

LEADING WITH LOVE – OUR PROPHET’S EXAMPLE

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Description: Prophet Muhammad led people with love, compassion and genuine care and this is why he gained unparalleled respect and obedience.

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By: Tarek al-Barghouthi (islamtoday.net) [edited by IslamReligion.com]

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Love is the rain that quenches the soul’s thirst in desolate times where the strong devours the weak and those in power oppress the disenfranchised. 

This is why love was the approach chosen by the best of humanity, whom God sent as a mercy to guide the people away from every form of oppression.

Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was as God describes him in the Quran:

"Now there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves: it grieves him that you should fall into distress: ardently anxious is he over you: to the Believers he is compassionate, merciful." (Surah al-Tawbah: 128)

The Prophet’s Companions loved him. Consider the case where the Prophet was arranging the ranks with his walking stick on the Day of Badr. He tapped Sawad b. `Aziyyah on the stomach while doing so, and Sawad said: "You have caused me pain, and I demand restitution!"

The Prophet let him take the stick and said: "You may retaliate."

Sawad immediately embraced the Prophet and said: "O Messenger of God! While standing in the battle line, I began to think of the proximity of death, and it was my wish that I embrace you before it."

Love for the Prophet is what motivated Sawad’s behavior.

Love is what made the woman from the tribe of Banu Dinar, when she was informed that her husband, brother, and two sons had died in the battle, ask about the Prophet’s state. When she was told he was well, she asked to see him. When she saw him, she declared: "As long as you are alright, every calamity is a minor thing!"

Has any leader in history been loved the way the Prophet's Companions loved him?

Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, both as a prophet and as a man, loved the people deeply. This is because of the mercy that God had placed in his heart. He also loved the message that he was entrusted to convey, and he loved his homeland Mecca and his adopted country Madinah. He loved the noble purpose of his life. He loved himself, and therefore made sure to avoid everything that was ignoble.

Aishah wondered about the Prophet's devotion in worship, asking: "Why do you weary yourself so much when God has forgiven you for all your past and future sins?"

He replied: "Shouldn't I then be a grateful servant?"^[1]

The secret behind the Prophet's success as a leader, apart from the revelation he received from God, was that he led through love. It was true love that overflowed his being and spread to the people around him.

The message he conveyed was one of compassion and mercy. Every reasonable person who heard it embraced it with full devotion. The Prophet's message was one of mercy and guidance for everyone.

It is true that the Prophet possessed the full range of leadership qualities, including courage, wisdom, patience, fortitude, and industry. He was an example to follow in every aspect of life.

Leadership, as a concept, is often assumed to be a Western innovation. Though this is clearly not the case, it is true that in the West leadership is the focus of intensive research and the topic of numerous academic studies. It is befitting for us to study the ways in which Prophet Muhammad was a great leader, and the way his eminent Companions took up the mantle of leadership after him.

If we turn our attention to the kind of leadership that exists in the Arab world today, we find that it follows the model of a military regime: follow orders and ask questions later. This approach may be suited for a military operation, but it is no way to run a country. Such an approach is doomed to fail.

The leadership of Prophet Muhammad provides a stark contrast. Professor John Adair, in his book *The Leadership of Muhammad*, was asked during a radio interview why Arab leaders are failures while the leadership of Prophet Muhammad was so successful. Adair replied that Arab leaders today lead people through fear, when they should do what Prophet Muhammad did which was to win the people's hearts.

He then added: "The leader of the people in today's world is supposed to be their servant. Leadership in your (Arab) countries, however, is a question of inheritance and the acquisition of wealth and power."

Prophet Muhammad is our example of how to lead others in every aspect of life that requires leadership. He said: "The best of leaders among you are those whom you love and who love you in return. They pray for you and you pray for them."^[2]

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

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