

QAWWAMOON

‘PROTECTORS AND MAINTAINERS’

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MALE AND FEMALE: BACK TO BASICS

How odd it is that humans spend so much time thinking of marriage yet so little time actually preparing for it. Which of us takes the time to learn about the other gender? We may attend every marriage course that runs in the years leading up to our marriage yet what have we really gained from them? Many of us might be able to dictate the rights of the spouses yet when actually married how many concentrate on the rights of the other as opposed to always demanding their own rights? A healthy marriage is not one wherein both or one spouse is constantly reminding the other of their rights. Flexibility and putting the other first needs to be adopted in order for the affection and mercy to grow, and for the marriage to be nurtured and developed into a deep connection that lasts the tests of time and the trials of the world which cannot be avoided.

There are some things that will remain the same no matter what point in time it is, whether moments preceding the Day of Judgement, or hundreds of years before the Day of Judgement. This is why the final message of Islam is just that: the Final Message for all people, until the end of time. There are no further additions to be made and no further Prophets and Messengers to be sent. The message is complete and will always be relevant now for all people, of all times and all backgrounds.

What does this have to do with the male and the female? It is quite simple. It shows that the core nature of the male and female consists of certain traits and characteristics that will remain constant across all cross sections of the world. Obviously there will also be additional differences from influences within the environment, culture and so on, but the core is something that Allah ﷻ created and made distinct for each gender. Therefore it makes sense that we should learn about this before we actually marry the opposite gender!

We should all know that men are generally more irritable when they haven't eaten and that when they do not wish to talk about something, it means just that, hence we should give them the space to retreat and come to the conclusions they need to come to without badgering them to talk about the issue until we are blue in the face. Did the Prophet ﷺ not retreat to the cave of Hira for contemplation? Did Khadijah ﷺ insist on knowing his every thought or did she give him space when he wanted it and support when he needed it?

We should all also know that women can sometimes be highly emotional and at other times cry for no apparent reason and that when they have something bothering them they need to talk about it, not necessarily seeking that anything be done, but just that they are listened to. Did Aishah ﷺ not narrate how the Prophet ﷺ would check to see if she was awake at night and engage in conversation with her if she was, but let her rest if she was asleep?⁵ These simple facts about the nature of the two genders alone can eliminate years of unnecessary grief yet how many people know, understand and accommodate these different natures?

The two biggest mistakes spouses make in marriages are that we try and deal with our spouse in the way that we would want to be dealt with or we approach them in the same manner that we would approach different family members of that gender, for example our mum or sister or brother. Your spouse is not you and nor are they a blood relative of yours, therefore the same rules do not apply and should not be applied. By default we cannot expect that our spouse will

5 Sahih Bukhari, hadith number 258

deal with situations in exactly the same way that we would and nor can we expect that just because our sister or brother reacts in a certain way, our wife or husband will do the same. Our relationships with the opposite gender in a bloodline family context will be completely different to our relationship within marriage. This is one of the factors which makes marriage unique in itself.

In his book, 'Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus', John Gray identifies the emotional needs of men and women. It is simple and straightforward in outlining the different natures of men and women yet many of us scorn at seeking such knowledge, usually to our own detriment. These needs can be summarised as follows:⁶

PRIMARY EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF WOMEN

Compassion – Having that concern and showing that you care and are mindful of the needs of your wife, even if you cannot always meet them.

Understanding – Allowing her to speak her mind without passing judgements, but with an openness and closeness that allows her to come to you anytime anything is on her mind, shows that she is understood by you. You don't need to have any answers for her but just offer her the comfort of having you to turn to without being rejected.

Respect – Knowing that you will respect her and ensure her honour is never compromised and that she can rely on you to protect her, will make your wife feel honoured and proud to be your wife. It will raise your status in her eyes. She will know that you are truly her garment, there to fulfil your responsibilities towards her. Honouring her both in public and private will reinforce this and strengthen your bond; only honouring her with such respect in one of these contexts will cause her to distance herself from you and not trust you.

