PROTECT THIS HOUSE

SH. YASER BIRJAS

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Single Weekend Degree Seminar

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Islamic Center of Naperville - Ogden

INFO@ALMAGHRIB.ORG

1 888 ALMAGHRIB

Professional Notes

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

All praise is due to Allah the Lord of the universe. And peace and blessings be upon His beloved Messenger Muhammad, his family, and his pious followers who follow his guidance.

By the grace and mercy of Allah, we have compiled notes for Shaykh Yaser Birjas’ class “Protect This House: The Muslim Family In The Modern World”. These notes are student notes published by Qabeelat Wasat. They have not been approved by AlMaghrib Institute or Shaykh Yaser Birjas. Therefore, we cannot attest to the complete accuracy of this material. Any Islamic ruling pertaining to your personal situation needs to be discussed with your local scholar. These notes are by no means a substitute for a personalized fatwa.

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INTRODUCTION

PROTECT THIS HOUSE

“Protect This House” is the reason why we are all here. It takes a real man to be a father, a real lady to be a mother, and an entire community to build a family. When it comes to building a family, we have to realize it’s not a part-time trivial matter. It is not a hobby, nor is it a job. It’s a life-long experience. It's a serious matter.

For Shaykh Yaser Birjas, “Protect This House” has a story. In his second seminar, he was wondering what kind of topic they should cover. What do people ask questions about the most? He noticed a lot of issues pertaining to family and marriage. Most of the AlMaghrib students back in those days were college students. There was “Fiqh of Love”, a special class designed for this. It was a double weekend seminar. In that class, they discussed everything related to family and marriage, love (haram, halal)—all aspects of fiqh and psychology related to that matter.

Then many of those students got hyped up and got married, and a few years later, they come back to Shaykh Yaser: we got married, and now we are in trouble! They asked, “How do we keep our marriage?” The wife has issues with her husband and vice versa, asking, “How do we revive this relationship?” Then there was a second class called “Love Notes”, which focused on what the husband and wife need to know in order to rekindle love and recharge those beautiful emotions. It included tips to sustain the relationship, communication, and so on. It was an amazing seminar.

Then a few years later, those people came back to Shaykh Yaser, and complained, saying, “Now we have kids, and now because of these kids, we have a lot of conflict between husband and wife, parents and children, children and parents, in-laws, siblings... How are we going to manage all these issues?” Therefore, we have this “Protect This House” class. This class is about family life in the modern world.

This class is all about the earnestness of love. We learned from Ibn Hazm in “Love Notes” that there are two phases of love: jesting about love and the earnestness of love. This class will be about the earnestness of love—the second phase.

People need to understand the difference between a house and a home.

- House: a building, can even be a tent
- Home: everything that is inside that house

This class is called “Protect This House,” but we are actually referring to protecting the inner structure of this house.
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP
In regards to family, membership is mandatory. Once you’re born into a family, there is no quitting. You cannot quit—there’s no such thing as an expired membership. There’s no such thing as “don’t call me”, “don’t speak to me”, “I don’t know”. If you have blood relations, you are considered related. What if you’re sour? We will talk about it. What if my parents are abusive? We will discuss these issues because they are serious matters.

In a family, acceptance is absolutely unconditional. But what if your son decides to take a path different than the one you charted for him? You wanted him to be religious and a hafidh, but he chose a different path. Can you cut him off? You can if you want to, but you would need to deal with this issue wisely. What if your brother or sister does something you disapprove of religiously and culturally? How do you manage these differences? Especially if these choices can be truly dangerous for ourselves, children, and the well-being of iman. We will discuss this.

When it comes to family, we need to understand that the nobility of the family is its diversity. What does that mean? Some parents try to create a system of parenting like one size fits all. They want all their kids to be huffadh, handsome/beautiful, straight As, all athletic, etc. But when their kids fit something else, havoc wreaks and parents start fighting as many fitan (trials) arise. We need to teach ourselves as parents that sometimes, the strength of our family comes from understanding its diversity. The family is diverse in level of education, interests in life, emotional intelligence, etc. This unit of diversity is so beautiful and amazing.

FAMILY IS A LIFELONG EXPERIENCE OF BELONGING
There is no such thing as spending a few years in the family and that’s it; even when you grow older, you will come back to the family. This concept mainly manifests itself in the younger ones. When they become teenagers, they want to leave the house and “live life”. When parents try to teach them something or encourage them to speak a certain language, or eat certain food, they don’t want to, and they refuse. Then maybe at 25 or 30 years old, they suddenly start speaking that language and returning to their traditional culture. What happened? When we settle down, we like to do so in a comfortable and familiar place. That is what we learn from our houses. Kids may rebel, but they return due to this lifelong experience of belonging to one family and one group of people. Don’t cut them off.

When it comes to family life, it is a source of stability. One of biggest issues is emotional stability. Family is a group of people you can lean on when things become difficult. Besides that, financial support is important especially as parents grow older and weaker, and they are unable to sustain their livelihood; they expect their children will be around to support them. Older ones support younger ones and vice versa. There is a sense of stability.
FAMILY SIZES ARE SHRINKING
Nowadays, changes in the Muslim family are actually causing so many different experiences. For example, one of biggest changes currently is the downsizing of family: from 10 kids to maybe 1 or 2 kids and a pet. Families are becoming smaller. We all think of it from an economic perspective—don’t want to have too many kids, too expensive, or both parents are working so it will be hard to have too many kids. That change has a ripple effect, as there are extreme changes in the family, including emotional changes, financial changes, and even changes in the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. There is so much competition over fewer kids.

SHARED SPACE IN THE FAMILY
Family is an organized institution of love and responsibility. These are shared spaces. For example, parents complain to Shaykh Yaser about siblings bickering. How should they deal with this issue? Shaykh Yaser tells them not to stop it, and as long as there is no blood, it’s fine. Siblings bickering with each other is actually a part of the social training for kids; it’s not necessarily the best training, but it is what it is. Disappointment and frustration are negative emotions that are real, and they will have to deal with this in the outside world. If parents always come to the rescue when their kids are dealing with some negative feelings, then kids never develop the stamina, the thick skin to deal with these situations in real life. Slowly and gradually, kids need to grow and learn. As parents, we are responsible to keep order. This is the social act of learning. Kids need to take care of themselves. They learn from each other. Younger ones learn from older ones, and the older ones learn to take care of younger ones.

A few months ago, Shaykh Yaser’s wife went overseas, and she took their 6-year old girl. The other three kids stayed with Shaykh Yaser. As he drove back from the airport, he’s thinking, What have I done to myself? School is still going on, etc. The moment they entered the house, the older son said, “I call dishes.” The other one said, “I call laundry.” Other said, “I call floor and vacuum.” He didn’t even ask for any of that stuff. They know it is a shared space. They didn’t necessarily keep their word on their own, but with reminders, they did. As soon as mom came back, everyone dropped their assignments. Why? Because Mama is here! But still, they are learning. The home is an institution where people learn to love and respect, and even frustration and disappointment is a learning experience. As a parent, one has to monitor and take directions and make the right decisions.
THE EXTENSION OF HUMANITY
When it comes to family, we need to understand that family is nothing but the extension of humanity—many men and women, different ages, and backgrounds. It’s important for all of us to ensure we have a healthy extension of that humanity. There is a specific attack on family in this society, and an extreme liberal progressive agenda that redefining family and marriage. As Muslims, we cannot really oppose the law of the land, but we have to keep our values as well. What does family mean to us? What about the changes that are happening today? This class is all about relationships: parents and children, children and parents, between children themselves, in-laws, extended family, uncles, cousins, etc.

When spouses have issues between themselves, the children become the “battlefield,” as parents try to keep their kids for themselves. Instead, they should be focused on the main relationship that makes kids happy i.e. the relationship between husband and wife.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY
What causes a family to be dysfunctional?
This activity will show us the problems we have in our own families in this specific community. Every community brings some common problems, but each community is unique. One community says financial problems (this community may be from a lower socioeconomic class). Another community may say problems with communication (more “luxury” communities).

Brothers:
1.) Lack of communication
2.) Disrespect (cultural aspects may play a role)
3.) Finances, money, expenses

Sisters:
1.) Lack of communication
2.) Taqwa, lack of spirituality, lack of relationship
   with Allah (their house is empty of spirituality; husband doesn’t help wife teach kids Qur’an, or he doesn’t wake up for Fajr)
3.) Cultural differences (which men interpret to mean disrespect)

Lack of communication ranked number 1 for both men and women in this qabeelah. Culture didn’t score on the top five in most qabeelahs, but it ranks here in Chicago—Chicago is a very diverse community, but it is also very segregated e.g. Desis in the North, Arabs in the South.

There must be action items. Most of our masaajid are very active in outreach programs, but how many masaajid in the area have a regular class on communication? How many masaajid have a registered family therapist? These issues are very crucial, but we don’t seem to be very active in promoting such activities.
The Chicago community needs to address some issues:

1.) Stereotypes
   - Arabs vs. Desi, reverts vs. born Muslim, immigrants, etc.

2.) Prejudice
   - For example, feeling uncomfortable praying next to someone of a different culture
   - Potential spouses and proposals, family may feel uncomfortable with a different culture

3.) Discrimination
   - If your culture is judgmental, it is a problem with your culture

Just like the corporate world has cultural sensitivity, we too need to be inclusive as a community.

TOP 5 REASONS FOR A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

In the National Community, these ranked as the top 5 for causing family discord:

1.) Work
   - Being busy prevents a person from having quality time with the family
   - You don’t have to apologize for what you need to do e.g. working long hours
   - But you need to compensate, maybe wake up a bit earlier to have breakfast with your family or pray Fajr together
   - Compensation for your 5am to 5pm shift

2.) Communication
   - Deals a lot with lack of communication
   - It also comes from being too busy i.e. you don’t have time to communicate
   - If family members do have time, they have short circuits and start fighting
   - Your silence can actually be a form of communication
     - Some people think that if you don’t talk, you don’t fight.
     - And when they discuss their issues, they say, “Well, I didn’t say anything.”
     - That’s a problem, because silence can be negative communication

3.) Societal dynamics
   - Roles of the wife and husband are being redefined due to many cultural changes
   - This also impacts finances

4.) Media
   - Everything has to do with media, especially visual
   - Media portrays a false image of family life
   - If you watch movies or read books, you realize it’s not even real
• Actors live an amazing family life in the movies, but these same actors wish they truly had that kind of life with their actual families
• They may have a happy marriage in a TV program, but not in real life
• Even divorce is idealized in movies; the couple has a divorce but they are still okay with each other and the kids go between mom and dad
• It seems so amazing, but it’s not real

5.) Infidelity
• Cheating has become a great issue today because it takes multiple forms
• Not many people perceive these methods as cheating
• The first thing that comes to mind is the actual physical cheating between a man and woman; i.e. zina/adultery
• But with social media, it is very easy for people to chat with the opposite gender, even at work
• You can find pictures and videos online of the opposite gender
• All of this can destroy households and families
• In past, anyone who wanted to cheat needed to exert effort
• Nowadays, if you have a smartphone, you become very vulnerable
• Many husbands and wives fall into this temptation
  o In the past, when people fell into such traps, the mistakes would get buried, and it would be a personal issue between them and Allah ﷻ
  o But now in the digital world, nothing gets deleted; anyone can grab your phone or laptop which may be synced together
  o So, such behavior is more easily exposed and may cause many problems between a husband and wife.

Based on a survey, divorce has increased 12% in America. 38% of these cases are related to Facebook, which made it easy for people to reconnect with old friends. We can sometimes break the rules of modesty in this society without even knowing it. Thus, we need to uphold the principles of hayya.

As an action item for the community, both individually and as family, we need to read about these issues in order to improve the quality of our families. Read about efficiency to help you combat the busy nature of life in addition to learning time management skills. When we read books about communication, we will realize this is a skill that deals heavily with emotional intelligence. It not only applies to husband and wife, but also to parents and kids, in-laws, etc. Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry is a good book to read dealing with this issue.

In regards to social dynamics, reading about this topic will help us learn about the real rules of marriage. We might see things in the media, but they may not be real. Just like physics, marriage has rules. If you throw something up, it will come down. If you throw something against a wall, it will bounce back at you. Likewise, if you throw a mean comment to your wife, she will probably throw a mean comment back.
WHAT IS ADAB?

*Adab* is derived from مادة مادية مادية مادية ماد i.e. to invite people together, usually for a good cause such as banquet, buffet, food spread, etc. People will pick the best from an open buffet. In a plate of fruit, you pick the freshest, sweetest fruit. From manners, you see how people behave, you get all the experiences and you pick the best. There is a different spectrum between most behaved and least behaved and everything in between, and you pick the best.

The link here, though, is that *adab* almost invites one to the acquisition of all qualities of excellence and praiseworthy dispositions and forbids them from acquiring that which is wrong, inappropriate, and evil. Some think *adab* is just literature, but there is a deeper meaning to it beyond the literature. When you see someone behaving in the most beautiful way, that is *adab*.

In the Qur’an, Allah ﷺ says:

> “Do what is perfectly beautiful. Allah loves those who do what is perfectly beautiful.”
>
> **Surah al-Baqarah, 2:195**

So in the deepest sense, *adab* is beautiful being and beautiful feeling and beautiful thinking – expressing ourselves in beautiful action.

- *Adab* designates a wide range of social and ethical virtues, like good manners, tact, grace, indulgence towards friends, refined taste, courage, erudition, and literary skill.

- *Adab*, thus, is education and upbringing, high moral principles and correct behavior, scholarship, and knowledge all at once.

- *Adab* is to know how to speak correctly and act correctly at the right time and place. A lack of *adab* brings down the entire structure.

So, *adab* is actually more than just being “respectful” as somewhat suggested by the Asian languages, such as Urdu and Pashtu etc., and is closer to:

> “A complete code of conduct and moral behavior which determines our every action in this world.”

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“I was only sent to perfect good manners.” [Ahmad, Sahih, 8952]
ADAB VS. KHULUQ

Khuluq is almost synonymous with adab except that it is something a little bit more specific, i.e. it comes under adab. While adab is the general code of conduct with all possible affairs with all possible creation, khuluq, or good character, is more of a quality, a characteristic such as bravery, whereas adab is more of how we behave in general.

Adab means manners, while khuluq means etiquette (how you eat, speak, walk, respond to someone who spoke ill to you).

THE TRUE VALUE OF ADAB

In the subject of marriage, in reality, whenever you look back at the deep meaning of family, it’s all about your adab/akhlaaq/behavior towards your family members. In the concept of dealing with family, we look at the subject of adab and subject of akhlaaq.

Adab is paramount to learning our religion

In fact, the salaf would never take a narration or some knowledge from anyone whose adab was not up to the standard. As Ibrahim al-Nakha’i said, “If we were to take some ‘ilm from a man, we’d look at his manners, his prayer, and his general conduct before we took from him.” Some added, “We would see how he treated his parents first…”

Adab is the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah

In the Qur’an, Allah says:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خَلْقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“For, indeed, you are (Muhammad) most surely a man of outstanding character.”

Surah al-Taghabun, 68:4

The Prophet’s character earned him the title Al-Sadiq Al-Ameen, because that is how he dealt with his family. What do you get from khuluq? The Prophet said, “The best among you are those who are best to their family.”

Yazid b. Babanus said, “We went to ‘A’ishah and said, ‘Umm’il Mu’minin, what was the character of the Messenger of Allah like?’ She replied, ‘His character was the Qur’an. Can you recite the surah entitled The Believers?’ She said, ‘Recite:’
She said, "That was the character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."

Why did the Sahabah ask about the character of the Prophet ﷺ while they saw him every day? They saw his public image, and they wanted to know about his private image. Did he behave the same way at home? ‘A’ishah explained that his manners were the Qur’an. So, the Prophet ﷺ always followed the standards of the Qur’an, even at home.

**Why is it so hard to have the best manners and akhlaaq with family?**

Why is it so easy with other people? We have two faces: one is public, and one is private. In public, we smile, are happy, gentle, hospitable, kind, and generous. In private, it is a completely different story.

Our real life is just like a selfie – we fake it. One time, Shaykh Yaser was standing in line to pick up coffee. The lady in front of him spent five minutes trying to take the perfect selfie. While she was trying to take the picture, she was smiling; but as soon as she got her picture, her smile turned into a frown. So, out there, we may be all smiles and nice, but inside, only Allah ﷻ truly knows.

Character is nothing but the repetition of certain behavior, like when you do something regularly. If someone is always a joker, they call him a clown. If someone is always grumpy, people will call him grumpy. It depends on how you behave. Knowledge is not beneficial unless it translates into action through manners and akhlaaq. Unless it is repetitive and consistent, it is not considered your character. The human brain has two sides: the conscious and subconscious. We always speak to the conscious mind, and it receives information. If this information is not solidified through practice, it does not enter the subconscious to become archived.
The importance of *khuluq* in terms of family is that it helps build bridges between family members. Many of us worry about fixing the relationships around us – we do everything in our power, but nothing works! We get frustrated, then we get angry. Instead, we need to focus on maintaining our relationship with Allah ﷻ. When we deal with people using manners, it is not because they deserve it. It is because we deserve to be good and to do the right thing.

**The effect of adab is never lost upon a person.** You will always remember the kindness and courtesy of someone above any other trait or characteristic. When everything else disappears, *adab* is left behind. People may forget everything that you said to them – but they will never forget your *adab*. They will never forget how you made them feel.

Abu’l Darda’ said that one with good character will enter the Garden whereas the one with bad – the Fire. The one with good *adab* and *khuluq* is forgiven whilst he is asleep! Umm’l Darda’ said, “And how is he forgiven when he is asleep?!?” Because his Muslim brother awakes in the middle of the night, prays the night prayer and makes *du’a* to Allah ﷻ, and it is accepted. He asks for forgiveness for his sleeping brother and it is accepted.

If you are traveling, in hardship, or feeling lonely, and someone does something for the sake of goodness, how happy does that make you? How much *du’a* do we make for that person!?

**Adab is like a land with fortresses**

In order to protect our *iman* and *Tawheed*, we must surround ourselves with different layers – especially during these times. The first layer of protection is the layer of manners and etiquette. How do we behave if someone says something bad to us? How do we respond? Having good *adab* will help us protect our identity and community. *Adab* is like a land with fortresses; the 1st made of gold, 2nd of silver, 3rd of iron, 4th of baked clay, and the 5th of normal brick. If the 5th is defended properly, the enemies will never get in, but if they become lazy and neglectful, they’ll break into the first, and then to the second, and then to the third until they destroy the lot.

