

How the Righteous Cultivate their Children: Path to Success

Allah praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all creation, for His tremendous bounties upon the people.

It is He who commanded parents to properly cultivate their children and He commanded the children to be dutiful to their parents as they grow up, and obey them in that which is good. In response to this fine upbringing, the children should supplicate for their parents as Allah has said:

رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

"My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did raise me up when I was small." (Al-Isrā: 24)

It is upon the parents to begin this path of success by nurturing their households and to give their children the importance that the Prophets (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ) gave to their children. The friend or Khaleel of Allah, Ibrāheem (عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ) supplicated to Allah for righteous offspring:

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

"My Lord! Grant me offspring who will be from the righteous." (As-Sāffāt: 100) And he asked that his sons

be protected from idolatry and unbelief and that they should establish the Salāh:

وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ

“And keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols.” (Ibrāheem: 35)

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ

“My Lord! Make me one who establishes the Prayer (As-Salāh) and likewise my offspring. O our Lord! Accept my supplication.” (Ibrāheem: 35)

The Prophet Zakariyyah (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) called upon Allah (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) saying:

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۗ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

“O my Lord! Grant me from You, good offspring. You are indeed the All-Hearer of invocation.” (Āli ‘Imrān: 38)
And there are many examples like this.

This was the importance the Prophets gave to their children before they were even born! Then after their births they made huge efforts in cultivating them upon piety, obedience to Allah, worship, keeping them safe from misguidance and directing to all they knew to be good for them, protecting and warning them from the paths of evil and sin. They would not leave these important affairs to others, or relegate their duties or see the task as beyond their control. They regarded the cultivation of their offspring to be from greatest types of

obedience to Allah and an investment for themselves and wellbeing in this life and the next.

The first affair that must be considered in the education of children is their belief in Allah (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) and what He revealed to the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), so that they live their lives upon Islam and they die upon that. Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) stated:

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمْ الدِّينَ
فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“And Ibrāheem instructed his sons and so did Ya’qūb, saying, ‘O my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except as Muslims.’” (Al-Baqarah: 132) Even at the point of the death, the parent should remind his children of the ‘aqeedah and question them about the path they will take after his death!

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن
بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا
وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

“Or were you witnesses when death approached Ya’qūb? And he said unto his sons, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They said, ‘We shall worship your God, the God of your fathers, Ibrāheem, Ismā’eel and Ishāq, the One God and to Him we submit as Muslims.” (Al-Baqarah: 133)

Also the righteous Luqmān enjoined upon his son that tremendous legacy, warning him from idolatry, and polytheism, and commanded him to establish the Prayer, to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and to be patient when confronted with calamities. He warned him from pride and looking down upon others, from haughtiness and deceit. Look at this amazing tarbiyah!

All of this Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) has mentioned to us in His Book regarding the conduct of the Prophets and the righteous with their offspring. From this we begin to comprehend the great responsibility on parents in cultivating and caring for their children.

And who is there in these times who takes their religion seriously enough to worry about the ēmān of their children in years to come and even generations to come?

Sadly, most parents are only concerned with their worldly secular education, careers and the wealth their children will accumulate. They care little or nothing about the religious adherence or nurturing the noble character of their child. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated, "I was not sent except to perfect the noble manners." Many parents see that as long as their children nominally Muslims, then that is enough (i.e. that they utter the shahādah, have a Muslim name and pray once in a while!). Parents' religious and moral expectations for their children are continuing to decline which translates into children ceasing to practice Islam as they

enter into adulthood, and they fall into every spiralling immoral and sinful practices.

These types of parents are not following the path of the Prophets (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ). They care more about the accumulation of wealth, property and status regardless of comprises to their Religion in a society that couldn't care less about manners, morals and worship of Allah; a society that cares more about the private lives of footballers and politicians than about the teachings and lives of the Prophets of Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى). So where do you stand in this time of tribulation, conflict and confusion?

