

7 Reasons Why God is Worthy of Worship (part 1 of 6)

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 1: Knowledge of God is essential to understanding why God is worthy of our worship.

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God makes it very clear that the purpose of our lives is to worship Him, "**And I did not create the jinn (spirit world) and mankind except to worship Me.**" (Quran 51:56).

The concept of worship in the Islamic tradition is profound. Worship entails that we must know, love



and obey God, as well as single out and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. If we want to know, love and obey something other than God the most, including direct acts of worship (like ultimate gratitude) to something other than Him, then that is our object of worship. In this sense, human beings, including those who do not believe in God, cannot not worship. However, many misdirect their worship to things other than God; something this essay aims to address.

According to the Islamic spiritual tradition, acts of worship are accepted if they fulfil two conditions. The first is that the act of worship should be done purely for the sake of God. The second is that the action itself is prescribed by the Islamic source texts: the Quran and the authentic Prophetic traditions. So a natural question that follows from this is: *What are these acts of worship?*

The acts of worship are many. Any good action that is done to please God is an act of worship. However, there are some basic acts of worship which are essential to Islamic spiritual practice. These have been summarised by the Prophet Muhammad, may God's

peace and blessings be upon him, as the five pillars of Islam. They include: affirming and recognising in one's heart that there is no deity worthy of worship except God and that Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, is God's final messenger; praying five times a day; giving the obligatory charity if one can afford to; fasting in Ramadan (the 9th month of the Islamic calendar) and performing the pilgrimage if one is able to do so. These acts of worship have profound meanings and inner dimensions. These are the basic pillars of Islam. However, in developing one's spiritual practice one can engage in a plethora of additional spiritual activities. These include: reciting the Quran; remembrance of God; removing the spiritual diseases in one's heart; voluntary charity; repentance; spiritual reflection; conveying the message of Islam to others; feeding the poor; spreading peace; taking care of animals; studying the life of the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him; memorising the Quran; the night prayer; reflecting on natural phenomena and much more.

Since our reason for being is to worship the Divine, it is important to understand why we must dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. In this essay I will provide 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. These reasons include:

1. God is worthy of worship by virtue of who He is.
2. God has created and sustains everything.
3. God provides us with innumerable favours.
4. If we love ourselves, we must love God.
5. God is The-Loving, and His love is the purest form of love.
6. Worship is part of who we are.
7. Obeying God is the most rational thing to do.

Knowing God

Before I discuss the above reasons, it is important to elaborate on what is meant by knowing God. Knowledge of God is essential to understanding why God is worthy of our worship, because we cannot worship something we are ignorant of. This is why, in the Islamic tradition, traversing a path of knowing God is a form of worship:

"So know, that there is no deity except God." (Quran 47:19)

To know God means that we affirm that He is the sole creator and maintainer of everything that exists (known as *Oneness of God's Creativity*). It also entails that we affirm His names and attributes in the context of recognising that they are unique and that nothing can compare to God (known as *Oneness of God's Names and Attributes*). Knowledge of God also involves that we must know that He is unique in His Divinity; He alone is entitled to all acts of worship (known as *Oneness of God's Divinity*). It must be

noted that in Islamic theology it is critical to affirm that nothing whatsoever shares in God's creative power and ability, names and attributes, and Divinity. All forms of anthropomorphism are completely rejected. God is transcendent and maximally perfect. He has no imperfections. The concept of oneness in the Islamic spiritual tradition is referred to as *tawheed*, which linguistically means to affirm oneness or to make something one or unique.

Oneness of Creativity

The oneness of God's Creativity is to affirm and recognise that God is the sole creator, master and owner of everything that exists. God is the One who sustains, takes care of, and nourishes everything. According to the Islamic doctrine of *tawheed*, anyone who denies this has associated partners with God, which is polytheism (known as *shirk* in Islamic theology). Anyone who believes that these descriptions of God can be shared by any created thing has deified that thing. Therefore, they have associated partners with God.

