

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

98624 - His wife does not pray and she disobeys him in a lot of things.

What is the ruling concerning her? How should he deal with her?

the question

My wife disobeys me about many matters: about bringing our children up, education, our relationships with relatives, and about many marital matters. What should I do with her? I asked her to pray and read Quran, but she did not listen. Please make du'a that Allah guides her.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Happy homes are those which are built on mutual understanding and love and consolidated with affection and compassion between spouses. None of this can be achieved without the spouses doing the duties that are specific to them. For example, the husband is obliged to spend on his wife and children, and the wife is obliged to obey her husband. If the wife wants to deny her husband the right of qawwaamah (being in charge of the household) or to be wilfully defiant and refuse to obey him, then she is destroying her home by her own hand, and she will be the cause of her children being lost and neglected because of her bad actions.

Wives in general have to understand that obedience to their husbands is an Islamic duty that is required of them. The husband should do a good job of being in charge of his wife and family, by guiding them to that which is in their best interests and will bring them happiness.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allaah has made one of them to

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excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means”

[al-Nisa' 4:34]

Wives should ponder the following ahaadeeth:

1-

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “If I were to command anyone to prostrate to anyone else, I would have commanded women to prostrate to their husbands.”

Narrated and classed as hasan by al-Tirmidhi (1159); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

2-

It was narrated that Abu Umaamah said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There are three whose prayer goes no further than their ears: the runaway slave until he returns, a wife whose husband remains angry with her overnight, and a imam who leads the people in prayer when they object to him doing so.” Narrated and classed as hasan by al-Tirmidhi (360).

3-

It was narrated from Mu'aadh ibn Jabal that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “No woman offends her husband in this world but his wife among the hoor al-iyn says, ‘Do not offend him, may Allaah kill you, for he is only with you for a short time and soon he will leave you and come to us.’” Narrated by al-Tirmidhi (1174) and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

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4-

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "It is not permissible for a woman to fast when her husband is present except with his permission, or to allow anyone to enter his house without his permission."

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4899) and Muslim (1026).

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, commenting on this hadeeth:

As a woman is obliged to obey her husband and satisfy his desire, so it is more appropriate that she is required to obey him with regard to things that are more important than that, such as the upbringing of their children, the well being of the family, and other rights and duties.

Al-Haafiz said in al-Fath: This hadeeth shows that the husband's rights over the wife are more important than doing voluntary good deeds, because fulfilling his rights is obligatory, and that which is obligatory takes precedence over voluntary acts.

Adaab al-Zafaaf (p. 210).

Secondly:

The husband has to look for the causes of his wife's wilful defiance and find out the ways in which he can treat her sickness and lead her to the way of guidance and salvation, so that she will be protected from the wrath and punishment of Allaah. These causes may include the husband! Yes, you may be one of the causes of her wilful defiance, either because of sins that you are committing – as one of the salaf said: "I see the effect of my sins in my mount and my wife", in her bad attitude or refusal to obey him – or the husband may have a bad attitude towards his wife so her behaviour is a reaction against the way he deals with her.

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Other causes may include her family, relatives, neighbours or friends who share a role with the shaytaan in causing separation between man and wife.

If the cause has to do with her – due to the weakness of her faith and her ignorance of the rulings of sharee’ah – then he should remind her of Allaah and play a role in strengthening her faith and teaching her what she does not know about the rights that her husband has over her. If that does not work, then he may hit her in a way that is not severe and that does not cause injury, and if that does not work, then he may forsake her in her bed.

If his efforts do not succeed and she does not respond to good advice from him or from someone else, then he may divorce her once (one talaaq). This may serve as a reminder and “wake up call”. But if she persists in her defiance and disobedience, then there is nothing good in her and Allaah may give him someone better than her.

The basic principle for this gradual approach in setting things straight is to be found in the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, Allaah is Ever Most High, Most Great”

[al-Nisa’ 4:34]

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmaan al-Sa’di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

“As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct” means: who refuse to obey their husbands in word or in deed; he may discipline her by using the lightest means then the next lightest.

“admonish them” means: explain the ruling of Allaah with regard to obeying and disobeying the husband, and encourage her to be obedient, and warn her against disobedience. If that produces

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the desired results, all well and good, otherwise the husband should refuse to share her bed, by not sleeping with her or being intimate with her, to whatever extent will produce the desired result. Otherwise he may hit her in a way that is not severe and that does not cause injury. If one of these methods produces the desired result, then

“seek not against them means (of annoyance)” i.e., you have got what you wanted, so stop pursuing rebuking her for what is past and seeking out faults mention of which will cause harm and provoke evil.

Tafseer al-Sa'di (p. 142).

Whatever the case, the husband is the one who knows his wife best. If he knows that the reason for her wilful defiance is something that he can remedy, then he should do that. If he cannot deal with her, then he should appoint someone else from among his family or hers to undertake this mission. Someone else may have a stronger influence over her than him.

Thirdly:

What we have said above is general in meaning and applies to any husband who is suffering because of his wife's wilful defiance. It would also include the wife asked about here, if she was one of those who pray. But as she does not pray, what we have said does not apply to her, because dealing with her is different. By not praying she is a kaafir woman and it is not permissible for him to be close to her or have intercourse with her, unless she prays.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But if they repent [by rejecting Shirk (polytheism) and accept Islamic Monotheism], perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah) and give Zakaah, then they are your brethren in religion”

[al-Tawbah 9:11]

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And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Between a man and shirk and kufr there stands his giving up prayer.” Narrated by Muslim (116).

And he said: “The covenant that distinguishes between us and them is prayer; whoever does not pray is a kaafir.”

Narrated and classed as saheeh by al-Tirmidhi (2621); al-Nasaa’i (463); Ibn Majaah (1079); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

Hence you have to start with this important matter and try by whatever means are available to you to remind her of the ruling on prayer, and that not praying is major kufr, and that your marriage contract with her will be rendered invalid if she persists in this grave sin. If she responds, then praise be to Allaah, and you can go on to do the things that we have mentioned above. If she does not respond, then do not try to deal with her wilful defiance, and do not ask about her shortcomings in raising the children, because it is not permissible for you to remain married to her. Warn her before her marriage is annulled – and annulment may be by your divorcing her, because most courts do not regard not praying as a reason for annulling a marriage. Give her another chance; perhaps Allaah will guide her and open her heart to the truth.

See also the answer to question no. [47425](#) which describes the best way to call one who does not pray.

See also the answers to questions no. [12828](#) and [91963](#).

We ask Allaah to guide her and help her to pray regularly, and to guide her to all that is good, and to guide her hearing, sight and physical faculties, and to enable her to give thanks for the blessings that Allaah has bestowed on her.

And Allaah knows best.