How the Prophet Taught Moral Lessons

In Madinah, Prophet Muhammad  used to set aside time every morning to teach his Companions. He was renowned for his eloquence and clarity of speech. He did not speak too quickly, and though his phrasing was precise, he did not speak slowly, or in fragments with lots of pauses. It was easy for everyone to follow what he said.

'A'ishah described his way of speaking as follows: "Allah's Messenger did not ramble on the way you do these days. His speech was clear and precise. Those who listened to him easily remembered what he said." [Sahih al-Bukhari (3568) and Sahih Muslim (2493)]

Almost every day, he would sit in the mosque in Madinah with his Companions gathered around him. He would often start a discussion by posing a question. Once, he asked: "Might I inform you of the gravest of major sins?" When his Companions replied in the affirmative, he said:

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| "The gravest of major sins are to associate partners in worship with Allah, to disrespect your parents, and to bear false witness." [Sahih al-Bukhari (2654)] |

Sometimes, he posed questions to open their eyes to some new idea or perspective that they had not thought of before. For instance, once he asked:

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| "Do you know what it means to be bankrupt?" |

They replied that it means to possess neither money nor goods. He said:

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| With respect to my followers, the one who is bankrupt is one who is brought forth on the day of judgment with prayers, fasts, and charity to his credit, but he had spoken ill of some people, falsely accused some people, misappropriated the wealth of others, and assaulted people or shed their blood. Those he had wronged will be compensated from his good deeds until he has no more to his credit. Then the remainder of those he had wronged will be compensated by having some of their sins placed on him. As a consequence, he is consigned to Hell. [Sahih Muslim (2581)] |

Sometimes, he simply wanted to stimulate their minds. Once he asked: "Tell me which tree is like a Muslim. Its leaves do not scatter everywhere and it yields up its fruit on a regular basis." His Companions suggested one desert tree after another, and each time the Prophet replied in the negative.

Then it occurred to 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar b. Al-Khattab that the tree in question might be the date palm. However, he was the youngest of the ten Companions in the Prophet's company on that occasion, and his father 'Umar as well as Abu Bakr were also present, so he felt shy to speak. Then the Prophet  said: "It is the date palm." [Sahih al-Bukhari (2209) and Sahih Muslim (2811)]

The Prophet would sometimes repeat a statement three times to emphasize its importance. For instance, once when enumerating the major sins, he came to the point where he said: "And beware of making false testimony; beware of bearing false witness." He began repeating it over and over again, until his Companions started to utter:

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| "If he would only desist..." [Sahih al-Bukharī (2654)] |

They were not saying this out of boredom, but out of anxiety and concern for the Prophet, because they could see how much it was affecting him.

Sometimes, the Prophet  took his Companions by surprise with a question in order to bring the discussion to a surprising conclusion. For instance, once he asked: "Who among you is fasting today?" This question took them off guard, since he had not even hinted to them earlier that they should fast on this day. Had he done so, they would have all been fasting.

They all sat silently for a while. Then Abu Bakr spoke up:

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| "I am fasting, O Messenger of Allah." |

Then the Prophet  asked:

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| "Who visited a sick person today?" |

Again, they were all quite, until Abu Bakr again spoke up saying that he had done so. Then he asked two further questions:

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| "Who followed a funeral procession today?" |

and

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| "Who fed a poor person?" |

Each question was met with silence until Abū Bakr spoke up admitting that he had done so.

Finally the Prophet  said:

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| "Anyone who carries out these four deeds in a single day will enter Paradise." [Sahih Muslim (1028)] |

Sometimes, the Prophet  used drawings to illustrate his point. On one occasion, he drew a square on the ground. He then drew a straight line going through the middle of the square but emerging out of it at the top end. Then he drew other smaller lines coming from the edges of the square and pointing inwards towards the larger straight line. Then he asked his Companions:

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| "Do you know what this means?" |

They replied: "Allah and His Messenger know best."