Likewise, *iman* is five fortresses: the 1st is *yaqin* (certainty), 2nd is *ikhlās* (sincerity), 3rd is fulfilling the obligations (*fara’id*), 4th is fulfilling the *sunnan*, and 5th is the preservation of *adab*. As long as the 5th is preserved and focused upon, the Shaytaan will never get in, but if he leaves *adab*, then the Shaytaan will start to devour his *sunnan*, then his *fara’id*, then his *ikhlās*, and then finally his *yaqin*.
CHAPTER ONE
Home Sweet Home
**Chapter 1: Home Sweet Home**

**What is a family?**

**Definition**

Family is a divinely inspired institution with marriage at its core.

> يتأمِّبِنَّهَا أَلْلَهُ نَشَأَتْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَجَدَنَّهَا وَحَلَّقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَاهَا وَبَتَّ مِنْهَا يَجَالُ كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءَ وَنُفِقُوا اللَّهُ أَلْلَهُ نَشَأَتْ لَوْنَهْدَٰهُ وَالْأَرْجَامُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَبُّمَا

“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. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.”

**Surah al-Nisa, 4:1**

A Muslim family consists of a legally married couple (husband and wife with a nikah) and their children. It also includes their parents, siblings, and other relatives. A Muslim family comes into existence through two means: blood relationship and marriage.

> وَهُوَ أَلْلَهُ خَلَقَ مِنْ أَلْلَهَ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نِسَاءً وَصِيمَارًا وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا

“And it is He who has created from water a human being and made him [a relative by] lineage and marriage. And ever is your Lord competent [concerning creation].”

**Surah al-Furqan, 25:54**

Is a city hall or court marriage enough? Many young men and women do not know the difference between this and a nikah. They go to court, get a marriage license, and consider themselves married. This is not enough – a nikah is required.
STRUCTURE
The traditional Muslim family is extended, often spanning 3 or more generations.

3 Layers

1. **Inner Fold** – husband and wife, their parents and ancestors, their children and offspring (closest kin; most valuable)

2. **Central Fold** – the Mahram (unmarriageable kin)

   **3 Ways to Establish Mahram relationship:**
   
   **Blood Relations** – brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and nephews and nieces

   **Marriage** – father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepparents, and stepchildren
   The moment the nikah is done, the mother-in-law and father-in-law become Mahram to the husband and wife forever – even if there is no consummation of the marriage. As for stepchildren, they do not become Mahram to the stepparents until the consummation of the marriage.
   Is the brother-in-law considered Mahram? No, not at all!

   **Breastfeeding** – similar to a biological child
   If a child is nursed in a family, it is as if they are a biological child in that family (milk sibling). The difference is that this child does not receive inheritance. Can any wealth be put aside for them? Yes – up to 1/3. How many times does the child have to be nursed? A narration by ‘A’ishah says 5 full meals (either the baby stops nursing or falls asleep). This nursing period takes place in the first two years.

**TYPES OF FAMILY STRUCTURE**

American family structure has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. Muslim American family structure is moving slowly in the same direction. Here are some of the most common types of family structure in this society:

A.) **Nuclear Family**: traditional family – two parents and their children

This type of family was long held in esteem by society as being the ideal in which to raise children. Children in nuclear families receive strength and stability from the two-parent structure and generally have more opportunities due to the financial ease of two adults. We often imagine a standard family as a mother and father with their children and pets running through a meadow – this is not the case! There are many different styles/shapes/sizes of families.

1. **Single Child Family** – a husband and wife have only one child

A common stereotype is that the child is spoiled and feels entitled to success and happiness – the parents are under emotional pressure because they only have one child! They feel the need to compensate for everything. Couples who have more children have more secure emotions. Parents who have only one or two children end up being more controlling – they micromanage in order to protect and save their children. They want to control the outcome of their lives, and they fear uncertainty.

The dynamics of a small family are different to the dynamics of a large family. For example, people may think that there is more financial stability with a smaller family. However, a larger family creates more financial stability. When couples have multiple children, they have more emotional stability as well.

There is nothing wrong with a small family or a large family!

2. **Single Child-Gender Family** – a husband and wife have two or three children, but they are all the same gender

There is no problem with this! Allah gives as He pleases. In terms of upbringing, though, there might be some difficult aspects. For example, when boys grow up without having sisters around, they might not be able to understand the opposite gender – they may not have a high level of emotional intelligence. Or, if girls grow up without brothers, they may not know how to deal with them in the future.
3. **Adopted Child Family** – a husband and wife adopt a child, whether they have children of their own or not

Many young couples choose to delay having children until they are ready. This typically deals with finishing school or spending time on their careers. By the time they decide to have children, they may have a difficult time biologically – so they make the decision to adopt.

The Islamic system is called *kafaalah*, and it is more like a sponsorship. It involves raising a child as a member of the family while keeping their family name and lineage.

The problem with adoption is the *Mahram* issue. If a couple adopts a boy, he is not *Mahram* to his adoptive mother once he reaches puberty. From a *fiqh* perspective, she would have to wear *hijab* in front of him and have a formal relationship – this is much easier said than done. What is the solution? The solution is to give the child the mother’s milk. If the child is under two years of age, this very is easy to do. If the child is older, and/or the mother cannot produce milk, then her sister can nurse the child. This is a case-by-case scenario that will be explained in detail later on.

✔ **What about foster families? This is a new trend these days.**

A foster family situation is temporary, while adoption is permanent. The state pays licensed and registered families to temporarily take care of foster children until permanent accommodations can be made for them (adoption).

Foster homes may have the same dilemma in terms of *Mahram*. Islamically, it is permissible to have a child in custody. Taking young children is preferable because it is easier.

Communities must have registered foster homes. We should make sure to find out which families are registered. Foster children are sent to any home on the registered list – Muslim or non-Muslim. We do not have enough Muslim foster homes registered!

**B.) Extended Family:** Multiple adults living together who are related either by blood or marriage

In addition to parents, extended families may also include uncles, aunts, cousins, and grandparents. Family members can work towards common goals such as raising the children and keeping up with the household duties. This type of family structure may form due to financial difficulties or because older relatives and unable to care for themselves alone. This is economic – it can help families save money. They can pool their money together and find a bigger accommodation.
Is it better to have a joint family, or a separate family? Many families choose to live together because of emotional gratification – the parents are trying to secure their retirement plan subconsciously. They want to make sure that their children are always around. Once their children leave, parents can develop emotional anxiety. If they have a financial plan, they can manage their emotions.

✓ **Should your parents live with you after you get married?**
Islamically, you are not obligated to live with your parents or make that arrangement. When you get married, you can have a separate accommodation. Is it better to have your parents live with you, or not? The Islamic answer is neutral, which means that it is on a case-by-case basis. If it is culturally acceptable, and you do not have any problems with it, then it is fine. If living with your parents is creating problems, then you do not have to do so. However, if parents are ill or cannot support themselves financially, then their children are obligated to take care of them.

C.) **Single Parent Family:** one parent raising one child or many children on his or her own

Often, a single parent family is a mother with her children, although there are single fathers as well. The single parent family is the biggest and most obvious change society has seen in terms of the changes in family structures.

Many times, we overlook the situation of single fathers, even though there are many such individuals in our communities. They often feel overlooked as society usually discusses the issues of single moms.

✓ **Are single parents allowed to adopt a child?**
Yes.

✓ **But what about establishing the Mahram relationship for children over 2 years old? For example, how would a single parent adopt a 5 year old child?**
Shaykh Yasir discussed this issue with many scholars, and to this point in time, he has still not received a satisfactory answer. Scholars give a very generic answer based on the story of Salim Mawla Abi Hudhayfah ﷺ. Abu Hudhayfah ﷺ had this child serving in his house, but as Salim starts growing up, Abu Hudhayfah starts to feel uncomfortable. The wife of Abu Hudhayfah goes to the Prophet ﷺ and explains that Salim is like her child while Abu Hudhayfah feels uncomfortable. So, the Prophet told her: *arthi’i* (nurse him). But Islamically, this means to give him milk in any way possible even if it be by pumping the milk out. After receiving this command, the wife of Abu Hudhayfah gave milk to Salim who then became *Mahram*. 
One of rules of becoming Mahram dictates that the cut off for breastfeeding is 2 years old is. This child was 10 years old, so how do we reconcile this difference?

Some scholars say the Prophet was giving an executive order, which overrode the fiqh ruling. However, the majority of fuqaha say that if it were an executive order, then the ruling would be contained only within that incident (i.e. exclusively for Salim).

We may have an opportunity to expand this rule. Since the situation of Salim was unique, you can apply this same rule in similar unique circumstances. This is an option for a husband and wife to adopt older children. Shaykh Yasir Birjas is not a huge fan of this opinion, but he does not object if others follow it.

Is there a specific amount of milk that the child must drink?

If the child is 2 years old, he or she must drink 5 full meals (i.e. until the child falls asleep while drinking or he or she stops). But what about a 10 years old child? The child must drink enough milk that would satisfy him or her.

Are unmarried/single individuals allowed to adopt?

Yes, but keep in mind that he or she needs to establish the Mahram relationship if the child is the opposite gender. If a man adopts a boy, the problem is solved. Likewise, if a woman adopts a girl, the problem is solved.

Say that a lady has been married for a few years, but she cannot conceive. Her biological clock is ticking, and she is afraid to wait any longer. Is she allowed to freeze some of her eggs for a later point in time?

Yes, she is allowed to freeze her eggs as long as the lab/agency is reputable, and there will be no cross contamination. Furthermore, when she freezes her eggs, it must be fertilized with her husband’s sperm.

Is this woman allowed to donate some of her eggs to another woman?

No, she cannot donate her eggs to anyone else.

What about a single woman who is not getting married soon, but she might get married later? Is she allowed to freeze her eggs?

Yes, with the same precautions listed above. There must be a guarantee of no cross contamination.

There is a husband and wife, and the wife froze some of her eggs. The husband had an accident and died. In that period when he is dead, is she allowed to fertilize her eggs with his semen while she carries the baby?

No. When the man is dead, she cannot have her eggs fertilized with his semen.
What if the man is on life support? So, technically, he is not dead. Is she allowed to have her eggs fertilized with his semen?
Most scholars say no, she cannot have a child in this manner because he is in the position of being dead. There are so many fiqh rulings pertaining to similar situations; for example, if a man is on his deathbed and starts distributing his money, wealth, and estates among family members, this distribution is Islamically considered null. It is also not allowed for someone to distribute all of his or her wealth after discovering he or she only has 6 months to live due to cancer. Likewise, it would not be permissible to fertilize the woman’s egg with his sperm while he is on life support.

A Muslim woman never got married, but she would love to have a child of her own. Is she allowed to freeze her eggs by injecting the sperm of a donor?
Absolutely not.

Are we allowed to be organ donor for sperm?
No.

Is a woman allowed to wash her husband’s body if he dies?
Yes, and vice versa. It is very cruel to prevent her from doing so. Aisha  once had a headache, and the Prophet  asked her why she is complaining. He explained that if she dies, he will take care of her, wash her, and pray her janazah for her. Also, when Fatimah  passed away, her husband Ali  washed he body.

Say that a man leaves his family, and his daughter grows up to be 25 years old. She is now getting married. Does her father have a right to return and assume the responsibility of wilayah? Is wilayah by blood relation?
There is a debate between scholars regarding this matter. They say that if the father left and did not support the family financially in any way or care for his kids, it will be dependent on the girl’s decision. If he comes back after walking away, she can decide if she accepts his wilayah or not. She can approve or not approve. If she refuses her father’s wilayah, the second in kinship will assume this responsibility such as the grandfather, brother, or uncle.

What if she has no family members to assume the responsibility of wilayah?
In this case, the religious authority in that area becomes her wali. In Muslim countries, the situation is referred back to the court. Here in the U.S., the situation is referred back to the Islamic center and Imam.

There is a rule in fiqh called al-saqit laa ya’ud (الساقط لا يعود): once you drop a right you cannot take it back. For example, say that someone owes you 5K, and he asks for an extension. You realize that this man is not capable of paying you back, so you forgive the debt. Two months later, you see this individual enjoying an abundance of wealth, and he explains that Allah  opened the doors of khair for him. You
cannot ask for the money back because you already waived the debt! But if this individual offers you the money back, you can still accept it. Keep in mind that you are not accepting the money as payment of debt but rather as charity. So, if the father walked out on his family, then he has no right to take back his rights based on the concept of al-saaqit laa ya’ud.

✓ But what if the father always kept a line of communication with his kids, including his daughters, and provided for them financially?
In this case, he is still the wali. However, if there was no support, he has forfeited his rights.

✓ What if the mother remarries, and the stepfather raised the girl, paying for her school and life expenses? Can the stepfather be the wali?
Technically, he is allowed to take the position of wali, not because of kinship, but because he provided for her. However, this is only if the girl did not have other family members to assume the role of wali. So, if her paternal grandfather or paternal uncle is present, they would serve as the wali.

✓ What if the mother takes the kids and runs off, cutting off the relationship with the father?
So, there is no communication with the father. He tried to look all over the place for them, and one day, he learns from social media that his daughter is getting married. The father then gets in touch with the daughter. Does this man have a right to be her wali? Yes, because in this case, the man did not forfeit his rights. Even if there was no financial support or communication, he can still be the wali because he didn’t forfeit his rights.

✓ What if this girl in the specific scenario listed above has a stepfather who took care of her all her life? Who becomes the wali?
In this case, the biological father is the actual wali, but one can also take into consideration the past with her stepfather.

D.) Childless Family: husband and wife living and working together with no children

These couples either cannot or choose not to have children. The childless family is sometimes the “forgotten family”, as it does not meet the traditional standards set by society. Many childless families take on the responsibility of pet ownership or have extensive contact with their nieces and nephews as a substitute for having their own children.

✓ Why do couples choose not to have children?
Some couples are biologically incapable of having children. Other couples may get married and just want to have fun, so they choose not to have kids. Perhaps they don’t want the responsibility of raising children, or they had a tough childhood
themselves. Some people are entrepreneurs and travel so much that they just don’t have time for kids. Islamically, people are allowed to make that decision.

✓ Is a couple allowed to get married under the condition that they will not have kids (i.e. putting it in the marriage contract)?
Yes. However, if the wife gets pregnant, they cannot abort.

✓ What if the man says he does not want to have kids, and the lady says she is undecided? So, the lady never agreed. Is this allowed?
The couple must actually discuss this issue and come to an agreement.

✓ Can the decision be temporary? For example, choosing not to have kids for the first 2 years or first 5 years of marriage because you want to finish your residency.
Yes, it is allowed.

✓ Can a couple choose not to have kids for a period of time in order to test the marriage?
Technically, from a fiqh perspective, the couple is allowed to make this decision. However, from a psychological perspective, it is an absolutely wrong decision to make. Once you open the door for failure, there is an 80% chance that you will meet that failure. However, if a couple delays having kids for pragmatic reasons such as wanting to finish school first or wanting to buy a house first, that is reasonable. But delaying kids just to test the marriage is not a very good idea. Remember, all of these matters are in the Hands of Allah 🧿.

✓ Can conflict be avoided if a couple chooses not to have kids?
Whether you have kids or not, there will always be some kind of conflict in the marriage. There is no such thing as avoiding conflict. Trying to avoid conflict is one of the biggest mistakes made in marriage, especially among younger couples. Always trying to avoid conflict is setting yourself up for failure. It is not about avoiding conflict but rather learning how to manage it. Conflict is an inevitable reality of the relationship, and it is actually a sign of growth! Everything in our lives revolves around variables; so, when there is conflict, something has changed the dynamics in the relationship. We must ask ourselves, what changed? When we understand that change, we can learn how to manage it.

E.) Step Family: involves two separate families merging into one new unit

Over half of all marriages end in divorce, and many of these individuals choose to get remarried, creating the stepfamily. It consists of a new husband and wife and their children from previous marriages or relationships. Stepfamilies are about as common as the nuclear family, although they tend to have more problems, such as adjustment periods and discipline issues. The status of Mahram among stepchildren is another challenge for this type of family.
Once the marriage is consummated, the stepparents become *Mahram* to the stepchildren. However, the stepsiblings from a *fiqh* perspective are not *Mahram* to one another (i.e. the children of the father are not *Mahram* to the children of the mother). Shaykh Yaser asked scholars how to overcome this issue, but unfortunately, there was no solid answer apart from the previous discussion about nursing. If people choose to follow this opinion, that is fine. However, some will say that technically, it is not a real answer to this dilemma.

✅ **How did people deal with the issue of stepsiblings in the past?**

In the culture of the past, by the time the child reaches 12 or 13 years old, he or she is already married and out of the house. So, the issue of stepsiblings did not really pose a problem. But in our times, kids sometimes stay with their parents until they are 18 years old or even 25 years old. How do we overcome this issue then? Shaykh Yaser knew a couple in this kind of situation, and unfortunately the marriage ended because the husband and wife could not resolve the issue.

Some will suggest that the children marry each other, but this is much easier said than done. If the children are 5 and 7 years old, how do they just get married? It is not black and white, and there is no specific answer to this question.

However, if the husband and wife have another child through the new marriage, this child becomes *Mahram* to all the other children from previous marriages.

✅ **Are stepparents permanent *Mahram?***

Yes, once the marriage is consummated, the stepparent becomes *Mahram* forever. Even if the couple divorces, the stepparent is still *Mahram*. Before consummation of the marriage, the stepparent is not *Mahram* yet.

✅ **Is a husband and wife allowed to hire a woman to carry their baby for them as a surrogate mother?**

So, both the sperm and egg come from the actual couple, and the surrogate mother is just a 3rd party.

This is not allowed. *Fuqaha* have stated only one condition in which this would be permissible: if the man marries that other woman serving as the surrogate mother, provided that he doesn’t marry her just for that reason.

✅ **Who becomes the actual rightful mother?**

There would be shared motherhood because the surrogate mother carried that baby for 9 months.

✅ **What if the stepchildren get married? Will their spouse be *Mahram* to the stepparent of opposite gender?**

No. For example, say a man gets married, and he has a daughter from a pervious marriage. When this daughter gets married, her husband is not *Mahram* to the stepmom.
VISION OF A MUSLIM FAMILY
Family is a major foundation of Islamic life. The Qur’an and Sunnah speak of family life as the nurturer of fitrah and guardian of the purpose of life. Muslim family life evolves around the principles of submission to the Will of Allah . Muslim families are supposed to be close, kind, and loving. Family is the backbone of the society, and to ensure that, Islam made its principles divine.

Why do we need a vision for the Muslim family?
Most importantly, a vision helps everyone in the relationship overcome all fears and difficulties because there is a bigger picture that you need to achieve.

