

Love after marriage

Magazine article written by Amr Khaled

Love after marriage…. Why does it end and how do we preserve and celebrate it throughout our lives? Love after marriage between the bickering, emotional rigidity and constant blame… and between the compassion, forgiveness and living the eternal dream. Mr. Amr Khaled prescribes four points for achieving marital happiness in life, from Islam's point of view, in an interview by Mr. Esam Ghazi.

This is how it went:

After the engagement, the betrothal and wedding night… how can a couple build a home based on understanding and happiness… how can they guarantee the continuance of their love and the stability of their marriage? Mr. Amr Khaled assures that all of this is possible on a condition that both spouses take their responsibilities. The husband should be patient, just, gentle, forgiving and compassionate, while the wife has to be the tender heart where her husband can lay down his troubles, embracing him and easing his pains instead of bickering with him and blaming him for every little thing. He says that past trials show that the best way to bring back the love and emotions between the two spouses is by them to worship God together.

Amr Khaled's prescription:

I asked Amr Khaled about the correct foundations of love in the beginning of marriage, especially in the honeymoon?

He responded by giving a prescription made out of four points:

The first point concerns the man alone. The man should deal with his wife with extreme patience, justice, gentleness and forgiveness. He has to be very compassionate, never insulting or hurting her, and he shouldn't prevent her from visiting her parents. He shouldn't be on the constant lookout for her faults and shortcomings to criticize her and make her pay for it. This doesn't mean that the man shouldn't be assertive but the basis of the marital relationship should be based on compassion, forgiveness, justice and tenderness. She will always remember the husband's treatment, so she won't insist on wrongdoing. Past trials show this, however much the wife was upset with her husband she learns to forgive him, knowing that he didn't mean it. The woman needs a man who can be both strong and tender. If the woman is insulted, hurt or treated cruelly by her man, her love for him will fade no matter how much love they started with.

-How did the Prophet (PBUH) deal with Aisha's jealousy?

The Seerah (Prophet Muhammad's life story) shows an example of this when Hafsa prepared a meal for the prophet and his companions in front of her house. The stew meal was made in a clay pot. When Aisha saw the companions and the Prophet assembled around the meal that Hafsa prepared, she was so jealous that she went over to the pot and kicked it so that it fell and broke.

-What was the Prophet's reaction to this?

He bent down to gather the stew back in what was left of the pot, then looked towards his companions and said, "Your mother was jealous." He didn't say "My wife was jealous", reminding them that she was one of their mother's (the mother's of the Believers who are the wives of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)) because he didn't want the companions to be mad at her.

He was forgiving in front of his companions but was assertive when he dealt with Aisha. He went over to her house and told her, "Aisha, you have ruined a pot for Hafsa and you owe her another instead." He was both compassionate and just. Aisha only asked for him to pray for her that God may forgive her, and he replied, "May God forgive you."

Is there better wisdom than this in dealing with the problems faced by a family? The wife felt the strength of the man as well as his compassion so she admitted she was wrong and asked her husband, the Prophet (PBUH), to ask forgiveness for her jealousy and anger so that she doesn't go back to them. His actions made her love for him grow in her heart, and this is a man's responsibility.

Putting the blame…the secret behind misery:

The second point is the responsibility of the wife. There are wives who are very eager to criticize their husbands for every small mistake that he makes, always complaining and bickering with him thus decreasing his morale and making his life miserable. So if he ever wanted to tell her about the problems he faced at work he wouldn't do it, because she would criticize and blame him.

When he chose her as a wife he thought that he would find in her the friend that he could confide in and the kind heart that could embrace him (The name of mother Eve in Arabic is Hawa', which comes from the word embrace as she is the one capable of embracing Adam).

But the husband finds the opposite of what he had wished for. She doesn't want to hear him or accept him so she loses

him to someone who will listen to him, raise his morale and not blame him. I advise the wife to listen to her husband with an open heart, raise his morale and not blame him for his shortcomings and mistakes unless there is something worthwhile.

And to constantly repeat to him, whether through joy or sorrow, "Don't worry, God is with us and He won't let us down."