Oneness of God's Names and Attributes

The 'oneness of God's names and attributes' means to describe God only by the names and attributes by which He has described Himself, which are found in the Quran and the Prophetic teachings (some names such as *Al-Khaaliq*, The-Creator, and *Al-Qadeer*, The-Powerful, can be affirmed by a sound rational mind). These names and attributes, such as The-Loving and The-Subtle, are affirmed but they are not comparable to creation. God's names and attributes are perfect without any deficiency or flaw, God is maximally perfect. God's names are described by God Himself as the most beautiful:

**"The most beautiful names belong to God: so call on Him by them."
(Quran 7:180)**

The one who compares these names and attributes to creation has committed humanisation, and therefore has associated partners with God. The one who compares any created thing to God has committed deification, which is also a form of associating partners with God.

Oneness of God's Divinity

The oneness of God's Divinity is that we must affirm that all acts of worship must be directed to Him alone. Someone who directs acts of worship to anything other than God, and the one who seeks reward from anything other than God in any act of worship, has associated partners with Him.

In certain contexts some acts of obedience, if directed to other than God, do not constitute associating partners with Him. For example, one's love for God may be deficient and require perfecting. Associating partners with God in the context of love would involve loving something or someone instead of God or as much as God. Someone can love their family and it would not constitute associating partners with God. If they loved their family instead of God or as much as God, then that would constitute a form of

associating partners with Him.

7 Reasons Why God is Worthy of Worship (part 2 of 6)

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 2: Associating partners with God is the gravest sin.

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The gravest sin

Associating partners with God is the gravest sin. The consequence of this sin is that the one who dies in such a state and has not repented dies in a state of disbelief. This will never be forgiven by God. (This applies to major forms of associating partners with God. There are lesser forms that do not lead to disbelief, such as



giving charity for other than God, obeying someone instead of God and showing off one's good deeds. However, major forms of associating partners with God such as praying to other than Him and believing other things are worthy of worship lead to disbelief. This however is a nuanced topic with many variables to consider, I suggest further study on this topic, as it is not the objective to go in to detail here.):

"Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with God has certainly committed a tremendous sin." (Quran 4:48)

However, if one associates partners with God and repents to Him and returns to the path of oneness, he or she will be forgiven, and their transgressions will be transformed into good deeds:

"And those who invoke not any other deity along with God... Except those who repent and believe, and do righteous deeds; for those, God will change their sins into good deeds, and God is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Quran 25:68 & 70)

The one who has associated partners with God and has never repented, and dies in that state (and has no excuse), has essentially oppressed themselves by closing the door to God's mercy. Their hearts have 'eternally' rejected God's guidance and mercy; therefore, they have alienated themselves from the Divine. Those who reject God will plead to go back to earth to do righteousness, but their hearts have 'eternally' rejected:

"[For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind.' No! It is only a word he is saying." (Quran 23:99-100)

This self-imposed spiritual reality is a form of denial. The person has denied all the just and fair opportunities that God has given them to embrace His mercy and love:

"God has not wronged them, but they wronged themselves." (Quran 3:117)

"This is reward for what your hands have done. And God is never unjust to His servants." (Quran 8:51)

It must be noted that according to Islamic theology, if someone was not given the right message of Islam, and sought the truth, they will have an excuse and will be tested on the Day of Judgment.^[1] God is The-Just and no one will be treated unjustly. This is why, when a non-Muslim has passed away, it is considered un-Islamic to pass judgment on their final abode (however, some scholars have said this may not apply to those who never sought the truth or had sufficient knowledge of Islam). No one knows what is in someone else's heart and whether someone was given the right message in the right way. However, from a creedal and societal point of view, non-Muslims who died will be buried as non-Muslims. This does not mean that this is their final judgement. In reality, God is maximally and perfectly just and merciful, so no one will be treated unmercifully and no one will be treated unjustly.

