

29th October 2010

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَ نَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَ نَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ
شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ
لَهُ ، وَ مَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ . وَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَ أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ .

All Praise be to **اللَّهِ** .

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness within ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one can lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leaves misguided, no one has the power to guide.

I testify that there is no God but **اللَّهِ** to whom there is no partner and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

وَأْتَقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ

وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾

“And guard yourselves from the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every soul shall be paid what it has earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly” (S2, A281)



رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

"Our Lord: Let not our hearts deviate now that you have guided us, and grant us mercy from you; for you are the grantor of bounties without measure" (Al-Imran, 3:8)

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْفِ الْأُمِّيْعَادَ

"Our Lord: You will gather all people to a day of which there is no doubt: for Allah does not fail His promise" (Al-Imran, 3:9)

Dear brothers and sisters, ASA. The topic for today's khutbah is a continuation from the main article of the newsletter about the responsibilities of the Muslim parent. So far, it has been customary for us to give general advice about our Islamic responsibilities to our children which to some extent makes it look as if this is a straight forward task. Clear rules: we need to teach them the essence of the message of Islam, and that is the submission to the will of Allah, and to recognise that their there is no god but Allah to whom there is no partner. A straight forward guidance with a good example given in this ayah:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِأَبْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

"Behold, Luqman said to his son admonishing him: "O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest form of transgression" (Luqman, 31:13)

Muslim parents are also fully aware of their responsibilities to teach their children the pillars Islam. We are all aware of the importance of Salat and Siyam, and we are also all aware of the importance of reading and learning the Holy Quran. When put this way, it does seem to be a straight forward task. It may not be easy, but hopefully straight forward. There is no doubt that the starting point is to establish the concept of "Tawheed" in our children and then to establish the basics. However, as our children start to evolve their characters and their inquisitive minds, the goal posts shift. As society as a whole evolves in its thinking, the goal posts shift even further.

There are goal posts that we never thought in our younger days that will ever be challenged, such as the existence of God, accepting homosexual marriages, euthanasia and so forth. With ever shifting goal posts, my concern as a parent is how to teach my growing children the understanding of the ethics of Islam as a way of life and not simply as a religion. The challenges to Islam are not only theological, but have now expanded to include many aspects of the way we live.

Do I therefore rest on teaching Islam as a simple a set of ritual rules for us to follow? In doing so, do we judge one to be a good Muslim if they pray, fast and read the Quran. Do we judge a good Muslim sister by her Hijab? Do we judge a good Muslim brother by the length of his beard and the shortness of his trouser sleeves? Where do we set our goal posts today, and where will they be tomorrow.

Brothers and sisters, we cannot create an enclave for our children and hope that they will be safe within it. To bring our children islamically, they need to be confident with their understanding of Islam to be able to cope with the challenges of non-Muslims and Muslims of a different understanding. We need to bring our children to be confident in addressing further changes in the future where the goal posts are shifted further and probably, we need to give them the confidence for them to set the goal posts themselves for society.

Can we now see that to simply teach them to believe in Allah, to pray, to fast and to read the Quran may no longer be enough? For today, I like to highlight some of the problems I am now facing as a parent with teenage children who are simply not taking what I tell them at face value.

The first point I want to bring up is the manner in which we teach and admonish our children. Allah(SWT) tells us in the Holy Quran:

أَدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ

“And call unto the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious” (An-Nahl, 16:125)

To call anyone unto the way of Allah demands wisdom, beautiful preaching and gracious argument. From the latest apprentice program, I think a good business term to use is “how to pitch”. Getting the right pitch when teaching our children Islam is very important, and in fact this goes for any thing in life when we want others to buy into something we are offering.

This is probably where our first problem lies. I think for most brothers and sisters of my age, it is safe to say that we were most likely brought up abroad. I was brought up in the Middle East within an Islamic environment. In my childhood days, there was no Internet, no mobile phones and no computers. Debating was very simple; whatever my parents and my teachers said it was right and I was not brought up to question. The rules set for us were simple and we were judged, and we judged others by them. Indeed we hardly debated and we were invariably judgemental. It was probably an easier task for our parents and we did not learn an alternative way.

