

7833 - Children Stealing

the question

I became very upset after I discovered that one of my children had stolen something and I am afraid that he may become a thief in the future. What advice can you give me?

Detailed answer

A young child may steal for a number of reasons:

1. He steals because he does not know the difference between borrowing and stealing, and the concept of personal ownership is not clear in his mind.
2. Some children steal because they are deprived of things that others have.
3. Some steal to take revenge on the parents or to attract their attention.

What do we advise?

1. Keep calm. Instead of rebuking him and putting him to shame, keep calm. This situation is an opportunity to teach your child.
2. Advise and exhort the child. Explain to him the Islamic rulings concerning stealing, and tell him that Allaah says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“Cut off (from the wrist joint) the (right) hand of the thief, male or female...” [al-Maa'idah 5:38]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) accepted the pledge of women, when they made bay'ah (oath of allegiance) to him, that they would not steal, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“... that they will not steal...” [al-Mumtahinah 60:12].

Remind your child that Allaah is always watching. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“He is with you (by His Knowledge) wheresoever you may be” [al-Hadeed 57:4]

And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“... Allaah is Witness to what you do.” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:98]

Tell him: Allaah can see you even if you steal something in secret, far away from the view of people, because He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“He knows the secret and that which is yet more hidden.” [Ta-Ha 20:7]

Confront the child: you have to confront the child with the reason and motive for stealing. For example, you could say to him, “I know that you took candy from the store, and that you took it because you felt that you needed it, but stealing it was not the answer. Next time, if you want something, talk to me first. I know that you want to be honest.” Try to make the child see how others feel – “If you were in the place of the person whose property was stolen, how would you feel?”

Making the punishment severe, such as making the child return the stolen property and apologizing, or making him pay the value of the item if it has been damaged or used up, whilst also depriving him of some privileges at home.

Supervising the child and not leaving him alone for a long time.

And Allaah is the Guide to the Straight Path.

See: Tanweer al-‘Ibaad bi Turuq al-Ta’aamul ma’a al-Awlaad by Dr. Haamid Nahaar al-Mutayri, p. 37.