

96704 - She loves him but he cannot stand her because she is not beautiful. Should he divorce her?

the question

I married a girl two years ago, and I agreed to it because she is religiously committed and she had memorized the Qur'aan in a short time. But when I saw her on the night of the engagement, I was put off because she is not beautiful. But I forced myself to accept her because of her religious commitment and other good qualities. We got married, but then I found out that she is bad-tempered and moody, which has affected our relationship and has made me keep away from her even more. It has reached a stage where I think that I do not love her, and I have started to shun her in bed, and she has been harmed by that a great deal, but she loves me, and I am afraid that if I divorce her, she will be greatly affected by that. I deeply regret having married her, and I am very upset, but I cannot stand her and I do not want her to waste her life with someone who does not love her, and I feel confused. I am very worried that my Lord may punish me for having married her even though I did not like her. I heard a lecture from a Shaykh who said: Marry her for her religious commitment even if she is not beautiful. What is the solution? May Allaah bless you.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We highlight many points in our answer, and we hope that you will pay attention to what we are going to say.

1 - Allaah has commanded husbands to treat their wives kindly, and He tells them that they may dislike their wives in some ways but they should not hasten to divorce them, rather they should be patient and keep them for two reasons:

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(i)

Because if they dislike one thing about them, there may be other good things about them that they like. So if someone has a wife whose looks are not pleasing to him, we say to him: Be content that she is a woman of good character, and make this quality a reason for keeping her and being patient with her, for that is what is best for your honour and your wealth and is best for your children's upbringing.

(ii)

Allaah has decreed that there is a lot of good in this world and in the Hereafter, in his being patient and putting up with her. In this world he may have a righteous child from her, and in the Hereafter he may be greatly rewarded for his patience. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and live with them honourably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allaah brings through it a great deal of good”

[al-Nisa' 4:19]

Imam al-Tabari (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

“and live with them honourably. If you dislike them” perhaps you dislike them but if you keep them, Allaah will grant you a great deal of good because of your keeping them even though you dislike them, such as a child you are blessed with through them, or your kindness towards them although you dislike them.

Tafseer al-Tabari (8/122)

Imam Ibn Katheer (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The words of Allaah (interpretation of the meaning): “If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike

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a thing and Allaah brings through it a great deal of good”

[al-Nisa’ 4:19]

mean: perhaps your patience in keeping them although you dislike them will bring you a great deal of good in this world and in the Hereafter, as Ibn ‘Abbaas said concerning this verse: it may be if he is kind to her that he may be blessed with a child from her, and there will be a great deal of good in this child. In the saheeh hadeeth it says: “No believing man should hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics he will be pleased with another.”

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (2/243)

Shaykh al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

What both spouses must do is to fulfil the duties enjoined by Allaah of kind treatment, and the husband should not mistreat the wife because of his being of a higher status than her and being in charge of her affairs. Similarly it is not permissible for the wife to try to prove she is better than the husband. Rather both of them must treat the other kindly. It is well known that the husband may dislike the wife, either because she falls short in her duties towards him or because of some lack of intelligence and wisdom, and so on. How should he deal with this woman? We say: This is mentioned in the Qur'aan and in the Sunnah. Allaah, may He be blessed and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allaah brings through it a great deal of good”

[al-Nisa’ 4:19]

And this happens in fact. A man may dislike his wife for some reason, but he shows patience, and Allaah creates a lot of good in this, and the dislike turns to love, the lack of interest to delight, and

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so on .

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “No believing man should hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics he will be pleased with another.” Look at this balanced view. Allaah gave great wisdom to the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “If he dislikes one of her characteristics he will be pleased with another.” Does anyone get everything he wants in this world? No, not at all. You will never get everything you want in this world, and even if one thing is perfect, something else will be lacking, even days. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And so are the days (good and not so good), that We give to men by turns”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:140]

Concerning that the Jaahili poet said:

A day against us and a day for us, a day when we are sad and a day when we are happy.

Try this and you will find that it is true. The world does not stay the same. A well known saying is: It is impossible for things to stay the same. So if you dislike something about your wife, think instead of what you are pleased with, until you are convinced.

Liqaa’aat al-Baab il-Maftooh (introduction to part 159)

2 - You should note that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us that beauty is one of the things for which a woman may be married, but he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us of that which is better, which is a wife who is religiously-committed.