Things have changed dramatically and drastically since. To bring up my children in the way I was brought up simply does not work. Many statements that my parents used with me to explain how Islam works do not work with my children. I cannot tell them this is the way because I say so. In the past, as a teenager, when my parents told me that, I never thought of questioning, and even if I did, I had very restricted avenues to question their rules and their reasoning. Now, all my children have to do is to Google the matter and in less than a second they have hundreds if not thousands of opinions. Suddenly, I can no longer say: this is the way because I say so!

This is the first of a list of problems that we as parents face. The information that we give our children is no longer accepted at face value. Of course, we are not talking about the basic principles of Islam, but even then this is no longer as straight forward. How many times are we now faced with even the basic of questions; is there a God and does Allah exist? As children, we could not have dreamed of even thinking of questioning this, but we now live in different times. We need to be realistic about this fact and not be too anxious or disturbed that such a question will be asked. We need to accept that the basic concept of the existence of a creator is a wider issue and does not relate to Islam only, and the question will be asked. What should disturb us as parents is if we have difficulty proving the point to our children. As such, one of the first rule is that if we want to have an influence on the Islamic awareness of our children, we need to educate ourselves as parents. We need to be more informed. We need to be more involved as parents in all that our children are being exposed to.

The second issue with regards to basics is that as parents if we want our children to be good at their Salat, Siyam and reading the Quran, we as parents cannot be failing in this of the most basic tasks of Islam. Should we the parents fail to show commitment to these pillars of Islam, our children will do the same. In my younger days, when I was brought up in an Islamic community, the deficiencies of my parents could be compensated for by the extended family, and if not, by the rest of the local Muslim community. This is no longer the case for our children. Living as Muslims in a predominantly non-Islamic and secular environment, the deficiencies of Muslim parents in their basic Islamic duties will not be compensated for by anyone except by the grace of Allah. The gap we leave in our children religious and spiritual upbringing will be filled in by others, and that means by non-Muslims.

The next difficulty parents face is how to pitch Islam to our children when there are variations amongst the different schools of thought and when we now have Muslims that do not have an affiliation to any particular school. In the UK, we do not have a clearly defined "reference authority" for UK Muslims or for European Muslims. This has resulted in a phenomenon whereby we now have two types of Islamic centres and mosques in the UK. We have mosques with an established identity, ie, Yamani, Bangladeshi, Nakshabandi, Shi'i and so on. The identity of the mosque is very clear; it is not European and it attracts Muslims of a particular persuasion. On the other hand you will find Islamic centres like ours which does not have such an identity and it serves Muslims of different backgrounds and different schools of thought. Our centre cannot be defined by any characteristic other than being an Islamic centre. This phenomenon creates its own difficulties for us as parents as we can easily have a number of interpretations of the same command being practiced within the confines of a single Mosque. This by itself is another source of confusion for our children. As their parents and their mentors, how do we present these differences to them? This is one major headache for the Muslim parent.

Do we now see the multitude of our problems as Muslim parents? Being a Muslim parent in these days is not an easy task. We need to grasp this responsibility with the seriousness it deserves. When my children were infants and little children, I thought this was an easy task. I was not questioned by them; what I said and what my wife said was accepted as the rule not to be argued with and our children were on the straight and narrow. Now it is very different. My children are teenagers. I now get asked basic things. Why should I pray? Why should I wear the Hijab? Why can't I eat what I want? Why can't I go out to a disco? Why can't I watch these programs on TV? Why can't I go to see this film with my friends at the cinema? Why can't I have a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Islam is sexist. What is wrong with homosexuality?

For the parents here, ask yourselves: are we ready for these questions? Are we up to the task? Can we afford not to answer them?

