

Marital Discord

Causes & Cures

By: Majdi Muhammad Ash- Shahawi



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Marital Discord

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Introduction

Indeed, all praise is for Allah; we praise Him, repent to Him, and seek His forgiveness and help. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own selves and of our wicked deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray; and whomsoever Allah leads astray, none can guide. And I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, and He has no partner; and I bear witness that our Prophet Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾﴾

"O you who believe! Fear Allah (by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden) as He should be feared. (Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always,) and die not except in a state of Islam [(as Muslims with complete submission to Allah)]." [Qur'an 3:102]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾﴾

"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you." [Qur'an 4:1]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾﴾

"O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e. he will be saved from the Hell-fire and will be admitted to Paradise)." [Qur'an 33:70, 71]

Indeed, the most truthful speech is Allah's Book, and the best guidance is that of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) The most evil of affairs are newly invented ones (in the religion), for every newly invented practice is an innovation (Bid'ah), every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

A blissful marriage is both stable and peaceful; it abounds with mutual love, compassion, and mercy, while disagreement and discord are reduced to a minimum level. This is not to say that a blissful marriage is altogether free from problems and disagreements between husband and wife; at least some disagreement is inevitable. The difference is that some couples know how to deal with, cope with, and solve disagreements that arise every so often, whereas other couples don't know how to handle a disagreement; either both of them or one of them exacerbates the situation until a small disagreement becomes a major battle. True, battles sometimes end in a truce, but when waged on a continuous

basis, battles tend to end in defeat, except that marital battles end in defeat for both opponents - divorce and the breaking up of a family. What is truly sad in this regard is that so many marriages end up in divorce not because of 'irreconcilable differences,' but because of trifling disagreements that are blown out of proportion by the husband, by the wife, or by both of them.

Islam provides the groundwork for a happy marriage. As long as both husband and wife adhere to Islam's teachings, and as long as they observe Allah's commands and prohibitions, they will share a happy life together.

This book - with the help and guidance of Allah (SWT) - contains the foundations for a happy marriage; it calls attention to the most common marital problems that people complain about, and then after that diagnosis, it contains an important discussion on how couples can best deal with and solve marital disagreements. I ask Allah (SWT) to guide us to the straight path. And all praise is for Allah, the Lord of all that exists.

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The Foundations of A Happy Marriage

One of the main goals of marriage in Islam is to achieve a happy union between husband and wife. We have to understand what a happy marriage means, what a happy marriage entails, and what are the means to achieving a happy marriage. Certainly, a happy marriage, in the Islamic sense, is not achieved merely through sexual relations. True, a healthy sex life between husband and wife plays an important role in achieving a happy marriage, but there are other factors as well - such as both parties living a stable life, physically, mentally, and even economically. Other factors include compatibility in terms of personality and a common view in religious matters.

Islam has laid the foundations that, if applied, help guarantee a stable married life. Some of those foundations are described in this chapter.

A Sound Choice

The Messenger of Allah (SWT) said:

«تُنكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ: لِمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَلِجَمَالِهَا وَلِدِينِهَا، فَاظْفَرْ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرِبَتْ يَدَاكَ»

"A woman is married for four (qualities or possessions): for her wealth, for her (honorable) lineage, for her beauty, and for her religion. So succeed in acquiring the woman of religion: Taribat Yadak (You will then profit and succeed; or this expression is used to encourage people to do something - in this case, to marry a woman who practices the teachings of Islam)." [Al-Bukhari (5090), Muslim (1466), Abu Dawud (2032), An-Nasai (6/ 68), Ibn Majah (1858), Ad-Darimi (2170), Ahmad (2/428), Al-Baihaqi (7/79), and Ibn Hibban (4025, 4026)]

This Hadith indicates that in all affairs, and in marriage particularly (since a person is choosing not a temporary companion but a lifelong companion) one should make religion one's priority over all else.

