

Fruits for the Week

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BECOMING A ROLE MODEL

Allah informs us: “*You have indeed in the apostle of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the final day.*” (Al-Ahzab: 21)

This verse tells us that we should emulate our Prophet’s conduct and character. As a young Muslim, you have an interesting and responsible role to play as a citizen of our country. Our behaviour and attitude will be observed by our peers, who may be Muslims or non-Muslims. Also, younger boys and girls may imitate us. It would be quite difficult for them to take their father or mother as their role model because of the big difference in age, but they will certainly imitate us.

If we are male adults and have long hair, young boys may copy us. If we wear dirty jeans, young teenagers may also wear them. If we behave rather wildly in public, they may follow us. If we smoke, they may, too. As their mind is not fully matured, they learn about social life outside their home by imitating us.

Therefore, it is very important that we cultivate an Islamic personality for our own good as well as for the good of the Muslim boys and girls in their early teens who may take us as their role model.

But who is our own role model? Certainly people older than us, probably even older than our parents, and whose lives are worthy of being imitated. However, the best model we can have is that of the Prophet himself when he was a youth. So, read about his character from the Hadith and books written about his youth. A brief summary:

He had a mild and gentle nature. He never quarrelled with anyone. He never lied. He was kind and generous. He was helpful to anyone. He would do any job given to him to the best of his ability. He was neat and clean. His hair was well kept. His dress was always simple and neat. He was well behaved. He was well disciplined and kept away from unsociable and anti-social elements. He became a symbol of honesty and trust and commanded respect from everyone who knew him in Mecca. His sterling character impressed everyone who came into contact with him: to see him was to love him.

Our Prophet never had the opportunity to acquire knowledge in a formal way. Rather, he gained knowledge from everything he saw – the sky, stars, moon, trees, birds, mountains, and people around him. Muslim youth of today are very lucky. They attend modern schools. They have magazines, books, television and the internet with which to acquire knowledge and widen their intellectual horizons. So there is no excuse if someone is 30 years old and still does not have, or work towards having, tertiary or other useful qualifications.

So, make sure that we play our part as good Muslim youth now, and not disappoint our parents in any way. Remember, we too will become a parent one day, and how we will feel if our children disappoint us. Wallahu A’lam.

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Correction

In the interview article of Prof. Anis Ahmad published by Ming Pao Daily on 1 March 2005 and reproduced in Fruits for the Week of 20 May 2005, it was wrongly transcribed by the reporter that “*jihad* does not mean fighting at all”. Prof. Anis Ahmad clarifies *jihad* as follows:

Jihad means war against injustice, exploitation, ignorance and hatred. It is a dynamic principle which puts ethical responsibility on every Muslim to help in liberation of mankind from tyranny, terror, extremism, ignorance, violation of human rights and imposition of one single culture on the whole of humanity. *Jihad* in the cause of Allah simply means organized and systematic struggle in order to establish human rights, peace, balance and modernization, justice and equity among peoples. It is not a tool for changing faith of people by force.

Jihad does not mean “holy war” which, translated into Arabic, should be *harb al-muqadis* and this term was neither used in the *Quran* nor *Sunnah*.