People who have heard the message of Islam in a sound and correct way will have to account for their denial. However, whoever dies without having heard the message of Islam, or heard it in a distorted form, will be given an opportunity to accept the truth. Echoing the principles from the various verses of the Quran and the Prophetic traditions, Al-Ghazali summarises this nuanced approach. He argues that people who never heard the message of Islam will have an excuse: "In fact, I would say that, God willing, most of the Byzantine Christians and the Turks of this age will be included in God's mercy. I'm

referring here to those who live in the farthest regions of Byzantium and Anatolia who have not come into contact with the message... They are excused." [2]

Al-Ghazali also argues that the people who heard negative things of the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, and his message will also be excused: "These people knew the name 'Muhammad', but nothing of his character or his qualities. Instead, all they heard since childhood is that a liar and imposter called 'Muhammad' claimed to be a prophet... This party, in my opinion, is like the first party. For even though they've heard his name, they heard the opposite of what his true qualities were. And this does not provide enough incentive for them to investigate [his true status]." [3]

The true teachings of Islam are a barrier to extremism. In my view, all forms of extremism are based on an 'ideological hardness' that hardens people's hearts. What I mean by this is that people adopt non-negotiable, binary and negative assumptions about the world and other people. This makes one group of people 'otherize' another. Otherization is not simply labelling people as belonging to other groups. This is natural and part of modern society. Otherization usually happens when one group describes another group in a negative way and maintains that each member is the same. This hardens people's hearts and prevents them from positively engaging with other people who seem to be different. Islam does not otherize people. It does not assert that everyone who is not a Muslim is ultimately doomed or evil. The Quran makes it quite clear that people constituting other groups "are not all alike" [4] and describes some of them as "upright" [5]. The Quran also applies this concept to believers too; some are righteous and some are not. Nevertheless, Islam teaches that every human being must be treated with mercy, compassion and fairness.

Endnotes:

[1] This is based on the following authentic tradition narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Hibban: "There are four (who will protest) to God on the Day of Resurrection: the deaf man who never heard anything, the insane man, the very old man, and the man who died during the *fatrah* (the interval between the time of Jesus (upon whom be peace) and the time of Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him. The deaf man will say, 'O Lord, Islam came but I never heard anything.' The insane man will say, 'O Lord, Islam came but the children ran after me and threw stones at me.' The very old man will say, 'O Lord, Islam came but I did not understand anything.' The man who died during the *fatrah* will say, 'O Lord, no Messenger from You came to me.' He will accept their promises of obedience, then word will be sent to them to enter the Fire. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, if they enter it, it will be cool and safe for them." There are other hadiths and verses of the Quran that indicate that God will not allow anyone to enter hell until people have been given the correct message of Islam.

[2] Al-Ghazali, M. A. (1993) *Fayasl al-Tafriqa Bayn al-Islam wa-l-Zandaqa*. Edited by M. Bejou. Damascus, p. 84. An online copy is available at: <http://ghazali.org/books/fiyasal-bejou.pdf>

[Accessed 21st November 2016].

[3] Ibid.

[4] The Quran, Chapter 3, Verse 113. This verse refers to the 'people of the book'. However, the principle applies to all groups of people.

[5] Ibid.

7 Reasons Why God is Worthy of Worship (part 3 of 6)

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 3: God is worthy of worship by virtue of His perfect names and attributes and because He has created and sustains everything.

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7 Reasons why God is worthy of worship

1 God is worthy of worship by virtue of who He is

The best place to start is to understand who God is. God, by definition, is the One who is entitled to our worship; it is a necessary fact of His own existence. The Quran repeatedly highlights this fact about God,



"Indeed, I am God. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance." (Quran 20:14)

Since God is the only Being whose right is our worship, then all of our acts of worship should be directed to Him alone.

In the Islamic tradition, God is considered a maximally perfect Being. He possesses all the perfect names and attributes to the highest degree possible. For example, in Islamic theology, God is described as the The-Loving, and this means that His love is the most perfect and greatest love possible. It is because of these names and attributes that God must be worshipped. We always praise people for their abilities, kindness, knowledge and wisdom. However, God's power, kindness, knowledge and wisdom are to the highest degree possible with no deficiency or flaw. Therefore, He is worthy of the most extensive form of praise, and praising God is a form of worship. In this light, God is worthy of worship by virtue of who He is.

