

Voices on Violence

Why does it happen, parent?

"It is for your own good,' she said to me as sticks rained on me. 'You are getting out of control. You want money and more money all the time! Do you think it grows on trees?' she asked me with fire in her eyes. 'You think your father gives me money? And on top, he brings you and your brother for me to take care of, instead of contributing some money. Today I am going to teach him a lesson. You will not eat until he provides more money.'"

"So was she teaching you a lesson, or your father?" Joseph's friend asked.

"I am not even sure what she was trying to teach, let alone who she was trying teach a lesson to. She said she has no job, no money and my father keeps bringing more children home from somewhere."

"You see, she doesn't have a bad heart," Joseph continued after a while. "It's just that sometimes she gets too angry. Most of the time she feels sorry after a few hours when she has calmed down, and calls me to eat. We all know that we have to be careful and stay out of her way when my father doesn't come home for a few days."

"What does your father do when he comes home and sees what has happened?"

"He tells me to behave better and stay out of her way. Sometimes if they fight, he beats her and all the children for bringing him problems. The other day he said I was making his life miserable. I wanted to ask him what I had done but a quick slap shut me up."

They sat in silence for a while and then Joseph said, "Sometimes I think they beat us children because they don't know what else to do with all the anger they are feeling."

In a study completed recently, more than 85 percent of the adults said that the goal of punishing children was to guide them on how to behave. However, more than a half of these adults said that children were being mistreated (wrongly or excessively punished) and a third of these adults said it happens often. In these cases children were being violated for reasons beyond their immediate behaviour.

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