When I Grow Up I Wanna Be Abu Bakr!

After groups of people had become Muslim, Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu insisted to RasulAllah sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam that they, the Muslims, declare their Islam publicly and not hide. RasulAllah finally agreed and as a group they entered the courtyard of the Ka'bah, each taking a corner, and called out to the people about Islam. Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu was the first khateeb to invite to Allah and His Messenger.

When the mob sitting there heard Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu and the others speaking about Allah and Islam, they ignited in anger and began stoning and beating the Muslims. Utbah pounced on Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu with his leather sandals, slapping him repeatedly in the face until Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu was knocked down. He then fell on top of Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu punching him in the stomach and continued the facial blows. Abu Bakr's tribe finally peeled Utbah off of him and swore that if Abu Bakr died, they were going to chop off Utbah's head in revenge. Abu Bakr laid in blood, his face indiscernible, unconscious.

It was only upon nightfall that Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu began to show signs of life. Do you know what the first words he spoke were? "What happened to RasulAllah? What happened to RasulAllah?" His mother offered him food but he refused. "I shall not touch food until I am taken to RasulAllah and am reassured that he is alright."

They carried him to Daar Al-Arqam and when he entered, RasulAllah cried at the state that Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu was in and hugged him. He held the hug as the Muslims gathered around.

Role Models. In his book Risaalat Al-Mu'allim, Jamal Abideen tells us that at the age of 2 – perhaps earlier – the boy or girl begins habitually imitating all that they see. At the age of 5 or 6 – when the child is in kindergarten and grade 1 – they reach a climax in imitating anything that they see, good or bad. Then this habit of imitating smoothes out but continues to play the most vital role in the child's upbringing.

Ibn Khaldoon writes in his Muqaddimah about this issue: "Children are influenced most by a role model. In their early years, children think that everything that adults do is correct and good and that their parents are the best amongst the adults and the most perfect."

Children do not learn by being told, they learn by example. How much weight does a commandment to a child to fast have when the parent or teacher himself is eating a sandwich? For this reason, it is something hated and despised by Allah that a person should command good and he himself do other than what he commands. For indeed, his words will have little worth when the two – his actions and commandments - are contradictory.

Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth glorifies Allah. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise / O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? / Most hateful it is with Allah that you say that which you do not do (Al-Saff 61/1-3).

And in Saheeh Muslim, the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam said:

"A man will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and be thrown into Hellfire. The inhabitants of Hellfire shall gather around him and say, ‘O so and so! What is wrong? Were you not the one that would tell people to do good and tell them to stay away from doing bad?’ He shall say, ‘Yes, I used to command people to do good but I would not do it myself, and I would command people to stay away from bad and I myself would commit it.'"

The severity of this warning stems from the harmful scars that cut into a child's personality when he sees his role models doing wrong and not doing what's right. By us not following what we claim to believe in, we could be causing the destruction of dozens of lives on the Day of Resurrection.

It is in this search for our role models that we turn to the shining light, Abu Bakr as Siddeeq radi Allahu anhu. When the Prophet sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam received the first revelations, the first man he approached was his best friend, Abu Bakr. When Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu heard that Muhammad had been chosen as a Prophet, he immediately announced, "I've never tasted a lie from you. I testify that there is no God but Allah, and you are the Messenger of Allah." RasulAllah later said, "There is no one that I have spoken to about Islam that did not debate the issue with me except Abu Bakr."

With the few verses that he knew, Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu set off to invite to this deen of Al-Islam. Soon, he was escorting by the hand the likes of Uthman, Az-Zubayr, Abd ArRahmaan ibn ‘Owf, Sa'd, Abu ‘Ubaidah, and Talha – six of the ten people who were promised Jannah during their time on earth. And on the Day of Resurrection they shall all be written in the book of Abu Bakr's good works.

In the early days of Islam, Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu would walk around the markets and homes observing all the Muslim slaves that were being tortured. He would watch as Umayyah dragged Bilal out to the grilling desert at noontime, the hottest moments of the day. Umayyah would press Bilal to the scalding ground and place a boulder on top of his chest to increase the torture. Bilal would say nothing but, "Ahad, Ahad (One, only One)." Abu Bakr would watch and whisper to Bilal, "YunJeeka AlWaahidul Ahad (The One [Allah] shall save you)."

Abu Bakr went to Umayyah and requested that he sell Bilal to him for 5 uwqiyyah of gold. Umayyah was astonished at that amount and hurriedly agreed. "Take Bilal. There is no good in him."

After the deal was done, Umayyah snickered, "Had you refused to pay more than 1 uwqiyyah I still would have sold him to you."

And Abu Bakr announced, "And had you refused to sell him for no less than 100 uwqiyyah I still would have bought him!"

Evil wishers – like always – spread rumors about Abu Bakr’s freeing of Bilal, saying that he did it only because of a favor he owed him. In the Qur’an, in verses to be recited till the end of time, Allah lay clear the intentions of Abu Bakr:

He who spends his wealth for increase in self-purification, / And have in his mind no favor from anyone for which a reward is expected in return, / Except only the desire to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High; / He surely will be pleased [when he will enter Paradise] (Al-Layl 92/18-21).

Read that last verse again. Allah is telling Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu that he is going to make him satisfied. Allahu Akbar! Imagine if Allah told you that. Would anything in the world be more valuable to you than that one ayah?