God is also the only One entitled to our supplications and prayers. He knows best what is good for us, and He wants what is good for us. Such a Being with these attributes must be prayed to, and be asked assistance of. God is worthy of our worship because there is something about God that makes Him so. He is the Being with the most perfect names and attributes.

An important point regarding worshipping God is that it is His right, even if we are not recipients of any type of comfort. If we were to live a life full of suffering, God must still be worshipped. Worshipping God is not dependent on some kind of reciprocal relationship; He gives us life, and we worship Him in return. Do not misunderstand what I am saying here: God showers us with many blessings (as I will discuss below); however, He is worshipped because of who He is and not necessarily how He decides "via His boundless wisdom" to distribute His bounty.

We praise people due to their sporting skill, eloquence, strength or any other attribute. We do so even though they do not benefit us in any direct way. Similarly, God deserves extensive praise by virtue of His perfect names and attributes, and not as a result of how He decided to manifest them in our lives. If we can praise people who have limited and flawed attributes, what does it mean on how we must praise God whose names and attributes have no deficiency or flaw?

2 God has created and also sustains everything

There is something in your life that you receive freely, yet you do not earn it and do not own it. There is no good reason to believe that you deserve it either. This thing is this moment, and the next moment, and all of the moments of your existence. You do not earn these moments, so what can you possibly do to earn another instant in your life? This is exactly why in popular culture we call it a gift: the gift of life. If you knew that you had 10 hours left to live and in order to live another 3 days you had to give away all of your wealth, you would immediately do so. That's why we all consider it to be so precious. You do not own these moments because you do not have the capacity to bring anything into existence; you cannot even create a fly. You do not deserve another moment of your existence because it is not yours; you do not have the ability to produce life, even for a second. Therefore, nothing that you do can be deserving of something that you can never acquire by yourself.

In light of these basic truths, you must always be in a state of gratitude, because you always receive something that you neither earn, nor own, nor deserve. These moments of our existence are from God alone, therefore we must be thankful to God, and acknowledge that all gratitude belongs to Him alone. Gratitude is a key aspect of worship.

God has created everything; He continually sustains the entire cosmos and provides for us out of His bounty. The Quran continually repeats this concept in various ways, which evokes a sense of gratitude and awe in the heart of the listener or reader:

**"It is He who created for you all of that which is on the Earth."
(Quran 2:29)**

"Do they indeed ascribe to Him as partners things that can create nothing but are themselves created?" (Quran 7:191)

**"O mankind, remember the favour of God upon you. Is there any creator other than God who provides for you from the heaven and Earth? There is no deity except Him, so how are you deluded?"
(Quran 35:3)**

Therefore, everything we use in our daily lives, and all of the essential things that we require to survive, are due to God. It follows then that His is all gratitude. Since God created everything that exists, He is the owner and master of everything, including us. Hence, we must be in a sense of awe and gratitude to Him. Since God is our Master, we must be His servants. To deny this is not only rejecting reality, but it is the height of ingratitude, arrogance and thanklessness.

Since God created us, our very existence is solely dependent on Him. We are not self-sufficient, even if some of us are deluded in thinking that we are. Whether we live a life of luxury and ease or poverty and hardship, we are ultimately dependent on God. Nothing in this universe is possible without Him and whatever happens is due to His will. Our success in business and the great things that we may achieve are ultimately because of God. He created the causes in the universe that we use to achieve success, and if He does not will our success it will never happen. Understanding our ultimate dependency on God should evoke an immense sense of gratitude and humility in our hearts. Humbling ourselves before God and thanking Him is a form of worship. One of the biggest barriers to Divine guidance and mercy is the delusion of self-sufficiency, which is ultimately based on ego and arrogance. The Quran makes this point clear:

**"But man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient."
(Quran 96:6 & 7)**

**"There is the one who is miserly, and is self-satisfied, who denies goodness" We shall smooth his way towards hardship and his wealth will not help him as he falls. Our part is to provide guidance."
(Quran 92:8-12)**

7 Reasons Why God is Worthy of Worship (part 4 of 6)

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 4: Three more reasons discussed.

