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## The Parent Child Connection

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## The Parent Child Connection

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The parent and child relationship is a very unique and interesting one. It is also a topic that has been highly researched and written on. It is one that has puzzled many since such a relationship was first established and it has been exemplified time and time again in various religious texts. Why is this relationship so unique and different than others? Why is it one that demands so much attention? Why is it important enough to have religious significance in the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and many other religious texts? The reason is simple, the parent child relationship, whether it be father or son, mother or daughter, is one that is necessary for human sustenance. In other words without an adequate parent child relationship, neither party can hope to live fulfilling lives. This is precisely the reason why this connection is so heavily emphasized in various religious texts and documents (story of the Prodigal son and Abraham and his son). And adequate parent child relationship is thus a template for a more fulfilling human divine relationship. In other words, these two relationships feed off of each other. An ample parent child relationship sets the precedence for a pleasing human divine relationship in the same way that the human divine relationship sets precedence for a gratifying parent child relationship. There are many things to be learned from the investigation of such a correlation; and in turn this analysis can lead to the revealing of many religious and worldly truths. These truths then help one to become more spiritual and strengthen his or her connection with the divine."



*Aisha Arshad*

### **The Parent Child Connection**

The parent and child relationship is a very unique and interesting one. It is also a topic that has been highly researched and written on. It is one that has puzzled many since such a relationship was first established and it has been exemplified time and time again in various religious texts. Why is this relationship so unique and different than others? Why is it one that demands so much attention? Why is it important enough to have religious significance in the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and many other religious texts? The reason is simple, the parent child relationship, whether it be father or son, mother or daughter, is one that is necessary for human sustenance. In other words without an adequate parent child relationship, neither party can hope to live fulfilling lives. This is precisely the reason why this connection is so heavily emphasized in various religious texts and documents (story of the Prodigal son and Abraham and his son). And adequate parent child relationship is thus a template for a more fulfilling human divine relationship. In other words, these two relationships feed off of each other. An ample parent child relationship sets the precedence for a pleasing human divine relationship in the same way that the human divine relationship sets precedence for a gratifying parent

child relationship. There are many things to be learned from the investigation of such a correlation; and in turn this analysis can lead to the revealing of many religious and worldly truths. These truths then help one to become more spiritual and strengthen his or her connection with the divine.

The fundamental and major truth to be realized from this type of relationship is that it is a mutually dependant symbiotic relationship. Although one may not initially realize it, both the parent and the child need to play out their roles in order for the relationship to work. Although it may seem that the parent would play the lead role in the education and sustenance of the child, nothing could be further from the truth. According to Pope John Paul II, “To maintain a joyful family requires much from both the parents and the children. Each member of the family has to become, in a special way, the servant of the other” (D’Ambrosio). In other words, there is much give and take on the part of both parent and child. The child very quickly learns to see the parent as the teacher; however, it is a little harder for the parent to acknowledge that the child is capable of doing the same. It is important to note that there are many things that the parent and child teach each other and they must both grasp this in order to for the relationship to function in harmony and further the spiritual experience of both.

It is easy to pick out the many things that a parent contributes to and teaches their child. The rearing and upbringing of the child is highly important. In fact in the Islamic tradition, these fundamental characteristics of childhood are considered rights to which the child is entitled. In accordance with Islamic law, for example, the parent must provide the child with shelter, food, clothing, and everything that is needed for the child to flourish within his or her surroundings. The child also has a right to be properly and

correctly educated by the parent. Therefore, these are not just things that the parent can chose to provide the child but must make sure that the child has in agreement with religious teachings. In this way the parent is able to teach the child love and respect. They are also able to teach the child morals and values that will help to sustain the child throughout life. Thus the parent not only gives the child life but also provides the child with the sustenance that will last the child a lifetime.

