

RAISING CHILDREN THE PROPHETIC WAY

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH DELIVERED BY
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INTRODUCTION

He, peace and blessings be upon him, was the embodiment and manifestation of perfection. He, peace and blessings be upon him, reached the pinnacle of perfection because of the completeness of his character, and he, peace and blessings be upon him, dispelled darkness because of his beauty, beauty dispels darkness. And all his actions, all his qualities were beautiful, were perfect and were complete, and it is incumbent upon us to invoke blessings him, peace and blessings be upon him.

Often times in our society today, parents come to us and complain about their challenges of raising children and children not obeying their parents. The best of what you can do is to hold onto the example of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and how he dealt with children. One of the most important techniques in raising children and youth is through our personal example and I want to focus on this tonight.

I share with you a scene from Madinah fourteen centuries ago. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is walking in Madinah and as he, peace and blessings be upon him, would walk in the streets of Madinah the children would see him and run towards him and would hug him. They would hold on to him and walk with him for a while. Children were happy in his presence. This is the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.

He, peace and blessings be upon him, is not ordinary person. He, peace and blessings be upon him, is the Messenger of Allah. The people knew this and accepted this. He, peace and blessings be upon him, was the most special person in their eyes.



COMFORT ZONE

Imam Tirmidhi mentions this description. When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, would talk with a young person - a child or a youth, that child would think that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was a child just like him or her. And when he, peace and blessings be upon him, would speak with an elderly person, that elderly person would think or feel that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was an elder just like him.

And so I share something with you tonight; establish a comfort zone with your children. They must feel comfortable in your presence. Remember the children running toward the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. I tell you; today some of our leaders - when they come to the Masjid - people want to run away from them because they are strict and harsh. This is not the way of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, he would invite people to Jannah.

Children have to feel comfortable with you. If you can do this, your relationship takes on a whole new level. Mothers are able to do it maybe better than fathers. Do not resign yourself at this. Fathers can do it too.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, established this with his children and grandchildren. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, would lead Jamaat in the Masjid, and often in sajdah his grandsons, Hassan & Hussain (he would refer to them as his sons) they would come and climb on his back. And the Sahaba mentioned the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, would remain long in sajdah and would not get up as long as Hassan and Hussain were on his back. He, peace and blessings be upon him, would wait for them before he got up from sajdah. There was a comfort zone and this took the relationship to a new level.



COMFORT ZONE

This comfort zone dictates your relationship with anyone. Concept of best friends is someone you share with. The good things and the difficult things you share with them. This is a total comfort zone. Allah refers to this as sakina and the level of the comfort zone determines the comfort of the relationship. For a parent you need to establish total comfort for your children. This is how you raise them well. This is the foundation of the beautiful fruits that grow out of that. Your children are the fruits of your deeds. If you live a good life and you are doing good deeds for Allah, your children are a fruit of that and will become that. If someone is not living a good life, they and do whatever they want to do - they live their lives' how they want to, their children will also be a fruit of their actions. We have to be mindful. Parents want their children to be Abu Bakr Siddique / 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with them) but they behave like John and Bill - it's not going to work. If you want your children to be Abu Bakr Siddique, then be like that. This is the way of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.



UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD

A beautiful incident at the time of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. He used to visit the homes of the Sahabiya from time to time. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, used to visit Umm Ayman (may Allah be pleased with her). She lived in the outskirts of Madinah. Whenever there was a Revelation, he would visit her and tell her. After the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, passed away Abu Bakr Siddique realised that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, used to visit Umm Ayman (May Allah be pleased with her) and did the same. When he went and sat with her, she started to cry and he also started to cry because they remembered the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. Many times in the past he would be there with her and tell her of Revelation and it made her sad. This is the relationship in Madinah. I mention this so you can understand the society in Madinah.

There was a young Sahaba, the son of Hazrat Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), he had a bird as a pet. Once the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, visited the young boy as he had heard that his pet bird had died. The young boy is sad that his pet died. The Prophet asked what happened and expressed condolences. That may seem insignificant for us but not the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. We would think to go out and buy another, but he, peace and blessings be upon him reached out to the boy and empathized. This is the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and his dealing with the children of Madinah. He teaches us to be able to put ourselves in the place of that other person.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD

Another important aspect is that for too many of us - parents and elders - we are so consumed with ourselves we don't recognise what our children are going through. But you need to make an effort to find out what they are going through. Don't say they are not telling me it's something that you have done which causes them to behave like that. Put yourself in a position where they tell you. You have to show interest. After school ask them about their day. Be interested in what they are, who they are and why they are doing what they do. Show the interest and they will open up to you. I'm not here to tell you tonight to beat your children when they do not pray or read Quran or quarrel when they do what you don't want them to do. This is not how to raise children.