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3 God provides us with innumerable favours

"And if you should [try to] count the favours of God, you could not enumerate them. Indeed mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful." (Quran 14:34)

We should be eternally grateful to God because we could never thank Him for His blessings. The heart is an appropriate example to illustrate this point. The human heart beats around 100,000 times a day, which is approximately 37,000,000 times a year. If we were to live up to the age of 75, the number of heartbeats would reach 2,759,400,000. How many of us have



even counted that number of heartbeats? No one ever has. It is actually impossible to count that many heartbeats. Firstly, for the first few years of your life you cannot count. Already there's a few years of backlog. Secondly, you cannot count your heartbeats while you are sleeping. To be able to count a lifetime's worth of heartbeats, you would have had to start counting each heartbeat from the day you were born and while you were asleep. This would interfere with your ability to live a normal life, as you would always be counting every time your heart started a new beat. As a practical matter it is impossible. However, every heartbeat is precious to us. Anyone of us would sacrifice a mountain of gold to ensure that our hearts function properly to keep us alive. Yet we forget and deny the One who created our hearts and enables them to function. This illustration forces us to conclude that we must be grateful to God, and gratitude is a form of worship. The above discussion just refers to heartbeats, so imagine the gratitude we must express for all the other blessings God has given us. From this perspective anything other than a heartbeat is a bonus. God has given us favours we cannot enumerate, and if we could count them we would have to thank Him for the ability to do so.

4 If we love ourselves, we must love God

Loving God is a fundamental aspect of worship. There are many types of love and one of these includes self-love. This occurs due to the desire to prolong our existence, feel pleasure and avoid pain, as well as the need to satisfy our human needs and motivations. We all have this natural love for ourselves because we want to be happy and content. The psychologist Erich Fromm argued that loving oneself is not a form of arrogance or egocentricity. Rather, self-love is about caring, taking responsibility and having respect for ourselves. This type of love is necessary in order to love others. If we cannot love ourselves, how then can we love other people? There is nothing closer to us than our own selves; if we cannot care for and respect ourselves, how then can we care for and respect others? Loving ourselves is a form of 'self-empathy'. We connect with our own feelings,

thoughts and aspirations. If we cannot connect with our own selves, how then can we empathise and connect with others? Eric Fromm echoes this idea by saying that love "implies that respect for one's own integrity and uniqueness, love for an understanding of one's own self, cannot be separated from respect and love and understanding for another individual."[\[1\]](#)

If a person's love for himself is necessary, this should lead him to love the One who made him. Why? Because God created the physical causes and means for human beings to achieve happiness and pleasure, and avoid pain. God has freely given us every precious moment of our existence, yet we do not earn or own these moments. The great theologian Al-Ghazali aptly explains that if we love ourselves we must love God:

"Therefore, if man's love for himself be necessary, then his love for Him through whom, first his coming-to-be, and second, his continuance in his essential being with all his inward and outward traits, his substance and his accidents, occur must also be necessary. Whoever is so besotted by his fleshy appetites as to lack this love neglects his Lord and Creator. He possesses no authentic knowledge of Him; his gaze is limited to his cravings and to things of sense."[\[2\]](#)

5 God is The-Loving, and His love is the purest form of love

God is The-Loving. He has the purest form of love. This should make anyone want to love Him, and loving Him is a key part of worship. Imagine if I were to tell you that there was this person who was the most loving person ever, and that no other love could match his love; wouldn't that instil a strong desire to get to know this person, and eventually love him too? God's love is the purest and most intense form of love; therefore, any sane person would want to love him too.

Given that the English word for love encompasses a range of meanings, the best way to elaborate on the Islamic conception of God's love is to look into the actual Quranic terms used to describe Divine love: His mercy (*rahmah*), His special mercy (*raheem*) and His special love (*muwadda*). By understanding these terms and how they relate to the Divine nature, our hearts will learn to love God.