In return many things are expected from the child. The child is expected to treat his parents with the utmost respect and kindness. The child is also expected to obey his parents and value their advice. But the child furthermore teaches the parent many things that may not be readily obvious. Through the upbringing and rearing of the child, the parent learns patience and humility. They understand what is meant by true pain when the child is hurt. Through the child, the parent slowly starts to realize the broader meaning of life and they start to take better care of themselves for the child's sake. They learn how to love unconditionally someone besides themselves and their understanding of sacrifice is expanded.

What then do all of these seemingly universal experiences have to do with religion and how do they increase our spirituality? Let us first consider our situation where the parent acts as the teacher. When the parent provides the child with food, clothing and shelter, they are setting the example that the child should do the same when they are in an analogous situation. Here they are setting precedence for their child to act in accordance with particular religious teachings when the child comes to be a parent. Similarly, when the parent teaches the child proper morals and values the child grows to understand that this is the appropriate way to act. In this way, they are furthering the

child's understanding of religion and paving the way for them to become more pious in their thinking and actions as adults thereby influencing the child's spirituality.

Therefore, through these actions, and in turn from the truths that the child has inadvertently revealed to them, the parent's spiritual and religious awareness is also increased. As said before, through the upbringing of the child, the parent learns to be more patient. Most are familiar with the quote, "patience is a virtue". There is, however, some religious truth within this quote as well. It is true that many religious traditions believe that the idea of "patience is a virtue" leads to more self awareness and is one of the many guideline set by God to help human beings live a better life. In the same way when the child teaches the parent humility a feeling of empathy rises from that experience. Through this experience, the parent is better able to relate to individuals around him or her and feels the urge to help whenever there is a need to lend a hand. Again, this is one of the ideas that many religions deem leads one to be more spiritually connected with God. For example, this is one of the central beliefs of the Mormon religion. In his article, featured in the book World Religions in America, called "The Later-day Saint (Mormon) Religion in America and the World", Danny L Jorgenson describes the connectivity of Mormons to the community around them. He states that, "They [the Mormons] also founded and sometimes still operate educational facilities, hospitals, and a wide variety of social welfare and humanitarian services throughout the nation" (Neusner 275). Thus Mormons firmly believe that it is part of their religious duty to be active in their community in their quest for religious perfection. The idea of helping others is also prevalent in the many teachings of Jesus and the Bible is filled with the

command the men must help the poor. It is considered to be a religious duty. All of these ideas extend from the central theme of the parent child relationship.

As can be seen from the discussion above, the parent child relationship is a very important one. The analysis of its characteristics reveals that it is a divine cycle that is continuous with no beginning and no end. One phase blends seamlessly into the other. In accordance with the religious teachings that were taught to them by his or her predecessors, the parent educates the child in certain morals which the child will go on to teach his or her children. At the same time, the child teaches the parent the above mentioned things. The parent starts to see the child through a different lens. They begin to distinguish the adolescent as a vehicle through which they can learn and further their understanding about spirituality and God. The parent no longer views her child as belonging to her but has the understanding that the child is a gift from God. This pushes them to see and appreciate God in a new light thereby strengthening their own sacred understanding. They then pass these “revelations” onto their growing child. As the child matures, he begins to understand and appreciate the teachings of his parent. As he begins to realize the sacrifices that the parent made for him, he likewise begins to see the parent as a gift of great value from God. This prompts him to take better care of the parent as the parent grows older and to strengthen his own ties with the divine first through his parent, then through himself and finally through his own children. In this way the cycle continues. Both parent and child come to realize that although at first their life experiences through their relationship seemed universal, they were really of a divine nature. Through each of our own relationships, as adults, we come to realize that God is evident through everyday experiences. We also come to realize that the family unit is a

self sustaining way for human beings to discover and rediscover their spirituality. In this way we come to realize our interconnectedness and the fact that we are really part of a larger celestial cycle which we are helping to feed. The parent child relationship, then, is the divine tie that weaves its way through the cycle and binds our past, our present and our future to the spiritual realm while simultaneously anchoring our spiritual experiences and strengthening our religious fervor.

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