

112020 - Honour your mother, but do not disobey your father!

the question

I really hope that you can offer me some sound advice about something I shall explain to you, because I know that your advice is good and beneficial. I am from Jeddah, and am a student in a scientific field, in the physics department. I am twenty years old. I hope that these years have been spent in obedience to Allah. Usually, when I am faced with a problem and cannot find a solution myself, I consult my father, who is more than a dear friend – may Allah preserve him and preserve you. But in this particular instance, it is not possible to seek his advice, and that is not an option for me. The problem, in brief, has to do with pleasing both of my parents. I can say that pleasing my father is my goal in life, after worshipping Allah, but what should I do if the thing that pleases him most is cutting off my mother completely? What should I do if my mother is dreaming of the day when we will cut off ties with our father? Until now, I have chosen my father and I have kept quiet. My brothers have tried to combine honouring both of them and upholding ties with both of them, but neither my father nor my mother is pleased with that. The issue is that my parents separated when I was four years old, and from that day I have never seen my mother or spoken to her. At the beginning of this year, there was some contact between her and my brothers, and she started to get involved in their lives, little by little. When my father found out about that, he was devastated and felt betrayed. All these years he has never remarried, and he has never gone out with his friends. He brought up myself and my three brothers by himself, with no support from my paternal aunt or any maternal aunt. By Allah, one year or two years or three years would go by, and no one of our family would ask about us. Now, I would say that many problems have arisen between my brothers and my father. I really feel that he can no longer stand their presence. Up till now, my mother has not tried to see me in the university, and she has not tried to talk to me on my mobile phone. I find this very strange, but perhaps that makes it easy for me to choose. My need for my mother would be quite obvious to any rational person, for this is something obvious, but really I have grown up and been brought up in the best manner, and I do not feel that I need her to be around. Why should I let her affect my relationship with my father? Please tell me what you think.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Honouring parents is one of the most important obligations upon children, and disobeying them is something that is definitely prohibited. The believer seeks the pleasure of his Lord, may He be exalted, by doing what Allah, may He be exalted, has enjoined upon him and by refraining from what He has prohibited to him. Thus he hopes for the reward of his Lord and fears His punishment.

One of the signs of honouring one's parents is obeying them and treating them kindly in word and deed, and not mistreating them, even by saying "uff" (the mildest word of disrespect). But this does not mean that they are to be obeyed in everything that they tell their child to do. Rather that is dependent upon whether their instructions are in accordance with Islamic teachings, and do not include any prohibited act that incurs the wrath of Allah, may He be exalted; in that case, there is no obedience to them, even if that makes them angry. The believer is a slave to his Lord, may He be exalted; he does what He commands and refrains from what He forbids. When it comes to obeying other people, that is restricted to what Allah, may He be exalted, has prescribed and cannot be separated from that. Allah, may He be Blessed and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour.

And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: ‘My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small’”

[al-Israa' 17:23-25].

Imam Ibn Jareer at-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Your Lord, O Muhammad, has ordained that you should worship none but Allah, for it is not appropriate that any be worshipped but He. And He has commanded you to be dutiful to your

parents, to treat them kindly and to honour them. End quote.

Tafseer at-Tabari (17/413-414).

Shaykh Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shinqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

In this verse, Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has enjoined sincerity of worship to Him alone, and alongside that He has enjoined kindness towards parents. The mention of honouring parents alongside worshipping Him alone, may He be glorified and exalted, also occurs in other verses, such as the verse in Soorat an-Nisaa', "Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents" [an-Nisaa' 4:36]; the verse in al-Baqarah, "And (remember) when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel, (saying): Worship none but Allah (Alone) and be dutiful and good to parents" [al-Baqarah 2:83]; and the verse in Soorat Luqmaan, "give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination" [Luqmaan 31:14]. Elsewhere, Allah explained that honouring parents is obligatory, even if they are mushrikeen who call their child to ascribe partners to Allah, as it says in Soorat Luqmaan, "But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly" [Luqmaan 31:15]; and in Soorat al-Ankaboot, "And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents, but if they strive to make you join with Me (in worship) anything (as a partner) of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not. Unto Me is your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do" [al-Ankaboot 29:8].

In these verses Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, mentions honouring parents alongside worshipping Him alone (Tawheed). This is indicative of the emphasis placed on the command to honour parents. End quote.

Adwaa' al-Bayaan (3/85)

Hence what you must do is honour both of your parents, and it is forbidden for you to disobey them. Your father's instruction to cut off ties with your mother is contrary to Islamic teaching, and it is unlawful for you to obey him. The same applies if your mother tells you to cut off ties with your father.

If the father has one right, then the mother has three times as much.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: A man came to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: O Messenger of Allah, which of the people is most deserving of my good companionship? He said: "Your mother." He said: Then who? He said: "Then your mother." He said: Then who? He said: "Then your mother." He said: Then who? He said: "Then your father."