He  said:

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| The line going through the middle of the box represents the human being. The other lines aiming towards it are the trials of life that come at him from all directions. If a person manages to avoid one of those trials, he will run into one of the others. The surrounding square is the lifespan that encompasses a person. The extension of the line outside the box represent hiss hopes. The person remains busy with those hopes, but the term of life comes to an end before they are fulfilled. [Sahih al-Bukhari (6417)] |

The purpose of these daily gatherings in the mosque was to teach his Companions about Islam and provide them with moral lessons. However, it was not about lecturing or preaching. It is always a dynamic discussion; never a one-way exchange, and it was always thought-provoking.

God sent Muhammad, the Final Prophet (peace be upon him-PBUH) as a “**mercy for all the worlds.”** (Quran [21:107](https://quran.com/21%3A107))

Thus, the methods that he followed in order to spread this divine message to humanity could be summarized into the following:

1. Being a living example.
2. Educating his companions to be role models for humanity.
3. Teaching the concept of *[dawah](http://aboutislam.net/counseling/ask-about-islam/how-to-perform-dawah/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)*, or call for Islam.

### Being a Living Example

Regarding the first method, the Prophet (PBUH) spread the message of Islam through showing humanity an example of an excellent human being.

He was an ideal teacher, friend, [husband](http://aboutislam.net/family-society/husbands-wives/prophet-muhammad-a-husband-like-no-other/), father, grandfather, speaker, [neighbour](http://aboutislam.net/counseling/ask-the-scholar/morals-manners/what-are-the-rights-of-our-neighbors/), employer, etc.

In all the roles that he played in his life, he gave humanity examples of how to reach human perfection.

And this is the main means through which the message of Islam was spread among his people.

It has been mentioned in Mubarakpuri’s biography of the Prophet Muhammad, Ar-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (the Sealed Nectar), that when Ja`far ibn Abi Talib was asked by Al-Najashi, the King of Ethiopia at the time, about the message of Muhammad, Ja`far said:

*He (Muhammad) is a man who is asking us to be honest, chaste, and good to our relatives.*

When Aishah, the Prophet’s wife, was asked about his manners, she said:

*His manners were the Quran. (Ahmad)*

*He was a Quran walking on earth. (Ahmad)*

And, Allah Almighty said of His messenger:

***Indeed, you have a sublime character.****(Quran*[*68:4*](https://quran.com/68%3A4)*)*

### He Taught His Companions How To Teach Others

The second factor in the spread of Islam was the way the companions were educated by their [teacher, Muhammad](http://aboutislam.net/reading-islam/about-muhammad/the-teacher-of-mankind/).

This was so they could be role models themselves. Islam was spread in various parts of the world through the companions’ excellent conduct, demonstrated during their travels after the Prophet passed away.

**The Islamic state can**[**never force people to become Muslim by any means, as some might think.**](http://aboutislam.net/counseling/ask-about-islam/fight-everyone-converts/)

The way Islam spread in the vast areas in Asia and Africa was through the excellent example that the companions and their students and followers (at-tabe`een) gave to people.

The areas of the largest Islamic populations today in East Asia have never seen any military conflict with any Islamic state.

Indonesia is a clear example. The way Islam spread and, later, became the religion of the overwhelming majority of that country was through akhlaq ([good manners](http://aboutislam.net/reading-islam/about-muhammad/good-manners-a-key-to-paradise/) and ethical morality).

### He Taught People How To Give Effective Dawah

The third method through which the Prophet (PBUH) spread the message of Islam was by teaching the concept of dawah (call for Islam).

The Prophet Muhammad taught his companions, and all Muslims, that a caller to a good deed is rewarded a reward equal to the reward of those who follow him in his or her call (Al-Bukhari).

The Prophet also advised his people to:

*Convey the message after me, even one verse. (Al-Bukhari)*

Allah describes the Prophet’s way by saying:

***Say [O Prophet]: “This is my way: Resting upon conscious insight accessible to reason, I am calling [you all] unto God – I and they who follow me.” And [say:] “Limitless is God in His glory; and I am not one of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him!”****(Quran*[*12:108*](https://quran.com/12%3A108)*)*