Mercy

It is said that another word for love is mercy. One of God's names is The-Merciful; the Arabic word used is *Ar-Rahmaan*. This English translation does not fully represent the depth and intensity that the meaning of this word carries. The name *Ar-Rahmaan* has three major connotations: the first is that God's mercy is an intense mercy; the second is that His mercy is an immediate mercy; and the third is a mercy so powerful that nothing can stop it. God's mercy encompasses all things and He prefers guidance for people. In God's book, the Quran, He says,

"...but My mercy encompasses all things...." (Quran 7:156)

"It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Quran." (Quran 55:1-2)

In the above verse, God says He is The-Merciful, which can be understood as the "Lord

of Mercy", and that He taught the Quran. This is a linguistic indication to highlight that the Quran was revealed as a manifestation of God's mercy. In other words, the Quran is like one big love-letter to humanity. As with true love, the one who loves wants good for the beloved, and warns them of pitfalls and obstacles, and shows them the way to happiness. The Quran is no different: it calls out to humanity, and it also warns and expresses glad tidings.

Endnotes:

[1] Fromm, E. (1956). *The Art of Loving*. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 58-59.

[2] Al-Ghazali. (2011) *Al-Ghazali on Love, Longing, Intimacy & Contentment*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Eric Ormsby. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, p. 25.

7 Reasons Why God is Worthy of Worship (part 5 of 6)

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 5: Reason 5 continued and reason 6 (God is worthy of our worship because we have been created with an innate tendency to worship).

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Special Mercy

Connected to *Ar-Rahmaan* is *Ar-Raheem*. These names share the same root as the previous, which comes from the Arabic word for womb. The difference in meaning however is significant. *Ar-Raheem* refers to a special mercy for those who want to embrace it. Whoever chooses to accept God's guidance has essentially accepted His special mercy. This special mercy is for the believers and it is manifested in paradise; unending, blissful peace with God.



Special Love

According to the Quran, God is The-Loving. The Arabic name is *Al-Wadood*. This refers to a special love that is apparent. It comes from the word *wud*, which means expressing love through the act of giving: "And He is the Forgiving, The Loving." (Quran 85:14)

God's love transcends all of the different types of love. His love is greater than all worldly forms of love. For example, a mother's love, although selfless, is based on her internal need to love her child. It completes her, and through her sacrifices she feels whole and fulfilled. God is an independent Being who is self-sufficient and perfect; He does not require anything. God's love is not based on a need or want; it is therefore the purest form of love, because He gains absolutely nothing from loving us.

In this light, how can we not love the One who is more loving than anything we can imagine? The Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said, "God is more affectionate to His servants than a mother to her children."[\[1\]](#)

If God is the most loving, and His love is greater than the greatest worldly love we have experienced, this should instil in us a deeper love for God. Significantly, this should make us want to love Him by being one of His servants. Al-Ghazali aptly said, "For those endowed with insight there is in reality no object of love but God, nor does anyone but He deserve love."[\[2\]](#)

From a spiritual perspective, God's love is the greatest blessing anyone can ever achieve, as it is a source of internal tranquillity, serenity, and eternal bliss in the hereafter. Not loving God is not only a form of ingratitude, but the greatest form of hate. Not loving the One who is the source of love is a rejection of that which enables love to occur and fill our hearts.

God does not force His special love on us. Although, by His mercy, He lovingly gives us every moment of our lives, to fully embrace God's love and be recipients of His special love, one must enter into a relationship with Him. It is as if God's love is waiting for us to embrace it. However, we have closed the door and put up the shutters. We have kept the door shut by denying, ignoring and rejecting God. If God were to force His special love on us, love would lose all meaning. We have the choice: to follow the right path and thereby gain God's special love, or reject His guidance and face the spiritual consequences.

The most loving Being wants to love you, but in order for you to embrace that love, and for it to be meaningful, you have to choose to love Him and follow the path that leads to His love. This path is the Prophetic path of the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him.

