



Treating the Wife Well

When we seek out knowledge about marriage we see that the Qur'an and Sunnah have assigned tremendous importance to the marriage contract and have distinguished it above all other contracts. Indeed the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said, **"When a man marries, he has completed half of his religion and he needs only to fear Allah to complete the other half."** (Mishkat). In the Qur'an, Allah says, **"And how could you take it (back) while you have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a firm and strong covenant?"** [4:81]

Brothers should also make sure they are asking themselves the right questions before getting married and throughout the marriage.

"What are the rights of a wife upon her husband?", "What is my responsibility toward her?", "What do I owe her?" Never asking these questions, or answering them with ignorance, causes many problems in Muslim households. What are the characteristics every man should possess in order to be a good husband to his wife?

The characteristics of a Muslim husband and the way to acquire them have been made clear and easier to accomplish through the example of Prophet Muhammad, (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Allah says, **"Indeed you have in the messenger of Allah a most excellent example of conduct for him who looks forward to the meeting with Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much."** [33:21]

Unfortunately many brothers interpret this in a limited way - they focus on what we know of the dress and physical attributes of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and his Sahaba. There is no question that the best example of a husband and father is the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Why is it, then, that so many of us are so far from his example in this area? Could it be that other examples around us influence our behavior more? Do we believe that our financial contribution should represent our dedication to our families? Or have we deliberately ignored the model Allah has provided us. Allah has taught us that if we want to achieve Allah's pleasure in all spheres of life, the best example for us is His Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Indeed, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) himself has informed us that the excellence of his example encompasses and includes everything, especially his behavior toward his wives. He, (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said, **"The best of you are those who are best toward their wives and I am the best of you toward my wives."** (Tirmithi)

Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) advised us to **"treat women kindly. The woman has been created from a rib (which is curved). The most crooked part of the rib is the uppermost part. If you were to try to straighten it you will (certainly) break it and if you leave it as it is, it will**

remain curved, So treat women kindly." (Bukhari and Muslim). So when a husband offers advice, or reminds or admonishes his wife, he must take this hadeeth into consideration and exercise his authority in a gentle manner in order to bring about the desired result.

A Wife is an advisor

A husband and wife spend many hours, days and years together, InshaAllah, they get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses very well. It is for this reason that a wife can be the best advisor for her husband. Also, sometimes we are so involved in other aspects of a situation that we find it hard to find a suitable solution. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) used to discuss certain matters with his wives and ask for their advice.

An example of this happened shortly after the treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed. Many of the Prophet's companions were displeased with the treaty and the great number of compromises it contained. So, when the Prophet ordered the companions to shave their heads, slaughter their animals and prepare to return to Medina, instead of complying as they had always done in the past, the companions remained in their places. This greatly disturbed the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) for his companions had never disobeyed him in this manner before. He (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) went to Umm Salamah and asked her for advice. She told him, "You are the Messenger of Allah, Shave your head and slaughter your animal and the people will do as you have done." So the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) had his head shaved and slaughtered his animal and the people followed him.

Showing your wife that you care

Remember that you will be rewarded by Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala for any emotions you show to your wife as the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said **"one would be rewarded for anything that he does seeking the pleasure of Allah even the food that he puts in the mouth of his wife.**

We should realize that none of us is perfect, and that Allah allowed us this safe relationship where we can offer help to one another and use every opportunity available to improve ourselves and the image we present as a model for our families, friends and others. As Umar ibnul Khattab once said, **"May Allah have Mercy upon the one who points out my shortcomings."**

How many brothers appreciate the hard work that goes into maintaining the home, caring for children, preparing meals as well as being able to take care of them? Many wives have felt neglected and taken for granted simply because their husbands do not appreciate what they do. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) showed that he knew that maintaining a home was not just "women's work."

Aisha (radiyallahu anha) was once asked, **"How was the Prophet's conduct in his home?" She said, "He was like one of you at home, yet he was most lenient**

and most generous. His spirits were high at all times, he smiled and even joined us in laughter at times. He was ready to give a helping hand to his wives in the ordinary work of the house, he sewed his own clothes and mended his own shoes. In general, he helped in whatever work his wives did. However, when the call to prayer was pronounced, he dropped everything and hurried to the masjid." (Tabaqat of Ibn Sad)

Brothers, just try to imagine what your lives would be like if for some reason you had to do all of this by yourself, in addition to a job outside the home. It would seem impossible. It helps to show your wife that you appreciate her efforts. You may tell her that you appreciate her, but do you show her? When was the last time you did the laundry, ran the vacuum, changed a diaper, provided a home-cooked meal for your family, or gave your wife a day off (while you completed her chores for that day)? Showing the initiative to help your wife, and lessen her burden will mean so much more to her than the effort you put forth and will do much to strengthen your relationship.

