491457 - Should he tell his friend’s family about his misdeeds?

the question

I have a friend whose mother likes me and she feels that her son is no longer good, and she asks me about him, and I tell her the truth about what he does. But I have another friend who said that I am causing trouble, and that what I am doing is wrong. I would like to ask you to give a ruling on what I am doing: am I causing trouble or not?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Islam urges the Muslim to look for righteous friends who will help him to carry out his religious duties and remain steadfast in that, because this is one of the means that help a person to follow the path of righteousness and remain steadfast in adhering to the truth. Having righteous friends is one of the greatest means that helps the Muslim to remain steadfast in his faith. It was narrated from Abu Musa that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The believers (in their mutual support) are like a structure, parts of which support other parts” – and he interlaced his fingers. Narrated by al-Bukhari (467).

Musa (peace be upon him) sought righteous company, even though he was a prophet:

{And appoint for me a helper from my family,

Harun, my brother.

Strengthen me through him,

and let him share in my task,

so that we may glorify You much

and remember You much} [Ta-Ha 20:29-34].

According to the hadith narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “A man will follow the way of his close friend, so let one of you look at who he takes as a close friend.” Narrated by Abu Dawud (4833); classed as sahih by al-Albani.

One of the factors that facilitate sincerity in friendship, love and companionship is when each person is very keen to make sure that his friend is in the best state in terms of religious commitment and manners. This is why it is prescribed to choose righteous and sincere friends and companions. This is a crucial element of true brotherhood and is one of the foundations thereof.

It was narrated that Jarir ibn ‘Abdillah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I swore allegiance to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) pledging to establish prayer, give zakah and show sincerity to every Muslim. Narrated by al-Bukhari (57).

So if a person sees his brother or friend misbehaving, he must advise him and correct him, and keep him away from the places and means that may make him fall into that bad conduct.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is important to get together with one’s brothers in order to cooperate in attaining means of salvation, exhort one another to hold fast to the truth and exhort one another to hold fast to patience. That is one of the greatest means of attaining success. *Al-Fawa’id* (1/71).

Based on that, it is your duty towards your friend to create a good environment that will enable you both to carry out your religious duties, help you both to avoid sin and protect you both from drifting away.

So if you see your friend making a mistake or doing something wrong, then the first step – as we have mentioned above – is to advise him, correct him, help him to do good, divert him from what is wrong and evil, warn him against it, and warn him of the bad consequences of his misbehaviour and the danger of having bad friends.

Secondly:

If he does not respond to advice, then there are two scenarios regarding the way to deal with the situation:

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If his mistakes are rare slips, there is no need to tell his family, so as to maintain the good relationship between you, and because the basic principle is to conceal the mistakes of one's fellow Muslim. Your important role is to continue to be a friend who tries to help him to do good, and strives to correct his friend's behaviour and advise him. This is the benefit of being a good brother and a good friend.

-2-

If these mistakes become habitual and you are not able to turn him away from this misbehaviour, then in that case you should tell his family about it, so that it does not become ingrained behaviour or lead to persistent decline and drifting away from the straight path.

That is because covering up for him in this case would lead to the problem becoming worse and his persisting in wrongdoing without anyone intervening to stop him and correct him. This comes under the heading of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, by means of which social conduct may be corrected.

And Allah knows best.