

Obligation.. Doubt.. Who Is God?!

The son was watching TV when his father came home late at night. He knew that there was something serious his father wanted to say. The family had just finished supper when the father asked his son to go into a quiet room nearby to have their conversation. The son was very curious to know the subject to be discussed with his father.

F Do you know why I wanted to see you tonight, son?

S No Dad. But I guess it is something serious.

F I have been thinking and planning for this meeting and the coming ones for a while.

S Since when, Dad?

F Since your puberty, about a year ago. I've been preparing a special program for you.

S What is this program? And what does it have to do with my puberty?

F Puberty is the transition period between childhood and manhood, fun and seriousness, unlimited freedom and responsibility, as you know. In this program, I'm going to have a series of discussions with you about religion, beliefs, faith, life, mankind, society, the universe and many other things that you should know the true meaning of and develop an opinion and attitude suitable to your state of maturity and adulthood.

S Thank you, Dad, for trusting me.

F Son, first of all, this trust is God's trust. And if you didn't have the capacity, He wouldn't entrust you with obligations. It is an honor that humans alone, of all the creatures of the earth, are entrusted with obligations.

S Quite right Dad, what you say makes me feel proud, and love God even more because He obliges me with responsibility. I hope to be a good servant of God and to love and obey him.

F Well-said. A righteous servant loves God and obeys Him.

Love and obedience are inseparable. A poet said “A lover obeys the beloved.”

S It seems to me that those who disobey God do this because they don’t have the love of God in their hearts.

F Exactly, even some of those whose faith is weak don’t feel the love for God; so, when they perform their religious duties, they do so with reluctance, and when they pray, they pray with laziness.

S Yesterday, I read this in the Quran: “***If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you.***”

F What do you understand from this verse?

S I infer that there is a mutual love between God and the believer.

F And that love means obedience and enduring hardship for the sake of the beloved.

S I liked the supplication that Mom read yesterday in the *al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah*¹ and I’m trying to memorize it.

F Which supplication, son?

S The supplication that says: “.. ***I ask for your love and the love of those who love you; the love of every task which brings me closer to You, to be my strongest love rather than any others', and to make my love towards You as a lead to your Heaven, and my eagerness to You as a prevention of disobedience.***”

F This supplication also sheds light on the relationship between love and obedience.

S But Dad, how can we find God’s love in our hearts?

F It is simple: by knowing Him. If you truly know Him, you’ll get the ultimate love.

S So, the first step is: knowing God.

F “The first thing in religion is to be aware of it”, mentioned in *Nahj al-Balaghah*²

Knowing God is the first thing in religion, and this knowledge is a prerequisite for loving Him. Therefore, knowing God is a prerequisite for religion and for loving Him. This is a mathematical equation, son, or something similar to a math equation.

S How?

F In math, there is something called substitution when dealing with equations.

S Yes, you remind me of that. When we apply it, we say: Knowledge = Religion. Knowledge = Love; and by substitution we find that religion is love, don't we, Dad?

F And this is what Imam al-Sadiq (Peace be upon him) said.

S What did he say?!

F He said "***Is religion anything other than love!***" Son, love is the most beautiful thing in the world.

S God is great.³ You are speaking with me in the youth language, the language of...

F An adolescent?

S Well, Dad, I was shy to say this.

F Yes, I spoke to you using the teenagers' language, as God's Messenger (Peace be upon him) commands us to speak with people according to their way of thinking. God sent each Messenger to speak to people in their own language. So why shouldn't I speak with you like a teenager?

S Exactly Dad, unless someone hears something in his own language, he won't understand it and hence won't interact with it. One of our teachers had given me a religious book as a present. I struggled when I tried to read it, and after a while I gave up because of its language which sounded like that of our ancestors who lived ages ago; therefore, it had nothing to do with our life today.

F This is the reason why some youth turn away from religion because they find no representation of religion in a language that they can understand. This time is the time of computer and internet, and it's impossible to present Islam through very old books written long time ago.

S How nicely you speak, Dad! I feel I love you more than ever and love God and thank Him for giving me such a wonderful father.

F And I love God more for giving me such a son.

S Praise be to God!

F Praise be to God!

S We wandered away from the subject, Dad.

F On the contrary, we have reached the core of the subject... we reached the subject of love. My love for you and my love for God lead me to talk to you about religion, life, God, human beings, the world and the hereafter... I want you to have a comprehensive review of all thoughts related to religion after you have reached your maturity.

S But Dad, you have discussed with us almost all of our religious issues, explained many ideological

problems, clarified the principles and the components of the religion and showed us the path of guidance. Do you see a shortcoming in my faith, or defect in my behavior?

F It's not about a shortcoming in faith or misbehaviors, son.

It is something else, completely different and extremely dangerous. That's why I want you to be prepared and informed about some issues without being shocked.

S OK, Dad! What's that important and dangerous matter which I should know after my puberty?

F I wanted to tell you that what you have learnt from me about religion was incorrect.

S What?! Dad! What are you saying?!

F As I said, all that you have heard from me about religion was completely wrong.

S Dad! What are you saying?! What do you mean? Which aspect of religion was wrong? The ideology? The manners? Please Dad, be frank with me.

F I mean the basics of religion, the ideology: the faith in God, the hereafter, the Prophet and the Messengers and all what you have learnt about is incorrect.

S Seek God's forgiveness. Dad, what happened to you? Sorry Dad for being impolite. How can believing in God, the hereafter and the Messengers be wrong? I cannot believe what I'm hearing.

F I will answer this question tomorrow.

S Dad! Please be frank about your intentions, for you made me feel uncertain. How can you leave me in this state? And how can I pray then, while I'm in a state of uncertainty.

F Who asked you to pray?

S Didn't you ask me to pray and to perform it patiently?

F Then your prayer is not accepted at all.

S Not accepted? What does that mean? Shall I abandon praying then?

F It is up to you whether you want to pray or not.

S That's strange. I'm going crazy. How can my father ask me to give up praying? How? My father, who taught me how to pray, is asking me to give it up now!

F I am not asking you to give it up. I am telling you that you may give up or continue praying, as you wish.

S This is strange too. Didn't you say that praying is the pillar of religion and the first thing I'll be asked about in the hereafter? And that God says: "***Establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.***"

F I told you that all you've heard from me before your puberty was wrong.

S Dad, it's forbidden to say so!

F What is the meaning of forbidden?

S Forbidden means that God doesn't allow it.

F God? Who is God?

S O God... this is madness!

F Don't be mad. I asked you a question; answer me or say "I don't know".

S But you asked me "Who is God?"

F What's wrong with this question?

S Dad, please! What is going on? Is this real that you, my father, are saying what you're saying? I cannot believe it.

F Yes, I'm your father saying this. If I didn't do so, then I wouldn't be your father.

S My God! What happened?

F We'll continue this discussion tomorrow. Now go to bed. Good night!

1. Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah (also called the Psalms of Islam) is a famous book comprising a collection of prayers said by Imam `Ali ibn al- Husayn al-Sajjad (A.S.).

2. Nahj al-Balaghah is a book comprising a collection of sermons, epistles, and aphorisms of Imam `Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s) compiled by al- Sharif al-Razi (406/1015).

3. In the original text, the author wrote, "allahu-akbar." In Muslim heritage, this phrase is used to express surprise.

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