

Marriage and Society

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ISBN: 0473271443

ISBN-13: 978-0473271442

INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah the most gracious, the most merciful, I thank Allah, who created you and me, every living being, what we see and what we don't see. May Allah accept all our good deeds, and guide us in life to follow the right path and live in the right way, until the Day of Judgment.

As a true believer in Allah, the first thing that you have to accept and believe is *toubeed*, which is that there is no god other than Allah (the oneness of Allah). This sounds simple, but if you do not accept it and live by it, your piety is meaningless. This belief is the main foundation of your faith. The fact is: there is no god but Allah, and he is the only creator. You must worship Allah, as the holy Quran tells us in verse 56 of *surah* (chapter) Adh-Dhariyat – “*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.*” Allah sent prophets to mankind to teach it how to worship him. This happened from the beginning of time until 571 AD, when he sent his final prophet - Muhammad - to convey his final messages to all of mankind. The most important part of these messages is *toubeed*. Without *toubeed*, whatever you do in your life is meaningless. One very important part of *toubeed* is to keep your faith in God in every aspect of your life. When anything happens to you, whether it is good or bad, it is Allah's will. I will discuss this further, in the context of this book.

To worship God, and keep your faith in him alone, is the most challenging thing for many Muslims and non-Muslims especially in this day and age. People are becoming less believing and less faithful, because they are influenced by science or myth. When we witness major events on earth, whether they concern humans or our environment, science always has an explanation for those events. Alternatively, when something good or bad happens to someone, some people may think the cause is supernatural. These are false beliefs, and are forbidden in Islam. Neither science nor myth can explain anything. God is the only door! In verse 39 of *surah* Al-Kahf, we are told that “*And why did you, when you entered your garden, not say, 'What Allah willed [has occurred]; there is no power except in Allah'?*”. Those who live their lives like this are the winners here and hereafter. When dealing with all of the problems that affect you - whether they are in your marriage, family, physical health, finances, social life, or spirituality - ask for help through powerful prayers and supplication to Allah. He will surely provide you with a solution which is lawful

under Islamic religious teachings. On the other hand, if you have anything good, or valuable, you must humble yourself and know that it comes from Allah's mercy on you. This is the same for your intelligence and physical strength. It is very important to follow your prayers and to remember Allah alone when you say these prayers. Verse 5 of *surah* Al-Fatihah says *"It is You we worship and You we ask for help."* Most Muslims make this promise every single day, at least five times, but very few people keep it. It is compulsory, as stated in verse 22 of *surah* Al-Hashr which says *"He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful."* This verse is one of the few verses of the holy Quran in which Allah warns every believer about what is required from them.

The oneness of Allah is one of the five main pillars of Islam. It is an opportunity for you to take refuge and protection from Allah when you are in any kind of trouble or need. That is why it is important for you to try and learn from Islamic scholars. They will teach you the proper way of asking for help from Allah. One of the favours that you can ask of Allah is forgiveness. You have to realise that every soul is guilty of crime. You may or may not know which crime you are guilty of. When you regret your bad deeds or your past mistakes, and you are ready to come clean, it is never too late. Allah has mentioned frequently in the holy Quran that he can forgive you for any sins, as long as you are not deliberately repeating them. In verse 53 of *surah* Az-Zumar, he says *"O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah . Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."* This verse gives every true believer a second chance. All that you have to do is maintain the conditions of forgiveness. They are that you must regret your sins, and you must not deliberately commit any future sins. By the mercy of Allah, he might forgive you for all of your past sins, and help you stay on the right path to the Day of Judgement.

My personal advice to all of you is that if almighty Allah can forgive every human being for their sins by repentance, then we on Earth can also forgive someone for their mistakes and move on. In most aspects of life, everybody has the right to a second chance. In return you must not abuse that second chance by repeating the same mistakes!

Respect the privacy of your Muslim brothers and sisters after they

repent and become good people. Do not remind them of the sins and mistakes that they committed in the past. I have seen this attitude in some people, who often remind somebody of their past mistakes which they have since forgotten and left behind. This kind of attitude is not Islamic. One authentic *hadith* (the traditions of the holy prophet Muhammad) says “*Islam does not count on someone’s past mistakes and sins that you might commit but regret and never repeat again*”

The mercy door of Allah is always open for you until the Day of Judgement. It is your time to prepare to live a meaningful life, as described in the holy Quran. This will only lead you and your family to a very happy end. It is the end which is waiting for you - and everyone else. If you don’t prepare for that day, that day will have already prepared something for you.

In conclusion, according our holy prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), “*you are all sinners, but the best among you is those who repent after they realize that they have committed a sin, by asking forgiveness from Allah.*”

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful, my intention in writing this book is to try and help my brothers and sisters in Islam, and non-Muslims, in whatever little way is possible. There are underlying problems in Muslim and non-Muslim society today which need attention from almost every angle.

Most people wait and do not take action until problems have already started to occur. This is the only time they act on any issue. I feel that it is a moral duty of every Muslim to say or do something to prevent problems from happening. Verse 104 of *surah* Ali Imran says: “*And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful (is 104)*” This is one of the main things our holy prophet emphasises in many of the *hadith*. By advising and guiding one another we can help to prevent much of the trouble in Muslim and non-Muslim society.