Religion is the yardstick by which one should choose his spouse. But this does not mean that a woman's other qualities are unimportant. If a woman is rich, her husband may, with her consent, spend from her wealth. And if two women are equal in their religious devoutness, [Though, of course, this is near impossible to measure] one should choose the more beautiful of the two. On the other hand, one should not choose a non-religious beautiful woman over a religious woman who is not beautiful. Ibn 'Amr (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

«لَا تَزَوِّجُوا النِّسَاءَ لِحُسْنِهِنَّ، فَعَسَى حُسْنُهُنَّ أَنْ يُرْدِيَهُنَّ، وَلَا تَزَوِّجُوهُنَّ لِأَمْوَالِهِنَّ، فَعَسَى أَمْوَالُهُنَّ أَنْ تُطْغِيَهُنَّ، وَلَكِنْ تَزَوِّجُوهُنَّ عَلَى الدِّينِ، وَلَا أَمَّةٌ خَرَمَاءُ، سَوْدَاءُ ذَاتُ دِينٍ أَفْضَلُ»

"Do not marry women for their beauty: perhaps their beauty will lead to their destruction. Nor should you marry them for their wealth: perhaps their wealth will lead them to exceed the proper bounds (and become high-handed). Instead, marry them for (their) religion. And a Kharma (one whose nose is partly cut off and whose ear is partly punctured), black female-slave who applies the (teachings of the) religion is better (than another woman who, though she may be better looking, does not apply the teachings of the religion)." [Ibn Majah (1859) and Al-Baihaqi (7/80). And in Ad-Da'ifah, Al-Albani declared the Hadith to be weak (1060)]

In our society today, religious-minded men, for the most part, search for women who have a similar outlook. Most problems in this regard arise when two non-religious-minded people marry, and then one of them is guided to the truth. Perhaps the factor that leads to most failures in marriage is for a husband and wife to have not opposite, for that is not the right word, but clashing personalities and habits.

Therefore, both man and woman should learn as much as they can about their prospective spouse. It is the responsibility of the families of both parties to openly declare all relevant information about their relative that is trying to get married. Doing so is in everyone's best interest, for openness at the outset is better than failure in the end. A girl's family knows her quirks and habits more than anyone else, and the same can be said about a man's family. Women are better qualified to speak about one from their sex, just as men are better qualified to speak about one from their sex.

In spite of what I have just said, people who are Islamically engaged (which simply means that a proposal has been accepted, but the marriage has not yet taken place) should not mix in a manner that is contrary to the teachings of Islam. By dating or mixing in a non-Islamic manner, two people will not really get to know each other better. A man can date a woman for 2 years, yet he will still know nothing about her quirks and foibles. He only sees her when she is at her best, and then after marriage, he learns of her many faults (and vice versa); hence the high divorce rate in Western countries. It is a girl's family members (since they have known her for her entire life) who are best qualified to give a clear depiction of her character to a prospective suitor. And it is a man's family members who are best qualified to give a clear depiction of his character to the girl to whom he is proposing and to her guardian.

Islam permits a man to know firsthand, prior to marriage, about the physical attributes of his prospective wife; of course, certain conditions must be fulfilled. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that a man went to the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and informed him that he married a woman from the Ansar (the native inhabitants of Al-Madinah). The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him:

«أَنْظَرْتَ إِلَيْهَا؟»

"Did you see her?"

He said, "No." The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

«فَاذْهَبْ فَانْظُرْ إِلَيْهَا فَإِنَّ فِي أَعْيُنِ الْأَنْصَارِ شَيْئًا»

*"Then go and look at her, for indeed, there is something in the eyes of the (people of the) Ansar."
[Muslim (1424), Ahmad (2/76, 299), and Ibn Hibban (4030)]*

The people of knowledge disagree about the meaning of, "For indeed, there is something in the eyes of the (people of the) Ansar." Some say that they were bleary-eyed; others maintain that their eyes were small; and yet others say that they had blueness in their eyes. In the narration of Abu 'Awanah in his Mustakhraj, the Hadith contains the following addition: "Verily, their eyes are small." Based on this narration, the strongest view is that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was referring to the smallness of their eyes.

When Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah proposed to a woman, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him:

«انْظُرْ إِلَيْهَا فَإِنَّهُ أَحْرَى أَنْ يُؤَدَمَ بَيْنَكُمَا»

"Look at her, for indeed, doing so will make it more likely for your (marriage) together to last longer." [Ahmad (4/245, 246), At-Tirmidhi (1087), Ad-Darimi (2172), An-Nasai (7/6), Ibn Majah (1865), and Ibn Hibban (4032).]

On another occasion, a woman went to the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and presented herself to him, hoping that he would marry her. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) looked at her, and then looked at her more intently; he (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) then lowered his head. Then, when the woman realized that he had not made a judgment regarding her, she sat down... [Al-Bukhari (1526)] And on yet another occasion, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent Umm Salim (May Allah be pleased with her) to look at a woman, giving her these instructions:

«شُمِّي عَوَارِضَهَا وَانْظُرِي إِلَى عُرْقُوبِيهَا»

"Smell her teeth and look at her Achilles' tendons." [Reported by Ahmad (3/231), and the narrators of his narration of the Hadith are all trustworthy. Al-Bazzar reported it too, as is found in Majma' Az-Zawa'id (4/276). Al-Hakim reported it (2/166); he declared it to be authentic, and Adh-Dhahabi concurred with his judgment. And Al-Baihaqi reported it as well (7/87)]

Religion Should Be The Primary Factor When One Chooses A Spouse

In our times, the period beginning with the proposal and ending with the wedding is fraught with artificiality - on both sides. Because of this artificiality, one cannot have a clear idea of what his or her future spouse is really like. The suitor attires himself in the best of clothing, and he acts artificially; the same goes for the girl to whom he has proposed. This is why I advise that both families make their choice based on the other's practice of the religion, based on the other's character, manners, outlook, and thinking. A man should strive to choose a mate whose disposition corresponds with his own.

Granted, wealth and beauty are important considerations, but they are secondary concerns when compared with the issue of disposition and character. The religion (Islam) requires us to refine our characters, and religion is the basis for which we choose our spouses.

A man should marry his equal in terms of piety and righteousness, for in a Hadith related by 'Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

«تَخَيَّرُوا الْأَكْفَاءَ لِنُطْفِكُمْ فَانْكِحُوا الْأَكْفَاءَ، وَأَنْكِحُوا إِلَيْهِمْ»

"Choose equals for your sperm, so marry equals, and marry off (your daughters) to their equals." [Ibn Majah (1968), Al-Hakim (2/163), and Ad-Daraqutni (3/299). And Al-Albani declared it to be authentic in As-Sahihah (1067)]

One needs to keep in mind that a righteous woman helps her husband to better apply the teachings of Islam. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

«مَنْ رَزَقَهُ اللَّهُ امْرَأَةً صَالِحَةً فَقَدْ أَعَانَهُ عَلَى شَطْرِ دِينِهِ، فَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ فِي الشَّطْرِ الْبَاقِي»

“As for he whom Allah provides with a righteous woman, He (Allah SWT) has indeed helped him with half of his religion. Then let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half.” [Reported by Al-Hakim (2/161), who said, "This Hadith has an authentic chain, though they (Bukhari and Muslim) did not report it." Adh-Dhahabi concurred, and Al-Albani declared it to be Hasan in As-Sahihah (625).

Islam stresses the importance of piety as the main standard by which one should choose his wife; this does not, however, detract from the importance of good looks, for it is by being satisfied with the good looks of one's wife that one is able to remain faithful and constant. For the most part, a man, by his very disposition, feels unfulfilled if he has an unsightly wife. As for the Hadeeth in which we are instructed not to marry a woman for her beauty, it in no way indicates that we should not take beauty into consideration when we are making a choice. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was warning us not to marry solely for beauty, especially when a woman is corrupted in her religion.

