

The problem of lust (a dad-son dialogue) – I

According to the teachings Islam, the desires and lusts play a vital part in the makeup of every human being; they cannot be ignored. Humans, unlike the angels, have to face the challenge in this life of mastering these forces within us. If we fail to do so, then we become enslaved by our desires and thus fall below the level of the animal kingdom.

The keys to a happy and fulfilled life are to be found in the guidance contained in the Quran and in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad whose lifestyle embodied a perfect balance between permissible enjoyment and abstention from what is forbidden.

In this article, we will talk about the dangers of yielding to the unrestrained cravings of the soul through highlighting the problem of lust. Although man could be afflicted by lust at any age, young men are more susceptible. That is because between adulthood and childhood is adolescence, where a person undergoes great physical and psychological changes. During this stage, one's decisions and experiences determine, to a great extent, the type of adult one will become. So, if a person succeeded in curbing his desires during this period, it would be easier for him to curb it for the rest of his life.

Sometimes, our children who are on the threshold of adolescence receive scant attention from parents regarding this matter; so, we preferred to tackle the issue of lust in the form of dad-son dialogue:

Son: Dad! You've told me a lot about the advantages and bright aspects of the period of entering manhood. Can you tell me about its problems and difficulties?

Dad: This is a crucial question. You know that Satan is eager to tempt and seduce human beings. Allah Says in the Noble Quran (what means): "[Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]." [Quran 7: 16-17]

Therefore, the fight between Satan and a young man reaches its climax when the young man reaches the age of religious obligation.

Allah made the way to His Paradise hard and difficult, and the way to the Hell full of desires for certain wisdom, namely, to test people. In other words, the road to Hell is closer than that to Paradise. The Prophet is reported to have

said: "Hellfire is surrounded by all kinds of desires and passions, while Paradise is surrounded by all kinds of disliked undesirable things." [Al-Bukhaari]

Thus, desires and lust start to appear in this stage of someone's life in order to distinguish those who can resist the temptation from those who cannot. If the ways to Paradise were furnished with flowers, everybody would take it.

Son: Can you tell me more about these desires, Dad?

Dad: Well! They are so many, varying in strength and scope. Allah Says (what means): "Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire – of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return." [Quran 3: 14]

As for their varying nature, they differ from one person to another and from one environment to another. However, the influence of sexual desire on young people is the strongest and most dangerous, especially in the present time. The Prophet warned us against that when he said: "I am not leaving behind a more harmful trial (cause of mischief) for men than women." The Prophet also said: "A person who gives surety to (safeguard) what is between his jaws (tongue) and what is between his two legs (private organs), I guarantee his entrance into Paradise." [Al-Bukhaari]

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet was asked about the things which cause most people to enter Paradise. He answered: "Being careful about one's obligations to Allah, and good behavior". Then, he was asked: "What are these things which would lead a person into Hellfire?" He answered: "His mouth and genitals (i.e., misusing them)." [Al-Bukhaari]

Son: You have come close to home when you spoke about this desire. May I ask more questions about it?

Dad: Go ahead, son.

Son: Some young people say that Allah is All-Knowledgeable and All-Wise, so they wonder if there is any apparent wisdom that a Muslim can see behind afflicting people with such a strong desire?

Dad: You should know, my son, that a Muslim is not allowed to question or object to the commandments of Allah. He must submit to whatever comes from his Lord and believe in it whether or not he knows the wisdom behind it. However, if he knows the wisdom, his Faith will become more firm.

One wisdom behind sexual desire is to sustain the human race by means of reproduction. Therefore, the two sexes are attracted to each other in order to achieve this end. Again, as mentioned earlier, one of the greatest pieces of wisdom is affliction and trial. If the way of obedience is hard, it will not be taken except by honest and pious people who are characterized by patience and fortitude, or else it will be open to everybody.

Son: I think the first step a wise young man should take is to know the temptations that may enkindle such a desire so that he may avoid them. Am I correct, Dad?

Dad: Certainly. One should avoid the things that may stir up desires and lust.

Son: What are the most dangerous of such temptations?

