

Nurturing Believers

Parenting Advice for Muslim Mothers

Part 7: Love for Allah ﷻ as the Basis for Tarbiyah

In our last post, we discussed the importance of making children *feel* sorry, as opposed to merely making them *say* sorry and suggested many practical ways we can enable them to feel remorse. In this post we would like to discuss one of the ways in which parents *usually* try to make their children regret their mistakes, and the **serious damage** caused by this.

Usually the name of Allah ﷻ is used by parents to scare and threaten their children, and to make them feel guilty, and hence to pressurize them into *their* obedience. E.g. they might say, *"If you don't eat your vegetables, Allah will be very angry with you."*
"Hurry up and wash your face, Allah doesn't like dirty children."
"Allah will punish you if you don't finish your milk."
"You better listen to me; Allah puts disobedient children into the Hellfire."
"You better apologize to me right away or Allah will never forgive you."



Statements like these are extremely harmful not only for our children, but also for ourselves

How are they harmful for us?

Statements like these are lies, and make us sinful for uttering them, in more than one way:

- First, children who have not yet reached puberty are NOT accountable for their actions, and so will NOT attract the wrath of Allah ﷻ or be punished for their mistakes. So, to threaten them with such consequences **enters us in the ranks of liars.**
- Second, even if they were accountable, many of the actions regarding which we threaten our children are not even sins. They are merely our personal preferences, which may have nothing to do with the pleasure or displeasure of Allah ﷻ. By attributing anger to Allah (swt) wrongfully for committing these "mistakes" we are doing more than lying, **we are making up lies about Allah ﷻ.**
- Third, even if children were accountable, and did commit a sin, to say with such surety that Allah ﷻ will be angry with them or punish them is itself a sin. Do we **claim to be privy to the decisions of Allah ﷻ** with regards to His Creation?

How are they harmful for our children?

For the limited benefit of temporarily getting our children to obey us, we unknowingly **lay the foundation of a lifetime of spiritual struggle** for our children, and there could be no greater harm that we could cause ourselves or them than this. This is because by threatening them with the anger and punishment of Allah ﷻ we do the following:



Deprive our children of the opportunity to love Allah ﷻ, when we create an image of Allah ﷻ as an angry, vengeful God, who is just looking for excuses to punish, and does not even spare the youngest and most innocent. Such a Lord is not someone our children can fall in love with.



Create despair in our children, by giving them the impression that even their slightest mistakes will be punished, so that they feel that there is no escape from the Divine whip.



Create confusion about their religion, so that they consider not eating vegetables or washing the face as sins that are punishable in the Hereafter. This will not only distort their understanding of their *deen*, but also make them view it as excessively strict and contrary to their own nature.



Push them towards rejection, when we create an image of a God who is so difficult to please, and religious injunctions that are so difficult to follow, there is a grave danger that our children will eventually choose not to put in any effort into trying to please Allah ﷻ by following the *deen*; fear will turn to resentment, which will eventually turn into rejection.



Cause their hearts to be hardened, because they will feel that harshness and anger and vengeance are desirable traits.



Make our children generally fearful and anxious, which will negatively affect their self-confidence, and the way they conduct themselves throughout their lives including in personal relationships.



REMEMBER!!!

Just like our children will only take our guidance seriously if they love and trust us, they will only willfully submit to Allah ﷻ if they feel loved by Him, and love Him in return. Indeed, **love for Allah ﷻ is the only basis for lasting spiritual success**, and this love will not develop as long as we continue to scare and threaten our children, and make them feel guilty, using the name of Allah ﷻ. Instead we can tell them what Allah ﷻ likes and is pleased with, for example, by saying,



"Allah will be so happy with you if you finish all your vegetables and not waste food."

"Allah loves cleanliness and will love you more if you wash up."

"If you stop arguing, Allah will build a house for you in the center of Jannah."

Insha'Allah in posts to come, we will teach you practical ways of fostering love for Allah ﷻ in the hearts of your children, but as a first step, the negative portrayal of Allah ﷻ must be stopped completely.

To be continued...