2621 - How to Deal with a Misbehaving Mother in Islam

the question

first i wish to state that this q&a is very beneficial to the ummah mash'Allah and we hope you and your helpers will receive the best reward in this world and the next. my question is on behalf of a muslim young man. he is mash'Allah a sincere seeming and knowledgeable muslim who follows islam to the best of his ability and upon the correct aqeedah. he lives alone with his divorced mother whose does not follow islam thoroughly and engages in very unislamic activities sometimes. i know both him and his mother and they are very close and very kind but i see that the son i sometimes put in situations that are extremely stressful for him and i cannot advise him properly. a few examples of these situations include the mother going out of the house in shorts and the son hating this shame but walking with her for fear that she will be accosted, or the mother being overly friendly with male acquaintances in the western manner, or going to dinner and sitting at a table where alcohol is being consumed though the mother does not consume it. there are various other types of scenarios that try this brother such as his mothers' friends advocating every kind of bidah. he does say what is wrong and try to give dawah to his mother but it is usually ignored as "extremism" or "from the stone age". please advise, my friend is confided in me only that he feels like a dirty "dayouth" and wants to know if staying with his mother is the correct thing given such behavior on her part. he errs on the side of staying with his mother even when she is adamant about wearing unislamic clothing for fear of her being molested be some stranger. also he did not tell me of these things and reveal his families faults, rather it is evident for those around to see as well as for me to see as his friend. please help and mat Allah ta'Ala reward you with the good.

Summary of answer

The best ways to deal with a misbehaving mother:

-Treat your mother well.

-Gently advise her, from time to time, to give up her bad behaviour.

-Explain to her how sinful her deeds are and what punishment awaits her if she does not stop.

-If she does not respond, then keep away from her in a good way.

-Do not mix with her in ways that will adversely affect your religion, but do not upset her either.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Challenge of a Misbehaving Mother

There is no doubt that the story you have told us is very sad and moving, especially when we see someone suffering because the person who is closest to him is lacking in terms of religion. But {Allah (Alone) is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs for us.} [Al- `Imran 3:173 – interpretation of the meaning] '{Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.} [Al-Baqarah 2:156 – interpretation of the meaning]

Honoring Parents despite Their Faults

This brother should remember that honouring one's parents is one of the most important duties that human beings have towards one another, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): {And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years – give thanks to Me and to your parents, - unto Me is the final destination. But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly…} [Luqman 31:14-15].

These disbelieving parents were doing their utmost to make their son associate partners with Allah, yet in spite of that Allah commanded the son to maintain a relationship with them and behave kindly with them in this world.

Dealing with a Mother’s Misbehavior in Islam

So you are also obliged to treat your mother well, advise her to give up her bad behaviour, explain to her how sinful her deeds are and what punishment awaits her if she does not stop.

If she responds, then praise be to Allah. If she does not, then keep away from her in a good way; do not mix with her in ways that will adversely affect your religion, but do not upset her either.

Behave with her in the world kindly, and continue to advise her from time to time.

Your keeping away from her will not be a sin, if you do it for the sake of Allah and in opposition to something wrong. (See the response of Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Uthaymin in Fatawa Islamiyyah, 4/196; Al-Lajnah Ad-Da’imah fi Fatawa Islamiyyah (Standing Committee on Islamic Fatwas), 4/204; Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Jibrin in Fatawa Al-Mar’ah al-Muslimah, 2/957)

Final Advice: Patience and Reward from Allah

In conclusion, if your staying with her will benefit her by increasing her religious commitment and Iman, her adherence to Islamic duties and her avoidance of prohibited deeds – or at least reduce her involvement in such activities – because she feels that she is being watched, for example, or because this will keep bad people away from her, and this will not cause you any harm at the same time, then stay with her in the hope of earning reward for whatever efforts you make, and Allah will reward you for your patience.

If you have already tried your utmost, to no avail, and have found that you are not making progress in any of the ways referred to above, and staying with her will have an adverse effect on your own religious commitment or reputation, then there is no sin on you if you keep away from her, as stated above, so long as you continue to check on her from time to time, to pay attention to her needs and to advise her.

We ask Allah to bless you with patience and reward you for your efforts, for He is the best of supporters and helpers.

Check these answers for more insight: (793, 326674, 3044, 76408, 129319)

And Allah knows best.