"Say, [O Muhammad]: 'If you love God, then follow me, [so] God will love you and forgive your sins. And God is Forgiving and Merciful'."
(Quran 3:31)

6 Worship is part of who we are

God is worthy of our worship because worship is part of who we are. Just like our need to eat, drink and breathe, worship is an innate tendency. From this perspective, we are natural-born worshippers, because that is who we are and it is our Divinely given purpose. Worshipping God is a logical necessity, just as when we say a car is red. It is red because we have defined that colour as red; it is red by definition. Likewise, we are worshippers by definition, because God defined and made us that way: "I did not create the *Jinn* [spirit world], nor mankind, except to worship Me." (Quran 51:56)

Even people who do not believe in God, including those who reject the fact that He is entitled to worship, manifest signs of adoration, reverence and devotion. If you do not worship God, you'll still end up worshipping something. From an Islamic perspective, the object that you love and revere the most, including whatever you attribute ultimate power to and believe you are ultimately dependent on, is essentially your object of worship. For many people, this can include an ideology, a leader, a family member, and even your own self. In other words, many people idolise these things. Polytheism or idolatry is not just about praying to or bowing down in front of an object.

God is rooted in our innermost nature, and when God commands us to worship Him it is actually a mercy and act of love. It is as if every human being has a hole in his or her heart. This hole is not physical, it is spiritual, and it needs to be filled to achieve spiritual tranquillity. We attempt to fill this hole with a new job, a holiday, a new house, a new car, a hobby, travel or taking up a popular self-help course. However, every time we fill our hearts with these things, a new hole appears. We are never truly satisfied, and after a while we seek something else to fill the spiritual void. Yet, once we fill our hearts with the love of God, the hole remains permanently closed. Thus, we feel at peace and experience a tranquillity that can never be put into words, and a serenity that is undisturbed by calamity.

Endnotes:

[1] Narrated by Abu Dawud.

[2] Al-Ghazali. (2011) Al-Ghazali on Love, Longing, Intimacy & Contentment, p. 23.

7 Reasons Why God is Worthy of Worship (part 6 of 6)

Description: 7 reasons for why we must worship God and dedicate all acts of worship to Him alone. Part 6: Reason 7 (Obeying God is the most rational thing to do) and how worshipping God alone is truly liberating.

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7 Obeying God is the most rational thing to do

**"And obey God and the Prophet[1] so that you may be given mercy."
(Quran 3:132)**

When I travel by plane, I usually hear the pilot announce "via the inflight audio system" to fasten our seat belts due to oncoming turbulence. My typical response involves sitting down, fastening my belt and hoping (and praying) for the best. The reason I obey the



pilot's command is that I understand he is the authority concerning the plane, how it works and the effects of turbulence. My obedience is a result of using my rational faculties. Only an arrogant person would disobey a valid authority. Would any of us take seriously a seven-year-old telling us that our maths professor does not know how to teach calculus?

In a similar light, disobeying God is foolish and unfounded. Obeying God, even if we do not know the full wisdom behind some of His commands, is the most rational thing to do. God's commands are based on His boundless knowledge and wisdom. He is the ultimate authority. To deny this authority is like a two-year-old child scribbling on a piece of paper and claiming that he is more eloquent than Shakespeare. (Actually, it is worse.)

This does not mean that we suspend our minds when obeying God. We are told by God Himself to use our reason. However, once we have established what God has said, then that should result in obedience.

Obeying God entails that one should fear Him. A believer should fear God if he wants to be in a state of servitude and obedience. This fear, however, is not the type of fear that is associated with being scared of an enemy or an evil force. God wants good for us.

Rather, this fear is associated with skin-shivering awe, loss, love and unhappiness. We fear God from the perspective of fearing losing His love and good pleasure.[2] (To explore more about this concept of fear please read [here](#).)