When a woman is at once wicked and beautiful, she is a greater test for her husband. He finds it hard to divorce her: he cannot bear her demeanor, yet he cannot bear to be without her. His situation is similar to that of the man who went to the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I indeed have a woman (wife) who does not repel the hand that touches. ["(She) does not repel the hand that touches" either means that she does not repel the hand of a man who wants to have illicit relations with her, or that she does not refuse anyone who asks for some of her husband's wealth. Some scholars have said that, "Then keep her," means: "Then keep her from doing evil." Some scholars have said that, "Does not repel the hand that touches," refers not to illegal sexual intercourse but to sexual relations that do not reach that level; so kissing and pleasure derived from merely touching are intended. Otherwise, the man would have been accusing his wife of adultery, for which there is a particular ruling in Islam. For a more detailed discussion of this Hadith, refer to 'Aunul-Ma'bud]" The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

« طَلَّقَهَا »

"Divorce her."

He said, "I indeed love her." The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

« أَمْسِكْهَا »

"Then keep her (as your wife)." [An-Nasai (6/67)]

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered him to keep her because he feared that, if he were to divorce her, he would be tempted to seek her out through forbidden means.

Therefore, beauty is important, but of prime importance are piety and righteousness. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

« الدُّنْيَا كُلُّهَا مَتَاعٌ، وَخَيْرُ مَتَاعِ الدُّنْيَا الْمَرْأَةُ الصَّالِحَةُ »

"The world in its entirety is Mata' (goods or that through which pleasure is derived), and the best Mata' of the world is a righteous wife." [Muslim (1467), An-Nasai (6/56, 57), Ibn Majah (1855), Ahmad (2/168), and Ibn Hibban (4020)]

Shared Duties

A man is responsible for his family and for his own self; he must strive to protect his family from the Hell-fire, for Allah (SWT) said:

﴿قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا﴾

"Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell)." [Qur'an 66:6]

Hence a man must obey Allah's commands, stay away from matters He (SWT) prohibited, advise his family, and fulfill their rights. But he is not the only one who has duties: His wife is responsible for her home, for organizing her husband's affairs, for taking care of their children, and for advising her husband.

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

«كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ، وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ، وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ، وَالْعَبْدُ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُ، أَلَا فِكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»

"Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is responsible for his flock. The Imam is a shepherd, and he is responsible for his congregation. A man is shepherd among his family, and he is responsible for his flock (his family). A woman is shepherd in her husband's home and children, and she is responsible for them. A servant is shepherd over the wealth of his owner, and he is responsible for it. Lo! Every one of you is a shepherd and every one of you is responsible for his flock." [Al-Bukhari (893), Muslim (1829), Abu Dawud (2928), At-Tirmidhi (1705), Ahmad (2/5, 54, 55, 108, 111, 121), and Ibn Hibban (4473)]

It Is Compulsory For A Woman To Serve Her Husband

Shaikhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said:

"Scholars disagree: does a woman have to serve her husband to fix up the mattress, to serve food, drink, and bread, to knead dough, to give food to his servants and livestock, and so on? Some scholars have said, 'She does not have to serve him,' but this view is weak, weak like the view in which it is held that a man does not have to have intimate relations (sexual intercourse) with his wife. If he doesn't, then he isn't treating her well... And it is said that - this is the correct view - she must serve him, for a husband is her chief in Allah's Book... Among the scholars who hold this view are those who say, 'She must serve him a little bit,' while others among them say, 'She must serve him according to Al-Ma'ruf,' and this latter view is correct. A woman must serve her husband according to Al-Ma'ruf, which means that the standard of society based on their status applies to them. The help provided by a wife who lives in the desert is not like the help provided by a wife who is a city-dweller, and the help of a strong woman is not like the help of a weak woman (so the matter depends upon Al-Ma'ruf - upon the situation of the husband and wife, and upon the norms of the society they live in)." [Fatawa, Ibn Taymiyyah (2/234, 235)]