

Intimate Issues (part 1 of 2): Sex and Marriage in Islam

Description: Islam encourages marriage and prohibits pre-marital and extra-marital relationships.

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Published on 30 Dec 2013 - Last modified on 31 Aug 2014

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Islam is a holistic way of life. It takes into account all of humankind's needs; spiritual, emotional and physical. Part of physical wellbeing includes sexual wellbeing and health. God created sex not only for procreation but to fulfil humankind's need for intimacy. Islam leaves no part of our lives unexplained and thus sexuality and intimacy are not topics that the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, shy away from or neglect.



Islam encourages marriage and has made it the only means through which one can satisfy their sexual needs. There are well-known consequences if a person engages in premarital relationships or behaves in a promiscuous manner. These include unwanted pregnancies, the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, family breakdown in cases of adultery and emotional difficulties arising from relationships without commitment. Islam is aware of these complications and cautions the person who does not take the matter seriously. Islam defines pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships as great sins.

"Nor come closer to illicit sexual intimacy for it is a shameful and immoral, opening the door (to other immorality)." (Quran 17:32)

When a man or woman is able to marry, they should be encouraged and aided in their attempts to get married. Also when the intention has been made clear, the couple should marry as quickly as possible to discourage any temptation to fall into sin. Prophet Muhammad encouraged marriage however he encouraged fasting for those who did not have the means to marry. He said: "Whoever among you possesses the physical and financial resources to marry should do so, because it helps one to guard their modesty, and whoever is unable to marry should fast, as fasting diminishes one's sexual desire."^[1]

God, in infinite wisdom guides us away from the potentially destructive behaviour of pre-marital or extra-marital relationships and towards behaviour that allows us to live God centred lives while enjoying the closeness of a loving relationship. In fact God rewards us for intimacy with our lawful partner. Prophet Muhammad told his companions that "In the sexual act of each of you there is charity." The Companions asked, "When one of us fulfils his sexual desire, will he be given a reward for that?" And he said, "Do you not think that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts

upon it lawfully he will be rewarded."[\[2\]](#)

Giving pleasure to one's spouse is a highly rewarding deed. Marriage itself is viewed in Islam as the longest, most continuous act of worship a Muslim will perform in the course of their lives. It is a partnership between two who seek to please God; thus, sexual intimacy between spouses is the 'spark' that strengthens this bond. As each person strives to fulfil the rights and needs of the other, an affection and fondness is achieved. God stresses that a person will find intimacy and comfort in a lawful union.

"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect." (Quran 30:21)

Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, was known as a loving husband and a family man. He was known to speak frankly to his companions, both men and women, when they asked him about matters of a sexual nature. For example his responses to questions included such wise advice as, "None of you should fall upon his wife like an animal; let their be a 'messenger' between you." "And what is a messenger?" they asked, and he replied: "Kisses and words."[\[3\]](#)

Prophet Muhammad said: "If one of you says, when he has intercourse with his wife: 'I begin with the name of God, O God, keep Satan away from me and keep Satan away from that which You bestow upon us,' if it is decreed that they should have a child, Satan will never harm him."[\[4\]](#)

Prophet Muhammad was never embarrassed and strove to provide clear and understandable answers about all sorts of subjects including menstruation and orgasm. A woman once asked the Prophet if she needed to take a bath after a wet dream to which he replied, "Yes, if she sees liquid."[\[5\]](#)

God has ordained that our spouses be like our garments and that the husband and wife protect each other and be close companions. However marriage has many psychological, emotional and physical aspects to it and all matters relating to physical, emotional and spiritual health must be addressed, because all three areas are vital for the marriage to survive in a healthy way. God has given permission for married couples to fulfil their desires in many and varied ways and positions.

"Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth when and how you will, and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear God, and know that you will (one day) meet Him..." (Quran 2:223)

The Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad also educate and advise us of any prohibitions within the confines of marriage. It is taken and understood from the above verse of the Quran that within a marriage both the man and woman have the right to enjoy each other's bodies and intimate companionship however they must avoid having sex when the woman is menstruating or bleeding after childbirth and they must never engage in anal sex.

In part 2 we will look at prohibitions in the bedroom and discuss sex education and its

ability to teach children healthy Islamic attitudes towards marriage, sex and body image.

Endnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

[3] Musnad Al Firdaus- imām Daylami

[4] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[5] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

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