People ask Shaykh Yaser if he ever gets stage fright. He says that he does. The element of stage fright helps one recalibrate, focus, and do the best he or she can. People ask him how he gets rid of it. He says that he doesn’t; rather, he only overcomes it. Likewise, some people are so afraid of getting married because of the “what if?” scenario. The “what if?” becomes a huge monster that can prevent you from getting married. Instead of trying to remove fears completely, one must learn to overcome them by creating a beautiful vision for the marriage and family.

Do you think that soldiers and happy and jolly to march forth on the battlefield? Of course not! They are so afraid. But how do they go into battle and sacrifice their lives? The commander portrays an amazing vision for the Muslims, one that revolves around Jannah and shahada. This vision helps the soldiers overcome their fear.

Once the vision of the marriage loses focus, the marriage becomes boring. During counseling, Shaykh Yaser sometimes asks couples where they see themselves in the next 5 years. The husband and wife immediately turn to each other. They have no clue! If they had a vision, they would have presented it.

People may stand at the crossroad and ask, “Where should I go?” It depends on where they want to go! If they know the end goal, we can better direct them on the correct path. Likewise, it is not practical for couples to ask the marriage counselor, “What should I do?” Families need to have a vision; there must be a shared goal that family members are trying to pursue that will ultimately influence the decisions made.
The Vision of Ibrahim

 رباني إني أسكنت من دِرَّيْتِي بَوادَ عَيْرٍ ذَي زَرعٍ عند بَنيك المَهْرَم رَبِّنَا ليَقيموا الصَّلْوَة فَاجْعِلْ أَفْعَادُهُمْ مِمَّا آتَتْنَاهُمْ وَأَزْرَقُوهُمْ مِمَّا أَنْثَمَتْ لَعْلَهُم يُشْكَرُونَ

“Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer. So make hearts among the people incline toward them and provide for them from the fruits that they might be grateful.”

Surah Ibrahim, 14:37

Allah ﷻ presents us with one of the best households, and that is the household of Ibrahim ﷺ. Ibrahim was almost 60+ years old when he had his first child, Ismael ﷺ. Allah then commands Ibrahim to put Ismael and his mother in the desert. What a test! Ibrahim says the above words when he is leaving them in the barren valley with no vegetables and no trees.

Ibrahim ﷺ had an amazing vision: the building of a sacred house. At that time, the Ka’bah was not built. There was absolutely nothing, but Ibrahim was a visionary man. He knew that there would be a sacred house in that area. When people move to a new area, they usually look at the school district first, followed by the real estate market. After ensuring the community is affluent with no crime, they may choose to buy a house in that area only to realize that the masjid is too far away! But the vision of Ibrahim ﷺ focused on the sacred house first. And after being close to the house of Allah ﷻ and securing the family’s worship, he wanted a community whose people would be inclined towards them. Not many people assess the character and quality of the people they will live by until after they move.
And lastly, Ibrahim wanted provision for his family. Most people will ask for food and water first, especially if they are sending their young kids to a barren desert. But Ibrahim didn’t care because knew that provision was guaranteed. Jibril once came to the Prophet and said, “No soul shall die until it finishes its set provisions and term limit (i.e. rizq and life span).” So, provision is being secured; you just have to work hard to receive it. Ibrahim was not worried about provision. Rather, he was worried about guidance and good community, as these two aspects are not guaranteed.

So, we need to stop worrying about our salary and provision because they are not the most important things in life. We care so much about our future and provision that we do not give sadaqah at times. In fact, we might actually find the best paying job but end up with the worst family life. So what’s the point? On the other hand, we might not necessarily have the best paying job, but we might have a peaceful mind and heart because of the strong community that surrounds us. We can still pursue a path in order to improve our quality of life. But remember, don’t work hard but work smart. That way, we get quality with money.

**We thrive under pressure**

As human beings, we thrive under pressure. If we always have convenience in our lives, we are not going to do much. Ibn Khaldun was a Muslim sociologist who authored a book called *Al-Muqaddimah*, in which he discussed how hard times produce strong men. And strong men create convenient times. Convenient times create weak men, and weak men create hard times.

During hard times, a certain group of outliers stand out amongst the crowd and become leaders. If times become difficult, don't get depressed. There is a tough administration coming up, and yet another masjid recently burned down in Texas. Roll up your sleeves, get excited, and get ready to shine. Hard times bring out the best in us. Perhaps raising our children here during difficult times is for the best.
FAMILY DIVINE PRINCIPLES

1.) Islam is a reference point

"Say, 'Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.'" Surah al-An’am, 6:162

You live your life to please Allah ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah though it displeases the people, then Allah becomes pleased with him and He will make the people pleased with him. Whoever seeks the pleasure of the people and it displeases Allah, then Allah becomes displeased with him and will make the people displeased with him." We must always be true to our values and stand firmly for our beliefs.

2.) The life of this world is a temporary one

"Allah extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]. And they rejoice in the worldly life, while the worldly life is not, compared to the Hereafter, except [brief] enjoyment.”

Surah al-Ra’d, 13:26

We need to stop treating this dunya as our eternity. This doesn’t mean we quit our job and live in the masjid until we die. Some would say that we need to create balance, but Shaykh Yaser believes that we need to establish priorities, which will ultimately create balance in our lives. So, if family is our priority, then we may need to cut back on some of our work hours. Some may say, “But there are too many expenses!” Then try to cut back on some of the expenses. Focusing too much on expenses means we are more preoccupied with the house instead of the family. Remember, this world is temporary, so we need to focus on the akhira while not forgetting about the dunya either.
3.) Gain and loss is in the Hereafter

So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” Surah al-Zalzalah, 99:7-8

Many issues can come between family members, and everyone is worried about winning the battle here in this *dunya*. Instead, we can overlook these issues and stand before Allah . From the above *ayat*, we believe that no *khair* in this world will go unnoticed, and no evil in this world will go unnoticed either. So, if you think that you missed something in this *dunya*, you don’t have to go fight for it to the end; in the process, you may lose a lot of your principles. For example, conflict can exist between siblings as they fight over matters such as the house or land. There can also be conflict between the husband and wife or between the mother and daughter-in-law. We don’t have to win every battle; the true gain and true loss is not necessarily in this *dunya* but in the *akhira*. Having this mentality will help us let go of things.

4.) The nobility of a family is measured by piety

“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.” Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13

Ibn Taymiyyah explained that nowhere in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet is righteousness or piety ever measured by lineage or bloodline. We will never see this principle in either the Qur’an or *Sunnah*; rather, it is the people who tie nobility to blood, which can destroy society. The Prophet said, “If somebody comes to you and you are pleased with his character and religion, then marry him. If you do not, there will be discord on earth and widespread corruption.” So, if you are pleased with this person’s *deen* (relationship with Allah ) and character (*akhlaaq* – relationship with the people), then accept the proposal.
5.) Healthy families produce healthy society

“And fear a trial which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in penalty.” Surah al-Anfal, 8:25

Try to help other people take care of their family, and don't be selfish.

6.) Family challenges are internal

Many people don't want to accept this principle. Sometimes, a wife will request that ruqya is done for her husband because she is ready to blame Shaytan for the family problems. Ruqya is the process of reciting Qur'an over someone to ensure he or she is not affected by the evil eye or jinn. It is possible for the evil eye or jinn to cause problems in the marriage as Allah says:
“...but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. But the two angels do not teach anyone unless they say, ‘We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic].’ And [yet] they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by permission of Allah...” Surah al-Baqarah, 2:102

However, we cannot immediately blame the evil eye and jinn for all of our problems. We first need to check our own lives and determine what factors contributed to the problem at hand. Remember, marriage has rules just like math and physics. $1+1=2$, so don’t try to make $1+1=10$.

7.) A brilliant future is not a sole product of a good present

“....and the [best] outcome (end) is for [those of] righteousness.” Surah Taha, 20:132

We never attach ourselves to the results. We are only responsible for doing our best and making the effort; the results are in the Hands of Allah ۚۚ. Do the results always have to be in our advantage? Sometimes, negative results can be good for us. For example, the recent election of Trump is waking up a lot of people, both Muslim and non-Muslim. People are striving to do the right thing. There will be a push between khair and sharr. This pulling and pushing can help us achieve a middle path. It is one of the rules of Allah ۚۚ that one group of people will check another group:

وَلَوْ لاَ دَفَعُ اللهُ اللُّهَ أَلْلَهَ للَّهَ الْأَرْضَ فَبَعْضُهُم بَعْضٍ لِفَسَكَتْ الأَرْضَ

وَلَمَّا حَكَى اللهُ ذَٰلِكَ ۡوَفَضَّلَ ۡعَلَى ۡعَلَمِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds.” Surah al-Baqarah, 2:251

Remember, we are not responsible for the results, only the effort. Some parents try hard to raise their children well; they send them to Islamic school, hifdh programs, etc. However, the kids may still deviate and become bad. The parents then start doubting their own faith. It is not our job to create perfect children; rather, we need to create responsible children.

Similarly, a husband and wife may do everything by the book, but their relationship is still not that great. They start doubting the Qur’an, Sunnah, and Islamic teachings. We need to keep our present situation good while understanding that the future is in the Hands of
Allah ﷻ. Whatever comes your way, make the best out of it. If it’s good, then take it to the next level. If not, learn to calibrate and push on.

People may think that istikhara is a decision-making technique that entails prayer and waiting for some kind of dream, email, or bird flying through the window. Istikhara is not a means to make the decision but rather your connection with Allah ﷻ as you ask Him for guidance in making the right decision. You make the final decision. If you are unsure, then you need to ask more and read more about the subject.

VALUES OF A MUSLIM FAMILY

A Muslim family should maintain itself within the limits of the positive values in its involvement in the matters of this world and should avoid the negative ones. This is what matters in the Hereafter.

1.) Love and Mercy

The basis of a Muslim family revolves around these two major ingredients.

وَمَنْ أَفْلَحْ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ أُرْزُقْنَاهُمْ وَلَسَّكُنَّا إِلَيْهِمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ مُوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَأَحْيَانَ لَقَوْمٍ يَنفَكُرُونَ

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.” Surah al-Rum, 30:21

In this ayah, Allah ﷻ speaks about the miracles and wonders of the creation such as the heavens, earth, people, color, language, rain, and clouds. In the middle of all these signs, He mentions mates and spouse, and He placed between them love (passion) and mercy (compassion). This ayah is very unique. It is mentioned alongside the magnificent creation of the heavens and earth. Allah wraps this ayah with the word ayat in the beginning (وَمَنْ أَفْلَحْ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ) and the end (إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَأَحْيَانَ لَقَوْمٍ يَنفَكُرُونَ). So, this particular ayah is the most unique of everything else mentioned in that context. The love and mercy mentioned in this ayah is very unique, and it remains much more interesting than the creation of the heavens and earth. Allah says that the whole purpose of creating us together is to help us achieve peace and tranquility. How can we do that? Through love and mercy.

If you don’t love someone, you can still have mercy on him or her. The relationship becomes terrible when you stop caring (i.e. become less compassionate), and it can result in abuse.
2.) Having good intentions

*Ibn ‘Abbas* narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Verily Allah has recorded the good deeds and the evil deeds.” Then he clarified that: “Whosoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it with Himself as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times, or more than that. But if he intends to do an evil deed and does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it down as one single evil deed.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

When people are getting married, they need to have a good intention. If their intention is wrong, the relationship will be very miserable. When Shaykh Yaser counsels couples, he has them establish as signature of the relationship as part of the marriage profile. It serves as the glue as it holds people together, and if it is permanent, the relationship can last a long time. But once it dries out, the relationship will fall apart. For example, say a couple gets married for a green card or for children; once these factors disappear, the marriage will fall apart. If a couple marries for any reason other than love and mercy, the relationship will most likely fail.

3.) Purifying your soul

“*And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption].” Surah al-Shams, 91:7-10*
Allah gives us the ultimate goal of this life, and He explains how the one who purifies his or her soul has gained success. Those who fail to purify their soul have failed. Some people are evil not only in their actions, but also in their intentions. They always hold grudges, they have the evil eye for others, and they don’t want *khair* for anyone else.

We must teach our children to have pure souls. In school, they may have good grades, but what the teacher says about them at the end of the school year is so much more important (e.g. their manners and *akhlaaq*). In the work force, no one cares what grades you had! Instead, people care about how you treat them.

*Abu Hurayrah* narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “Do not be envious of one another; do not artificially raise prices against one another; do not hate one another; do not turn one’s back on each other; and do not undercut one another in business transactions. And be, [O] servants of Allah, brethren. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He does not wrong him. He does not fail him [when he needs him]. He does not lie to him. And he does not show contempt for him. Piety is here” – and he pointed to his chest three times. “It is enough of evil for a person to hold his Muslim brother in contempt. All of a Muslim is inviolable to another Muslim: his blood, his wealth, and his honor.” [*Muslim*]

4.) Encouraging good and forbidding evil

*Abu Sa’id al-Khudri* narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “Whoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then he must change it with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then he must change it with his heart. And that is the slightest [effect of] faith. [*Muslim*]

We need to teach our kids to be proactive and to care about other people. They need to understand they have a responsibility to others beside themselves. As a part of the family, they need to care about other family members. Teenagers often respond with “I don’t care!” if you tell them something such as, “Don’t talk to your sister like that!” These individuals must learn how to care while encouraging good and forbidding evil.

5.) Dignity and self discipline

“O you who have believed, upon you is [responsibility for] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided. To Allah is you return all together; then He will inform you of what you used to do.” *Surah al-Ma’idah, 5:105*
Abu HurayrahNarrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “Part of the perfection of one’s Islam is his leaving that which does not concern him.” [Tirmidhi]

We may not restrain ourselves at times, and we can make mistakes that affect other people. As a family, it is very important to have a sense of dignity and self-discipline; we must do the right thing regardless of what people say and do. Once we have done the right thing, we have fulfilled our responsibility. We need to impart this to our children too as we implement a system to keep them in check. For example, parents may choose not to buy cellphones for their teenage kids. Or if they do allow cellphones, there will be limitations to allow for self-discipline.

6.) Truthfulness and trustworthiness

‘Abdullah b. Mas’udNarrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “Verily, truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man may speak the truth until he is recorded with Allah as truthful. Verily, falsehood leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the Hellfire. A man may tell lies until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.” [Muslim]

Shaykh Yaser taught his kids that he will tolerate any mistake they make, and he will help them with it. He does not expect perfection, and he understands that mistakes can be a learning opportunity. However, he taught them that he will never tolerate lying.

Kids lie to their parents in order to protect them; the kids know they cannot tolerate the truth. Parents must learn to accept some disappointment that comes with their kids’ mistakes. Ultimately, kids learn from their parents’ reaction to stress and difficulty. Kids learn to lie when their parents teach them the truth is costly. For example, if parents hear something break, they will come into the room and ask who broke the object. The young child doesn’t know any better, so he or she will confess. The parents then punish this child. The next time this happens, the child who broke the object will blame someone else like his brother, saying, “He did it!” So, this child has learned that truthfulness is bad.
7.) Contentment and Reliance on Allah

“Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”

Surah al-Baqarah, 2:268

Contentment is the key to happiness. Many parents, husbands, and wives make happiness their goal; this is one of the worst goals because they are setting themselves up for failure. You cannot make “happy” your goal because once you reach that goal, you can reach the higher level of “happier”. And once you reach that goal, you can be even happier! With this mindset, you will never be happy.

“Allah says that He will give you (O Muhammad) until you are satisfied, not happy.”

Surah ad-Duhaa, 93:5

Allah says that He will give you (O Muhammad) until you are satisfied, not happy.
And he is going to be satisfied." **Surah al-Layl, 92:21**

Allah revealed this *ayah* about Abu Bake Al-Siddiq. He shall be content and pleased. Again, we learn that contentment is the goal. If we can achieve contentment, we will be happy regardless of the circumstances. There is an Arabic poem that says if you have a content heart, then you own this whole world on top of your head. You are happy with whatever you eat.

Contentment is an intrinsic value that we develop by doing our part, and then delivering everything to Allah. This is *tawakkul*; I do my part, then, ya Allah, it is in Your Hand. Whatever the results are, I will be content because I did everything I could.

So, if your kids break bad after you give them the best Islamic upbringing, don’t despair. You tried you best. Nuh spent 950 years giving *da’wah* yet his own son and wife disbelieved in him.

**8.) Earning Halal and Eating Halal**

"O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship." **Surah al-Baqarah, 2:172**

This remains one of the hardest principles in our times. Unfortunately, the *halal* is intertwined with a lot of *haram*. Try your best, and don’t compromise much. If your situation becomes difficult, continue to strive for the *halal*. If you need to break the rules for dire circumstances, your kids need to know that it is not the norm.

**9.) Gratefulness and Thankfulness**

"Ramaynät, O you who have believed, make your deeds attractive to Allah, make them deeds of thankfulness. Work with your hands in the fear of Allah and may your work be accepted for you. It is the grace of Allah to do good work."

**Surah al-Adha, 3:130**
“They made for him what he willed of elevated chambers, statues, bowls like reservoirs, and stationary kettles. [We said], ‘Work, O family of David, in gratitude.’ And few of My servants are grateful.” Surah Saba, 34:13

This concept ties in with contentment. Many parents push their children to be ungrateful. Sometimes the wife may cause the husband to be ungrateful and vice versa. For example, if your child or spouse is always using the phrase “That’s it?”, you are dealing with an ingrate. That phrase more or less equates with, “I expected more than this!” Whenever we go to a restaurant, we order food like there’s no tomorrow. Yet there remains a lot of excess food, which is usually thrown away.

10.) Holding on to the Path of Steadfastness

فَأَسْتَقِيمَ كَمَا أَمَرْتُ وَمِنْ تَأَبِ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَفْتَعِلْ إِنَّهُ يَمْثَلُكُمْ بِابْطِرَاءٍ

“So remain on a right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to Allah], and do not transgress. Indeed, He is Seeing of what you do.” Surah Hud, 11:112

Ibn Khaldun explained that difficult times produce strong men. We need to teach our kids that during difficult times, we stay strong. We do not hide or run away. Teach them that they are human; if the weaken, they must recalibrate. If they need help, they should reach out for help.

11.) Standing for Justice

بِتَابِيْهِ أَلْتَيْبَ، إِمْنًا كِوْنُوا قَوْمًا لِلَّهِ شَهِدَّاءٍ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجِرُونَ مَنْ تَحْكَمُ شَيْبَانُ قُوَّةً عَلَى أَنْ تَبْعَلُوا أُنْفَقُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ للِّقَوْمِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ حِيْرًا يَمْثَلُكُمْ

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” Surah al-Ma’idah, 5:8

We do not teach our children to stand for justice; instead, we teach them to fight for what is theirs. When playing musical chairs in the west, there will only be 9 seats available while there are 10 kids playing. So, there is a process of elimination as all the kids fight for a seat.
When playing musical chairs in Japan, there will be 9 seats available while there are 10 kids playing. When the music stops, the players must find a means to have everyone seated before time runs out. Even if just one kid is not seated, the whole team loses. This difference in mentality manifests how we teach our kids to be selfish and fight for themselves, even if it entails hurting other people. Other societies teach that we all enjoy together and win together.

