

would say I'm somewhere right in the middle. I am the third of my mother's six children, and I am the oldest boy among them.

As I mentioned earlier, my father died when I was only eight years old. During his life we were a united family and we lived graciously. Upon his death, however, our family became divided and we soon fell victim to ruthless waves of greed which rendered us incapable of recognizing friend from foe. This is the taste of orphanhood; bitter regardless of the shape it takes. One might think that a rich orphan lives in a better condition than a poor orphan, but I did not find that to be the case for me. What adds to the misery of the rich orphan are the packs of corrupt and greedy men who do not fear God. They circle around him with the intent of taking his wealth, whereas good people might avoid the rich orphan to protect themselves from the suspicion of ulterior motives. It is a hard situation to explain, but I do not wish to prolong writing on sorrowful matters simply because I love joyful tales filled with hope and life lessons. Nevertheless, many of life's most valuable lessons often require hardships.

I was four years old when I joined *Al-Farabi* elementary school which was no more than 200 meters away from our house. Although the school was so close our father was very particular that we had to wait for the driver to bring us back and forth from school. Sometimes the driver would be late to bring us home, however, and in that case we would walk home, leave our bags, then walk back to school and play in the street until the driver arrived. At the time, we didn't understand why our father was so insistent on this peculiar system, but later we found out that the