Brothers and sisters, we have many of our children with us today. I have presented many questions for you and many challenges, but, if you are expecting a solution from me then I am afraid you will be very disappointed. The solution to our children upbringing as Muslims lies collectively with us as a unit. We, the Muslims of Altrincham must work as a unit to help bring up our children as good Muslims, as strong Muslims and as confident Muslims. In a centre like ours, this must take place irrespective of our different backgrounds and understandings. This needs to take place with all of us putting the effort in all aspects of religion, conduct and behaviour. As an example, some parents still think that the Islamic development of their children is the function of the local centre and only the local centre. You may be right, but your local centre will only succeed if you contribute to it.

When your children are at this centre, they can only be here for a few hours a week. The rest of the time they are with you. The resources of this centre are finite and they are being stretched. You must put the effort. You cannot sit back and assume that just because they have Islamic lessons a few hours a week that this is enough for them. Please do not fall into this trap. We are not living in an Islamic community, far from it. The parents of Altrincham Muslim community must put a great deal of effort for this to succeed.

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ.
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. أَمَا بَعْدُ:

Now for another problem that we face as parents when teaching to our children and when we are trying to apply Islam ourselves.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ
قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ

“Say: O people of the Book! Do not exceed in the bounds of your religion, trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who have previously gone astray, and have misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the right path” (Al-Ma’ida, 5:77)

In this ayah, we come across a very important term: “Al-ghulou”.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ

“Say: O people of the Book! Do not exceed in the bounds of your religion, trespassing beyond the truth”

This term is defined as being excessively strict and hard with the boundaries of religion. In this ayah, Allah(SWT) is admonishing the people of the book not to exceed in their religion. As with most commands, it looks reasonable straight forwards at first. The problem we face is that we probably do not know when does one reach a state when they are exceeding in the bounds of religion. This becomes even more difficult when the foundations of Islam are being challenged and we feel we must take a strong stand. We therefore have to ask ourselves; are we exceeding the boundaries of religion?

This is what the Prophet(SAAWS) said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُو فِي الدِّينِ؛ فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ
مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِالْغُلُو فِي الدِّينِ

“Beware of exceed the bounds of religion, for indeed those before have been ruined by exceeding the bounds of religion” (narrated by Ahmad).

Brothers and sisters, the challenges we have as parents are set for us by both the non-Islamic community and by the Islamic community. They are different challenges, but we need to be ready for both.

One of our main challenges is to cope with ideas and concepts that our children bring back to us not from non-Muslims, but from fellow Muslims who are taking some concepts into excess.

One obvious concept is how we should interact with non-Muslims. I have come across Muslims that claim you are not allowed to have friends outside Islam. Another are those who claim that your Salat will not be accepted if you are wearing short sleeves, and the examples are plenty. Many are not too serious, but when these excesses start to make divisions within our local community and within society as a whole, we need to rethink. Islam never came to divide, but it came to unit humanity. Our children will need from us appropriate guidance when it comes to such matters, and we do need to question whether we are being excessive beyond what Islam demands.

The following hadeeth has been mentioned by Br Basil before, and we need to look at it carefully when it comes to teaching our children and giving them advice.

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ السَّلَامِ بْنُ مُطَهَّرٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ عَنْ مَعْنِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الْغِفَارِيِّ عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ
الْمَقْبَرِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ

عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ وَلَنْ يُشَادَّ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ
إِلَّا غَلَبَهُ فَسَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالْعَدْوَةِ وَالرَّوْحَةِ وَشَيْءٍ
مِنَ الدُّلْجَةِ (البخاري)

“Indeed the religion (way of life) is that of ease. If one goes to task with it, it will overcome him. As such, try to be exacting in your religion, (if not), get close. In doing so [and this is where I find the clue of the beautiful teaching of the Prophet(SAAWS)], he says: give glad tidings (and not always be threatening), and take help on achieving your religion by keeping to your prayers at dawn, during the day and to some extent in the late night”.

The Prophet(SAAWSA) is teaching us that we need to aim at being exact in our religion. If we miss our aim, then we need to get as close as we possibly can. When we miss, we need to be conciliatory and give glad tidings to try further. To help us try further and succeed, we are advised that we need to get the help of our prayers. This, brothers and sisters, is one of the most important take away messages for today.