Allah has also decreed his messenger and Muslims shall preach and advise Muslims and non-Muslims equally. In verse 125 of *surah* An-Nahl we are told to “*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best.*” This verse asks every Muslim, whether they are man, woman, adult or child, to preach and advise human beings to the *deen* (religion) of Allah, which is Islam, and which leads to a better way of living in society.

According to one *hadith*, the prophet Muhammad has ordered every

Muslim to extend his message to others, even if that message is just one verse of the holy Quran. You can do this by preaching in public places - mosques, streets, town halls, weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals and on TV and radio. It is for this reason that I am preaching to you by writing this book. Preaching is all about reminding you of what you might already know; it is not about telling you something new. It is your moral duty to listen and read what is being preached. It is also strongly recommended that you to follow the good example and the advice you hear from preachers.

I have noticed that some people are not interested in listening or watching preachers when they preach, either at weddings and other public ceremonies, or on DVD and video. They usually fast-forward the video to skip the preaching part of these events. It is also very common for many people to pay only little attention to preachers at other public functions, such as Gamos, Zeyaras, and conferences. Loud noises in the audience often make it difficult to hear what the preacher has to say. This is why I have decided to reach out to my intended audience by writing this book. A book is normally used by someone who is ready to read and learn.

This is my first book and I have great hope and confidence that it might benefit many of its readers, both Muslims and non-Muslims, in every culture and race. Most of my references come from the holy Quran and *hadith*. However, in many cases the stories in this book are largely based on my own personal experience, research, and opinion. All the stories I mention are true stories - I have gained consent from the people I talk to. For privacy reasons, some of the names have been changed.

No part of this book is copied from any other text. My pure intention is to reach out to those who are in need of some advice and guidance in their social lives. I don't intend to make any political points, nor am I seeking any kind of fame or publicity. In writing this book, I aim to fulfil the command of Allah and his prophet. In Verse 9 of *surah* Al-Insan it says "We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude." I seek reward from Allah's countenance only.

1 MARRIAGE

Marriage is the most important social contract you can ever enter into

From an Islamic point of view, this contract is not only between you and your spouse, but also between you and Allah. Marriage is something that every Muslim desires, at least once in their lifetime. It is only through marriage that one can have sex without committing a sin. To have a sexual relationship with anyone - Muslim or non-Muslim - outside of marriage is adultery, which is punishable by death, or one hundred lashes in some cases (usually if the other person is single). To avoid this humiliation and the risk of death, it is best to marry before entering a sexual relationship. According to many authentic *hadith*, marriage is one of the *ibada* (obedience, submission, and devotion to Allah along with the ultimate love for Him), and is part of the *sunnah*, the way of life based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. There are many *surah* in the holy Quran which talk about marriage. Verse 3 of *surah* An-Nisa - “[*marry only*] one or those your right hand possesses” - and, in the same *surah*, verse 25 - “*marry them with the permission of their people*” - gives rights and permission for men to marry women. These two verses also signal that men are obliged to seek women for marriage, and prohibit women seeking men for marriage. However it is permissible for a woman to engage someone to look for a husband, and for someone to look on her behalf. It is also mentioned in another authentic *hadith* that the holy prophet Muhammad has ordered Muslims to marry and increase the number of Muslims, so that he will be proud of them on the day of Qiyama (the Day of Judgement). All of this has made marriage in Muslim society a necessary duty for everyone who has the ability and means to be married.

The base of all family lineage in Muslim society is marriage. Many social and family values in Muslim communities totally depend on marriage. If you deliver a child outside marriage it is not considered legitimate. The child would often not be allowed to occupy a useful position in their family, community, and wider society. A very high percentage of illegitimate children will be abused and marginalised, and suffer in many other areas of life.

It is very important, once you get married, to try and stay together for the rest of your life. In Islamic marriage, togetherness is one of the main keys to building a good family structure. Verse 103 of *surah* Al-Imran - “*And do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them.*” -

says that in your ups and downs you must try and live together as a happy family. Men and women were created as individuals - once you come together, it is in your best interest to stay together for life.

Your first example should be Adam and Hawa. God created Hawa from Adam as his wife, so that they could enjoy each other's company, and produce offspring to form a community, which has become our society as we know it today. Verse 1 of *surah* An-Nisa says: "*O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women.*" Society started from a marriage, and Adam and Hawa lived together for life. You must also try and achieve this. In Verse 11 of *surah* Ash-Shuraa it states "*He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby.*" You can see that mates of this kind are always better together than separate.

If you want learn more about marriage and the role of women in Islam, you might also refer to *surah* Al-Baqarah, *surah* An-Nisa, *surah* Al-Noor, and *surah* Al-Lajabou.

There are many interpretations of the meaning of love, but according to some experts the meaning of love is: what we experience in any moment that we share with somebody, without judging them in any way. According to some people, love is unconditional - completely accepting someone for who they are. They believe love is simply all about unselfishness.

