

The Prophet and Children



Prophet Muhammad, may God send His praises upon him, was an extraordinary husband, a perfect father, and a unique grandfather. He was unique in every way. He treated his children and grandchildren with great compassion and never neglected to direct them to the straight path and to good deeds. He loved them and treated them tenderly, but did not allow them to neglect matters related to the afterlife. He showed them how to lead a humane life and never allowed them to neglect their religious duties or to become spoiled.

His ultimate goal was to prepare them for the Hereafter. His perfect balance in such matters is another dimension of his divinely-inspired intellect. Anas Ibn Malik, the Messenger's helper for 10 years, says:

“I have never seen a man who was more compassionate to his family members than Muhammad.”^[1]

Muhammad was a human like us, but God inspired in him such an intimate affection for every living thing that he could establish a connection with all of them. As a result, he was full of extraordinary affection toward his family members and others.

All of the Prophet's sons died. Ibrahim, his last son, died in infancy. The Prophet often visited his son before the latter's death, although he was very busy. Ibrahim was looked after by a nurse. The Prophet would kiss and play with him before returning home.^[2]

When Ibrahim took his last breaths, the eyes of the Prophet started shedding tears. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf said:

“O God's Messenger, even you (weep)!” The Prophet said, “O Ibn Auf, this is mercy.”

Then he wept more and said:

“The eyes shed tears and the heart grieves, and we will not say except what pleases our Lord, O Ibrahim! Indeed we are grieved by your separation.”

The Messenger was completely balanced in the way he brought up his children. He loved his children and grandchildren very much, and instilled love in them. However, he never let his love for them be abused. None of them deliberately dared to do anything wrong. If they made an unintentional mistake, the Messenger's protection prevented them from going even slightly astray. He did this by wrapping them in love and an aura of dignity. For example, once Hasan or Hussain wanted to eat a date meant for distribution among the poor as alms. The Messenger immediately took it from his hand, and said:

“Anything given as alms is forbidden to us.”^[3]

In teaching them while they were young to be sensitive to forbidden acts, the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, established an important principle of education.

Whenever he returned to Medina, he would carry children on his mount. On such occasions, the Messenger embraced not only his grandchildren but also those in his house and those nearby. He conquered their hearts through his compassion. He loved all children.

He loved his granddaughter Umamah. He often went out with her on his shoulders, and even placed her on his shoulders while praying. When he prostrated, he put her down; when he had finished praying, he placed her on his back again.^[4]

The Prophet showed this degree of love to Umamah to teach his male followers how to treat girls. This was a vital necessity; only a decade earlier, it had been the social norm to bury infant or young girls alive. Such public paternal affection for a granddaughter had never been seen before in Arabia.

The Messenger proclaimed that Islam allows no discrimination between son and daughter. How could there be? One is Muhammad, the other is Khadijah; one is Adam, the other is Eve; one is Ali, the other is Fatima. For every great man there is a great woman.

As soon as Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger, entered the room where the Messenger was, he would stand, take her hands, and make her sit where he was sitting. He would ask about her health and family, show his paternal love for her and compliment her.

Fatimah, knowing how fond he was of her, loved him more than her own self. She always watched her father and how he called people to Islam. She wept profusely when the Messenger told her that he would die soon, but her tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy when he informed her that she would be the first of his family to follow him.^[5]

This is the Prophet and his relation to children, A man respected by leaders, cherished and loved by children.

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

[3] *Saheeh Muslim*

[4] *Saheeh Muslim*

[5] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*