In the west the challenges are much greater. In Muslim countries your duty to your children was such that where you would tell them what to do with respect to Islam, they would do it. It's tough here to tell our children what to do. It's the why. Why do I have to pray five times a day? Convince me. We are losing the battle because we need to understand that we need to tell them why you do what you do. It's a challenge for us. The best way for you to answer the question why is that you do it yourself. The proper way is to be a practical example. As the father in the home, you should get up before Fajr and make wudhu and go to your home Zawiyah (everyone should have a Zawiyah - this is traditional Muslim architecture). If you want your kids to be like the Sahaba then live it yourself. This is how we answer the question why. This is the most powerful tool at our disposal. Children want to be like their parents. This is human nature whether they know or not. When you show the example to them, your practice of Islam, maybe in their teenage years they move away from Islam, if they grow up this way they will come back to it. They will perform their Salah and read the Quran.

The knowledge you give your children as children is etched like stone. That knowledge is not going anywhere. It may get covered up but it is there. This is the reason of why we give to our children when they are young.





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GIFTS & ADVICE

I want to share some beautiful gifts to give our children, and I don't mean the material gifts we give on birthdays and Eid (this is good and we should do that). The first gift is of forward focus. They should focus ahead. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, says from the beauty of the Islam that the best of people is that he would leave off what is not of concern of him. I.e. mind your own business. The strong believer is beautiful and more loved by Allah than the weak believer. Give your children this forward focus to look ahead. Focus on what will benefit you. This is a habit of successful people. Too many of us are mindful of other people. Don't waste time - you should be spending this time on improving yourself. If you do this in your home, your children will learn from you and do this.

Focus on you and not on other people. To what you can do make your life better. Don't look back. We have so many historians in our community. Every other Muslim is a historian. I did this and that twenty years ago, giving a historical speech about what they did. Stop being historians and become makers of history. Do this.

The second gift is the gift of positive messages. There are only two types of messages to give your children. Positive or negative. Focus on giving positive messages. If you tell your children you hate what they are doing, don't do this or that, these are negative messages. Find a way of doing it in a positive way. If you tell a child not to do something they will want to do it. Negative messages have a different impact. Share positive messages with your children. Tell them you love them. Mothers find it easy to do this but not fathers. Tell them you love them and do something which shows them that you love them. Get in the habit off sharing things with them.



GIFTS & ADVICE

The next gift is of self-esteem. One of the problems with many teenagers is lack of self-esteem. In many communities there is a growing rate of suicide among teenagers. In the ghettos for example, single divorced mothers raise these people, their fathers are nowhere to be seen. These children have very low self-esteem and often use drugs and drink alcohol. Low self-esteem usually result in social vices and crime. If you want to give your children the gift of self-esteem, make them feel good about themselves. Don't put down your children, don't criticise them. A lot of people send me messages that they can do nothing to please their parents. This results in low self-esteem, they are told that they are losers and that they can do nothing. This leads to lots of problems.

Sayyiduna Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said that he spent ten years with the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, (as a khadim). He said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, never said no to him ever. He would always be nice to him. This is the Prophetic way of raising children. How do we interact with them? They need high self-esteem that they are good. No matter what they do. Encourage and inspire them to be better. In their end of year exams, they came third - don't tell them why did you only come third. That is wrong. Don't do that. Praise and congratulate them and encourage them to do better next time. This will raise their self-esteem.

The next gift is of compassion and mercy. Be compassionate with your children. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, in dealing with young Sahaba, or his own children or grand children was the most compassionate, kind and merciful. Have softness of heart in dealing with children. Don't be harsh. Allah says, "O Prophet, if you were harsh and hard hearted then people would run away from you." He was soft and gentle and people ran towards him. Gifts of compassion and mercy must be shared with children. They will then strive to be like you. Sometimes you influence your children in how you listen to them rather than talking to them. They will know just by looking at you whether you are happy or sad with them. It will affect them and will change their bad ways.



GIFTS AND ADVICE

Your child wants to marry a non-Muslim. The parents tell the child that he/she is not Muslim. The child says I will convert her. The parents say convert her now. The father tells the child that your mother is crying because of what her son is doing. Many times that touches them. They don't realise that their parents are sad and unhappy. They will then change because disobeying / displeasing parents displeases Allah. Tell them the consequence. The pleasure of Allah is connected to the pleasure of parents. If your parents are angry with you, Allah is angry. Treat children with mercy and compassion - they will have love for you even if they don't show it.