12.) Respect one another
‘Abdullah b. ‘Amr narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “He is not of us who does not have mercy on young children, nor honor the elderly.” [Tirmidhi]

This is especially important between siblings and children. For example, if you have guests coming over with their kids, there may be a fight over toys. Their child wants to play with the toy, but your own child says, “No, it’s my toy!” Instead of handing over the toy completely to the other child, they can take turns.

13.) Dealing with people is dealing with Allah

“[Saying], "We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude." Surah al-Insan, 76:9

Always remember, you are kind and good to others not because the people necessarily deserve it, but because you deserve to do the right thing all the time. Don’t be arrogant when trying to be good to others (e.g. I am being kind to you for Allah, not because you actually deserve it). Rather, be good to others while truly believing that you need to treat others well.

14.) Striving to be a successful family

“And [recall] when We took your covenant, [O Children of Israel, to abide by the Torah] and We raised over you the mount, [saying], "Take what We have given you with determination and remember what is in it that perhaps you may become righteous.”
Surah al-Baqarah, 2:63

As Muslims, we believe in this principle. However, in this society, this principle does not resonate as much. When kids turn 14 years old, they are more or less considered free to make decisions for themselves and even leave the home. As families, we must strive to
ensure that our kids are successful. We will stand before Allah ﷺ, and He will ask us about our children. We need to ensure that they are fulfilling obligations such as prayer. We will not be responsible for the decisions they make when they are older.

15.) Time is the life capital

“By time, indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.”

Surah al-‘Asr, 103:1-3

Imam Shafi‘i said that if people were to ponder just this surah, it would be sufficient for them to gain guidance and righteousness. This surah really does summarize everything about our existence. We realize that life is time that has an expiration date. Allah ﷺ swears by time that every soul is in a constant state of loss. We grow older and weaker as time passes. However, Allah says that people who have the following four qualities will be saved from loss: faith, good deeds, advising each other to truth, and advising each other to patience.

You’re only strong when you complete the first two aspects properly. What makes you weak is the gap between what you learned/believe in and what you do. This gap contributes to hypocrisy. The greater the gap, the weaker you are. The smaller the gap, the
stronger you are. Your entire life is about closing that gap between what you know and what you actually practice. We need to learn more, and then implement that knowledge.

Allah ﷻ knows that we are human beings who are weak individuals. Thus, He emphasizes the importance of helping each other (وَهَدَّأَلَّا إِلَيْهِ). When we are enjoining good and assisting others, don’t expect people to be happy with your advice. They may rebel. That’s why we need to persevere in patience (وَوَتَّابُوا إِنَّا أَنْصَبِرُ).

When it comes to family life, we are currently receiving information. How much we actually practice that information is our business. We become weaker when we don’t implement these principles. We need to be authentic, genuine, and real. The only way to achieve this is by always closing the gap.
CHAPTER TWO
The Life of a Muslim Couple
Chapter 2: The Life of a Muslim Couple
The Etiquette of a Husband and Wife

PRINCIPLES OF MARITAL LIFE

Marriage is a divinely inspired institution. Allah ﷻ revealed its rules and principles in the Qur’an, and the Messenger ﷺ lived these principles through his blessed family life. In our times, people are trying to change the institute of marriage and the definition of family. However, because marital life is divinely inspired, it cannot be hanged.

The most important relationship we need to nurture and nourish is the relationship between husband and wife. If this relationship is healthy, it will ultimately help fix other relationships. What’s the point of having a good relationship with your kids if you don’t have a good relationship with your spouse?

Marriage is a sacred covenant

"And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?" Surah al-Nisa, 4:21

This ayah is speaking in the context of divorce; how can you demand the mahar back when you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you the strong covenant? The covenant is the word of Allah ﷻ that made the relationship and action halal between husband and wife. Allah has called marriage a strong covenant. No one can change this meaning or principle.

Successful marriage is based on love and mercy

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.” Surah al-Rum, 30:21
Love is the passion while mercy is the compassion. As time passes, there may not be as much passion, but you always need compassion. Spouses may not love one another to the same extent they did early in the relationship when they were younger, but they still care for one another. Sometimes, a woman will stay in a relationship because she feels bad to leave her husband; so, she is not acting on love but rather mercy. Likewise, a man can stay in a relationship out of mercy to the kids.

**The best example is the example of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ**

‘A’ishah ﷺ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family.” [Tirmidhi]

We need to follow his example to achieve successful relationships with our own families.

**There is no such thing as a perfect couple, but there is a perfect work in progress**

Abu Hurayrah ﷺ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “A believing man (husband) does not detest a believing woman (wife). If he dislikes something from her, he will like another.” [Muslim]

There is something fundamentally wrong if a husband or wife hates the spouse. Something is missing in the relationship because the Prophet ﷺ said that a true believer cannot have that much hate in one’s heart for the spouse.

There is no such thing as a perfect marriage or a perfect spouse, but there is always one in the making. Keep trying until the very end. You will realize you had a wonderful time when you retire. You will look back and say, “Wow, what a journey!” In the move Up, Mr. Fredricksen sees a note in Ellie’s scrapbook thanking him for the wonderful journey and encouraging him to go out and have another one. You only realize how beautiful the journey is when you come to the end of the road. During times of difficulty, you usually think of the worst-case scenarios.

“**Happiness is only a period between two hardships; and life is full of hardships.**”

~Shaykh Yaser Birjas~

Life has its ups and downs. Today you may be happy, and tomorrow you won’t be so happy. Sometimes, excessive grief can be a source of great relief. In the movie Inside Out, Riley and her family move from Minnesota to San Francisco. Riley wants to return to Minnesota, so she runs away from her parents and boards a bus. She comes to a moment of such extreme sadness that even the most beautiful golden memories turn blue. That excessive sadness and grief lead to relief as she got off the bus and returned home. So, sometimes we will
have to cry ourselves to sleep so that we wake up the next day refreshed. This is not the best habit to do on a daily basis, but we will have to go through some difficult times to enjoy and appreciate the good.

**Marriage is partnership, not ownership**

*Umm Sulaym narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “Women are men’s counterparts.”* [Ahmad and others]

In some cultures, once a man and woman get married, the woman becomes the property of the family. In western culture, the woman even changes her last name to the husband’s last name. In Southern American, the child is born with both the mother and father’s last name: the father’s last name becomes the child’s middle name, and the mother’s last name becomes the child’s last name (or vice versa). People fear losing their family line. But the Prophet taught us that women are counterparts to men. So, men and women complete one another; they don’t compete against one another.

When Shaykh Yaser counsels couples, sometimes the husband may complain, saying, “My wife just doesn’t get. She doesn’t see things the way I see it!” The Shaykh will respond that he is lucky because this means he married a lady! If she sees everything the way he does, then the man actually married another dude! Some men want their wives to be in sync with everything they think, but this is not the correct mentality to have.

Biologically speaking, a human being is made of two components: the masculine and the feminine. So, a man may be 90% man and 10% woman. And a woman may be 90% woman and 10% man. Why do we need the other part? In order to connect with the opposite gender. Based on one’s upbringing, a man may actually increase to 15% woman and become emotionally smarter; this will ultimately allow him to connect better with his wife. But increasing the woman counterpart too much is not good.

For example, when the wife is crying, she doesn’t necessarily want her husband to come and cry with her. She will get confused! In her book *Save The Males, Why Men Matter Why Women Should Care*, author Kathleen Parker explains how western culture and Hollywood has “girlified” men. The way TV portrays men is inaccurate. It’s not right when a girl marries a man who is too soft.

A man may say that his wife complains too much. Shaykh Yaser Birjas explains that this is very good sign because it keeps the husband awake and alert. It is a healthy sign: she feels safe enough to bring up her complaints with her husband without fear of being condemned. A husband should be concerned when the woman is too quiet.
RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS
Most couples come to Shaykh Yaser for counseling, saying, "We want you to tell us what to do. What are the rights and obligations?" The Shaykh feels sad for them; he realizes that there is a problem with love and mercy when couples fight over issues of rights and obligations. In the Qur'an, Allah does not mention these rights in detail. Rather, He always refers to them bil ma’roof (what is customary and culturally practiced at that time). Fixing issues pertaining to rights and obligations is easy. Fixing love and mercy requires more attention; once this is fixed, the rights and obligations will fall into place very well. When spouses love one another, they are willing to give up some of their rights to please the other person. So, instead of fighting for rights and obligations, fight for love and mercy.

"O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them unless they commit a clear immorality. And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good." Surah al-Nisa, 4:19

Marriage in Islam is a contract, and just like any contract, it comes with provisions. Allah says to live with them in kindness. This kindness is according to what is customary for your time. And Allah reminds us that we may dislike them, but there may be much khair for us in our spouses. Marriage doesn't always have to be about love. If you are planning on sustaining your marriage solely on love, you will not be able to. Love is an emotion, and you have no control over emotions. You only have control over your behavior and actions. We need to create a loving environment in order to rekindle sentimental love.

The concept of bil ma’roof helps us overcome some stereotypes. For example, traditionally speaking, it is the woman’s responsibility to wash the dishes and clean the house. However, in a non-traditional setting in which both the husband and wife may be working, we cannot simply say it is only the wife’s job. We need to adjust to this new style of life. This is bil ma’roof. Similarly, if a woman is marrying a man who is very traditional, she will need to accommodate to his preferences and expect that cleaning will be her responsibility.
3 KINDS OF MARRIAGE

1.) Traditional
- Man is the breadwinner and woman is the homemaker

2.) Egalitarian
- Husband and wife don’t see any difference in regard to rights and obligations
- Lady gives income to the household
- Man helps with cooking, cleaning, and children
- Responsibility is shared equally

3.) Transitional
- Traditional marriage moving into egalitarian marriage
- Man has fundamental role of breadwinner, but he will also help around house
- Woman’s job mostly homemaker, but she will help her husband
- Most marriages fall into this category

AND due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority].”

Surah al-Baqarah, 2:228

So, men and women have rights and obligations, but men have a degree over women. Allah did not specify what kind of degree, but it is a degree of responsibility in this context. So, the man has more authority. In the corporate world, the higher you climb in ranks, the more privileges you receive. However, these privileges come with a huge amount of responsibility and risk. Allah will hold the man accountable on the Day of Judgment more than the woman because he is the head of the household. So, in return, he has extra privileges. Keep in mind that we are referring to equity, not equality. Men and women have different levels of rights and obligations. In some areas, women are preferred; in other areas, men are preferred. But when you put them all together, it becomes even.
If the wife is working, does she need to contribute to paying the expenses?
It goes back to the concept of *bil ma'roof*. In the past, when women stayed at home all day, they didn’t contribute to household expenses. But today, we have professional women working from 7am to 5pm. The woman cannot say, “My money, my money.” That’s not right, and that’s not fair (unless the husband says it’s ok). The husband *does* have a right to have her help with expenses.

**RULES OF A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE**

1.) *Great relationships don’t just happen, they are created*
- Most men and women (especially the younger ones) look for the “perfect” person
- However, we should be looking for the “right” person instead
- If you look for the “perfect” or “best” person, you may be looking for criteria that is not practical (also, this person may not be the best one for you)
- But if you find the “right” person, that can be the best person for you
- Some people may have an image that they copy and past from TV (e.g. very religious, educated, good cook, etc.)
- Relationships are created, they don’t just happen
- It requires effort, must roll up your sleeves, start working on it from day 1

2.) *Your marriage, not your job, should get your best energy*
- We make excuses that we are too busy and tired
- The whole “busy” phenomenon is an American concept
- Other cultures have lots of time for family (even though they may work 2 shifts)
- They manage their time differently
- Don’t apologize for what you have to do, as long as it is good and right
- Remember to compensate for other aspects of your life at another time
  - E.g. family, exercising, eating healthy
- Men should not schedule family time by the minute; be spontaneous

3.) *If you cannot be happy without your spouse, you won’t be happy together*
- Many people make their happiness contingent on their spouse’s happiness
- Some men want to force their wives to be happy
  - If she isn’t happy, neither is he
- We need to be individually happy, it is an intrinsic value
- You can be happy even in the most difficult situations
E.g. When Shaykh Yaser was dealing with Bosnian and Palestinian refugees, he was dealing with widows and orphans
- These people were still happy and content
- Even though they may only have some tents, a few mattresses, and a very old tea set, they are happy
- One man even said, “I have everything!”
- This man’s happiness came from inside, he could then provide his kids with happiness as well

**4.) It is possible to hate and love someone at the same time**
- When you hate your wife at this time, you will love her again in a few hours
- It’s not the end of the world, there may be a moment where you will recover
- The Prophet ﷺ told us that there can be both iman and nifaq present in the heart at the same time, this is how the heart fluctuates
  - When you do good deeds, iman increases
  - When your good deeds go down, iman decreases
  - Same with love and hate: need to practice love actions so that love will increase

**5.) Commitment in marriage is a means to freedom, not slavery**
- New phenomenon of young men and women not getting married due to fear of commitment
- Men may be happy single (able to travel freely, play video games, play basketball with their friends, no responsibility)
- They envision marriage as being pinned to the ground
- However, once you get married, your life perspective changes
  - Free yourself from many childish things
  - Marriage is supposed to be a right of passage
  - Free to become and adult

**6.) Commitment is not a one-time thing; it’s an ongoing process**
- Marriage is a commitment
- It is not testing the relationship
- Once you commit to love them, you must continue with them
7.) Conflicts do not destroy marriages, resentment and withholding do
   - Many husbands and wives try to avoid conflict
   - Is it healthy to expose kids to conflict between mom and dad?
     - Sometimes it is good, you need to expose children to a certain degree of conflict
     - They see how mom and dad get upset but later reconcile
     - It is a test of reality: even when things go bad, they can still get better
   - Conflict is a sign of growth, an opportunity to learn what changed in your life that requires your attention

8.) Your primary relationship is with your spouse and not your children
   - When the relationship goes bad between husband and wife, there is a competition over the kids
   - The mother becomes overly protective
     - Trying to protect them from what may come next, such as abuse or divorce
   - She attaches herself to the children for emotional fulfillment because she does not receive it from her husband
   - Sometimes, the husband tries to win the kids over by spoiling them
   - The husband and wife focus so much on the children that they lose the primary relationship between themselves

9.) It’s never too late to repair a damaged trust
   - For example, he was cheating on you
     - It’s never too late to salvage a damaged trust
     - This process takes time
   - Can be hard to restore trust because of emotional pain
     - Injury of trust is not physical but rather emotional
   - Men and women deal with emotional pain differently
   - Men deal with emotional pain like physical pain
     - If you have ever bumped your knee or elbow on a desk or chair, it is very painful
     - But if you are asked to look at that corner you hit (or even just remember it in your mind), you would not feel the same pain
   - Emotional pain is different: it is always fresh, as if it just happened now
     - This is how the husband and wife feel when dealing with mistrust
     - Thus, recovery is difficult
     - Only if the couple ties loose ends and learns emotional closure can they restore the trust
     - It’s never too late, it is doable and requires time, effort, and commitment from both parties
Sometimes, mistakes like these can be a learning experience in addition to a focal point of the relationship

- It can be a means to catapult you to the best part of your relationship
- Ibn Qayyim al Jawziyyah said that Allah can test people with a sin, which will ultimately provoke repentance
  - This repentance is unparalleled to any other repentance they would have made for other mistakes
- When we are in our comfort zone, we have no where to end up
- But when we make a mistake, we improve ourselves by saying, “I will never put myself in that position again”

10.) **Expectations usually set us up for resentment**

- Resentment is based on expectation
- Explained in more detail on page 62

11.) **Your opinion is not the truth**

- When the man sees things a certain way, he thinks, “This is what it is!”
  - Same with the lady
- Whenever the husband and wife fight, the conversation sounds more factual
  - “You said this!”
  - “No, you did that!”
  - “What about last time?”
  - “What about your mom?”
  - “Where did you get that from?”
  - In the end, the couple never resolve the issue
- In an emotional argument, the facts and truth become absolutely irrelevant
- No one cares who is right or wrong
- People only care about one thing: you hurt me, make me feel better
- If we are only trying to prove ourselves right, we are missing the point
  - Stop trying to prove your spouse wrong
  - Let the conversation flow, see what your spouse really needs in order to feel better
    - Maybe your spouse needs a hug, kiss, or cup of coffee
    - Try to take your spouse out: let’s go shopping, let’s grab ice cream
- It’s not about whose right and wrong, it’s not about the truth
  - Instead, try to find out what happened
  - Then, try to fix the situation
  - It’s all about, “I’m hurt, make me feel better”

12.) **Marriage should always be a win/win scenario**

- Why does it have to be “You lose, I win” mentality?
- Some people feel the need to win every battle
  - Especially when it comes to the mother
- Try to amend the situation
13.) **Always appreciate your spouse for the ordinary things**
   - Some people wait for the big things to say thank you
   - Why can’t we say thank you for the ordinary things?
     - *jazakAllah khair* for taking the kids to the *masjid*
     - Thank you for the cup of coffee, I really appreciate it
     - You look awesome
   - When you appreciate the little things, your spouse will feel satisfied
   - Spouses need to feel appreciated
     - They don’t want to feel like what they’re doing is going down the drain

14.) **Possessiveness and jealousy are born out of fear not love**
   - Why would a lady grab her husband’s phone?
     - She must be looking for something else apart from time and weather
     - She wants to make sure she is ok
   - Caution is necessary at times, and jealousy can be a means of survival
   - You need to do the best thing that will reduce your chances of losing your spouse
     - If a man feels that he is losing his wife, he needs to upgrade himself
     - He needs to look for what is missing and then add that to the relationship
       - E.g. Is there lack of communication, no thank you, not affectionate enough, not buying her gifts, not being considerate of her feelings?
     - Same for the lady: she needs to look for what is missing in the relationship with her husband and provide that
       - E.g. Is he missing peace of mind?

