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Home > The Perfect Role Model: The Prophet of Islam > Generosity

Generosity

Generosity is the tangible manifestation of human self–sacrifice. It is a sacred attribute that is held in high esteem and considered to be of great value by all nations. The Noble Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), the source of human virtues, possessed this attribute in its highest form. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) has said,

"I am the one who has been disciplined by God, and 'Ali has been disciplined by me. My Lord has commanded me to be generous and do good and He has forbidden me from being stingy and from oppressing others. There is nothing that God hates more than stinginess and being ill-tempered."1

Similarly, after returning from the Battle of Hunayn, the Bedouins formed a circle around the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) in order to get their share of the war booty. As the crowd gathered, someone snatched the Prophet's cloak. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) stood up and said,

"Give me back my cloak. What, are you afraid of (me behaving with) stinginess? If I had as much gold as these thorny shrubs here, I would have divided it amongst you. You will not find me to be stingy."2

Included here are a few examples of the Prophet's generosity:

1. One day, a group of under clothed people came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and asked him for clothes. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), who could never turn down a request, went home to gather clothes but found nothing other than a curtain that belonged to his daughter Fasimah (peace be upon her) and which had been placed over some goods. The Messenger of God asked her, "O Fasimah, would you like to be protected from the fire of Hell by means of this curtain?"

She (peace be upon her) replied, "Yes."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) tore that curtain into pieces and gave it to the poor to wear.3

2. One day the Most Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went to the market with only eight *dirhams*. On the way, he saw a female slave crying. He asked her why she was crying. She replied, "My master sent me with two *dirhams* to buy something for him, but I have lost those two *dirhams*." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) gave her two *dirhams* from his money and continued towards the market with only six *dirhams*. There he bought a shirt four *dirhams* and then headed for home.

On his way, he saw an emaciated, old man crying, sitting unclothed, saying, "Whoever clothes me, may God clothe him with heavenly clothing."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), upon seeing this, clothed him with the shirt he had bought and once again headed for the market. There he bought a shirt for two dirhams. On his way home, once again, he saw the same female slave. She was sitting and crying. He (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked, "What happened?"

She replied, "I bought that which I was supposed to buy, but I am afraid I will be punished for being late."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) told her, "Show me the way to your house." He followed her until they arrived at the house of one of the Helpers. The men were absent and only the women were at home. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) greeted them from behind the door saying, "As-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh (may peace, mercy and blessings be upon you)." The women recognized the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) voice but did not reply to him until he said so three times. At that point they said, "wa 'alaykumus-salam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh, may our parents be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of God." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) asked them, "Did you not hear my voice?" They said, "Yes, we did, but we wanted you to greet us and our children with peace (salam) many times."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Your female slave is late and she is afraid of your punishment. For my sake, do not punish her."

They said, all together, "We have accepted your intercession, forgiven her punishment and, due to your blessed footsteps, we have freed her."

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) turned back and said, "I have never seen eight *dirhams* more blessed than these. They have turned fear into safety, freed a slave and clothed two unclothed people."4

3. A woman told her son to go to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and greet him and ask him for some cloth so that she may make it into a shirt. He went to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and said what his mother had told him to say. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "I have no cloth (to give you) at

present..." The boy said, "My mother said for you to give me your cloak so that she can make a shirt out of it." The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, "Allow me to go to my chamber." When he went to his chamber, he took off his cloak and then gave it to the child. The child gave it to his mother.5

- 1. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 17.
- 2. Al-Wafa bi Ahwal al-Mustafa, vol. 2, p. 442.
- 3. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 78.
- 4. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 70.
- 5. Sharaf an-Nabi, p. 78.

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