

Lesson 8

3–18–10 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al–Arba’in al–Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 430–432.

Summary

If you see your child misbehaving, how do you deal with it? Well, generally, there are three approaches. In one approach, you can just let it be and not do anything. This is an easy way out and usually leads to an undisciplined or spoiled child. Another approach is to use force. Unfortunately, many adults naturally lean towards slapping or hitting their children for quick results without fully understanding the consequences of our time. The best and hardest way to deal with the situation is to educate and/or negotiate with the child.

For example, if the child does not want to do his or her homework and just wants to play, you can try to explain the importance of homework and maybe entice him or her with a reward. Also, there is nothing wrong with being stern to instill values and discipline. Sometimes being stern is important to avoid spoiling the child. Now, occasionally, punishment must be used, such as in last resort cases.

However, in Islam, there are guidelines that should be followed. Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said to *raise your child with patience and never beat him more than five times*. (Jalali, page 430). Also, while addressing school children, Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said that *let your teacher know that if he beats you more than three times, I am going to punish him*.

First and foremost, negotiations and reasoning must be used with children at a starting point, and punishment, such as the beating mentioned in the *ahadith* (traditions), is a last resort. Now, why does the Imam put a short limitation on the beatings? If you are going to use a method or tool to obtain a specific effect, and after using that method or tool for a while, that specific effect is not achieved, does it make sense to continue the use of such?

Even psychology experiments show that if you try to train a dog or animal using a technique and that technique does not work in a relatively short time period, then you have to try a different approach. If you

continue to beat a child several times over, then one is no longer using the beating as a means of correction, but the beating becomes a tool of anger, revenge, and/or hostility. The children are not punching bags for adults to let out their stress.

Look how Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) treats and respects children. He addresses them specifically as individuals with rights. If the teacher does not respect those rights, the Imam said he will punish him. What a profound and daunting statement. We should think before we raise our hands to hit a child.

Actually, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that *you cannot spank or beat a child for something that is not haram* (forbidden or unpermitted according to Islamic law). Why beat at all? Well, as explained in previous lessons, one must take historical context into account. Beating was merely a means, not the goal. Today, beating may not be necessary as there may exist a slew of punishment means for correction that may be more effective without causing resentment, fear, and/or hatred (as created within children in today's society due to a number of factors).

As good Muslims and parents, we should also focus on acts of affection towards our children. For example, we should give gifts to our children. There are *ahadith* that mention that *giving gifts to your children is like giving charity or freeing a slave*. Also, there is a *hadith* (tradition) stating that one should give gifts to girls first.

However, one should be cognizant of not exceeding the limits. Parents should not spoil their children and should not instill materialism. It is the parent's duty to raise a good individual. Parents should always advise and teach their children. Allah (the All-Wise) provides great points for parents to teach their children in the Qur'an (31: 13 and 31: 16-19). In these verses, Allah (the All-Generous) speaks of how the honorable Luqman (may we reach his level) advised his son.¹

At least eleven points of wisdom, (Jalali, pages 431-432), can be extracted from these verses:

i) *Never associate anything with God*. Generally, there can be two types of *shirk* (polytheism). One type is actually worshipping idols or statues, and the other type is when you seek help from someone other than God and you believe that the other being is really the source of the help or power. Yes, we seek doctors and others for worldly help, but they are only means. The true help is the Lord, the Indescribable Source.

ii) *Whatever God wants to happen, will happen*.

iii) *God knows what you do, and He is All-Aware*.

iv) *Never miss prayer*. Proper *salat* (prayer) will help keep you on the straight path.

v) *If you see something that is right, say that is right and follow it*.

vi) *If you see something that is wrong, say that is wrong and avoid it.*

vii) *Be patient.*

viii) *Do not beg from anyone/Be modest in your bearing.* Meaning, keep within due bounds and observe reasonable limits regarding your behavior.

ix) *Do not be proud of yourself and do not think you are better.* Pride is a downfall. Do what you have to do and be thankful.

x) *Do not walk exultantly or like a braggart.*

xi) *When talking, use an appropriate voice and do not yell.*

“Indeed the ungainliest of voices is the donkey’s voice.” (Qur’an (31:19)).

These are points of guidance and wisdom we should all teach our children. *Insha’Allah* (if God wills), may we, as adults, also understand and follow these principles.

1. For more information on the honorable Luqman, see Majlisi, Allamah Muhammad Baqir. *Hayat al-Qulub*. Vol. 1. Trans. Sayyid Athar Husain S. H. Rizvi. Ansariyan Publications, Second Reprint 2007, pages 413–427.

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