

Khutbah

The notion of honor in Islam

Delivered on October 26, 2007

By Imam Didmar Faja

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى
كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

“And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with At-Tayyibat, and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment.” Isra

Allah has honored the sons of Adam by creating them in the best way. He says:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

Verily, We created man in the best stature (mould). (Tin)

Ways to honor other Muslims

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ
عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا

Allah commanded His servant Muhammad (pbuh) to tell the believing servants of Allah to address each other in their conversations and discussions with the best and politest of words. For if they do not do so then Shaytan will sow discord among them, and words will lead to actions, resulting in the rise of evil and conflicts among them

1. Show mercy and love towards our young, and respect and honor towards our elders

Showing mercy and love towards young ones, and respecting and honoring elders are very important foundations of a society. The youth need love and mercy from the elders in order to achieve and attain success in the future. The elders need respect and honor from the young people. The young ones should show respect and honor to the elders so they themselves will be respected and honored later on during their lifetime inshaalah.

Rasulullah (saw) said: "He is not of us who has no compassion for our little ones and does not honor our old ones" (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi)

A preacher spoke harshly to the Caliph Ma'mun Ar-Rasheed. The Caliph said: "Please be polite and courteous to me, for Pharaoh was a worse fellow than me, and Moses (pbuh) was a much better person than you, but before Moses (pbuh) and Harun (pbuh) went to instruct Pharaoh, Allah said: 'But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah).'" (Taha: 44)

2. Protecting and respecting each other's privacy and concealing each other's mistakes

"If a person conceals the weakness of another in this world, Allah will conceal their weakness in the hereafter." (Al Nawawi, Riyad as-Saliheen)

In another Hadith we read: "Do not harm Muslims, and do not revile them, nor pursue their imperfections. For verily, whosoever pursues the imperfections of his brother shall have his own imperfections pursued by Allah." (Sunan of at-Tirmidhi)

Concealing the faults of and respecting the privacy of others is the theme of the following Hadith: "The Muslim who helps another when the latter's honor and dignity are under attack, shall be helped by Allah, Glorious and Sublime is He! - At a time when he would wish for Allah's help. But he who forsakes a Muslim, whose dignity is under attack, shall have Allah forsake him at a time when he would wish for Allah's help." [Al Ghazali, Ihyaa Ulum al Din; Kitab Adab al Suhbah p 369]

To protect the honor of a Muslim brother or sister, one must conceal their faults. It is noted that concealment (satr) is recommended only with regard to persons who are not generally known to engage in corrupt and harmful activities. As for those who are notorious, it is recommended that their evil is not concealed and that the matter is reported to the appropriate authorities.

Exposing the faults of others by casting suspicion, or spying on them, is wrong.

Abu Hurairah (ra) said that Rasulullah (saw) said: "Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the greatest falsehood. Do not try to find fault with each other, do not spy on one another, do not vie with one another, do not envy one another, do not be angry with one another, do not turn away from one another, and be servants of Allah, brothers to one another, as you have been enjoined. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim, he does him no wrong, nor does he let him down, nor does he despise him. Fear of God is here, fear of God is here, and he pointed to his chest. It is evil enough that a Muslim should look down on his brother. For every Muslim is sacred to one another: his blood, his honor, and his property. Allah does not look at your bodies or your forms, or your deeds, but He looks at your hearts." (Bukhari, Muslim)

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was once asked about the correct meaning of a hadith to which he replied: "When you hear something from or about your brother, ascribe to it the best interpretation until you can no longer do so. Find an excuse for him by saying, 'Maybe he said this, or maybe he meant such and such.'"

3. To honor a Muslim is to accept their apology

A Muslim should accept the sincere apology of his fellow Muslim and not be harsh towards him. It is reported in a Hadith: "Whoever is offered an apology from a fellow Muslim should accept it unless he knows that the person apologizing is being dishonest" (Mishkat al Tabrizi). Hasan (ra), the son of Ali (kw) is reported to have said:” If a man abuses me in one ear and then apologizes to me in the other, I shall accept his apology."

Tolerance and forgiveness are necessary conducts in order to encourage an atmosphere of brotherhood in our community.