Healthy body. Healthy mind

Many brothers want their wives to be able to look good and in order to do this she needs to take care of her body. How do you expect her to do this if she barely steps foot out of the house? It is really not right for a husband to go out to play a game while his wife remains tucked away in the house with no one to talk to except a three-year-old. The Muslim husband has to spend quality time with his wife and to allow her to engage in permissible forms of recreation.

Allah has directed us to take care of our bodies, not only men but women also. Aisha (radiyallahu anha) reported, **"I raced with the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and beat him in the race. Later, after I had put on some weight, we raced again. This time he was the winner. At that time he said to me, "This one cancels that one."** (Abu Dawud). On another occasion Aisha (radiyallahu anha) said, **"By Allah, I saw the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) standing at the door of my house while the Abyssinians were displaying their skill with spears in the courtyard of the Prophet's masjid. He concealed me with his cloth so that I could see their play and he stood there for me until I became tired and left. So, be understanding of the young woman who is eager for entertainment."** (Muslim)

Many brothers feel that the Islamic regulations concerning hijab forbid a woman to leave the house for recreation, but the above evidences seem to refute this position. In fact, when a woman wears hijab, she is recognized as a Muslim woman and thus protected from being molested. And, the society is protected from the fitnah that would occur if she were not properly clothed. In all circumstances the woman should wear the proper hijab and seclusion should be sought. Even if others are around the woman, she may still enjoy herself within limits.

Piety and Fear of Allah

If a man really and truly wants to be a good husband to his wife, he must also possess fear of Allah. If a man has the fear of Allah, and it is this fear that most influences his relationship and his dealings with his wife, he fears what Allah may do to him if he harms her or treats her in a way that is unjust. He knows that he has to

meet Allah and answer for all that he has said and done. Indeed this is why Hasan ibn Ali said when asked, **"O Hasan I have a daughter. To whom do you think I should marry her?"** Hasan said, **'Marry her to a man who fears Allah; for if he truly fears Allah and if he loves her he will honor her and even if he doesn't love her, he will never oppress or abuse her (because he fears Allah).'**

Brothers! Let the fact and belief that Allah is watching guide you in your treatment of the woman you have made your wife by granting her the respect and dignity she deserves. You have brought somebody's daughter into your own home. She left her family, her friends, close associates and in many cases even the town that she grew up in and she came to a strange environment just to share the rest of her life with you. Was she handed over to you to be a target of your physical and verbal abuse?

What then are the most important ingredients of a happy marriage? Allah Ta'la says **'And from amongst His signs is that He created for you from amongst yourselves partners, that you may live in tranquility with them, and He has created love and mercy between you. Verily in that are signs for those who reflect.'** [30:21]

Today, we are very courteous to our clients, appreciative to our colleagues and cheerful to our friends. Unfortunately this warmth is not extended to the poor wife who is most deserving of this courtesy and charm. Every person has shortcomings. It is therefore quite natural to find this in your partner. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has advised us to take pleasure in the good and overlook the bad. Have you ever spared the thought that there may be so many habits which you possess that may be bringing grief to your wife? She may have been patiently bearing it not wanting to hurt your feelings!

Education

One of the most desirable characteristics of a Muslim husband is that he himself is knowledgeable about Islam and teaches his wife whatever he knows. Why would any Muslim husband want to deny his wife this right? Is it not his wife who will guide his children as they grow? Isn't she the one who teaches them about haram and halal? Isn't she the one to see that they learn to pray and fast? Isn't she the one who must protect her husband's place and belongings in his absence according to Islamic guidelines? If her knowledge about the deen is limited, the entire family will suffer. Many men seek to shelter their wives from outside influences by forbidding them to participate in outside activities. Many men may fear that if their wife's Imaan becomes stronger, she will object to his behavior or certain weaknesses in his character. These are reasons that should compel us to participate in her Islamic education, so as she learns, so will we.

As the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said, **"Each one of you is a shepherd and every shepherd will be asked about his flock... and the man will be asked about his family."** (Bukhari and Muslim).

When the Day of Judgment comes, will our reasons for not educating our families be sufficient for Allah? Will we be able to offer any excuse after Allah and His Messenger have made it clear that educating our wives is a duty enjoined upon him that he will be asked about?

Brothers, do your wives read the Qur'an, Hadeeth and Seerah of Prophet Mohammed (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)? Do they understand their meanings? Do they practice what they have learned? It is our obligation to make certain that our wives have the opportunity and means to continuously increase their knowledge. To do so will not only please Allah but will improve the relations of everyone in our homes, our Ummah, and inshaAllah the societies in which we live.