This was Abu Bakr; this was Khaleefatu Rasulillaah. When ‘Amr ibn Al- Aas became Muslim, RasulAllah appointed him as a leader for one of the Muslim armies. ‘Amr believed that this could only be so because RasulAllah sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam loved him the most. So after the army had returned, ‘Amr went and sat by RasulAllah sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam and asked him a question out loud so that everyone would hear the answer. He asked, “Who do you love the most?”

RasulAllah replied, "Aisha," his wife.

Startled, ‘Amr asked, "No, no, from the men who?"

He said, "Her father!" Abu Bakr, radi Allahu anhu.

PART II: Who are our Role Models?

Have you ever sat with your children or some Muslim neighbor's children? Give them a basketball and lower the rim for them and listen to what they say. All – with a few exceptions – will call out the name of a kafir basketball player as they take the shot. You'll hear the name of Michael Jordan shouted out and others, a name that comes from their heart as they slam the ball in glee.

Listen carefully; they are innocently calling to the world, "I wanna be a kafir basketball player, just like that kafir Jordan." Don't be surprised when they reach university, after they've lost their precious youth, that they can spit a ball into a basket with unbelievable precision, yet they cannot read Al-Fatiha without fumbling like a baby. On the Day of Resurrection, these entertainment idols shall disown all those that took them as role models and imitated their sins. Interestingly, Reebok advertised one of these entertainment idols dunking a ball and at the end of the commercial he walks to the camera and says, "Just because I dunk a ball doesn't mean I have to raise your kids." Subhan Allah, if children and parents only understood what he said.

Look at the real models and the children that took them as their models. Aisha narrates that RasulAllah used to visit them in the mornings and in the evenings. But one day he came at noon time – a time that signified something different was happening. Abu Bakr radi Allahu anhu opened the door and RasulAllah announced that Allah had given him permission to do Hijrah to Madinah. Abu Bakr bounced out, "Together, Yaa RasulAllah, together!"

And Rasul Allah replied, "Together."

Abu Bakr began to cry. Aisha comments, "I never believed that someone could cry from happiness until I saw my father that day cry when he found out he would be doing Hijrah with RasulAllah."

Look at the Hijrah incident and you shall see that all the characters involved other than Abu Bakr were children. Aisha and her brother Abd ArRahmaan. Asmaa was slapped in the face by Abu Jahl when she refused to tell him where her father was. The guide that took them to Madinah was also a young boy. Subhan Allah, these children grew up to be amongst the greatest humans to ever walk this earth. How not when they had the greatest role models – RasulAllah and Abu Bakr.

After over 10 years of da'wah and jihaad in Madinah, when RasulAllah passed away, 'Umar called all the people, sharpened his sword and spoke. "Muhammad is not dead. He went to his Lord as Musa went to his Lord and he shall come back as Musa did. When he does, he shall kill all those who said he was dead."

News reached Abu Bakr of the Prophet's death. He prepared himself and galloped on his horse to RasulAllah's home. There, RasulAllah lay covered in a cloth. Abu Bakr raised the cloth and kissed RasulAllah saying, "Tibta Hayyan wa Mayyitan (You are blessed in life and in death)." He then stepped outside as 'Umar was addressing the people. "Sit down 'Umar," said Abu Bakr. He then praised Allah and began, "Whoever worships Muhammad let him know that Muhammad is dead, and whoever Allah let him know that Allah is alive and never dies." He then recited the verse:

Muhammad is nothing more than a Messenger. Messengers came and went before him. If he dies or is killed shall you turn on your heels?

'Umar said, "When I heard that verse, my knees became soft as I fell. I knew that RasulAllah had died."

Soon after that, Abu Bakr sent out the army of Usama. Usama was 18 at that time, the age of one of our youth in grade 12. He led an entire Muslim army, fought the Romans and came home victorious, breeding fear in all those that wanted to attack the Muslims in Madinah.

As Usama was leaving Madinah, Abu Bakr was escorting his horse as he walked along side it. Usama said, "You shall ride with me or I shall come down and walk."

But Abu Bakr refused saying, "You shall not come down and I shall not ride. What harm does it bring me that I should dust my feet in the cause of Allah for an hour of the day." Indeed, Usama reached this position because he had role models like Abu Bakr.

Muslims understood the seriousness of the role models their children had. ‘Amr ibn Utbah rahimahullah advised his son's teacher, "Let the first correction you do to my son be the correction of yourself. Verily, their eyes are locked into yours. Good to them is what you do, even if it is bad. And bad to them is what you do not do, even if it is good."

Many parents have understood this issue of finding the correct role models for their children. Here is an example that we conclude with: In a kindergarten classroom, a non-Muslim teacher sat with the students and asked each one what they want to be when they grow up. One said, "I want to be a policeman." The other announced, "I want to be a fireman." Then a Muslim boy in the crowd spoke up, "I want to be a Sahaabee!" A what?

When parent teacher conferences came up, the teacher asked the parents about this Sahaabee that their son wanted to be when he grew up. They said, "Whenever we have the chance we read stories of the Prophet's companions to him. They have become his role models. And when he becomes older he wants to be just like the Sahaabaa."

Isn't that what we want for our kids too?