15.) **If you think marriage counseling is too expensive, try divorce**
   - Many couples don’t have premarital counseling because they think $500 is too expensive
   - Yet, they are willing to spend $25,000 on a wedding
   - The best time to have marital counseling is when the relationship is on good terms, not when it’s nasty
   - Also, if the marriage is going into stagnation, this a red flag
     - The couple should seek counseling, they need direction
     - Never underestimate counseling, it is even mentioned in the Qur’an:

> "And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Acquainted [with all things]." *Surah al-Nisa, 4:35*
16.) *Forgiveness is its own reward, and revenge is its own punishment*
   - Forgiveness sets you free from other people
   - If you always hold a grudge, you anchor yourself to the person
   - Just let go, and things will be fine

17.) *It's not always about you*
   - If your spouse is in a bad mood, it doesn’t necessarily have to do with you
   - Maybe he just had a bad day at work
   - Give him some time, and he will come around

18.) *Silence can be deafening*
   - Don’t use silence as a weapon, it can be very devastating
   - Ironically, it is extremely loud
     - E.g. A husband comes into the house and says *salam*, woman responds with the *salam* and stays quiet when he tries to have a conversation
     - It is almost like she is yelling through her silence
     - It is not healthy in a relationship
     - However, it is ok to be upset for some time

19.) *Patience is a lost virtue*
   - In department stores, people can’t stand in lines anymore, they keep switching lines
   - People order online and use drive-through for food and medicine
   - There is no drive-through for marriage or for giving the *shahada*
   - As human beings, we have a very limited reservoir of patience
     - Patience decreases through stress in our life
     - But our patience can increase when we learn to be more tolerant
     - An experiment was conducted to test people’s tolerance:
Some people in the waiting room were told to eat from either the red radish or the cookies.

Others were told they cannot eat the cookies.

After some time, the participants were given an unsolvable puzzle.

Researchers discovered that those banned from the cookies spent 5-7 minutes less time working on the puzzle before they gave up in comparison to those who were allowed to eat from the cookies.

Why? Because those people spent some of their tolerance resisting the cookies, so they had less tolerance than others in solving the puzzle.

- This same concept also works in marriage:
  - The worst time for you to find emotional fulfillment is the first 10 minutes when you get back from work.
  - People come home from work expecting food, a perfect house, and kids behaving.
  - But it doesn’t work like this, Shaykh Yaser advises people to chew gum the first 10 minutes when they meet their spouse after a long day.
    - When you chew gum, you cannot look angry.
    - As a result, you always have a sense of relief.
  - The last 10 minutes before you leave for work should be an enjoyable time.

- We need to practice patience in our lives:
  - The Prophet said, “Knowledge comes from learning and hilm (forbearance and patience) comes through training.”

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**إِنَّا الْعَلَمُ بِالْتَّوْلُيْدِ، وَإِنَّمَا الْحَلمُ بِالَّتِينَمَانِ بالتحلم**

**20. Marriage is not about you being happy; it’s about making someone else happy**

- “And they lived happily ever after” → this is the biggest lie we were told lies as children.
- Marriage does not make you happy, it makes you responsible, this is the real world.
- You make yourself happy.
  - Happiness does not depend on your marriage.
- Some people may be in a miserable relationship, but they are still happy.
- When you are happy, you can give happiness to someone else.
- In marriage, you need to try to make your spouse happy.
- People are happier in giving rather than taking.
  - Same with the relationship: do things that make your spouse happy, things that are meaningful to them (not you).
  - What if I tried everything but my spouse is still not happy? Make dua
FROM THE LIFE OF THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ

Dealing with troubles – even the Prophet had problems with his family:

1.) Jealousy

The Prophet asked ‘A’ishah if there was any food because he didn’t want the guests to wait long. ‘A’ishah overheard the footsteps of a servant coming from the house of Hafsah (keep in mind that ‘A’ishah was not a very good cook). The moment she heard the footsteps, ‘A’ishah jumped on the servant and hit her arms out of jealousy. The plate dropped and broke, and food spilled all over the place. The Prophet saw everything. Most other men would reprimand their wives, saying things like, “How can you do this?” and “You have embarrassed me in front of my guests!”, but the Prophet was different. He started collecting the food, and told his guests, “What can I do? She is very jealous.”

Sometimes, jealousy can be an issue of trust. One day, the Prophet was sleeping in the house of ‘A’ishah. When he thought she was asleep, he left the house in the middle of the night. She thought he was going to visit another wife, so she became very jealous. She put on her clothes and started walking after him. The Prophet actually went to the cemetery (al-Baqee); he raised his hands and made dua for the deceased. Then he returns to his house, heading straight towards ‘A’ishah who was hiding. She turned around and started walking fast. The Prophet hastens his footsteps, and so did ‘A’ishah. She reaches the house before he does, breathing verily heavily. At home, the Prophet asks her while she is trying to catch her breath, “Was that you?” ‘A’ishah felt very shy, embarrassed, and awkward. He asked her, “Are you afraid that Allah and His Messenger will be unfair to you?” Out of her love for him, she wanted to reconcile right away, so she goes to hug him. But the Prophet places his hand on her chest and pushes her away. This was a natural reaction (i.e. I’m not ready right now. How can you do this to me?). The Prophet got over it later and moved on. He knew that she was acting out of love for him.

2.) Finances

The Prophet was always generous, and he always gave his wives what they deserved of their allowances. There was still more treasure coming from Madinah, which he would distribute, and the wives of the Prophet wanted more. There was an especially large amount of treasure coming from Bahrain; they complained to the Prophet. Umar overheard them, so he comes and asks permission to enter. When he enters, all the women cover up and then remain quiet. He asks them why they raise their voices with the Prophet yet they are very quiet when he comes. One of them answered back, saying that the Prophet is a very kind, tolerant, and patient person while Umar is a rude man. She explained that it is none of his business and he shouldn’t get involved. So, we learn from this incident that even the wives of the Prophet were demanding in terms of finances.
In traditional families today, many men don’t disclose their earnings to their wives and even keep their bank accounts secret. Many times, it is because of the man’s responsibility to his own parents, family, and perhaps cousins overseas.

3.) Silent treatment

The wives of the Prophet ﷺ would sometimes give the Prophet cold treatment due to issues like finances. Umar ﷺ overheard this, and he asked his daughter Hafsah ﷺ, “Ya Hafsah, is it true that you don’t speak to the Prophet ﷺ for some time?” She replied, “Yes, sometimes for the whole day until night.” Umar said, “My daughter, don’t do this. You are not ‘A’ishah. She can do it and get away with it, but you can’t.”

Shortly afterwards, rumors spread in the community that the Prophet ﷺ had divorced all his wives. Umar ﷺ goes straight to Hafsah ﷺ who is crying. He says, “You don’t listen to me!” He then asks her if the Prophet had divorced her, but she wasn’t sure. So, he left in search of the Prophet ﷺ who had isolated himself above the house of ‘A’ishah ﷺ (so he was in a room similar to a loft while ‘A’ishah was in the lower level). Umar asked permission to enter three times, and he was finally given permission. He saw the Prophet ﷺ leaning on his side, looking very upset. Umar tried to break the ice by saying how men had more control in Makkah and how the Ansari women in Madinah were more outspoken with stronger personalities. He goes on to explain how the Makkkan women started learning from the Madinan women and how his own wife even responded back to him!

The Prophet ﷺ had a big smile on his face, and he understood Umar’s words. Umar ﷺ then felt more relaxed, so he sat down and asked the Prophet if he had divorced his wives. The Prophet ﷺ said no, but he gave an oath not to approach them for an entire month (similar to a kind of boycott). So, the wives were giving him silent treatment, so he was giving them silent treatment in return. After 29 days, the Prophet ﷺ returned, starting with the house of ‘A’ishah ﷺ. He was excited to be back, and you would think that ‘A’ishah would be too, saying “Thank you” and “I’m so sorry”. Instead, she said, “Well, the month is not over yet!” The Prophet ﷺ could have just left, but he said the month can be like this (flashing 30 days) or like this (flashing 29 days). He was more or less saying, be quiet, let’s get over it, and move on.
4.) In-laws

Even the most precious house of the Prophet ﷺ had issues. ‘A’ishah ﷺ wasn’t jealous of anyone more than Fatimah ﷺ. The relationship between the Prophet ﷺ and Fatimah was certain (i.e. connected by blood), but the relationship between the Prophet and ‘A’ishah was uncertain (i.e. he could divorce her). So, whenever Fatimah came, ‘A’ishah would have her guard up because the Prophet ﷺ did not offer his full attention to ‘A’ishah.

While the Prophet ﷺ was on his deathbed, Fatimah sat down next to him. He whispered something to her, and started crying. He then whispered to her again, and she then started laughing. ‘A’ishah later asked Fatimah about this incident, but she explained that it was her father’s secret which she will not disclose. About 6 months later, Fatimah tells ‘A’ishah about the conversation: the first time he whispered to her that he will be leavening this world, and the second time he whispered to her that she will be joining him in Jannah. Fatimah passed away about 6 months after the passing of the Prophet ﷺ.

Once, the Prophet ﷺ came to the house of Fatimah ﷺ, and he asked her, “Where is your cousin?” The Prophet noticed that she was not in her best mood, and he knew there was an issue going on between her and her husband. Even the question the Prophet asked embodies deep meaning: in the tribal system, when you ask someone where his or her cousin is, it is a statement of tahbeeb, a way to soften the heart. The Prophet ﷺ is trying to break the ice by reminding Fatimah that her husband is also her cousin. She says, “I don’t know. Something happened, and he just left.” From some narrations, Fatimah did not disclose what happened to the Prophet. She wanted to be respectful to her husband, so she kept things just between them. Nowadays, whenever an issue comes up between a husband and wife, the wife calls her mom and tells her everything, which later spreads to the father, brothers, etc. Likewise, the husband can sometimes call his mom or sister and disclose all the details.

The Prophet ﷺ sent someone to find Ali ﷺ because Fatimah needed emotional support from her husband at that time. He stayed with her in the meantime. They received news that Ali is in the masjid, so the Prophet went straight over. The Prophet found Ali on the floor with dust all over his body; he was agitated, flipping left and right. The Prophet ﷺ woke him up and said, “Get up dusty man.” So, he took Ali home and reconciled between him and his wife.

Look at this beautiful example! The Prophet ﷺ dealt with in-law issues, but he didn’t take sides or argue about the problem. Rather, he just wanted to reconcile between their hearts. But in serious matters that required intervention, the Prophet would address the issue with his son-in-law. For example, Ali wanted to marry another wife who happened to be the daughter of Abu Jahl (she was Muslim). Fatimah ﷺ became upset and told her father. The Prophet ﷺ pulled Ali aside and asked him if it were true. He then said, “I swear by
Allah, it is never possible that the daughter of the Messenger of Allah and the daughter of the enemy of Allah will be with the same man.” He was telling him that he can’t do this. The Prophet was not objecting to Ali having a second wife, but he was objecting specifically to his choice. Ali never married a second wife during the lifetime of the Prophet or Fatimah (until she passed away).

**Dealings with love**

1.) **Being playful with love**

It’s all about strengthening love and mercy; rights and obligations will fall in right place afterwards. ‘A’ishah was once with the Prophet. The caravan went way ahead of them, so the Prophet said, “Let’s race!” He actually started running with his wife! Can you imagine that? Some people are so conservative, they cannot even imagine the Prophet running. Akhi, take it easy. This was a man and his wife running in the desert, having fun. ‘A’ishah won the first time, but later on when she was older and had gained some weight, they raced again and the Prophet won.

![Desert Scene](image)

2.) **Eating food can be romantic**

At least one meal should be eaten together with the family. Imagine if the husband and wife feed each other in the most beautiful way. Shaykh Yasser always praises his wife’s cooking in front of the kids, and the kids learned from him.

One day, the Prophet was eating with ‘A’ishah. She had in her hand a piece of meat, and as she was eating, the Prophet asked her to hand him the meat. She gave him the piece of meat, and he took a bite from where she had eaten from while she was looking at him. It was a very romantic moment.

‘A’ishah was once drinking from a cup, and the Prophet asked for it. He took the cup, turned it around, and drank from the same spot where her lips were.

Make sure you have your kids see you feeding each other.
3.) **He was a man of chivalry**

The Prophet ﷺ was always there to assist his wives. For example, Saffiyah  was trying to jump on a camel, so the Prophet kneeled down for her, and she used his knee as a step. As she was jumping over the camel, the Prophet was covering her from behind so that she wouldn’t be exposed.

In our times, we can follow this example by opening the door for our spouse.

4.) **Acts of service**

‘A’ishah  said that the Prophet ﷺ was at the service of his family until the adhaan was called – after that, he was gone, like a stranger. So, when he was around the house, he would help a lot. He also took care of his own shirt and shoes. But obviously, ‘A’ishah wanted to serve Prophet too. It was a matter of completion that came from love.

5.) **Pranks are always welcome**

Fun pranks are ok, but they should not be disrespectful. The Prophet ﷺ, ‘A’ishah  and Sawda  were once eating a meal in the house of the Prophet. Sawda is much older than ‘A’ishah (she was probably the age of her mother). Sawda was in the camp of ‘A’ishah, under her leadership. ‘A’ishah was not a very good cook, and she presented them with food that was a bit greasy. The Prophet ﷺ started eating, but he didn’t say anything. ‘A’ishah starts eating too, and she asks Sawda why she isn’t eating anything. Sawda responds, “I don’t like it.” ‘A’ishah says, “You will eat, or I’m going to spray this in your face!” So, she grabs some food and rubs it in Sawda’s face. Sawda is so shocked, and she looks at the Prophet ﷺ who is laughing and gesturing that she should retalite. So, Sawda rubs the food is ‘A’ishah’s face too.

**AVOIDING CONFLICT – THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF CONFLICT**
The vicious cycle of conflict is the reason why the husband and wife never solve a problem. What the husband needs the most from his wife is respect. What the wife needs the most from her husband is love. Love and respect are the same thing, but men and women speak different dialects. When we deliver love or respect, we must make sure it is meaningful to your spouse, even if it doesn’t make sense to you. When Shaykh Yaser asked men how they can receive respect from their wives, the number 1 answer was cooking good food on time. For men, it is not about the food itself, but rather having a wife who cares that he was out all day. When Shaykh Yaser asked women what they want the most from their husbands, the number 1 answer was acts of service such as helping around the house. They want him to care, not necessarily work more.

**The Love and Respect Spiral**

When it starts with a little thing and ends up with a mess. Say that the wife cooks an amazing dinner and has the house ready for her husband. After dinner, the husband goes to the living room while the wife prepares sweets and coffee. She asks, “Honey, what’s on TV.” He responds, “Dust.” (i.e. the TV is dirty). How do you expect the wife to react? He responded without love. So, she will respond without respect, and says, “Why don’t you go clean it yourself!” The man says, “Watch your tongue.” She says, “No, you watch your tongue!” Then there is a huge argument.

He will respond with even less love, and she will respond with even respect. It becomes a full circle, and when that circle becomes full, a new circle starts (similar to a spiral). What is the solution? You must reverse it. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. So, go from point B straight to point A by cutting through all the layers. This solution is mentioned in the Qur’an:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنَ فَوَلَا مَسَّهُ مَعْنَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ وَعَمِلَ صَبْرًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينِ ۚ وَلَا نَسَى أَحْسَنَةٌ وَلَا سَيِّئَةٌ أَدْفَعَ بِالْتَّبْيِينِ هُيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا أَلَّهُ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدْوَةً كَأَنْ ۖ وَٰلِيُّ حَمِيمٍ وَمَا يَلْقَفُهَا إِلَّا أَلَّهُ ذُوقَهُا وَمَا يَلْقَفُهَا إِلَّا ذُو حُظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ۖ وَإِمَآ يُزَعَّجَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نُعْجُرَ
“And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, “Indeed, I am of the Muslims. And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good]. And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” Surah Fusilat, 41:33-36

It’s all about submission to Allah ﷻ and responding with that which is best. What’s meaning of these ayat? Listen, you claim to believe: then submit! Sometimes you will see rules and commands that your are not happy with, but if they come from Allah, then submit! Like Ibrahim ﷺ when he sent his wife and kid to desert and was later commanded to sacrifice his son; he didn’t hesitate. Nowadays, our ego can get in the way of obeying the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ. I don’t want him to win, I don’t want her to win.

**Respond with that which is best**
The good and the bad are not equal. Always respond with that which is best. Allah says *idfa’* (push → put forth effort, start sweating, needs a lot of work). He didn’t say ‘*imal* (do). Respond with that which is best. Usually, when someone wrongs you, you mostly likely respond with that which is worst, not even equal. Sometimes, we fall very low from what is expected of us.
Allah emphasizes the importance of striving the best level. If we fall short of the “best” level, we would at least achieve “better” or “good”. But if we always reach the “equal” level in an attempt to retaliate, when we fall short, we will reach the “bad”, “worse”, or “worst” level. Responding with that which is best is not necessarily easy, but Allah tells us that if we continue with this path, the hostility may turn into friendship. Your good manners can really change a person.

Allah reminds us that it will not be easy, and only those who truly perceive and are patient can pass that test. If you’re not one of them, then become one of them. Those who are patient will be granted great reward. Remember, the reward is from Allah, not the people. You’re not doing it to receive a “thank you”, but because you need to do the right thing.

Allah reminds us that we are human beings. There can be times where we just lost it. It happens, it’s not the end of the world. If Shaytan distracts you and whispers to you, seek fauge with Allah. Recalibrate, do the right thing, and move on. Keep trying and trying! Non-stop effort. Hopefully you will be able to pass test.

Forgive and Forget Requires Momentum

"Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good." Surah Ale-Imran, 3:134

Some people hold their anger and forgive you, but they never forget. We must hold our anger, forgive, and forget. This process requires momentum. Forgiving and forgetting sets you free and brings you peace! If you don’t forgive and forget you will be dictated by emotions you expect from other people. If you did the right think, who cares what other people say?

THE TRAP OF EXPECTATION

This is the number 1 reason for young couples to get a divorce. When talking to these couples, Shaykh Yaser noted that the top word they use is “expect” and all its derivatives. The second most commonly used word is “understand”. Expectations are a normal part of an early marriage. In Love Notes, we discussed the 5 phases of marriage: in love, honeymoon, disappointment, adjustment, and autopilot phase. In the disappointment phase, it’s all about the trap of expectation.

During Shaykh Yaser’s counseling, the second part of the marriage profile is the DNA of the problem. This refers to a deep underlying theme that keeps coming up in the relationship over and over again. This theme can actually be triggered by one early problem (e.g. something that has been said or done in the past). One of the biggest problems is
uncertainty. The first manifestation of uncertainty is anger. Anger is never the problem; it is only a symptom to a deeper problem. We need to differentiate between anger as a feeling and acting angrily as a behavior. As a feeling, you can have as much anger as you want. But in terms of behavior, if you act angrily and it becomes a habit, you need to change.

Most husband and wife couples deal with anger by remaining silent for a few days, then they come back together. They break the ice, move on, and never solved problem. Uncertainty breeds anxiety, and your brain starts preparing you for the worst case scenario. Anxiety is actually the brain’s way of trying to defend you as it prepares you for the fight or flight response. When you are unable to deal with the fight or flight response, you get so scared and develop a fear of the unknown. “What if?” scenarios keep racing through your brain. It becomes so overwhelming and unbearable that you usually start to give up and become numb. You become very cold, you don’t know what to do, and you go into a mode of resentment, giving people silent treatment. It can lead to depression and you can get easily ticked off as you lash out at people. Overall, anger is only a symptom of uncertainty.