The next gift is of humour. Give them this. Share humour with them. Subhan'Allah some parents in their home are so serious, there is no joking is allowed, no laughter in the home. This should not be the mindset of the home. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, would share humour. There should be light humour in the home. You should not be serious all the time. More muscles are used to frown than to smile. Do your muscles a favour and smile. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said smiling is act of charity when you smile towards strangers. When smiling at your family, blessings are greater. So smile.

A special course is needed to teach brothers how to smile!!! A misconception is that you have to be serious to be a good Muslim. No, this is wrong. It brings out goodness in people - do it to your children. I tell you it's a beautiful thing to have children that bring happiness in the home. I tell my children that they make me happy when they are happy in the home, they are always making happy remarks in the home. We should all do this.



GIFTS & ADVICE

The next gift is of balance. This gift of balance is not to go to extremes in anything. Seek the middle balanced way, this is the way of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Some people get religious and want to be the most religious person around. They want to be more religious than the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. On the other hand, some people don't want to practice Islam, don't want to be told to pray, to go to the Masjid or to give sadaqah. This is even worse. Seek the balanced away. Sayyidah Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, would be nice with them, spend time with them, but when time for Salah came he would stop everything and pray.

Each movement comes with its requirement. Salah five times a day, don't do anything at this time. Teach your children to be good Muslims and they can enjoy themselves too. You don't have to live this constricted life - do Dhikr and read Quran and be happy. Learn this balance. Many people feel if they became religious they would not be happy and therefore don't get religious. If you tell them to go to do Hajj, they say they will go when they are older. There is a mindset to wait till they get old. Hajj should be at the top of your priority list as soon as you can afford it. You will enjoy your hajj more when you're younger and stronger. It truly becomes a journey of a lifetime. Recognise each moment has its requirements and fulfil these requirements. And teach your children - I'm a Muslim and I have obligations.



GIFTS & ADVICE

The next gift is of abundance. The spirit of sharing. We need to teach children this spirit of sharing and generosity. It is a 14 centuries old tradition - if you lived in a Muslim country there are occasions when your mother cooks and gives food to the neighbour. This is how they are training you to share with your neighbours. Especially at times of Eid and Ramadan. The father gives money to children to give in the Mosque box. Give your children the feeling of abundance no matter what we have in life, however little we have, always give something for the sake of Allah. No matter who we are, there's always something we can share. Sayyidah Fatima (may Allah be pleased with her) had a beautiful practice - whenever she would share something with a poor person, (she didn't have much, she wasn't wealthy) she would wrap it in a piece of cloth and put perfume and attar on it and then give it. Someone asked why do you do that, she replied: "When I give this charity to this person it reaches the hand of Allah before the hand of the person. So this is how I want to present to Allah."

Share with people in a beautiful way, don't be condescending. Some people find it difficult to give sadaqah, teach your children that the best of deeds is that when you give secretly with your right hand, the left hand doesn't know. Teach your children to be free handed. This is the way of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him.



Conclusion

I want to conclude, by mentioning a final gift, which I alluded to at the beginning. The gift of being a role model for our children. Think of what you want your children to be and become that. Live that in your life. Be what you want your children to be, the good qualities you want in them, let them see them in you. Be that. You want a reason to be good Muslim? Your children are that reason. You want a reason to read Fajr in the masjid? Your children are that reason. You want a reason to fast in the summer when it's hot and difficult? Your children are that reason.

Strive to do this, because your children are the fruits of your deeds. They will become what you are and better. The effect of your good deeds is not restricted to your children but to their children and their children. I do recognise it is a challenge, it is difficult to raise children in this society, there are many distractions, almost nothing out there is taking them to Allah, most things - the culture the influence, the messages they see out there and in their TV, is taking them away from Allah. But your sincere efforts to be this great example will help your children. You are teaching them to become what you want them to be.

Don't under estimate the power of du'ā'. Make constant du'ā' for your children. When they are young and when they grow, when they are teenagers and when they disobey Allah always make du'ā' for pious spouses and pious children. Make du'ā' for their wellbeing, their duniya and that they pass exams and get good jobs with a halal income. Du'ā' of parents is very powerful. Don't displease your parents - their du'ā' against you is powerful. Many times when your wife or kids don't listen to you or you have blocks in life it is because you displeased your parents. If your parents love you this is pleasing to Allah.