

INTERFAITH INSIGHT

A Muslim perspective on service: Finding God by serving

As a part of the Year of Interfaith Service this is the second in a series of Insights on various religious perspectives on service.

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The question of being a servant expressed in the word and in Arabic, to somebody or something is one of the fundamental questions in Islam.

The prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, has been described in the Qur'an, as Abdullah or a Servant of God.

It is narrated that the Prophet said that the two names that are dearest to God are Abdullah, a servant of God, and

Abdurrahman, a servant of the Most Merciful.

One tradition in Islam narrates that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was given a choice to be a prophet servant or a prophet king, and he chose to be a prophet servant.

The wisdom behind this narrative unveils one of the fundamental teachings in Islam about human beings. Human beings are created, as the Qur'an says, to serve God.

This very service is both channeled and tested by God through



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humans' ability to utilize all the resources in the world that are created to serve them.

The Qur'an says: "It is Allah Who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you; it is He Who hath made the ships subject to you that they may sail through the sea by His command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you. And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses: and the Night and the Day hath He (also) made subject to you. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favours of Allah never will ye

be able to number them: verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude." (14:32-34)

In other words, God enabled human beings to serve Him by making everything else in the world at the service of humans.

This immense potential is met with huge responsibility that is often times returned by humans with 'injustice and ingratitude'.

The moral message of these Qur'anic verses is that this favor of God should be returned by gratitude and service to others, because it is those who are needy that deserve our attention.

One tradition in Islam narrates that God will ask a man on the Day of Judgment: "Why did not you visit me when I was sick?" A

man will be confused with this question and ask himself how come that God can be sick? God will answer: "So and so was sick and you did not visit him. Had you visited him, you would have found me (my grace and blessings) there."

The prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, taught that it is through serving and helping others that we find God's blessings and mercy, and ultimately find peace in our hearts.

Finding this internal peace, or in Arabic language Islam, is what the Prophet has taught by his example, and this is why his example is so precious for every Muslim.

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