I personally believe that the true meaning of love is a special emotional attachment, which creates affection, connection and the unusually good and positive feeling that you have for somebody. This will initially be conditional, but will eventually become unconditional. My reasoning for this is that people don't usually love each other when they first meet. Before you honestly feel that you love someone, you usually notice something special in that person - maybe the way they look, walk, speak, laugh, dress, talk or act. You may like, admire, and have positive thoughts about a person. These thoughts will eventually turn into unconditional love.

For example, in Islamic tradition, our holy prophet Muhammad recommended to Muslim men that when they are planning to get married, there are four characteristics that men should look for in women. These are her beauty, her family background, her religious nature, and her wealth. He strongly recommended that men should focus on a woman who is the more religious among women. It is these four characteristics, which will one day form unconditional love.

How to make your conditional love into unconditional love?

Firstly, to love someone unconditionally, you must try to learn and know the true meaning of love. You must try to look for only the positive side of that person, and ignore their negative side. We all feel unconditional love for Jesus and Muhammad, because all that we know about them is positive. If you only look at the positive side of a person, you will end up loving them. You must keep reminding yourself of the first thing which made you like that person - that thing may eventually develop their love in your heart and mind. Every love begins in a similar way, like how a seed grows when you plant it. When you plant love in your heart, use your mind like rain to water it, and your love will grow like seed. One single cell of sperm can make a woman pregnant. That little cell will evolve and grow until it becomes a complete human being, which will also evolve until it too becomes soil one day. This is why I believe love, seeds, and sperm cells are all the same. They all start conditionally, and then become unconditional.

People ask, "Does love exist?" My answer is yes. It is both spiritually and scientifically proven that love exists.

The only problem that I think confuses many people is that the meaning of love is different in every society and generation. Love can be defined partly based on culture and belief systems. Like beauty, it is in the eye of the beholder. However, chemistry, emotions, affection and experiences are all the same. It is also possible to learn how to love someone, and you can love more than one person at the same time.

What prevents love?

There can be various reasons for the prevention of love. Main reasons include hate and a poor judgment of the un-loved person. Selfishness also can play a role, as can supernatural influences.

Circumstantial love is also very common. A person might love you simply because you share something in common - like religion, work, business, sport, nationality and so on. It is possible for this to turn into unconditional love. You must realise that, whilst admiration, chemistry and positive thoughts are all very powerful feelings, they are not equivalent to love. However, each of these can evolve into actual and unconditional love.

Can love be bought?

I don't think so. Love is something that is priceless and it is too pure for

sale.

Can one person love another forever?

This is absolutely possible.

Will I know if somebody loves me?

Yes, you will most likely notice it in the way they treat you, and possibly the way they behave around you.

How should I treat someone that I love?

You must try, to the best of your ability, to make them as happy as possible, and to physically and verbally protect them as much as possible. In life, we all seek two things - happiness and safety.

When should you find yourself a wife and get married?

Every man's dream is that one day he will find a good, beautiful wife to marry. This is not as easy as you might think - it requires both effort and luck. Firstly, you must be physically, emotionally and financially strong, because you will need all these attributes to be able to maintain your wife and family. When you meet these requirements, you are obligated to find yourself a wife.

Someone who is fit physically and emotionally, but is not financially strong, might ask for some help from their family or friends if they really want to marry. However I recommended that you wait until you are financially secure before you get married, because your wife and future family will be fully dependent on you.

Those who are not physically capable of satisfying their wife sexually must think twice before they form any sort of relationship. You have to understand that marriage is not compulsory, it is optional. It is very common in our society for people will get married when they know that they cannot satisfy their wife. This generally causes a lot conflict. In some cases the marriage will end in humiliation. To avoid this, don't marry in first place if you are lacking the physical ability to satisfy a wife.

I strongly recommend that you be sure that you love the lady that you are going to get married to, and make sure that she loves you. Otherwise one or both of you are likely to end up cheating or requesting divorce. Try to get to know her well, before you decide to marry. Make sure you don't have children or sex before you get married.

It is very important to love and care for your wife.

The following example is to help you think carefully about marriage, follow your religion and traditions, and understand that your life depends on what you choose to do.

Women, water, and money are all the same. When we have them, we must take care of them. Otherwise when we lose them, we will forever feel pain. You cannot live without water. Your life will be very difficult without money. Your life will be perfect with women. If you are in a position that is suitable for you to get married, doing so is best for you and for wider society.

In many parts of the Muslim world, including the Gambia, wives have historically been selected for boys in very early stages of their life. This was called Blo Seto, meaning 'tied hand'. The chosen girl would in time become the boy's wife. In childhood, her parents would bring her up to accept that she would marry the chosen boy in the future. They prepared her psychically, emotionally and spiritually to ensure the marriage would be successful. Each year before their marriage, his family would give small gifts and presents to her family. By the time she reached puberty, she would know everything about the boy, his family and his culture. In many cases, when they married in this way, they stayed together for life. Since these traditions now occur less and less in our society, young girls truly don't learn how to become a good wife. When they get married they know very little about a husband's family and customs. Muslim countries around the world must introduce a better system which teaches young girls about marriage and relationships; so that by the time they finish secondary school they know the role that they must play in their marriage.

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