Dad: On top of such temptations is looking boldly at a woman as an object of sexual desire. This serves as a stimulus that may lead to an unlawful response. Also, it is the first step towards major sins. Allah warns us against such a forbidden look; He Almighty Says (what means): "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do." [Quran 24: 30]

Because of its dangerous consequences, the Prophet warned his companions against looking at forbidden things. He said: "Refrain from sitting on the sidewalks of the streets." The companions submitted: 'O Messenger of Allah, we have no other alternative, there is no other place where we can sit and discuss things.' He said: "If that is so, then observe your responsibilities due to the street." The companions asked as to what was due to the street? He said: "lower your gaze, clear the street off obstacles, reply to greetings, and enjoin virtuous deeds and forbid evil ones."

Son: I can gather from this that a Muslim should be on his guard and keep away from places where he would look at forbidden things. Is that right?

Dad: Yes, my son, in the previous saying, the Prophet ordered them not only to avoid looking at forbidden things, but also to avoid sitting on the sidewalks. The Prophet said so although the streets of Madeenah then were different from the streets nowadays. Nowadays, the streets are full of unveiled women, who

tend to display their charm. The women then were veiled and showed signs of modesty; and so they would stick themselves to the walls while walking without a legal escort as bashful as they were.

Son: Why is looking at a woman so dangerous?

Dad: This is because it is oftentimes followed by serious consequences. When someone looks at a woman, he pictures her as an object of sexual desire. And the image develops in his mind. Satan, then, beautifies this image and brings it back in his mind with all sorts of desirable animation. When this is repeated, it develops into an obsession; and one may be haunted by such an image in his prayers.

When someone is obsessed by a certain idea, there is always the possibility that such an idea might materialize into tangible action. The whole thing starts with an intention perceived, then the intention develops into determination, followed by vicious scheming, which eventually results in committing adultery. If this were not the outcome, thinking would lead to masturbation which is forbidden.

Son: Dad, I have an important question about masturbation, but I will put it off until later. For now, I have another important question about looking at women. What would you say to those young men who watch actresses in movies or view pictures of women in magazines or on the Internet; and their excuse is that there is no harm in just doing that since they are not looking at the real woman body but rather an image of her?

Dad: This is the same as looking at women in person; there is no difference, since both actions will lead to the same result.

Son: What if the whole matter is confined to a mere thought, I mean no action is taken. Would you say something like 'it's the thought that counts'?

Dad: One of the Attributes of Allah is "The Merciful"; and so He Almighty does not punish His slaves except for the sins that they actually commit. The Prophet is reported to have said: "Allah forgives my followers for evil deeds their own selves may suggest to them as long as they do not act upon them." But, thinking about women in a persistent way may lead to the unlawful act of adultery. I would advise you and every young man to engage yourselves in things that will benefit you in this world and in the Hereafter. Be careful when such thoughts cross your mind; try to stop them right away and replace them with better thoughts.

Son: Dad, how can I put a curb on my desires?

Dad: The best thing to do is to maintain a strong Faith in Allah. This is the most effective weapon against desires. I am telling you this because the Prophet is reported to have said that there would come a time when Faith would become dear and rare to found. Mu'aath used to call one of his friends and say to him: "Let's sit and spend some time increasing our Faith!"

Son: Dad! What are some of the things that one does to increase his faith?

Dad: Faith increases with submission to Allah. Good deeds, like reading the Noble Quran and reflecting on its meanings, remembering Allah, and contemplating His creation, also increase faith.

Then you have to fear Allah in the most appropriate manner, and observe your duties to Him wherever you are. That is because a true believer should know that Allah encompasses everything and that nothing is hidden from Him. Not even an atom escapes His knowledge. Allah Says of Himself in the Noble Quran (what means): "And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darkneses of the earth

and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record." [Quran 6: 59]

Allah Almighty also Says (what means): "Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs lose [prematurely] or exceed. And everything with Him is by due measure. [He is] Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Grand, the Exalted." [Quran 13: 8-10]

Allah knows whoever commits unlawful acts in broad daylight and whoever commits them behind closed doors. If a believer is well-aware of this fact, he will fear Allah. Do you remember that Hadeeth in which the Prophet named the types of believers that will be under the Shade of the Throne of Allah on the Day of Judgement? One of them is a man who was seduced by a beautiful woman, but he said: "I fear Allah."

The problem of lust (a dad-son dialogue) – III

Son: Dad, were there more things that help increase one's faith?