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) informed us that each child is born with an innate nature which is true faith in Allah; a nature that is good and willing to accept what is good easily. But this innate nature can be corrupted by those who are charged with the upbringing of the child through wicked cultivation and setting bad examples. And this is usually through the parents! The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ، فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يَنْصَرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ،
كَمَثَلِ الْبُهَيْمَةِ تُنْتَجُ الْبُهَيْمَةُ، هَلْ تَرَى فِيهَا جَدْعَاءَ

“Every child is born with a true innate faith in Islam (al-fitrah) and then his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or into a Magian. This is just like an animal which delivers a perfect baby. Do you find it mutilated?”¹ So, children are born uncorrupted and

¹ Bukhari, no. 1385.

without their mind and morals mutilated. However, later they are altered and indoctrinated by those who take responsibility over them, whether it be parents, teachers or relatives. Children are not born to worship idols, or the cross, or the graves or cows. And they are not born immoral or gay or lesbian or transexual; they are not born atheists or Darwinists. Children are born upon a sound innate nature that accepts what is good and believes in Allah and would worship Him alone if left uncorrupted.

Muslim parents themselves are quite often responsible for corrupting the Fitrah of their children by pointing them towards that which harms their cultivation. So you must take care in nurturing your children and keeping them upon the Fitrah. That is a parental duty. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

لَكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، الْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ،
وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ
زَوْجِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا، وَالْخَادِمُ رَاعٍ فِي مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَمَسْئُولٌ
عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ - قَالَ وَحَسِبْتُ أَنْ قَدْ قَالَ - وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي مَالِ أَبِيهِ
وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ وَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

"All of you are guardians and responsible for your wards and the things under your care. The ruler is the guardian of his subjects and is responsible for them and a man is the guardian of his family and is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband's house

and is responsible for it. A servant is the guardian of his master's belongings and is responsible for them.”²

The wellbeing of a child begins with nurturing his ēmān, his belief in Allah, the Last Day and the Revelation. Parents are responsible for educating their children and a lot of things besides. Each affair is important and deserves attention: their health, their hygiene, their education and so on. But all of these must be built upon the foundation of correct Islam, the Sunnah, truthfulness and sincerity. You cannot sacrifice the faith of your children which is related to their eternal wellbeing in the Hereafter for the short-term gains in wealth, status and prestige in this world.

It is also not a matter of just multiplying their outward deeds without nurturing what is in their hearts. The outwards actions should not be performed without thought or feeling. Bakr Ibn Abdillāh Al-Muzani said: “Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq (رضي الله عنه) did not excel the people in that he prayed more than them or fasted more than them. Rather, he excelled them with an affair that was in his heart.”³

Cultivation must build on what is in the Fitrah of your son or your daughter. A young child is not aware of what will bring him harm or benefit just as he is not able to provide for himself or clothe himself or shelter

² Bukhāri, no. 893.

³ Imām Ahmad reported it in Fadā'il As-Sahābah (118) with an authentic chain of narration.

himself. So the parents are responsible for all of that, especially in the early years. So when the parents fulfil this huge responsibility, the children grow to become righteous offspring, with excellent morals and good character who supplicate for their parents:

رَبِّ اَرْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

“My Lord! Bestow on my parents your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small.” (Al-Isrā: 24) So Allah commands the children to supplicate for mercy for them just as they were merciful to him when he was a baby, weak and unable even to feed himself. So they nurtured him in his body, his manners, his religion until he became upright upon *ēmān* and earned his own livelihood without having to beg from others. That is the rounded and comprehensive nurturing that every parent should aspire towards that does not compromise the belief, worship or duties of a Muslim.

So raising children is not about giving them whatever they want to eat, or drink or wear, and buying them cars, phones, computers games and mobile devices! In fact that type of cultivation will only harm them and does not benefit them. You spoil them and end up ruining their religion, morals and manners. The true and necessary *tarbiyah* (cultivation) is in their religion, their character, and protecting their *Fitrah* from corruption.

Parents are required, therefore to watch out for their children’s wellbeing, and watch their activities in the house, in school and in public. The house must be a

place of learning and nurturing, where they feel protected and loved. Our homes should be free from the means that lead to disbelief, sins and loose morals. So there should not be in Muslim homes TV and Music channels that corrupt morality – and the internet must be controlled through parental control software. And their worldly education should be an Islamic setting, an Islamic Salafi school or through properly structured home-schooling where the children are only exposed to that which will benefit them.

However parents are often reluctant to spend money on their children to be educated in a good Islamic school because they fear loss in their wealth. They want that new car, new leather sofa or new phone. There are schools upon the Sunnah that charge less than £3,000 per annum per child, yet parents will not enrol their children, but they will quite willingly spend over a thousand pounds on the latest phone and several thousand on a car, but not for the Islamic tarbiyah of their children!