The reasons I have provided above may raise some questions. These include: *Does God need our worship? Why did He create us to worship Him?* These questions have already been addressed [here](#). To summarise, God is independent and everything depends on Him. He does not need anything. Worshipping God is for us, not for Him. Also, God creating us to worship Him was inevitable. His perfect names and attributes were going to manifest themselves. An artist inevitably produces art work because he has the attribute of being artistic. By greater reason, God would inevitably create us to worship Him because He is the One worthy of worship. This inevitability is not based on need but rather a manifestation of God's names and attributes.

A Note on the Essence of Worship

In the Islamic tradition, a key act of worship is supplication (known as *dua* in Islamic theology). The Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, taught that supplication is "the essence of worship"[3]. Supplications are to God alone, because only He can help us when we ask for help for something that we need or want. Supplicating to anything other than God is an act of polytheism, because the person is asking for something from an entity that does not have the ability to provide or fulfil that request. For example, if someone were to ask a stone idol to grant them twin girls, it would be an act of polytheism because they are supplicating to an entity that has no power to fulfil that request. This does not mean, however, that asking someone who has the ability to assist you for help is polytheism. It would only be polytheism if one were to believe that God was not the ultimate creator of their ability to help you. Supplicating to God is part of making our worship pure, and the way we supplicate to Him should be with humility. God says: "Invoke your Lord with humility" (Quran 7:55) and "So invoke God making your worship pure for Him." (Quran 40:1)

The free slave

From an existential perspective, worshipping God is true liberation. If worship entails loving and obeying God the most, then in reality many of us also have other gods in our lives. Many of us want to love and obey our own egos and desires the most. We think we are always right, we never want to be wrong, and we always want to impose ourselves on others. From this perspective, we are enslaved to ourselves. The Quran points out such a debased spiritual state and describes the one who considers his desires, passions and whims as his god, to be worse than an animal: "Think of the man who has taken his own passion as a god: are you to be his guardian? Do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are just like cattle"no, they are further from the path." (Quran 25:43 & 44)

From self-worship, sometimes we move to worship various forms of social pressures, ideas, norms and cultures. They become our point of reference, we start to love them, want to know more about them, and are led to 'obey' them. Examples abound; take, for

instance, materialism. We have become preoccupied with money and material belongings. Obviously, to want money and possessions is not necessarily a bad thing, but we have allowed our pursuit to define who we are. Our time and efforts are devoted to the accumulation of wealth, making the false notion of material success the primary focus in our lives. From this perspective, material things start to control us, and lead us to serve the culture of avid materialism rather than serving God. I appreciate that this does not apply to everyone, but this form of excessive materialism is very common.

Essentially, if we are not worshipping God, we are still worshipping something else. This can be our own egos and desires, or ephemeral things like material possessions. In the Islamic tradition, worshipping God defines who we are, as it is part of our nature. If we forget God, and start to worship things that are not worthy of worship, we will slowly forget our own selves: "And be not like those who forgot God, so He made them forget themselves." (Quran 59:19)

Our understanding of who we are is dependent on our relationship with God, which is shaped by our servitude and worship. In this sense, when we worship God we are freed from submission to other 'gods', whether ourselves or things that we own or desire.

The Quran presents us with a profound analogy: "God puts forward this illustration: can a man who has for his masters several partners at odds with each other be considered equal to a man devoted wholly to one master? All praise belongs to God, though most of them do not know." (Quran 39:29)

God is essentially telling us that if we do not worship God, we end up worshipping something else. These things enslave us and they become our masters. The Quranic analogy is teaching us that without God, we have many 'masters' and they all want something from us. They are all 'at odds with each other', and we end up in a state of misery, confusion and unhappiness. However, God, who knows everything, including our own selves, and who has more mercy than anyone else, is telling us that He is our master, and that only by worshipping Him alone will we truly free ourselves from the shackles of the things we have taken as replacements for Him.

To conclude this essay, lovingly worshipping God and peacefully submitting to Him frees you from the degraded worship of the ephemeral world and the lustful submission to the carnal and egotistical realities of the human condition. The following lines of poetry by the Poet of the East, Muhammad Iqbal, eloquently summarises this point:

"This one prostration which you deem too exacting liberates you from a thousand prostrations."