⁶ The headings under the 'Primary Emotional Needs of Women' and 'Primary Emotional Needs of Men' have been taken from Gray, 2005. Explanations are the author's own. For further information about the topic, see Yasir Qadhi, 2013.

Validation – When your wife takes the courage to speak up about her emotions and things that have been on her mind, or just in general, men can easily fall into the trap of invalidating how she feels without meaning to. Examples include by telling her she is being silly or by trying to explain away what she is saying. This can leave a woman feeling totally unheard and unloved. Regardless of whether the issue is something major or not, just accepting that your wife has certain emotions about it will validate what she feels and therefore she will feel that it is safe to be open with you in the future and that you will understand and not make her feel insignificant or worthless.

Devotion – When your wife feels that you have special deep feelings for her, she will feel loved and very special and no one will be able to take your place. She will hold these emotions close to her heart and she will hold you deep within her heart. You will have secured her loyalty and devotion in return. The simple act of ensuring you give your wife a regular hug, or make daily physical non intimate contact, for example, just by sitting next to her or stroking her face or touching her arm will reinforce this message.

Reassurance – Women need regular reassurance of your emotional connection and of your love. You will not lose anything by often telling your wife that you love her – you will only gain her admiration, love and loyalty in return. Men can often expect that their wife should know he loves her, but letting her know regularly and reinforcing it with positive and caring action does not cost anything and will only strengthen the affection and bond between you and will bring much comfort to your wife, beyond what you can imagine.

PRIMARY EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF MEN

Trust – A man needs to know that his wife has complete and total trust in him to do the best of his ability always and that even if things do

not go as planned, you will not be there to point the finger at him but rather be there to assure him that you knew he did his best. Without this he will be left feeling inadequate and undermined, which will cause friction and distance to develop.

Encouragement – Giving that positive encouragement and support will provide your husband with the drive and motivation he needs to not just achieve, but to excel in whatever he undertakes. By being encouraging as opposed to pointing out failings and errors, you will sow the seeds of support and will give the message to your husband that he has a solid foundation that he can always turn to and lean on for support.

Approval – Undermining your husband and the reasons behind his actions are another easy trap that many can fall into. This shows disapproval towards him and his thinking without any room for making mistakes. When you show your husband that you approve of his leadership skills and decision making, it will strengthen him and help him keep that focus on developing qualities that are already instilled within him but may just need nurturing, growth and experience.

Appreciation – When you appreciate your husband and all that he does for you, it will motivate him to do more for you and ensure your needs are being put first. It is such a simple concept that many fail to realise or adopt. Instead our minds are easily dominated by expectations and demands rather than focussing on appreciating all that we get from our spouses. This means that where we can actually be receiving emotional support and uplift one another, we instead inflict darkness and drag each other down.

Acceptance – None of us are perfect and hence we should not expect that our spouse will be perfect either. When you show unreserved acceptance to your husband of all his qualities, both strengths and weaknesses, it will show him that he does not need to hide any part

of himself from you and that he can be himself around you. In return he will naturally accept you and all your strengths, weaknesses and moods. By not accepting him and constantly pointing out the things he needs to change, you will have the opposite effect to what you wanted and make him feel inadequate and unmotivated to make any positive changes for the benefit of the marriage.

Admiration – By showing your husband how much you admire him and all the unique traits he has as well as the unique qualities of your relationship, you are providing him with a stable and solid platform from which he will only strive to be better to you as a husband. This will send him the clear message that you love and admire him and have noticed what is special about him, giving him a lightness that he can carry around with him wherever he may be and cause him to smile inwardly when thinking about you.

It cannot be said that these different needs are totally exclusive to each gender, as naturally we can see that there will be some overlap. However, the key thing to note is that these are the primary needs of each gender based upon their natural make up and therefore can be used as a general guideline for mutual benefit.