

## Chapel Talk by Papia Furkan

### Watching My Brother Being Tortured

I was born and raised into a Muslim family and a few years ago, I decided to become a Sunni Muslim and I started following the Hanafi school of thought. And very very recently, I realized that “man suffers for his faith and continues to suffer until he walks the earth free from sin” and truly how fortunate I am to be where I am, all safe and sound with a bounty of worldly pleasures. I also came to terms with the fact that I take things for granted and am never satisfied with whatever is lying in front of me until I started to open my eyes up just a little bit more and put my obsessions behind me.

Imagine waking up one day and you find your hands and feet shackled and you have no idea what is going on or what you are being arrested for or what your crime is. You have no way of defending yourself and regardless of how loudly you scream and yell, it is all useless because your voice is unheard. No one cares about what you have to say. In fact, no one could give a second thought about you. Except for Allah swt. He cares.

Imagine cleaning and cooking and helping your Mom make a home-cooked meal and you go outside for a short swim. You find your hands shackled and you're unaware of whatever charges are being thrown at you. The next day, the FBI brings back your swimming shorts to your Mom and walk away without a word. How do you expect your Mom to react?

Imagine having one of your kidneys removed while in captivity, having your teeth removed, having your nose broken and then having it reset inaccurately and not being taken care of your gunshot wounds. There's blood dripping over all of your clothes and yet, your voice is unheard. At the same time, you have to strip naked to be checked every time your lawyers visit you and when you appear in court. Can you blame anyone for refusing to seek medical attention or legal rights when you are forced to undergo such humiliation?

Now imagine being tortured all day and night, being water-boarded, forced into stress positions for hours, hung on ceilings by your wrists, deprived of sleep and food and you are constantly being yelled at. Your wounds aren't healing and you are pushed to work on your hands and feet and knees. How can you expect your wounds to heal? You are now forced to strip naked so authorities can take pictures of intimate parts of your body and mock you. You are forced to commit demoralized acts so others can entertain themselves. You are raped and put into such humiliation and pain that death sounds so much sweeter at this moment. You are taunted and threatened and embarrassed and there's nothing else you can do but submit to these disgusting animals. Someone comes in and interrogates you for hours and you are forced to confess ridiculous things and you refuse and spit back at them. So what do they do? They obtain a female interrogator to tempt you and again you refuse. She

takes a red marker and stains her fingers with it. She pulls her hands out of her pants and wipes it on your back telling you it's impure blood. Water is now turned off and you can't make ablution or offer your prayers. You are forced to confess things you have not committed because otherwise, if you don't, your family is at risk. During Abdullah Khadr's hearing, he said: "If someone tells you 'If you don't tell us you are selling missiles to Al-Qaeda, we are going to rape your sister.' What would you say?"

It doesn't matter what your crime is and whether you are innocent or guilty. The only crime you have committed is being a Muslim. How is this even a crime? We have brothers and sisters being tortured every day for submitting WILLINGLY to our Lord. Most of them do not have access to medical consultants, to lawyers or even their families. They are kept under solitary confinement for 24 hours, every single day—no connection with humans, light, fresh air. Most of us can't even bear to go ten minutes without picking up the phone, checking our FaceBook and e-mails, go outside or whatever it is we are so obsessed with doing.

If truth be told, I am so disgusted with so many people in so many ways. We worry so much about what kind of shoes we wear or what brand of clothes we buy that we forget there are people out there who do not even own a pair of shoes or decent clothing on their back. We waste so much food every day and fill ourselves until we vomit that we have no idea there are people out there who are at wits end for a piece of bread. Our lives are confined to just ourselves. It's always "this and that" and "me." How often do you truly stop for a second to think of anyone but yourselves?

Every so often, you meet a group of people that make statements such as "Looks aren't that important to me and people shouldn't worry about looks that much." What are you doing with so much makeup on your face, with your Armani jacket and sunglasses for, then? If you truly meant that, you wouldn't own a mirror, now, would you?

There are people on this campus that complain so much about the smallest nitty-gritty things, useless insignificant crazes that truly have no importance to them. They waste so much money buying things they don't even use and worry for hours about what others think of themselves. What if everyone took 10 minutes out of their lives and put these habits behind and made an effort to remember more important things? Wouldn't Allah reward them so much more?

Every time I ask someone to write a letter to at least one prisoner, I receive this statement "I can't write now. I'm busy." Their form of being "busy" is refreshing their FaceBook page, watching a movie or talking on the phone. As calmly as I can, I leave them my contact information and ask them to write one when they're not "busy." Weeks pass by and I never receive their letters.

If I ask you today to write a simple letter and you tell me you are busy, that is fine.

But imagine if one day you are incarcerated in a small cell and you have no outside communication. Wouldn't you want someone to send you a letter of inspiration and hope? Wouldn't you want to have the knowledge that there are people out there who have you in their thoughts and prayers? And what if no one writes you one because they are too "busy?" How would that make you feel? So how do you think our brothers and sisters feel at this very exact moment when you refuse to write a short letter to them because you're too busy refreshing your FaceBook page?

Islam is not the enemy here. In fact, no religion is. Yes, this is true! Religion does not cause corruption in the hearts of individuals. It is, however, government that ploys, accuses and tricks people into being something they were never to begin with--- terrorists or evil, vile creatures. I did realize that the most unfortunate and the most deprived are the most optimistic and patient. It's true that "oppression can only survive through silence."

People constantly say that so and so is oppressing the community and the minds of others. But ask yourself this: How can the oppressed become the oppressors?