**Solution**

Communication, not speculation. If you don’t share information, people will make their own. Fix the uncertainty box because then there will be no anxiety, resentment, or anger. What is the first sign that your starting to deal with uncertainty? Criticism. When your spouse starts criticizing you, he or she is dealing with some uncertainty (e.g. new development, new change, new information, some valuables they don’t have control over). This uncertainty then leads to anxiety, etc. So, when your spouse starts criticizing, be smart and start investigating in a nice way. Try to find out what the situation is. Once you find out, deal with it.

Most people try to solve this problem by controlling the variables. People become very controlling, they want to control their spouse, where they go, what they drive, what they work, how much they get, etc. They don’t want to leave anything to uncertainty, and this is a sign of insecurity. But remember, people can only tolerate control to a certain limit.
Beyond that limit, we break. So remember, control is not the solution. A certain level of trust needs to be maintained.

Most people control each other by harsh criticism which is ultimately an attempt to control how you think, feel, behave. The mother-in-law tries to size down the daughter-in-law by criticizing her (e.g. food) in an attempt to control her.

In order to remove uncertainty, you need to make the uncertain less uncertain with information you obtain through communication. For example, if there is tension between a husband and wife concerning living conditions and expenses, the husband should openly communicate with the wife that he is job-hunting and taking such and such steps to secure their future. If you’re not a good communicator, you must learn how to communicate.
CHAPTER THREE
Parents - The Guardians
CHAPTER 3: PARENTS, THE GUARDIANS
BIRR’L-WALIDAYN

THE MEANING OF BIRR’L-WALIDAYN
“Barr” in the Arabic language means open space with no boundaries. Therefore, the word “birr” in “birr’l-walidayn” means to share khair and kindness with your parents with no limits.

Allah ﷻ refers to the angels in the Quran as “kiramin barara” and the people of Jannah as “abrar.” “Barara” for the angels comes from goodness, “birr.” Meaning the angels are good in essence. Whereas “abrar” for the people of Jannah comes from the actions that made the people good, “barr.” What makes a human being good is not the essence, but the outcome of his or her actions. What makes angels good is the essence of their creation itself.

Is listening to your parents considered birr’l-walidayn? Do you have to give your parents money? Do you have to care for them physically? Absolutely, there are no boundaries. The question that arises then is which of the khair you should give your parents? That is based on a case-by-case scenario. Some parents should be given money, while other parents should be given company by being with them physically. You have to be considerate of what their needs are and you can offer birr’l-walidayn to them in whichever way they need it.

BIRR (BENEVOLENCE) VS. HUBB (LOVE)
Is your obligation to give your parents birr’l-walidayn or hubb’l-walidayn? Are we obligated to be kind to them (birr) or are we obligated to love them (hubb)? Giving them both would be perfect, but what if you cannot give them hubb? Hubb is an emotion and birr is an action. Birr’l-walidayn is your obligation. Even if you grew up in a tough household and cannot feel love for your parents, you must still treat them with acts of love. If you were obligated by Allah ﷻ to love your parents, then it would have been tough for people to achieve in some cases. However, everyone can be kind and patient and can endure hardship with their parents.

Where does the obligation to love your parents come from? Allah ﷻ made that clear in the Quran:

وَوَضَبْنَا إِلَّا إِنْسَنَ يُوَالِدُهُ حَمْلَتِهِ أَمَّهُ وَهَذَا عَلَى وَهْنِ وَفِصْلَتِهِ فِي عَامِيَّةٍ أَنَّ أَشْكُرُ لِي وَلُوْلِدَيْكَ إِلَى أَلْمِصِيرُ

“We have commanded people to be good to their parents: their mothers carried them, with strain upon strain, and it takes two years to wean them. Give thanks to Me and to your parents—all will return to Me.” Surah Luqman, 31:14
A mother carries her baby for nine months, *wahn ‘ala wahn* (weakness upon weakness). While carrying the baby, the mother gets weaker as the baby gets stronger. After the baby is born, it is as if the baby sucks the life out of her. The two years that follow the birth, the mother is at the service of the baby. The mother must eat and drink well for the health of the child through her milk. For this reason, Allah commands you to be grateful to Him and to your parents. Giving them your *birr* has nothing to do with whether they were good or bad to you. Your parents earned your *birr* by giving birth to you. Giving your parents *hubb* can be difficult at times, but you are still responsible to give them *birr*.

✅ **What if the parents who raised you are not your biological parents? Are you obligated to give them *birr***?

Obviously, because it is not about the emotion of love, but the action of kindness. They raised you and therefore deserve your birr.

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**THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS AND HOW THEY SHOULD BE TREATED**

"Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say no word that shows impatience with them, and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them respectfully and lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say, 'Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little.'"

*Surah Al-Isra, 17:23-24*
Worshipping Allah and being kind to your parents are mentioned together. Being kind to your parents is mentioned second to worshipping Allah, almost as if you are worshipping your parents. Worshipping Allah is servitude and you are similarly a servant to your parents, but in a different context. If your parents become old, never say “uff” to them. Even a frustrated sigh in their face is a major sin. So do not yell at them, do not raise your voice and do not cuss at them. Lower your wing in humility, and say, “My Lord, have mercy on them.” They earned it by taking care of you all those years. There is no way for you to ever pay them back for their kindness.

The parents are gates to al-Jannah, when they are gone, those gates are closed. If your parents are still alive, make sure that you have those tickets to Jannah.
It is showing gratitude to Allah

“We have commanded people to be good to their parents: their mothers carried them, with strain upon strain, and it takes two years to wean them. Give thanks to Me and to your parents—all will return to Me.”

Surah Luqman, 31:14

Doing good to your parents is showing gratitude to Allah. Look at it this way: it is not about whether your parents deserve it or not, but you deserve to always be grateful, to be kind and to do the right thing. Showing gratitude to your parents is showing gratitude to Allah.

It is a form of Jihad

“A man came to the Prophet wanting to do jihad. The Prophet asked, ‘Are your parents still alive?’ ‘Yes,’ he replied. He said, ‘Then exert yourself on their behalf.’” [Bukhari]

Go and fight your self, your whims and your desires serving your parents. Serving your parents is truly a big jihad. It is not easy to deal with your parents in their old age. Especially if you are married with kids and your parents are being irrational and unrealistic. Be patient with them.

Allah said we grow from weakness, to strength, to weakness and then we get much weaker. This is what happens with parents. As they get older in age, they get younger in mentality and become like kids. The Prophet said as the son of Adam gets older, two things grow with him; stinginess (attachment to worldly things) and a wish for a long life. For kids, their world is their belongings. They get attached to their crayons, toys and blanket etc. Older adults act like kids as well with their attachment to their possessions such as a cup or a spoon etc. We need to be patient with them. Dealing with parents can be very difficult, and therefore the reward for birr’l-walidayn is so great. Enduring the hardships of birr’l-walidayn is so difficult, and you will understand this when you get older as well. Growing old is mandatory, but growing up is optional.

The birr of the mother

Abu Hurayra said, "The Prophet was asked, 'Messenger of Allah, to whom should I be dutiful?’ 'Your mother,' he replied. He was asked, 'Then whom?' 'Your mother,' he replied. He was asked, 'Then whom?' 'Your mother,' he replied. He was asked, 'Then whom?' He replied, 'Your father.'” [Bukhari]
The man may have been asking who he should be dutiful to in his circle of friends, but the Prophet surprised him by saying “your mother.” The man was shocked and asked again, and the Prophet said “your mother.” The man was getting confused and asked again and the Prophet said “your mother.” The man got the same response three times. He realized the Prophet was repeating himself consciously, and so when he asked the fourth time, the Prophet understood that the man understood and then responded “your father.” The mother gets three shares versus the one share for the father. Most men feel this is unfair, but look at the traditional upbringing. The mother has given so much to the child. Specifically, the concept of the child growing up and literally sucking the life out of her.

They say about the man that there are two women in his life. The first one gives him his life and the second one gives him her life. The first one is the mother and the second one is the wife. However, Shaykh Yaser thinks that is an unfair statement and that it is the same woman for both. It is the mother, she gives him his life AND her life, then comes the wife after that. The mother dedicates a lot of her time and a lot of her life for her child. If not taking care of the child physically, she worries about the child. That is why she deserves ¾ of your birr.

**The birr of the father**

Abu Hurayrah narrated the Prophet said, "A child cannot repay his father unless he finds him as a slave and the buys him and sets him free." [Muslim]

Birr of the mother is more because of the emotional nature of the mother, but it is more pragmatic for the man. When the Prophet was asked how a man can pay back his father’s birr, the Prophet said there is nothing you can repay him with, except if he finds him as a slave and buys him and sets him free. In our times, the father can be in big debt after investing in his child’s upbringing, so set him free from his financial hardships.

**The birr to the non-Muslim parent**

"But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do."

Surah Luqman, 31:15

If you have non-Muslim parents, do you need to show them birr’l-walidayn? Yes! If your non-Muslim parents try to make you commit kufr, do not obey them, but still be kind to
them. Similarly, with Muslim parents, if they try to make you do something haram, do not obey them, but still be kind to them. Doing birr to your parents is required from you, specifically when they are not good to you. Because if your parents were good to you, there would be no need for a religious mandate to take care of them and being obedient to them. But because the expectation is that they might not be that good to you, you are still required to be kind to them. Being good to them is a religious command. Allah ﷻ said in the above verse to treat them kindly, in a way that is considered equitable, customary and reasonable.

A great example of showing kindness to your non-Muslim parents can be found in the life of Asma bint Abi Bakr ﷺ. When people would migrate from Makkah to Madinah, they would be unable to adjust to the climate of Madinah. They would get allergies and sickness in the new environment. Makkan women who migrated to Madinah were unable to conceive and had miscarriages. When the people of Makkah and Madinah heard this news, they were mocking the migrants saying they will not be able to adjust to the climate and will all die. This is when the Prophet ﷺ made dua for the fever to be removed from the city into the mountains. Finally, after almost a year, Asma bint Abi Bakr became the first muhajir woman to give birth to a healthy child. That child was Abdullah ibn Zubayr ﷺ, and he became a celebrity when he was born. People were celebrating and partying, not because of Abdullah himself, but because there was a breakthrough.

The news spread all the way to Makkah to Asma’s non-Muslim mother and so she came to Madinah to celebrate with her daughter. When Asma saw her mother came in, she got confused because a lot of Muslims did not know what to do with their non-Muslim parents at the time. Asma did not even allow her to come into the house. She went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “My mother came all the way to visit, she is still a mushrika.” She asked whether she should honor her mother. The Prophet was shocked and surprised and said “No question! Just take care of your mother!” From this hadith, we learn that there are no boundaries when it comes to dealing with non-Muslim parents, unless they order you to do something that violates your faith. You should treat your parents with kindness even if they are non-Muslim.

**Warning against undutifulness to parents**

In the Arabic language, the word for being undutiful to your parents is “uquq’l-walidayn.” “Uquq” comes from the verb “’aqqa” meaning to “cut.” We celebrate the birth of a child by performing aqeeqah. “Aqeeqah” means cutting and sacrificing of an animal. There is also a precious stone, which in the Arabic language is called “aqeeq.” Aqeeq is red in color most of the time, and red is also the color of blood. And there is a large valley (like a trench) in Madinah which becomes a flowing river in the rainy season. That valley is called “waad al aqeeq.” It cuts Madinah completely, as if slaying the Earth.

So “uquq’l-walidayn” means cutting ties with family. It is like slaying that relationship and spilling the blood of the relationship. It is a very ugly picture with a dramatic meaning more so than “disobedience to parents.” There are different ways that people practice uquq.
Qabeelat Wasat
February 2017

Protect This House
Shaykh Yaser Birjas

The first part of the ayah speaks about the treatment of your parents verbally.

- Allah commands you to never insult your parents. Even simply saying “uff” is in and of itself an insult.
- “Tan har huma” is raising your voice and yelling at them, so never yell at your parents.
- Then Allah says to only speak with them in noble words.

The second part of the ayah speaks about lowering the wings of humility to them in terms of treatment and actions.

Any kind of treatment of parents outside of the guidelines set in the above verse is considered uquq’l-walidayn. Therefore, yelling, cursing, physical abuse, silent treatment and all these kinds of treatments are considered uquq. Uquq is a wide concept and covers anything that has to do with hurting your parents.

**Birr’l-walidayn after their death**

A man came to the Messenger of Allah and asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Is there any kindness or dutifulness that I can show to my parents after their death?” He replied: “Yes: (1) to supplicate for them, (2) seek Allah’s forgiveness for them, (3) fulfill their will and pledges after their death, (4) keep on good terms with those who are not connected with you but through them, (5) and show reverence to their friends.” [Abu Dawud]

The lesson from the above hadith is you can still have birr’l-walidayn for your parents after they pass away. By praying janazah and making dua for them, by making istighfar for them, by fulfilling their will and pledges (as long as they are halal and within your capacity), by maintaining relations with those whom you are not connected with except through them.
(your parents’ cousins, for example), and by showing reverence and checking up on their friends.

*The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “When a man dies all his good deeds come to an end except three: Ongoing charity (Sadaqah Jariyah), beneficial knowledge and a righteous son who prays for him.” [Sunan an-Nasa’i]*

There are three more things you could do for your parents after they pass away. (1) if they have money, then donate some of it as *sadaqah jariyah*, such as building a *masjid*, (2) if your parents were knowledgeable people and they wrote books or did research, then sponsor some packages to some institutions scholarships so that people can start learning based on their scholarship. And (3) you could make a lot of *dua* for your parents.

*A woman from the tribe of Juhaina came to the Prophet and said, “My mother had vowed to perform Hajj but she died before performing it. May I perform Hajj on my mother's behalf?”

The Prophet replied, “Perform Hajj on her behalf. Had there been a debt on your mother, would you have paid it or not? So, pay Allah’s debt as He has more right to be paid.” [Bukhari]*

If your parents died and they did not perform *hajj*, then you can do *hajj* on their behalf, but make sure to do *hajj* for yourself first. Can you do *hajj* for your parent and yourself in the same *hajj* season? No.

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN DEALING WITH PARENTS**

*Parents limiting the number of children for you*

If you’re married and would like to have a third child and your parents say no, you do not have to obey them. Unless your parents have a legitimate reason, such as them babysitting the children while you and your wife work. If you having more children in this situation puts more stress on your parents, then they do have the right to say no.

*Parents preventing you from moving far away*

If you would like to move far away from your parents for the sake of your career, can they stop you? You should weigh the circumstances. If your parents need you physically, then you should stay close. If they do not need you, then you have the choice to move away even
if your parents disapprove. When you have a decision, it should not translate into *uquq'l-walidayn*.

What if your parents are financing your college education and you want to study in Boston while your parents want you to study in Chicago? You should stay in Chicago. And in terms of a degree decision when they are paying for your college, you have to learn to negotiate with them if your career goals and their wishes do not align. Shaykh Yaser suggests that you follow your passion in terms of your college education. If your parents do not want to finance it, then you find another way to pay without taking loans (like scholarships).

**Parents causing fitnah between couples**

What if every time you go to your parent’s house, they cause fitnah between you and your wife? Do you have to take your wife with you every time you go to your parent’s house? That depends on a case-by-case scenario. If you can maintain order, then bring the family. But if not, every now and then go by yourself and take the kids.

**Parents asking for money**

What if your dad asks you to send him money? That also depends on a case-by-case scenario. How often does he ask? How much does he need? If it is for him buying a land, then you do not have to. If he needs the money, then take care of him. If he does not need the money, then you do not have to send it to him. But be reasonable (*bil ma’roof*). If your dad needs $300, sending him $400 is fine. But sending him $700 is not fair to your own family.

What about for the wife? Can she send her money to her family? If they need it, then yes. If they do not, then *bil ma’roof* (be reasonable), and rest will be shared with family.

**Daughters taking care of their parents**

What if only daughters happen to be taking care of parents and the parents are getting older? The girls are responsible for taking care of the parents. If the husband asks his wife to not send money to her parents, should she obey him? First thing Shaykh Yaser recommends for parents is to seek good counseling. They need to have someone neutral to show them what is right and what is wrong in these issues. Let the lady go and seek counselling if the husband does not want to go. These situations are case by case scenarios, so giving a blanket answer is not right. Sometimes, she should not send the money. Other times, she should send whether her husband agrees or not. Girls are still responsible, especially if parents are old and unable to take care of themselves, they should take them in and the husband should accommodate for them. The husband and wife should have this conversation much earlier in their relationship before it becomes reality.

**One parent being non-Muslim**

What if one of your parents is Muslim and the other non-Muslim? There are many families like this. Is it even allowed for a non-Muslim wife to worship as her tradition in the house of a Muslim husband? Can she have cross in the house? Yes, she can. The man married her
knowing she was kaafir and will worship based on her tradition. He has no right to prevent her from worshipping as her tradition. As for other issues, such as drinking alcohol, that is a different story. Even in her religion, it is not acceptable to drink.

**Dealing with Difficult Parents**

How much are you responsible to obey difficult parents? You should obey them as long as they do not command you to do haram. The Prophet ﷺ said there is no obedience to the creation if it entails disobedience to the Creator. What if they are not commanding you to do haram, but are preventing you from doing good (such as volunteering at the masjid or even attending weekend seminars)? You should still obey your parents if they are being reasonable (if they are worried about late nights, for example). If they are being unreasonable, then learn to negotiate with them.

What if you want to be an engineer and your parents want you to be a doctor and they refuse to speak with you if you become anything other than a doctor? When you have a choice in these kinds of decisions, it is your right as long as it does not clash with your parents.

As for adults who have been dealing with difficult parents for a very long time, Sh. Yaser recommends going to professional therapy. It helps you clear your heart, helps tie loose ends and to get some emotional closure on things from the past. Now as an adult, it is your choice to make these decisions. When you are young and something wrong happens, shame on your parents. Now that you are an adult and something wrong happens, shame on you. As an adult, learn to make the right decisions.

**Dealing with a neglectful parent**

Shaykh Yaser recommends that you not judge your parent for leaving, whether it was your mother or your father who left. You should try to be as neutral as possible. Try to put yourself in their shoes, maybe they had no choice but to leave and it was not their fault. Maybe the mother who left did so due to an abusive husband and she could not take it anymore. So, do not harbor any grudge against them. Again, when you were young, shame on your parents. But now that you are an adult, shame on you if you hold a grudge against them.

