and sisters who are parents in Submission, and have raised believing children who are now a second generation of good believing adults, and they are now my brothers and sisters in faith. They pick up things I drop with my old self! Thank you very very much and I really appreciate you and I see you all as the new generation God talks about in Quran. He is the One who repeats it. Thank you, Muslim parents, for raising the second generation devoted to God Almighty. May God continue to bless you. This is in appre-

ciation of Muslim parents and their children, who obey the first commandment to worship God alone and the law to honor your parents.

We enjoined the human being to honor his parents. His mother bore him arduously, gave birth to him arduously, and took intimate care of him for thirty months. When he reaches maturity, and reaches the age of forty, he should say, "My Lord, direct me to appreciate the blessings You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do the righteous works that please You. Let my children be righteous as well. I have repented to You; I am a submitter." It is from these that we accept the righteous works, and overlook their sins. They have deserved Paradise. This is the truthful promise that is promised to them. [46:15-6]

Sister Carolyn

Luqmān's Wisdom

[31:12-13] We have endowed Luqmān 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. Recall that Luqmān said to his son, as he enlightened him, "O my son, do not set up any idols beside GOD; idolatry is a gross injustice."