Trailing the Steps of the Rightly Guided Caliphs

The Excellent Deeds of Abu Bakr

Ann Stock shares beautiful stories from the lives of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. This month, she looks at the good deeds of Abu Bakr and his treatment of women.

Umar grabbed his slave girl and turned her around in front of him. Holding her shoulders between his mighty hands, he bent down and looked into her eyes, the eyes of a traitor. It was true. She had accepted Islam. It was people like her who were the source of all of the trouble in Makka, thought Umar. He lifted his hand and landed a blow across her face. All of his frustration, confusion and anger passed through his hands onto his small victim.

Her screams began to fade with each slap. The little girl’s tears mixed with Umar’s sweat as they splattered his forearm. Powerless against her attacker, the little girl dropped to the ground, curtsied up on the floor and began to pray. She lay motionless, closing her eyes as tightly as she could hoping to disappear from his presence or waiting until death relieved her.

Abu Bakr was walking along Umar’s street when he heard the terrifying screams. He quickened his pace, searching for the source of the cries. Staring at the little girl laying on the ground, Abu Bakr understood why Umar was painting as he sat in the corner. Abu Bakr’s heart broke as he knelt by her side. He smoothed the hair away from the little girl’s face and gave her a helping hand. Reaching in his pocket, he gave Umar, who was not yet a believer, a stern look as he tossed the pouch of gold coins into his lap. Then Abu Bakr and the little girl left in chilly silence.

Abu Bakr frequently purchased the Muslim slaves in Makkah during those early days of Islam. They were often the weakest among the slaves, including women and children. His behaviour confused his own family members; they were baffled by Abu Bakr’s actions. Instead of competing for wealth, power and glory in this life, they sought out opportunities to prepare for the day they would meet their Creator. Abu Bakr was unwavering in his desire to do for others because his heart was full of faith; and faith can never exist in one heart with selfishness, just as one who gets dusty for the sake of Allah cannot be in Hell. (Sahih Jameea)

Who has created death and life that He may test you which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving. (Al-Mulk:2)

We find today that many Muslims are being persecuted. We watch as they are abused and misunderstood in societies which feel threatened by Islam and Muslims, just as the pagans of Makkah felt threatened in those early days.

Sometimes it might seem foolishly hard to stand up for our brothers and sisters. We might feel we are putting ourselves out there for ridicule or even worse, we might worry that an unwanted spotlight will be put upon ourselves. In looking at the Companions, we see the perfect example of selfless fortitude and strength. If we are in a position to help our brothers and sisters by whatever capacity, we should do it. We should walk in the footsteps of the greatest Muslims who used to actively compete to find those deeds which could be done to help the weakest and most vulnerable. Selfless acts of charity will increase our faith, insha Allah. By far, Abu Bakr had the most faith of all of the Companions and he was the best at doing good deeds.

We may not be able to find slaves to free in this day and age, but we can relate to other good deeds Abu Bakr did.

The Companions entered the Masjid, queued for prayer and then sat down in the company of the Prophet one early morning. “Who amongst you has woken up this morning with the intention of fasting?” asked the Prophet as he looked around at his companions who in turn looked at each with curiosity. “Me!” said Abu Bakr hesitantly as he liked to keep his good deeds to himself. “And who among you has accompanied a funeral procession?” continued the Prophet. “Me” replied Abu Bakr. “Then who among you has fed a poor person (today)”? The Prophet continued. “Me” said Abu Bakr. “And who among you has visited a sick person today?” The Prophet replied Abu Bakr as a final time.

The rest of the Companions stared at the ground wondering how anyone could have done all that before the morning lesson. The Messenger of Allah broke the silence by saying “Whenever these (the performance of these deeds) are combined in a person, then it means that that person will enter Paradise” (Muslim).

The list of good deeds above is within the capacity of most of us. So let us, and I remind myself first, aspire to achieve some of them. We can visit our sisters when they are sick, especially newly reverted sisters and those without support. We can volunteer to feed the elderly and struggling families. Let us not regret the passing of another day. “I have never regretted anything as much as my regret over a day on which the sun has set and my life span decreases, whilst my good deeds have not yet increased.” (Abdullah b. Mas’ud)

Sources and further reading

Al-Faarooq Umar, by Abdur-Rahmaan Ash-Sharqaawee
Seerah Ibn Hishaaam
Tafseer Al-Akooose
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