What if the parent was neglectful due to carelessness? What if they just wanted a free life, abandoned their family and never communicated with the kids? They would have no authority over their kids. Authority is for those who take care of their kids in their lives.

There was a brother who was abandoned as a child and he went looking for his father after growing up. He wanted to find out why his father left. After finding his father and realizing that he is getting old, the brother came to Shaykh Yaser seeking advice on whether he was now responsible for taking care of his father, even though his father never cared for him and never spent a penny on him. This is a very tough situation to be in. The Shyakh told the brother there is 'adl and fadhl in terms of the level of justice. The fairness here is that no matter what, the man is still his father. And because it was the brother himself who reached
out to the father, the brother should then take care of the father. But *fadhl* is to take care of him beyond financial support.

Once you become an adult, you need to reconcile with your family as much as you can and move on. You do not have to have love for them, but at least have that emotional closure and move on with your life.

**Dealing with an abusive parent**

What if your parent is very aggressive and you have been through physical abuse? A lot of patience is involved here. Once you become an adult and become conscious of what happened, do you have to reconcile with them? That is up to you. There is no obligation here. Remember, you do not have to love them, but you are still responsible to have *birr*l-*walidayn*. Not because they deserve it, but because you deserve to do the right thing and it is a command upon you. If someone disobeyed Allah in the way they treat you, do not respond to them in a way that shows disobedience to Allah. Obey Allah at all times.

What if the abuse was sexual abuse? Some people think this does not happen in the Muslim community, but it does. It happens more than we expect. Sometimes it is the father, sometimes it is someone else in the family, but it does happen and it is a scary situation. What if the girl grows up and realizes that she was sexually abused by her own parent? Should she report them and bring it to the law enforcement? That is up to her. She can seek justice, but there is also *fadhl* (which is holding your anger, forgiving, forgetting and moving on). She is not obligated to have *fadhl* on her parent. If she wants to seek justice, she has all the means in the Islamic system to do so. However, remember that seeking justice is not going to bring peace. What the victims are most bothered by is the feeling that they have been wronged and that the perpetrator is getting away with it. But there is the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter, so even if she does not seek justice in this world, she can stand in front of Allah and ask for her rights there. This is something that should give the victim a sense of relief and help overcome this difficulty in the dunya and moving on. If you do decide to seek justice, you have all the *haqq* and the right to do so.

**Parents Forcing Marriage with Someone**

Do you have to obey every command of your parents? What if they are trying to force you to marry a particular person? You do not have to obey them. What if they start guilt tripping you or start making dua against you? This is called *'adl* (the abusive use of power). *'Adl* is mentioned in the Quran multiple times. Allah is The Just, He did not allow the father to force his daughter to marry someone.
CHAPTER FOUR
Children - The Adornment of Life
CHAPTER 4: CHILDREN, THE ADORNMENT OF LIFE
RAISING CHILDREN IN A CHALLENGING TIME

THE GREAT BLESSING OF HAVING CHILDREN

Having children is a privilege, not a right

A lot of people start doubting the qadr and hikmah of Allah if they are having trouble conceiving children. If Allah has blessed you with children, then you are privileged. There are people who have been trying for 3-5 years and still do not have kids. This requires a lot of patience. No one has the right to question Allah’s wisdom.

لَيْتَ مَا فِی الْأَرْضِ وَالْسَمُوَاتِ مَا يَبْنِئُهُ لَمَنْ كَانَ إِنَّ وَيْلَتْ لَمَنْ

أُوْلَٰٰذَةَ الْذَّکَرَۤ

“Allah is the most knowledgeable and competent, not random or arbitrary. Everything that occurs is part of His ‘ilm, power, and wisdom. If someone has both boys and girls, it is a ni’ama and a test. It is a ni’ama and a test also to have either all boys or all girls. Part of the ni’ama of having daughters is if you raise them and take care of them until they grow old, they can be a shield from Jahannam for you, so always be optimistic.

Children are the pleasure of this world

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنَوْنُ زَيْتَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَاۢ وَالْبَنِيَّتُ الْصِّلَاحِيَّةُ خَيرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ بَلْۢۡا وَخَيْرٌ

“Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one’s] hope.” Surah al-Kahf, 18:46

Regardless of how much parents may feel annoyed by this, they must realize that wealth and children are an adornment of this world. You cannot have it all, you must enjoy one step at a time. Many people live their lives just for this, all their money and all their hard work is to raise a family. In the process of raising a family, people can sometimes lose focus on the purpose of life.
**Children are legacy for the akhirah**

The Prophet ﷺ said "When the son of Adam passes away, his actions are closed down except for three: a continuous form of charity, something of knowledge by which others benefit from or a righteous child who prays for him."

Muslim

The Prophet ﷺ said when someone passes away, their good deeds come to an end except for three. One of them is a righteous child who will make dua for their parent.

Several ahadith mention when parents have a young child who passes away, that child will take the parents to Jannah on the Day of Judgement. So your children can be your ushers to al-Jannah.

**They are the comfort of the eyes**

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحْمَانُ وَأَلْبَسْنَا فَرْسَةً أَعْمَلَبِّي وَأَجْعَلْنَا

لِعِمَانِيَّةً إِمَامًا

"...those who pray, 'Our Lord, give us joy in our spouses and offspring. Make us good examples to those who are aware of You."

Surah al-Furqan, 25:74

Children become the adornment of this dunya, and the coolness of the eyes and the heart. However, is that always the case? There is no guarantee. When you have children, have them at your own risk. You are only responsible to do your part. The example of this for us is Nuh ﷺ. He did da’wah to his son for 950 years, the longest parenting you can think of. Yet his child was not a comfort for his eyes or heart. That does not mean he failed as a father, it means it was the son who failed. Everything is in the Hands of Allah ﷻ. You are only responsible for the effort, but Allah decides the result.

**CHILDREN ARE AMANAH**

بِنَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ أَمَتنُواٰ فَوْرًا أَنفَسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَفُوُدُّهَا آنَاسَ وَالْمَهْجُورَةَ عَلَيْهَا مُلْتِيَّةٌ

٦٩

"Oh Believers, guard yourselves and your families against a Fire fueled by people and stones, over which stand angels, stern and strong; angles who never disobey Allah’s commands to them, but do as they are ordered." Surah al-Tahrim, 66:6
Understand that once you have kids, you have signed a contract with Allah to be responsible for them. A lot of parents make the babysitters, grandparents, in-laws, daycare, Sunday school, Islamic school and everybody else responsible for their children, but not themselves. Once you sign that contract, there is no escape. You are the primary protector and guardian of your own children.

“All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. The leader of a people is a shepherd and he is responsible for his flock. A man is a shepherd for the people of his house and he is responsible for them. A woman is a shepherd of the house of her husband and his children and she is responsible for them. A servant is a shepherd for the wealth of his master and he is responsible for it. So indeed, each one of you is a shepherd and each is responsible for his flock.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

This hadith shows that leadership is very important for parenting. The Prophet ﷺ said you are shepherds. Why would he use the shepherd as an analogy between leadership and being a shepherd?

• The shepherd always looks at things from a different level than the sheep (the sheep always look down while the shepherd looks up and forward)
• The shepherd must be gentle with his flock, sheep are fragile
• Each sheep has a different personality
• The shepherd must be patient with his flock. The sheep do not always listen. And sometimes a sheep gets sick, so the shepherd must carry it over his shoulders
• A shepherd protects his flock from wolves. You as a parent are responsible to make sure your kids are protected from all the elements around them. Of course, when your kids get older, you must learn to let go of them slowly
• A shepherd must keep his flock together, because they tend to go to different places
• A shepherd is responsible for the wellbeing of his flock, making sure they eat properly

There are two kinds of leaderships, leadership from behind and leadership from the front. Leadership from behind is when you push everyone in front of you. You steer them as you see where they are going. How is it that a shepherd walks in front and has his flock follow him? The shepherd makes certain sounds through singing or chanting and the sheep begin to follow. Therefore, you must create some sense of harmony in your family, so that when you say something, they follow. A lot of parents do not create a sense of synchrony in the family. The children are going one way while the parents are going another way. Because the parents are too busy, the children are growing up watching TV, iPad and iPhone. As a result, when it is time for reaping the benefits of raising children, your kids have already taken a divergent path and that is when conflicts occur between parents and their children.
BOYS VS. GIRLS

And the male is not like the female

فَلَمَا وَضِعْنَاهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضِعْنَاهَا أُنثىٰ وَلَيَسَّ أَلَّا يُؤْخِذَنِي الْدُّرْكُ وَأَلَّا يُؤْخِذَنِي كَأَنْتَ أُنثىٰ،

But when she delivered her, she said, "My Lord, I have delivered a female." And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered, "And the male is not like the female. And I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge for her in You and [for] her descendants from Satan, the expelled [from the mercy of Allah]." Surah Ale-Imran, 3:36

There is a technical issue in this ayah. Who said "And the male is not like the female?" Are these the words of Allah ﷺ or is Allah quoting the words of the mother of Maryam? Some scholars say that Allah is quoting the mother of Maryam, others say it is Allah’s statement commenting on what Maryam said. Either way, if it is Allah commenting on her statement, that is a very clear command from Allah. And if it is Allah quoting her, the fact that Allah quoted the mother of Maryam and did not mention any objections afterwards means it is an endorsement. So it is true that the male and the female are not the same.

If this is the case, then how should it be treated? It is not about superiority. It is a matter of Allah saying the fact that men and women were created uniquely, they serve unique purposes in this life to complete one another. The Prophet ﷺ said women are the counterparts of men. A lot of people take this ayah and quote it out of context to say that it is about superiority. It is not about superiority; it is a matter of difference. Why is it so important in this context? Bani Israel had 12 branches and one of them was responsible for clergy and religious services. It was only men who served in the temple in their tradition. The mother of Maryam wanted to vow that if Allah gave her a son, she would give him to the temple to serve Him. However, Allah gave her a girl, and He knew what she delivered. Scholars understood from this that Allah knew what her supplication was and He gave her a girl on purpose. She asked for a special boy, and Allah taught her a lesson that to have a special boy, there must be a special mother to carry him. Allah gave her a special mother to carry a special boy.
And [mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds."

Surah Ale-Imran, 3:42

Allah speaks very highly of Maryam. He chose her, preferred her and elevated her status among all women of the world. That is Maryam, the mother of Isa ﷺ. No woman ever created throughout the history of mankind will match the status of Maryam.

The blessing of having girls

‘Uqba ibn ‘Amir reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say, "If someone has three daughters and is patient with them and clothes them from his wealth, they will be a shield against the Fire for him." [Ibn Majah]

Whoever has three girls and takes care of them from his wealth, they will be a shield for him from Jahannam. There is no hadith like this for raising boys. The only way boys can be a shield is if they pass away in the parent’s lifetime.

The Messenger of Allah said, "Any Muslim who loses three children before they reach the age of maturity, will be granted Jannah by Allah, the Exalted, out of His Mercy for them."

[Bukhari and Muslim]

The Prophet ﷺ said whoever loses three children and then they show patience, their children will be their ticket into Jannah. In another narration, a woman stood up and asked the Prophet, “How about two kids?” He said, “And two kids.” Abu Hurayrah ﷺ was narrating this story and he said, “Even if you had asked for one, he would have said the same thing.”

THE DEALINGS WITH GIRLS BEFORE ISLAM

Feeling the shame
“And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide.” *Surah al-Nahl, 16:58-59*

The Arabs before Islam used to have a feeling of shame whenever they had a daughter. Allah says in *surah al-Nahl*, whenever someone was given the news that they had a girl, their face would turn dark. They would get angry and upset and hide themselves from the people. They would debate whether they should bury her in the dirt or keep her. Unfortunately, this concept of shame of girl vs. boy is still present in today’s culture, though not to the extent of the people at that time. That is why these days, when it comes to girls, people are much more protective, whereas boys can go to hookah bars. That is why in the Arab culture today the women are very well educated while the guys are not at the same level. Parents let guys live their lives and expect them to mature and become “men” later. This dual standard is the representation of this culture of shame.

**Financial burden**

وَلَا نُعْفِنَّكُمْ أَوْلَدَكُمْ خَشْيَةً إِمَّاتِي إِنَّ تَرْفُهُمْ وَإِلَيْكُمْ إِنَّ فَتْلَهُمْ سَكَانًا خَطَّأً كبيرًا

“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin.” *Surah al-Isra, 17:31*

The Arabs before Islam would look at girls as a financial burden. When boys would become a certain age, they would fight, they would assist, they would go out to the pasture with the animals, they provided income for the family and the community. Allah warns in *surah al-Isra* to not kill children out of fear of poverty. Allah has guaranteed to provide for the children and for you.

Even today, a lot of people think of daughters as a financial burden. Traditionally, when it comes to marriage, the bride’s family is responsible for the dowry. It is as if their family lives their life to bring in enough money so that they can convince the groom’s family to take their daughter from them. Although Islamically speaking, it is the man who is supposed to provide the mahr.

**Burying them alive**

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ دَةٌ سَيْلَتْ بَيْنِ ذَنْبٍ قُتْلَتْ

“And when the female infant buried alive is questioned: for what sin was she killed?” *Surah al-Takwir, 81:8-9*
On the Day of Judgment, the infant girl will be asked why she was killed and there is obviously no reason for that whatsoever. Today, this practice is still present in a way. When a lady discovers that she is pregnant and that it is most likely a female, she will start making excuses to legitimize abortion. This is not limited to girls. A lot of wives, when they are overwhelmed and satisfied with the number of kids they have, they will consider abortion of a surprise pregnancy to continue their careers even though they are healthy enough to have a baby.

THE ETIQUETTE OF A NEWBORN

There are certain etiquettes to be observed by Muslims to ensure the right beginning for their children. Many of these etiquettes can be found in a single book written by Imam Ibn al-Qayyim called “Tuhfatul Mawdud bi Ahkam al-Mawlud: A Gift to the Loved One Regarding the Rulings of the Newborn.” He wrote this book for his son-in-law and daughter when they were having their first child.

Is it allowed for the husband to be there with the wife during delivery? Yes, he should be there for privacy, protection and most importantly for emotional support. Advice for the husband: When you go with your wife into the delivery room, do not take anything personally. The wife will be yelling at you, but she does not mean it and it is only the pain speaking.

Tahnik and Naming the child

Abu Musa said, “I had a baby boy, and I brought him to the Prophet. He named him Ibrahim, did tahnik with some dates and prayed for Allah to bless him, and then he gave him back to me.” [Bukhari]

The moment the child is born, there is the sunnah of tahnik and naming the child. The nurse will take the baby away after delivery to weigh him/her. After the baby is given back to you, put the baby on his/her chest and give the adhaan. The adhaan can be called by either the father or the mother. The point is for the child to hear the adhaan. The adhaan in this context is a reminder that this is the beginning of their life and they are the servant of Allah. The adhaan should be given in the right ear if possible. There is no need for the iqama since most of the narrations on calling the iqama for a newborn are weak. The adhaan for the newborn should not be loud, whispering it is sufficient.
After the *adhaan* is the Sunnah of *tahnik*. The word “*tahnik*” comes from the Arabic word “*hanak*” meaning “roof of the mouth.” The tradition is to rub the roof of the mouth of the child with something sweet (mainly date juice). Grab a date, chew it yourself, take some of the juice out with your finger and rub it on the roof of the baby’s mouth and the baby will start sucking on it. That does not mean that you should give the baby a whole date. They did not have medications back then, so they stimulated the baby’s immune system through the foreign particle right away. It does not have to be dates; dates are just what the people had back then. Is it mandatory? No, but it is Sunnah and it is good to follow the example of the Prophet ﷺ.

Who is responsible for naming the child? Islamically, there is no indication to who is responsible, but the parents themselves have the first right. Parents should mutually agree on a name, but if they can’t, don’t make it a battlefield. At the same time, it is permissible if parents take turns naming their children.

The parents can choose whatever name they want for their child, as long as it has a good meaning. It does not have to be Abdullah, or AbdurRahman. Keep in mind that one day, your child will ask you why you gave them their specific name; so make sure to choose their name wisely. The only restrictions on naming the child is that it cannot be a name attributed to only Allah ﷻ or any spiritual beings, such as the names of angels.

In addition, it does not have to be an Arabic name. Be mindful of giving your child an Arabic name if it has an alternative meaning in your culture or will be misunderstood or pronounced improperly. Furthermore, you can choose a name from the Qur’an, but don’t blindly pick any word that is mentioned, for example, *Firaun*. If you choose to pick a name from the Quran, make sure it has good meaning.
Aqiqah

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever wishes to perform a sacrifice on the occasion of a newborn, then he should sacrifice two sheep for his son and one for his daughter.”  

[al-Nasā’ī]

It is a Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ but not mandatory. There is no solid scholarly interpretation of why one should sacrifice two sheep for a son versus one for a daughter. The same rules of Qurbani apply while sacrificing the animal. However, you can do whatever you want with the meat, but it is better to celebrate by sharing it with your family and friends. It is allowed to send the Aqiqah overseas, but it is better to celebrate the birth of your child with those in your community and your masjid.

Shaving the Child’s Head

Regardless of the baby’s gender, it is Sunnah to shave their head. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, he suggested shaving the child’s head and giving the weight of the hair in silver, when that amount was significant. Today, you can give any amount of charity to a cause of your choice, but it is not mandatory. Anyone can shave the child’s head.

Circumcision

This was the Sunnah of Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ, before the Prophet ﷺ. According to tradition, Ibrahim ﷺ was first person to practice this and was passed down to his offspring. Thus, circumcision is also present in Jewish tradition.

For boys, it should be done as soon as possible and does not have to be performed by a Muslim. It can be done in the hospital itself. For girls, it was not done at the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and is not mandatory. The practice of female circumcision, al-khifah, actually originated in Africa. Some people in the African culture, both Muslim and non-Muslim still do this today as a part of the tradition. But, in the United States, it is illegal and considered mutilation. If something is not mandatory and is against the law of the country, we need to abide by the laws of the land.

Weaning of the Child

In Islam, nursing is very interesting because it is a very powerful principle. The husband and the wife cannot stop nursing the child unless they both agree on when to stop. If the husband and wife disagree on when to stop nursing, the mother has to nurse for the full term in Islam, 2 years after birth, and then the mother can stop nursing if she chooses to. For example, if the husband says to stop nursing after 6 months, the wife has the right to continue if she wants to. Similarly, if the wife wants to stop, but husband wants her to continue nursing, she must continue until the 2-year mark.
Allah ﷻ says in Surah al-Baqarah:

وَالْوَلَّدَاتُ يُضِعُّنَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامْلِيْنِ لَمَّا أَرَادُ أن يُتْمِّمَ الْرَّضَاةَ وَعَلَى الْمُولِّدَ عِنْدَ لَهُ رَفْعُهُ وَكَسْوَهُ بِالْمُعَرُوفَ

“Mothers suckle their children for two whole years, if they wish to complete the term, and clothing and maintenance must be borne by the father in a fair manner.”