Beyond this, parents should pay attention to whom their children are mixing with, and accompanying. Are they befriending good youth who are righteous, pray five times a day, well-mannered and attend the evening classes at the Masjid? Or are they children who are raised on street corners, in gangs and cultivated on a diet of movies, football and music? Do not leave your children to mix with bad company because that will corrupt their fitrah and their religion.

There are two dangerous paths from which we must protect our children and youth:

Firstly, from becoming easy and lenient with the Religion and distant from displaying good character. We all see that true steadfast adherence to Islam and to Islamic morals is quickly disappearing from the children of the Muslims, especially in non-Muslim countries. Parents send their children to state schools or colleges where there is free-mixing between the sexes; youth get involved in vices such as listening to music, watching movies and music videos; they take drugs, have girlfriends and boyfriends which leads to fornication, the abandonment of the Prayer and loss of morals and good character. And it is becoming more common to see youth turning to atheism. Many parents think that it is a risk worth taking and they gamble with the lives, religion, and ultimately the Hereafter of their own children!

The second dangerous path is that of exaggeration in the Religion that youth are sometimes drawn towards. They become harsh and severe on practicing – and this is due to their ignorance of the Religion. These are youth who accept the Religion but they are not cultivated upon it correctly – they go to extremes in their behaviour and end up oppressing themselves and transgressing the rights of others. Some abandon their parents, families and communities; they treat their neighbours badly and think themselves to be better than everyone else. We must prevent our children

becoming like that. The Prophet (ﷺ) stated: **“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him keep the family ties.”**⁴ And he (ﷺ) said: **“Indeed the best of you are the ones who are best in manners.”**⁵ And he said: **“Piety is to have good manners and sin is that which stirs in your heart, and you would hate the people to know about it.”**⁶

Both of these paths are a result of evil Tarbiyah or even outright carelessness on behalf of parents who come to regret their poor parenting in the end. All of this is due to them being distant from the gatherings of the people of knowledge and from the classes, and far removed from acting upon what they learn. Their ignorance is compounded because they follow the non-Muslims or ignorant Muslims blindly; they wander aimlessly without guidance. They adopt strange ideas and baseless fatāwa that they pick up online that they use to justify the corrupted tarbiyah that they inflict on their children.

Parents must start with themselves, by studying the Religion and passing that on to their children. You should be in the gatherings of learning and take from the students of Sunnah and their scholars. They are the ones about whom the Prophet (ﷺ) said: **“The Scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets.”**⁷ And he

⁴ Bukhāri, no. 6138.

⁵ Bukhāri, no. 3559.

⁶ Muslim, no. 2553.

⁷ Tirmidhi, 2682.

(صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **“This knowledge will be carried by the trustworthy ones of every generation.”**⁸ So seek out the trustworthy Salafis (from the people of knowledge) and seek their direction and guidance in your affairs. Do not try and navigate the complexities and pitfalls of tarbiyah by yourselves in the lands of the non-Muslims. You need help, so sit in the circles of the Salafi students and sheikhs, and get your children accustomed and attached to the Duroos. It may be difficult and strange for them (and you) in the beginning, but you must stick with it and not give up!

When you raise your children with the level of concern that I have alluded to in this article, they will benefit themselves and benefit you in this life and Hereafter. Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated:

إِذَا مَاتَ الْإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ
أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ

“When a person dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge by which people benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him.”⁹

Pious children are coolness of the eyes of the parents bring them joy and comfort to them in this life and the next. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) stated:

⁸ Al-Bayhaqi, 10/209.

⁹ Muslim, no. 1631.

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ
سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

“Gardens of perpetual residence; they will enter them with whoever were righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their children. And the angels will enter upon them from every gate, saying, ‘Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home.’” (Ar-Ra’d: 23-23) Ibn Katheer (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said: “That Allah will unite them with those they love in Paradise: their parents, their spouses, their children from those who deserve entry into Jannah among the believers so as to give them comfort and coolness to their eyes such that those in the lower levels of Paradise will be raised to higher levels (to unite them). This will be a bounty from Allah so that those who are higher are not brought lower, just as Allah said:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ

“And those who believe and whose children followed them in Faith, we shall surely unite them with their children.” (At-Tūr: 21)“

So each parent should supplicate as the Prophets supplicated, and strive as the Prophets and the Righteous Salaf strived in cultivating their children so that they are in harmony with each other in the world and united in the next in Paradise. End.