We don't want husbands running away from their wives on account that she doesn't understand him, and that she's always criticizing and condemning him.

-Khadeeja as a role model for all wives:

An example of this from the Seera, was when the Prophet (PBUH) would leave Khadeeja for twenty days to meditate and pray in the cave of Hera', before the message of Islam was conveyed to him by God. Khadeeja could have caused trouble because of his absence from home in conditions she didn't yet understand, but instead she was always trusting and supportive, bringing him food each day he was in the cave.

One day he came back from the cave shivering and crying, "Cover me, cover me." Khadeeja was the one who embraced him and made him feel safe telling him not to worry for God would never let him down. She started comforting him by saying, "You are kind to your kin, generous to your guest, take right for the weak and help the oppressed…

how can God after all this let you down?" The Hadith continues to say that she took him by the hand to Waraqa Ibn Novelle, thus becoming the First Lady of all worlds.

If a wife does that, would her husband ever let go of her and leave her for another woman? Impossible.

A common goal for the couple:

The third point is the prescription for marital happiness is the responsibility of both spouses. What causes the love in the hearts and homes to go cold? How does the burning flame of emotions burn out in the hearts of the husbands and wives? Emotions become cold when each spouse thinks and acts on a personal basis.

I advise the couples to make sure that they have a common goal that binds their hearts and minds so that their relationship may stay warm and tender. I have seen a man and his wife who were both above the age of 60 but their love for each other was beyond description. The secret of that everlasting love was that they had a common goal, which was to make their neighborhood the cleanest, prettiest and most religious neighborhood around.

They each started thinking of forming charity organizations to clean and decorate the surrounding blocks, as well as an organization to help young people in the neighborhood get married. Because of them the neighborhood became a highly sophisticated place for social relationships. I know a man and woman that have written down their marital goals in a pact that they have hanging on the wall of their bedroom.

The best treatment for emotional rigidity:

The fourth point is one of high importance that brings instant love directly into the hearts and it is that both the husband and wife worship God together. The problem is that the man and woman at home both pray individually. Why not worship God together?

Imagine the man who prays with his wife every Thursday night, will he ever complain about a lost shirt button? Imagine asking her to wake him up for Dawn Prayer so that they can pray together. The ones who do this, will they fight in the morning because breakfast wasn't cooked right? Love without a doubt comes with a nice trip outdoors, a delicious meal and a sweet gift. These things are essential for the growth of love in the hearts, but the most important thing that supports love in the household is that my wife and I worship God together. For it is God who says, "And that it is He (Allah) Who makes (whom He wills) laugh, and makes (whom He wills) weep." It is He that puts happiness into the hearts.

I have also seen husbands and wives who have reached a stage of emotional rigidity that is unimaginable. I asked a friend whose relationship with his wife had gone cold if he could start praying with his wife once a week. He said he could. In just two weeks my friend, who said he couldn't stand his wife, came back saying that he had become very close to his wife and that he feels an overwhelming love for her now. Nothing changed in their lives except for the fact that they worshipped God together. What would happen if when going out to dinner with your wife you asked her if you could praise God for five minutes before going to dinner?

This is the last advice in the prescription for marital happiness for those who are on their honeymoons starting their lives together, and for those who live a long marriage and want the love to continue and not burn out with time in their hearts.

Early divorce:

That was the prescription for marital happiness. But what if the couples don't use that prescription and their relation ends in an early divorce?

There are two reasons behind an early divorce. The first is the wrong choice of partner; the second, which mainly concerns youths who are thinking of getting married, is not taking their responsibilities seriously. It is up to all social organizations to help in spreading the awareness regarding the responsibilities of marriage, building a home and having kids. Reaching a mutual understanding will take some time and both spouses have to learn to compromise to reach that understanding. I shouldn't be expected to sacrifice all my traits for the other side and neither is the other side expected to do the same for me. In the same time both spouses are expected to compromise and bind together. Each side has to understand the others nature and be patient in dealing with them, as it is this understanding that keeps a family stable.