Surah al-Baqarah, 2:233

If the mother wants to work, she can pump the milk and keep it in the fridge. If the husband and wife agree, the mother can stop nursing before the 2-year period. It is not mandatory to nurse the full 2 years. On the other hand, if the mother wants to continue nursing after the child has reached 2 years of age, she can continue doing so.

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

‘Amr b. Sa‘Id al-‘As said,

ما نَحْلَ وَلَدٌ وَلَدَةٌ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ أَدَبِّ حَسَنٍ

“A parent never gifted anything to their child greater than good adab.”

Parents are responsible for the child’s education. The primary place for their tarbiyyah is at home, and both the mother and father need to take responsibility in teaching them.

Traditionally in the past, the father is the breadwinner and the mother takes care of the household. Hence, the mother is the one who carried the culture and tradition, and was the source of tarbiyyah. Imam Ahmad recalls how his mother would take him to the masjid for fajr when he was a child. As they would walk to the masjid, she would hold his hand while he was still wiping away the fatigue from his face. When he started attending classes in the masjid, his mother told him “Listen my son. Learn from [your teacher’s] manners. Observe and learn from his manners before you take from his knowledge.”

Today, there is a cultural shift. Women have jobs and careers, so the mother isn’t necessarily the primary carrier of Islamic tradition anymore. So, a lot of parents today like to delegate Islamic education and the teaching of tarbiyyah to someone else. This begs the question: which school system is best?
<table>
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<th>Public School</th>
<th>Islamic School</th>
<th>Home School</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Lots of opportunities</td>
<td>-Islamic education alongside</td>
<td>-No peer pressure</td>
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<td>-Learn how to deal with diversity, in terms of race, background, and</td>
<td>-general education</td>
<td>-Child can learn at their own pace</td>
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<td>thought</td>
<td>-Safer environment than public schools</td>
<td>-Highly individualized</td>
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<td>-Abundant resources</td>
<td>-Strong Islamic foundation</td>
<td>-Can tailor child's education to their</td>
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<td>-Practice for the real world</td>
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<td>strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<td>-Kids learn from good role models</td>
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<td>Cons</td>
<td>-Lots of dangers</td>
<td>-Fees and tuition are very high</td>
<td>-No social aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Lots of dangers</td>
<td>-Islamic schools don’t have a good</td>
<td>-Lots of pressure on the parents and</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Many temptations</td>
<td>business plan to sustain the school</td>
<td>can cause fitnah between husband and</td>
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<td>-Constant cultural shifts</td>
<td>-Not many people are willing to invest</td>
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<td>-Children easily influenced by peer pressure</td>
<td>into making quality Islamic schools</td>
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<td>-Little to no Islamic education within the school environment</td>
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So which one is best? At the end of the day, the school system doesn’t matter as much as how much effort you as a parent put into your kids and your child’s education. Go to school meetings, be a part of the school, volunteer for events, chaperone for field trips, etc. Ultimately, the parents are responsible for teaching their children about Islamic morals and values, and teaching them manners. No one else can do that for you.

CHILDREN AND DISCIPLINE

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Instruct your children to pray when they are seven, and spank them (if they don’t pray) when they are ten. And separate them from each other in their beds.”

[Abu Dawud, 495]

It is important that we take an active role in parenting. Instruct your children. Don’t be a passive parent and let someone else do the parenting for you.

When your children are still under the age of 7, you can have fun with them and be lenient. Don’t be too strict on your children or worry too much. Teach them the essential skills and enjoy your time with them. However, they should know how to perform salah, so that by the time they turn 7 years of age, they are ready to start praying regularly.

When the child reaches 10 years of age and is not praying regularly, you may hit your children for the sake of discipline, not for torture or abuse. This hadith does not advocate or defend abusing children. No parent has the right to torture their child and justify it by saying the Prophet ﷺ said it was okay. This hadith is showing the correct way of
disciplining children in Islam. Even for discipline, hitting the face is not allowed, and the
spanking should not leave marks.

At the same time, it is important to make sure that prayer, or any other act of ibadah, is
never an act of punishment. For example, if a child is playing video games and hasn’t
prayed yet, if there is enough time left for salah, let your child finish their game. The parent
should not yell and tell them to “turn off the game and go pray!” The child will
subconsciously link prayer as punishment. If the parent gently allows their child to pray
after they have finished their game, the next time, the child knows to pray before they start
the game so they won’t get interrupted. Disciplining children is a delicate balance, so we
must be careful to make sure that we are not discouraging from acts of ibadah, by using
them as forms of punishment.

Similarly, we should not reward children for their responsibilities or duties. Rewarding
children for doing their chores can be detrimental. If it is their duty to begin with, they
should not be rewarded for fulfilling their obligations. Likewise, children should not be
given 20 minutes extra TV time or video game time etc., as a reward for praying

Entertainment with your Children
The best entertainment for your children is when you spend time with them! A lot of
parents struggle to find time for their family due to their busy work schedule. But, you have
to make sure that you are making a life whilst making a living. Adjustments need to be
taken to make sure you have time for your kids. Even the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ found
time to play with his grandkids and spend time with his kids. Children don’t understand
that you are working to provide for them. All they see is that you’re away.

While choosing activities, make sure it is accommodating for various ages, so that all of
your kids have a good experience. Sometimes, since parents spend so much money on the
“perfect vacation” for their kids, they end up being very rigid so that they stick to the
schedule and get the most of their money. But, a vacation is supposed to be relaxing and
laid back! Parents have to be a bit spontaneous and go with the flow. At the end of the day,
it’s not about the money; it’s about the experience.

ESSENTIAL PARENTING SKILLS
1. Love and respect their other parent.
   • For men, love their mother. For ladies, respect their father.
   • Kids need to see their parents being kind, loving, and respectful towards one
     another.
2. Kids learn more from your actions than your words.
   • It doesn’t matter what you tell them, they will always look to see what you do
     first.
   • Be the person that you want your kids to be, instead of just expecting them to
do it on their own.
Example: If you want your daughter to wear hijab, make sure you wear hijab first.

3. **Tell your kids you love them. They need to hear it from you.**
   - In some cultures, it is hard for traditional parents to verbally express their love.
   - Kids need to hear it frequently. If you love your children, tell them.
   - No matter how much you do for them, if you don’t say, “I love you”, they won’t feel it.

4. **Observe each child’s specific needs. Parenting is not “one size fits all”**.
   - As parents, we need to understand the needs of our children, and provide the kind of love and care based on those differences.
   - Birth order and personality affects the nature of each child, so deal with each one accordingly.
   - *Note: If you have a child who truly does have a special need, make sure it is not at the expense of the other children. All children need love and attention.

5. **Link your children to Allah ﷻ.**
   - Teach and read them the story of Luqman ﷺ.
   - If you instill a love for Allah ﷻ from a young age, they will have a strong Islamic foundation for the rest of their lives.

6. **Allow your children to express their feelings and pain.**
   - It's okay for your kids, especially your boys, to cry.
   - They need to express their true feelings. If they can’t come to you, who else can they go to?
   - This generation requires a lot of emotional maintenance.

7. **There is no perfect child and no perfect parent.**
   - Parenting is a learning curve.
   - It’s not your job to raise a perfect or a happy child, only a responsible one.

8. **Be a confident parent.**
   - Kids can manipulate your weaknesses.
   - Don’t be your child’s friend. Be a parent. Friends will tell them what they want to hear, but parents will tell them what they need to hear.

9. **You and your spouse need to work as a team.**
   - If you start making decisions independently of your spouse, you undermine their authority in front of the children.

10. **Parents need to learn to let go.**
    - At some point, your kids will grow up. When they do, they’re just growing up, not growing away.
    - Do not become attached and clingy. This will slow down the process of them becoming successful adults.
FOUR STYLES OF PARENTING

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**Demand:** discipline  
**Responsiveness:** emotional aspect

1. **Authoritative**
   - High responsiveness, high demand.
   - They care highly for the children, but they also have order and set rules.
     - "As much as I love you, I have to put rules" & "I put rules because I love you."
   - *Best parenting style*

2. **Authoritarian**
   - Low responsiveness, high demand.
   - Low compassion for children, but lots of rules.
   - "Because I said so."

3. **Permissive**
   - High responsiveness, low demand.
   - Lots of compassion and emotion, but not enough rules.
   - Parents are afraid to put rules and easily give into children's demands.

4. **Neglectful**
   - Low demand, low responsiveness.
   - No compassion and no rules.
   - Parents don't care.

The best parenting style is authoritative. The other three styles are all the worst, because each of them has its own destructive capacity. When parents are afraid, kids can easily manipulate them. When parents are extremely strict, they can destroy the spirit of their kids.
CHILDREN AND THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH

Because the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received revelation later on in his life, there are not many accounts of how he dealt with his own children, until they became adults. The Prophet was very close with his daughter Fatima ﷺ, and whenever she came to visit her father, he would always get up for her. The Prophet used to kiss her on her forehead and seat her right next to him. He would give her special attention by whispering things to her, while seated in front of his wives. He gave her lots of attention and dearly loved Fatima; from her, he became the grandfather of Hassan and Hussain.

There is another beautiful story of the Prophet ﷺ and his eldest daughter Zainab ﷺ. During the Battle of Badr, Zainab’s husband was captured and she still resided in Makkah. The Prophet asked if there was any ransom to be given to release some of the prisoners of war, and Zainab took off her necklace, which was given to her by her mother, Khadija ﷺ, and sent it as a ransom for her husband. Upon seeing the necklace, the Prophet recognized it and his heart melted for Zainab. He took permission from the people to free Zainab’s husband without ransom and when they agreed, he told her husband to promise him that as soon as he got to Makkah, he would send Zainab to the Prophet ﷺ in Madinah.

Furthermore, when Zainab passed away, the Prophet took off his outer cloth and wrapped her with it so that she would have an article of his clothing to protect her and give her blessings in her grave. As he buried Zainab, he started to cry. This shows the deep love that the Prophet ﷺ had for his daughter.

The Prophet used to take break from assignments, and once, during a meeting with a leader of a bedouin tribe, he stopped at the house of Fatima. Upon seeing their grandfather, Hassan and Hussein came running. The Prophet would grab their hands and hug and kiss them. The bedouin leader was shocked to see this. He said, “I have 10 boys and I have never kissed any of them!” The Prophet said, “Can I put mercy in your heart after Allah has removed it?”
CHAPTER FIVE
The Extended Family
Ar-rahm means the womb, and it is used to express meaning of kinship in the Arabic language, because that is how kinship is established.

**THE PEOPLE WHO COUNT AS ARHAM**

Allah says in Surah al-Shu’ara’:

"Say (Oh Muhammad), no reward do I ask of you for this except to be kind to me for my kinship with you." *Surah al-Shu’ara’, 42:23*

**Blood Relations**

Those who are closest to you, in terms of blood ties, are considered awliya, and have more right upon you. For example, who has more right upon you, your uncle or your cousin? In terms of rights and obligations, your uncle does, since he is closer in kinship to you than your cousin. But, in terms of friendship, probably your cousin, since he is closer in age to you than your uncle. Similarly, your siblings have more rights on you than their children (your nieces and nephews). You should strive to have a good relationship with all your family members.

**The In-Laws**

Unless your in-laws are your blood relations before marriage, in-laws are not considered to be blood relations. They are not considered “rahm”. However, out of respect for the fact that they are the blood relations of your spouse, you should treat them with kindness. Even though you don’t have to treat your mother-in-law and father-in-law like your own parents, you are still obligated to have a good relationship with them since they are older than you.

**The Prophet** ﷺ said, “He is not a true believer; the one who doesn’t show respect to older ones and mercy to younger ones.”

Between a husband and wife, one of the main issues arises between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. In terms of taking care of her mother-in-law and father-in-law, it is not the daughter-in-law’s responsibility. It is their son’s responsibility to take care of them. However, most people today come from small families and the responsibility of taking care of the parents usually falls on only one or two kids. If you’re going to get married, you should know what the future looks like, and know that it is likely that when you get a bit
older, you will have to take care of your in-laws. Be accommodating and respectful of this matter as it is an obligation upon your spouse.

The main reason for conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is uncertainty. The nature of the mother is to protect her children and make sure they are fed, clothed, and well taken care of. Because of this, it is natural for the mother to constantly ask about the well-being of her son, which, often times, the daughter-in-law takes as a personal attack against herself, implying that her mother-in-law does not think her son is being taken care of by his wife. But, a mother is just doing what she has always done her whole life: making sure her son is okay. This was even seen at the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Once, when the Prophet ﷺ was older, sometime in his 50’s, he went to the house of Umm Ayman ﷺ, who was his maternal aunt. The moment he came in, she asked him, “Are you hungry? Come and have something to eat.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “I’m not hungry.” But Umm Ayman insisted that the Prophet come and eat something, as it was her instinct to continue caring for someone who was like her son, even when he was well into his 50’s. It is just the nature of the mother, so the daughter-in-law should not take offense to it.

So what is the solution to mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflicts? The man himself, actually, can resolve the situation. Most guys make the mistake of trying to mediate things and control the situation. He feels obliged to alleviate the situation and starts negotiating between his mother and his wife. Instead, the best thing he can do is deal with them separately. Love your mother the way she needs to be loved, and love your wife the way she needs to be loved. Listen to both sides, but don’t react, and don’t take sides. Stay neutral. All they want is for someone to listen to them and feel like their feelings are being validated.

The same concept applies to everyone as they deal with other members of their immediate and extended family. The circles may change, but the concept remains the same. Most of the time, the circles themselves aren’t stagnant either. When one changes, it can shift and change other circles. For example, if the sister-in-law has an argument with the daughter-in-law, she might tell her mother-in-law, so now, both the mother-in-law and sister-in-law are upset with the daughter-in-law. Learn to be emotionally intelligent! Leadership, marketing, sales, and negotiations are key to handling most, if not all, relationships.
THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THE TIES OF KINSHIP

On the authority of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari who said, “A Bedouin came to the Prophet whilst he was on a journey and asked, ‘Tell me what will bring me near to the Garden and keep me away from the fire.’ He replied, ‘Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him, establish the prayer, pay the alms-tax and maintain the ties of kinship.’” [al-Albani]

This tells us that keeping ties of kinship is associated with the other great acts of worship mentioned in the hadith. Maintaining good relations also extends our provisions and prolongs our term of life, as mentioned in another hadith by Bukhari and Muslim.

THE MEANING OF MAINTAINING THE TIES OF KINSHIP

Although it may be difficult sometimes, it is necessary to maintain the ties of kinship. When others are good to us, it is easy to be good to them. But, when others are still bad to us, we should still be good to them.

Abu Hurayrah narrated that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “Oh Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me; I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me.” The Prophet SAW said, “If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot dust in their mouths. Allah ﷺ will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that.” [Muslim]

Here, the expression “putting hot dust in their mouths” means that this man was being so nice to his relatives as if he was rubbing his kindness in their face. We learn then when our kinship might be rude or disrespectful towards us, we should continue doing the right thing. Allah ﷺ will send us support from the angels as long as we maintain goodness towards our relatives.

We should be good because we deserve to be good. Being kind and respectful towards others, no matter the circumstance, should be an essential trait of ours. How we treat others should not depend on how others treat us. Remember, at the end of the day, if we are merciful and kind towards others, Allah ﷺ will be kind and merciful towards us. That is how the Prophet ﷺ lived his life.

With that being said, human beings have a limited capacity. If being in a hostile situation is causing us to lose our iman, and lose faith in humanity, we have the right to take a break from dealing with our relatives. However, it is a case-by-case scenario and one that must be discussed with a professional scholar.
THE DANGERS OF SEVERING THE TIES OF KINSHIP

Cutting the ties of kinship can lead to corruption within our families and our communities and will bring Allah’s wrath upon us. In some cases, it may be justified to cut ties with one’s family, but the minimum courtesies must be maintained, like giving them Salam when you see them or calling on special occasions. Remember, you always deserve to do what is right.

“فَهَلِ عَسِيتُمُّ إِنْ تُؤْلُونَ أَنْ تَقْسِيمَ وَتَقْطَعُوا أَرْضَكُمُ أُوْلَئِكَ أَلَّذِينَ لَعْنَهُمْ اللَّهُ فَأَصْمَحَهُمْ وَأَعْمَلَ أَبْصَارَهُمْ”

Surah Muhammad, 47:22-23

Abu Bakrah reported that the Prophet said, “There is no sin more likely to bring punishment in this world in addition to what is stored up in the Hereafter than oppression and severing ties of kinship.” [Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi]

Jubayr b. Mut’am narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “One who severs the ties of kinship will not be admitted to Jannah.” [Bukhari and Muslim]
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion
Chapter 6: Conclusions
Success Within the Family

The Success in This Dunya

"Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope." Surah al-Kahf, 18:46

1. Enjoy good companionship of your family and children in this life.
   - Remember, it's not about having the biggest house or the nicest car. It's about the experiences and the time you spend with them. That will resonate the most with them.
2. Raise them for the reward and to succeed the in Hereafter
   - Raising children with iman is a sadaqa jariyah for you.

The Success in the Hereafter

How will you know that you have succeeded in the akhirah?

Allah ﷻ says in Surah al-Tur:

“And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith. We will join with them their descendants, and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds. Every person, for what he earned, is retained.”

Surah al-Tur, 52:21

The Dua of Ibrahim ﷺ

The household of Ibrahim ﷺ is one of the best examples of family life for us in the Qur’an. The key to his success was a foundation based upon the submission to Allah ﷻ. That is the most important thing. If you oppose Allah’s rules and laws, you will get tired and exhausted. There’s only so much you can do if you keep disobeying Allah. Convenience does
not always lead to happiness. But, if you follow the rules that Allah has set for us, you will always find peace and tranquility, even if it gets hard sometimes.

When Ibrahim ﷺ sent his family to the desert upon Allah's command, he did not negotiate with Allah. Instead, he obeyed. And as he left, he made dua and asked Allah to care of his family:

 ربِ اجعلني مقيم الصلاة و من ذريتي ربيَّا و قبِيل دعاء

“My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and [many] from my descendants. Our Lord, and accept my supplication.” Surah Ibrahim, 14:40

Even though, it might be tough to have a household like that of Ibrahim, it is not impossible. It will, however, require a lot of work, effort, spirituality, and tawakkul on Allah. When Ibrahim ﷺ made the dua above, scholars say he didn’t have children yet, which means that he was always making dua for his family and his children. Don’t only make dua for your children when things go wrong. Always make lots of dua for your family and your children.