

Breaking the News to family (part 2 of 2)

Description: A two-part lesson containing practical advice for new comers to Islam facing the challenge of breaking the news of their new faith to friends and family. Part 2: This lesson lays great emphasis on how to deal with parents and maintain their respect whilst breaking the news to them.

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Objectives

- To appreciate the rights of parents in Islam.
- To be aware of the limitations in obeying one's parents.
- To learn how to deal with parents and maintain respect for them whilst breaking the news to them.
- To gain courage in the face of real life challenges through the support of Prophetic narrations.

Arabic Terms

- *Hadith* - (plural " *ahadith* ") is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

Rights of Parents

First, it's a good idea to know the rights of your parents in Islam, as even non-Muslim parents have great rights over you. Allah says:

oeAnd We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents" (Quran 46:15)

Why are parents important?

Being kind to parents in Islam is regarded as obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and thus will be rewarded for in the Hereafter. Respecting and obeying them is a way of showing gratitude to them for the sacrifices they made and the care they took in rearing you. Respecting and honoring them develops friendship and love, which is extremely important now more than ever, as they may feel you have rejected them in your new lifestyle. Remember that obeying and honoring your parents is a means of entering Paradise, and treating your parents well will be a cause for your own children to treat you well, God willing.

How can you be kind to them? Obey them, respect them, lower your voice around them, smile, be humble, do not show your displeasure towards them, serve them, fulfill their wishes, consult them, listen to what they say, and do not be stubborn towards them. Also, visit them, spend time with them, offer them gifts, thank them for rearing you and treating you kindly when you were small. Above all, pray for their guidance.

There are, however, limits to obeying them. Allah says:

“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” (Quran 31:14-15)

Parents are not to be obeyed if they ask you to disobey Allah or His Messenger and violate Islamic teachings. If you are faced with a situation in which you may become involved with something not permissible in Islam, try to get around the situation. If they serve ham for dinner, try to tell them you don't feel like eating or something of the sort. In all cases, try as much as possible not to offend them.

When you feel the time is right and you wish to begin a dialogue with your parents about your acceptance of Islam, find things to thank them for, especially memories from the past. Tell them what a terrible child you must have been, and how bad you feel for having been such a bother to them. Clearly explain to them why you chose Islam. Let them know your relationship with them is intact.

Be careful not to get into a religious debate of 'my religion vs. your religion' with parents or anyone. If they 'judge' or insult you, or express 'anti-Islamic' sentiments, reject being embarrassed or feeling humiliated for your decision to be a Muslim. Remember the 'gift' of patience and let it go. Gain strength from the prayers mentioned above.

If they express their apprehension or fears, address them based on what you know of Islam thus far. Excuse yourself if they ask questions you do not have answers to. Realize you are still learning your religion. Do not try to 'convert' them or prove you are right and they are wrong. Try as much as possible to dispel any fears they may have about Islam or your acceptance. It is good to wind up any conversation by letting them know you love them and will pray for them. Some good gifts will also be an incentive for them to listen and an example of Muslim generosity, either of which might induce them to contemplate conversion themselves. Treating them in the best manner will make them feel as you are the best of their acquaintances, and that you sincerely mean well and desire good for them.

Remember change comes gradually. Few remain unaffected over time, and most will recover their relationship with you from the strain your conversion caused. Some, by divine guidance, will join you. Your relationship will evolve with time. It's up to you. Actions 'speak' louder than words. Let them see optimism, persistence, and cheerful warmth in your relationship with them. Here is a beautiful story of one of Prophet Muhammad's Companions. Abu Hurayrah said:

I used to invite my mother to Islam, when she was still a polytheist. One day I called her to Islam and she said something about the Messenger of Allah that upset me. I came to the Messenger of

Allah, weeping, and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I was calling my mother to Islam and she refused. Today I called her and she said something about you that upset me. Pray to Allah to guide the mother of Abu Hurayrah.' So the Messenger of Allah said: 'O Allah, guide the mother of Abu Hurayrah.'

I left, feeling hopeful because of the Prophet's prayer. When I got home, as I came near to the door I saw it was open. My mother heard my footsteps and said, 'Stay where you are, Abu Hurayrah!' I could hear the sound of water. She washed herself, got dressed and put on her head cover. Then she opened the door and said, 'O Abu Hurayrah, I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.'

I went back to the Messenger of Allah, weeping with joy, and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, good news! Allah has answered your prayer and has guided the mother of Abu Hurayrah.' He praised and thanked Allah, and said, 'That is good.' I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah to make my mother and me dear to His believing slaves, and to make them dear to us.' The Messenger of Allah said, 'O Allah, make this slave of Yours and his mother dear to Your believing slaves, and make the believers dear to them.' There is no believer who hears of me or sees me, but he loves me."
(*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Various Ahadeeth

I will end with some beautiful Prophetic narrations which will give you the courage to be spiritually brave in face of real life challenges.

The Prophet used Paradise to encourage his Companions to stand firm. The Messenger of Allah passed by Yaasir, his wife and 'Ammar, her son, when they were being tortured by the pagans of Mecca and said:

'Patience, family of Yaasir, patience, family of Yaasir, for your destination is Paradise.'" (*al-Hakim*)

The Messenger of Allah, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

'This world in comparison with the Next World is like putting your finger in the sea and seeing what comes back on it.'" (*Saheeh Muslim*)

The Prophet used to say:

'O Allah, there is no life but the life of the Next World.'" (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*)

The Messenger of Allah said:

'One among the people of the Fire who was wealthiest person in this world will be brought on the Day of the Judgment, dipped once into it and then asked, 'Son of Adam! Did anything good ever happen to you? Did you ever experience any blessing?' He will say, 'By Allah, no, my Lord.' Another one among the people of the Garden who was the most miserable person in this world will be brought and dipped once into it (Paradise) and then asked, 'Son of Adam! Did you ever experience any misery? Did you ever undergo any hardship?' He will say, 'By Allah, no. I never experienced any misery and I never underwent any hardship.'" (*Saheeh Muslim*)

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