22782 - How should the Muslim honour his parents?

the question

My problem may be summed up by staying that my father and mother are always arguing, because my father is sarcastic and offensive, and his character is very unfriendly and difficult to know.

My brothers and I are very afraid of him. We do not talk to him except in shallow terms. I want to please my Lord and attain Paradise, and I have read about the importance of honouring one's parents. But I am very confused. How can I honour my father when I do not know how?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allah has mentioned kind treatment of parents alongside the command to worship Him alone. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents" [al-Isra' 17:23]

"Worship Allah and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents…" [al-Nisa' 4:36]

This is indicative of the importance of honouring one's parents and treating them well.

Honouring one's parents means obeying them, respecting them, praying for them, lowering one's voice in their presence, smiling at them, lowering the wing of humility to them, not showing displeasure towards them, striving to serve them, fulfilling their wishes, consulting them, listening to what they say, not being stubborn towards them and respecting their friends both during their lifetime and after they have died.

That also includes not travelling without their permission, not sitting in a place higher than theirs, not starting to eat before they do, and not showing preference to your wife or child over them.

Honouring them also means visiting them, offering them gifts, thanking them for bringing you up and treating you kindly when you were small and after you grew up.

It also means striving to reduce the arguments between them, by offering sincere advice and reminding them as much as you can, and making excuses to the one who is wronged, and saying and doing things to calm them down.

No matter how your father treats you, you should follow the good manners described above, so as to avoid everything that may make him angry or upset, so long as that does not lead to sin or disobedience towards Allah, because the rights of Allah come before the rights of other people.

Ask Allah to guide them and to set their affairs straight, for He is All-Hearing, Ever Close and Ever Responsive.

And Allah knows best.