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5626) and Muslim (2548).

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This hadith urges people to honour relatives, and states that the mother is the most deserving of that, followed by the father, followed by the next closest then the next closest. The scholars said: The reason why the mother is given precedence is because of the effort she puts into raising her child, her compassion and her service, and the hardships that she suffered in carrying him then giving birth to him, then breastfeeding him, then bringing him up, serving him, caring for him when he was sick, and so on. End quote.

Sharh Muslim (16/102)

Secondly:

You can honour your mother without telling your father about it, and without any need for him to know that you are doing it. It is not permissible for him in the first place to order you to keep away from her and not speak to her. With wisdom, the children can honour both parents and uphold ties with both parents, without any need to give precedence to one over the other, and without any need to honour one at the expense of the other.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

I am a young man, eighteen years old. I pray regularly and I strive to please and obey my father, but since I was born and until now, I have never seen my mother, but I know where she is living now, and she is far away from me. In fact my father told me, as he divorced her. I want to see

her, because she is my mother, and Allah will bring me to account for it if I do not visit her. Please note that I have not told my father that I want to see her, because I am afraid that if I tell him, he will be angry with me, especially since he has married another woman, and he has a number of children from her. What is the Islamic ruling on my situation?

He replied:

What we think is that you should visit your mother and give her good companionship, and you should honour her as you are obliged to, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was asked: Which of the people is most deserving of my good companionship? He said: "Your mother." He said: Then who? He said: "Then your mother." He said: Then who? He said: "Then your mother." He said: Then who? He said: "Then your father."

It is not permissible for you to cut off ties with your mother in this manner; rather you should uphold ties with her and visit her. In this situation, you may be discreet with your father so that he does not know that you are visiting your mother, upholding ties with her and honouring her. In this way you will be fulfilling the rights of your mother whilst avoiding angering your father. End quote.

Fataawa Islamiyyah (4/213)

Shaykh al-'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was also asked:

I am a young man, twenty-five years old. My father and mother are constantly arguing, all day long. If I honour one of them, the other gets angry and gets upset with me; if I honour the other one, the first one gets angry and accuses me of being disobedient. What should I do in order to honour them both. Am I regarded as disobeying my mother simply by honouring my father, or vice versa?

He replied:

in answer to your question, we say that honouring both parents is one of the most important duties that one human owes to another, because Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents”

[an-Nisaa’ 4:36];

“And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:8]

“give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination”

[Luqmaan 31:14].

And there are many hadiths which speak of this matter. What the individual is obliged to do is to honour both of his parents, mother and father, and honour them by spending on them, by serving them and using all other means to help them, doing all that he can to honour them, to the extent that Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination.

But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly”

[Luqmaan 31:14-15].

Thus Allah enjoins giving good companionship to these two polytheist parents who strive to make their son join others in worship with Allah. Despite that, Allah enjoins dealing kindly with them in this world. As that is the case, then what you must do regarding your parents, who you say are constantly arguing, and each of them gets angry with you if you honour the other, what you must do is two things:

i. With regard to the dispute and arguments between them, you should try to reconcile between them as much as you can, so that the conflict, enmity and resentment that exists between them will be dispelled, because each of the spouses has duties towards the other that he or she must

fulfil, and part of honouring your parents is trying to resolve these conflicts so as to clear the air and make life happy.

ii. You must also honour and treat kindly each of them. You can avoid angering one parent if you honour the other by concealing what you do; honour your mother in a way that your father will not find out about, and honour your father in a way that your mother will not find out about. In this manner, you will do what is required of you. You should not accept one of them feeling angry if you honour the other; rather what you must do is explain to each of them that honouring one of them does not mean cutting off ties with the other, for each of them has a right to be honoured as Allah has enjoined.

End quote from Fataawa Islamiyyah (4/196, 197)

See also the answers to questions no. [5053](#), [3044](#), [5326](#)

But we would like to draw your attention to the importance of adopting a gradual approach in carrying out what we have advised you to do, and of paying attention to your father's feelings and pleasing him as much as you can, because your mother is absent from you, and will not be as concerned with your affairs as your father is. If someone has been absent from you, or you have been absent from her, for approximately sixteen years, one or two days' delay, or one or two months' delay, will not affect her. So give yourself time to plan how you can honour and please your mother without angering or offending your father. Remember that your father – may Allah help him and guide him to do that which He loves and is pleasing to Him – has played both roles in your life: the role of the father and the role of the mother. So his rights are multiplied and it is essential to please him. All Islamic duties are enjoined upon a person only to the extent that he is able to fulfil them. Whoever fears Allah, Allah will grant him a way out, and whoever fears Allah, Allah will make his affairs easy for him. So seek the help of Allah and ask Him to make it easy for you to obey and honour your parents, and to open your father's heart to what is right.

And Allah knows best.