

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Hadith Umm Zar'

Living Quran

Live Session – August 2019

Leadership, culture and kindness

Taught by Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Transcribed by Ayesha Khan

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Hatred

It seems disheartening that in this hadith so many wives hate their husbands. If these wives hate their husbands, then we can infer that the husbands hate their wives as well. Otherwise we would not have a problematic relationship between the husbands and wives. If their husbands loved their wives, they wouldn't treat them badly.

Sometimes there is love from one side, but not the other. If there is a broken link between husband and wife the marriage doesn't work. Ultimately for a marriage to work you need love from both sides. Both need to be on the same page.

Gender differences

You may have challenges and disagreements at times because women's nature is completely different from men's. They are wired differently. They think differently. The beauty of this is that we can use this to our advantage by complementing each other and completing what each other is missing.

Blaming women

The worst scenario is when spouses do not bridge this gap. They do not meet in the middle; they are on different pages and it becomes 'my way or the highway'. This attitude of dictatorship is further reinforced by culture. Any problem in any marriage is seen as the wife's fault. From an Islamic point such a view is not fair. Though it is the default setting promoted by culture. We sometimes take it as a fact that any problem in any marriage is caused by the wife. From a logical point of view this cannot be right. Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't, so it is not fair to blame the wife for all the mistakes.

Cultural Misogyny

Old traditions have placed the blame on the woman – Christian tradition blames Eve. The Greeks have Pandora's box, both suggesting that the problems faced by all of humanity originated from women. This misogynistic attitude underlies and perpetuates the oppression of women and the view that we are in the mess because of her. This has no basis in Islam. The narrations blaming Eve have no basis in Islam. Allah Almighty did not blame Hawa. He said:

"Then they both ate of that tree, and so their private parts appeared to them, and they began to stick on themselves the leaves from Paradise for their covering. Thus did Adam disobey his Lord, so he went astray. Then his Lord chose him, and turned to him with forgiveness and gave him guidance." (Quran 20:121-122)

Allah Almighty used the dual form (*muthana*) of the verb 'they (both) ate'. He didn't say Hawwa ate from the tree. Allah Almighty treats women and men as equals – there is no distinction between them intellectually or spiritually.

In Islam marriage is governed by principles not culture

Connecting the dots together, culture and customs dictate how we deal with marriage but Islam came to clarify the way. Marriage should not be dominated by culture. It should be governed by rules of justice and fairness as are clearly mentioned in the Quran and one of these is *ashiruhuna bil marouf* (treat them with kindness):

And live with them in kindness. For if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it. (4:19)

This is the principle between husband and wife: goodness.

Leadership in marriage

Kindness has to be mutual. It is not a one-way street. Allah Almighty is addressing those in charge. Women don't like this but it is Qur'anic that leadership has been given to the man. If he resigns this role and allocates his responsibility to his wife then Islamically we do not interfere. But if there is a conflict someone has to take the decision, and then the final word is the husband's. Not the wife's. Unless it is a matter of disobedience to Allah Almighty.

Allah Almighty appointed man a leader and usually he does not have as soft a nature as a woman. Though there are some sisters who do not have a soft nature, on the whole sisters are softer natured than brothers.

Keeping emotions under control

Don't be controlled by your emotions. Though you may hate something – the obstacles you face, your reaction should not be emotional. Take a step back. Think and then decide. This is the importance of this ayah. If you follow what your emotions dictate, you will quit at the first whiff of problems. That will be detrimental. If, on the other hand, you have sabr, you will reap its fruits. The more control you have over your emotions, the more fruitful your relationship with your spouse is.

The Prophet (peace be on him) did not take emotional decisions. When his wives upset him (peace be on him), and surah Tahreem was revealed, the Prophet (peace be on him) was sad, but he did not take any decisions while he was upset. He did not speak to his wives, he did not sleep in his bed, he moved into the mosque.

Taking decisions

Similarly, we should not take any emotional decisions. Stop and take stock. Go to your parents, or away. Calm down and don't make decisions on the spot. Any decision in that frame of mind will not be the right decision. Shaytan exploits three emotions in particular – he penetrates your fortress through three gates – one of these is sadness. So if you are sad, postpone any decisions till you have regained your calm.

There are three steps you have to take: Calm down. Make *istikhara*. Take *istishara* (consultation) with experts. Without these steps it is self-assassination.

Coping with challenges is part of the package

When Allah Almighty says 'For if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it' meaning that sometimes you have to put up with something but it is for your good. Imam Qushayri commented beautifully on the *ayah* that if you can pass the difficult test, what follows it is fruitful.

Think about this. The most difficult exams we experience in life, always prepare us for something important. This is why they are made difficult. If you can cope with them, then you are qualified enough to go to up to the second level. Doing CPD is not the same. When it is something more important, the test to qualify is harder than CPD.

Not melting like chocolate - Having sabr

The first challenge especially for the millennium generation means they jump to divorce straight away. Six months down the line their marriage is over. They barely know each other. They need to take a deep breath.

It isn't just stubbornness that causes the problems, it can be the result of different backgrounds, different cultures and upbringings. Neither partner told the other of their expectations. They think that just because they are university friends and they get along easily, they can be married and get along. Yet, at the very first hurdle it's all over. We need to have love, but it is not the only ingredient.

Cultural issues can ruin any successful marriage or destroy any sane person. I can tell you from experience some very intelligent people in top careers when it comes to their marriage behave like a baby. They are completely different in their professional and personal lives. Don't allow yourself to be in that position.

Suffering and divorce

Any marriage will have challenges and out of those challenges there could be aspects you can cope with and aspects that are beyond your capacity. If this is the case, you have the option to terminate the marriage. We need to look at each marriage on a case by case basis. We cannot generalise. We judge according to what is acceptable from an emotional and psychological point of view, not just what is physical. In many marriages there is no physical violence, but there is emotional or psychological abuse.

We need to try our best to make it work. And the solution for the problems could be divorce. However, when a divorce creates other problems, it is not a solution.

'Deal with them with kindness' means that kindness has to be dominant in marriage and in all relationships. It should be engulfed with love and mercy.