

Fatherhood in Islamic culture
Father Day, June 21, 2015
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Family, in Islam, is the cornerstone of a Muslim society, and hence fathers have a special role to play as head of the household. This does not mean that fathers are superior than mothers or they are above mothers because the Qur'an and the hadith (saying of the Prophet) treat them equally saying, "They are your garments and you are their garments" (Sura [chapter] 2, Aaya [verse]187). Also, the Prophet, peace be upon him, established the role of parents equal within the family in which he said, "Every one of you is shepherd and every one of you responsible for his flock. The Amir (Ruler) is a shepherd, and so is a husband who is responsible for his family. A woman is a shepherd who looks after her husband house and his children. In this way, every one of you is responsible for his flock." "Clothing" is feedback, support, protection, dignity and integrity that a husband and wife exert to each other. Shepherd is a role that both take care of their family not only one person. This comes through cooperation, consultation and proper and effective communication.

The above Aaya (Verse) and hadith clearly establishes equality between a husband and his wife. In Islam, men and women complement each other. Mutual respect between husband and wife is the strongest pillar of their relationship. The Qur'an says, "O mankind! Reverence your Guardian Lord, Who created you from a single soul, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) Countless men and women; Reverence God through Whom you demand your mutual (rights)." (Surah 4, Aaya 1).

Based upon the above verse, the first responsibility of a husband is to respect and establish a leadership based upon respect.

The second responsibility of a husband is to exert compassion to his wife and children. "Wal arhaam" in Arabic has a broader meaning. It means family members should exert care and compassion toward each other, and within the broader family relationship, people should not cut relationship with their family members. Compassion and care is part of "Nafaqa." The Qur'an says, "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are signs for those who reflect (Surah 30, Aaya 21).

The second responsibility of a husband is to provide sustenance (Nafaqa) to his family; Although the Real Provider is God Almighty . This sustenance should be with generosity and kindness and based upon his income, he should establish sound economic policies within the household so family members are not forced to go out for help, but also meet their demand socially. Sustenance is not only food, clothing, accommodation and health insurance, but also Islamic and civic education.. A father has a greater role in educating his children not only in their school work, but also Islamic morals, ethic, and values. In this case a mother assists him but he is the one who takes responsibility of his children.

Today, with hectic work schedules, fathers must find quality time to spend with their children.

The third responsibility of a husband is to regularly establish prayer within the household. The Qur'an says, " Enjoin prayer on your household and be constant therein." (Surah 20, Aaya 132).

Unfortunately, today many children do not know how to perform prayers. This is purely the negligence of their fathers.

The fourth responsibility of a father is to abandon any sort of "haram" (forbidden) things that God forbids for mankind such as alcoholic beverages, haram income, unhealthy and destructive association with outsiders. This is the responsibility of a father as the head of his household. The Qur'an says, "O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones." (Surah 66, Aaya 6). Fathers are highly responsible for the spiritual well being of their families as head of the household, and to make sure that nothing haram enters the household. Their wives and children should be dressed decently. The family should consume "halal" (permissible) food, and children must engage

in productive entertainment, not lust and corruption.

The fifth responsibility of a husband is to avoid extravagance. This comes through sound economic policies. Extravagance and over-spending lead the family to materialism and consequently to corruption. When members of a family get used to consumerism and over-spending; if they cannot get it, they may do anything wrong to get what they want. Family members should live decently but not to a point that brings destruction. The Qur'an warns people saying, "O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: Eat and drink but not by excess for God love not the wasters." (Surah 7, Aaya 31). One reason that a family lives in extravagance, and children become big time consumers and "shopaholic" is because, first there is no remembrance of God in that household and second, there is no sound economic policies.

Fathers have a huge social, economic, moral and Islamic responsibility toward their family. Ignoring them will lead a family either in chaotic lifestyle so that they keep fighting over petty issues or lead to corruption. But with love, compassion, following the guidance of the Qur'an and the path of the Prophet, peace be upon him a family will have felicity and prosperity.

Happy Father Day!

June 21, 2015

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