To finish, I want to take time dealing with one manifestation of our differences. This is when Muslims start looking at fellow Muslims in an inferior way just because they do not confirm to their way of thinking or to their way of practice. For example, if a Muslim girl does not wear the Hijab, some of her Muslim male colleagues and some of the sisters who wear the Hijab will look at her as being inferior to them or less religious or God fearing. On the other hand, we see the exact opposite where some sisters who do not agree with wearing the Hijab will look at their

sister who is wearing the Hijab, against all the odds, as being inferior to them and too submissive to Islam.

You can easily see the difficulty when on the one extreme we have those who will make the claim that the Hijab as practiced by many of our sisters is not compulsory while others will claim that not only is it compulsory, but the niqab should be the case. When we have such a wide gap in the extreme of opinions, what do we do as parents? How do we tackle such a difficult matter. What is right and what is not. Is there room for leeway? Am I a bad Muslim if I do not wear the Hijab. Am I a good Muslim if I do wear the Hijab. What do I do if I am bullied by non-Muslims for wearing the Hijab. What do I do if I am bullied by Muslims for not wearing the Hijab.

As you can see, I have inadvertently stumbled back on the issue of Hijab. For today, I am not going to lecture anyone about the Hijab, but the point I want to make is that our Muslim children are growing up with hardened rules about Islam in a manner that is making them judgemental of others. When we look at societies and religions, it seems that Muslims are brought up to be very judgemental and very critical of others. We, as parents, need to instil in our children a very important characteristic and that is to judge oneself before we judge anyone else.

sUmar(RAA) used to open his khutbah with: “O people, the angel of death has passed you to claim others, but it will pass others to claim you. Judge yourselves before you are judged and weigh your deeds before they are weighed upon you”.

I like to end on an important point that our children and also our adults need to take note of. As many Muslims no longer have a reference point or a scholar to learn from, and as many Muslims are becoming educated, it has been customary to hear, especially from these educated Muslims, like myself, that something in Islam simply does not make sense. Our children have been very fast in picking this up from school and friends. When you tell them, something about Islam the response from them is: “It does not make sense to me”. Please brothers and sisters, please be careful with this concept. If we want to judge everything in Islam as making or not making sense to us you will fall into another serious trap. It is the trap of putting everything in Islam to the challenge of our limited intellects. I will give you one such example.

In Hajj and Umrah, during Sa'i, it is necessary for the brothers to speed up between the two green markers. Our sisters do not have to do that. So there you are, you have just finished “Tawaaf”, you felt as if you are in the hands of Allah, you are feeling very spiritual, and you are still on that spiritual journey. You reach the first green marker, and you set off on a light run until the next green marker. You may well ask; what is the sense in that? The professor, the doctor, the surgeon, the street cleaner and every other man must take a light run between these two markers while you are in the height of spirituality. If you decide you want to make sense of this before you do so, then I am afraid you are going to be disappointed. Yes, we all know the background of what we are doing, but what is the sense in doing it. The answer is that we do it because we are told to do so!

Brothers and sisters, the test of Islam does not lie in the mind, but lies in the heart. When teaching and guiding our children, this is the point where we need to take a step back and look at Islam from a different angle. Islam by its nature is to submit. Islam does not want you to submit ignorantly, as Islam defines the era before Islam as the era of ignorance. Understanding Islam is important, but there comes a point where you have to submit your heart to the Majesty of Allah.

Remember what the Prophet(SAAWS) said in the final khutbah when he said: “this is where Taqwa lies, and he pointed to his heart and said that three times”. He did not point to his head. He did not point to his head and he did not point to his head, he pointed to his heart. If we ever learn something about Islam, it is that “Taqwa” lies in the heart. Let it be that one of the most important lessons to our children to be good Muslims is that they should have a heart full of forgiveness, full of compassion to others, full of mercy, full of giving and full of love. I am confident that if we can make our children connect to Allah with a sound heart, it will be the best foundation of their education in Islam.