Dad: One has to remember that he will stand before Allah on the Day of Reckoning when all secrets are disclosed. Nothing will be hidden from Him, and the mouths of the disbelievers will be sealed and their limbs will testify against them. Allah Aays (what means): "Until, when they reach it, their hearing and their eyes and their skins will testify against them of what they used to do." [Quran 41: 20]

Now, let me ask you if it is possible for a person to do wrong without his limbs being present with him? Allah answers this question in the Noble Quran (what means): "And you were not covering yourselves, lest your hearing testify against you or your sight or your skins, but you assumed that Allah does not know much of what you do." [Quran 41: 22]

Son: Is there any thing else?

Dad: Yes, son, a believer has to remember what Allah has in store on the Day of Resurrection for those who obey His commandments and keep away from what He has forbidden.

Son: You mean the maidens of Paradise?

Dad: Exactly! These are the chaste women of Paradise whom Allah describes in the Noble Quran (what means): "Indeed, We have produced the women of Paradise in a [new] creation, and made them virgins, devoted [to their husbands] and of equal age, for the companions of the right [who are]." [Quran 56: 35-38]

The Prophet is reported to have described them saying: "The first group (of people) who will enter Paradise will be (glittering) like a full-moon. They will neither spit therein nor blow their noses nor relieve nature. Their utensils therein will be of gold and their combs of gold and silver; in their censers the aloes wood will be used, and their sweat will smell like musk. Everyone of them will have two wives; the marrow of the bones of the wives' legs will be seen through the flesh out of excessive beauty. They (i.e. the people of Paradise) will neither have differences nor hatred amongst themselves; their hearts will be as if one heart, and they will be glorifying Allah in the morning and in the afternoon." [Al-Bukhaari]

Son: What else, dad?

Dad: You have to turn to Allah, following the example of the Prophet Yoosuf (Joseph) when the woman whom he worked for tried to seduce him. The Noble Quran gives an account of him, saying: "He said, "My Lord, prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me. And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them and [thus] be of the ignorant'." [Quran 12: 33]

My son! Turn to your Lord, raise your hands with humbleness to Allah in supplication, and realize that Allah will not turn away those who ask Him.

Besides, you have to strengthen your will. You have to train yourself to bridle uncontrollable desires; you must never surrender to them. But you have to know that this requires a tremendous amount of training, because you are struggling against your vicious instincts, which are amplified and supported by the accursed Satan.

Son: Is that all?

Dad: No, son, there remains an important issue that was always highlighted by the Prophet .

Son: You mean marriage, don't you?

Dad: Of course, son, may Allah grant you success in your life. Marriage enables one to enjoy what Allah has made lawful for him. This will surely prevent him from indulging in forbidden pleasures. If a person of your age cannot afford to get married, he has to observe fast on those days which were favoured by the Prophet such as Mondays and Thursdays, or whatever is most convenient. Fasting, as you know, infuses piety in the heart. Allah Says (what means): "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." [Quran 2: 183]

Moreover, fasting strengthens the will and determination, and qualifies you to defeat your vicious instincts.

Son: Dad, what about masturbation?

Dad: O my son, it is a filthy and blameworthy habit. Moreover, it is forbidden according to the Noble Quran and the authentic Sunnah. Allah Says (what

means): "And those who guard their private parts. Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they are not to be blamed." [Quran 70: 29-30]

These two verses indicate that true believers should guard their private parts from illegal sexual activity. There are two permissible outlets for satisfying sexual desire. These are one's wife and one's slave. Therefore, no way besides these two is permissible.

Also, practicing this blameworthy habit adversely affects the health and leads to health problems. Moreover, masturbation is a main cause of psychological disturbances, like depression and anxiety. Ejaculation of sperms due to masturbation is usually followed by fits of remorse, which develops later into a sense of indifference. What is worse is that one may practice this habit in a place where he cannot remove his ritual impurity by taking a shower, causing him to either miss the prayers in their appointed time, or perform them in a state of ritual impurity; and in either case, he will be sinful.

Son: So dad, how can one quit this filthy habit?

Dad: In order to quit this habit, one has to practise a few things. First, one should strengthen his belief in Allah. Second, one should lower his gaze and avoid thinking about lust. Third, one should avoid being alone. Fourth, one should keep himself busy with beneficial activities such as reading, useful sports and the like.

Excerpted with modification from: O My Child! You've Become an Adult, by: Mohammad Addawish

<http://www.islamweb.net>