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: “Women may be married for four things: their wealth, their lineage, their beauty and their religious commitment. Choose the one who is

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religiously-committed, may your hands be rubbed with dust (i.e., may you prosper).”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4802) and Muslim (1466).

Badr al-Deen al-‘Ayni (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

He mentioned “their religious commitment” because through that one may attain goodness in this world and in the Hereafter. What is befitting for those who are religiously committed and of noble character is that religion should be their focus in all things, especially in long-term matters. Hence the Messenger chose that which is best in the long-term and emphasized its importance, so he said choose the one who is religiously-committed, because through her you will attain the benefits of both realms (this world and the Hereafter) and your hands will be rubbed with dust if you do not do what you have been enjoined to do. Al-Karmaani said: Choose (the one who is religiously-committed), if you understand, O you who are seeking guidance.

They differed concerning the meaning of the words “may your hands be rubbed with dust.” It was said that it is basically a du‘aa’ but the Arabs use it to express objection, wonder, veneration and encouragement, and this is what is meant here. It is encouragement to seek the company of religiously-committed people in all things, because the one who keeps company with them will benefit from their attitudes and will be safe from evil on their part.

‘Umdat al-Qaari’ Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhaari (20/86)

3 - You should note that true beauty is inward, and the worldly beauty in outward form is bound to fade, either through sickness or burns, or with age. So the wise man looks for beauty that will not fade, but will increase and not decrease. The effect of this beauty is seen in a woman’s attitude and good treatment of her husband, and the good way in which she raises her children.

4 - You should note that Allaah calls that which exists between husband and wife “affection” and “mercy”; He does not call it “love”. He says (interpretation of the meaning):

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“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”

[al-Room 30:21]

This is usually how it is among wise and noble people. The one who wants to get married hears of a woman who is fit for marriage and he comes to propose to her and is impressed by her beauty or religious commitment or modesty, so he marries her. We do not say in this case that he has married for love, and Allaah does not call that which He creates between them love. This is not to reject the word or deny that love exists, rather it is to point out something of the greatest importance, which is that marriage is prescribed for many purposes, such as keeping oneself chaste, building a Muslim family and having children. Hence it was narrated from ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) that a man came to him wanting to divorce his wife, and when ‘Umar asked him about the reason for that, he said that he did not love her. ‘Umar replied: Are families not built on anything but love.

‘Umar also asked a woman whether she felt hatred towards her husband? She said: Yes. ‘Umar said to her: One of you should lie (about their feelings) and be patient. Not every family is built on love, but on good treatment on the basis of lineage and Islam.

So think about this, and look at the problems experienced by those who marry beautiful women who are not religiously-committed, and see how their lives are, full of despair, misery, doubts and suspicion. Look at the happiness and harmony experienced by those who marry religiously-committed women and how their lives are and how their children grow up.

5 - You could take a second wife, and keep this wife too. You have two choices:

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(i)

Give her her rights in full, and give her the same share as the second wife, which is treating her kindly as is enjoined upon you, and as we have mentioned at the beginning of the answer, and as it is well known that it is haraam to mistreat others in general, and especially in the case of co-wives.

(ii)

You could come to some agreement whereby your wife gives up some of her rights to a share of your time, but you keep her as a wife and look after her and see her; you can enter upon her and stay with her, and she will raise your child for you, and preserve your honour and your wealth. After some time your feelings towards her may change, and you may give her a share of your time as you give to your second wife. This solution is mentioned in the Book of Allaah, in the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and in the words of the scholars.

It was narrated from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) (concerning the verse) "And if a woman fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no sin on them both if they make terms of peace between themselves; and making peace is better. And human inner-selves are swayed by greed. But if you do good and keep away from evil, verily, Allaah is Ever Well-Acquainted with what you do" [al-Nisa' 4:128] that she said: This refers to a man who see something that he does not like in his wife, because of old age or something else, and he wants to divorce her, and she says: Keep me and give me whatever share you want. She said: There is nothing wrong with that if they both agree. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2548) and Muslim (3021).

According to a version narrated by Muslim she said: This was revealed concerning a woman who is married to a man, and he no longer wants to be intimate her, but she has been with him for so long and she has children with him, and she does not want him to leave her, so she says to him: you have no obligation towards me.

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End quote.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

If a man spends some time with his wife then he starts to dislike her, or he is unable to fulfil her rights, then he may divorce her or he may give her the choice: if she wants she may stay with him with no right to a share of his time and intimacy and maintenance, or some of that, according to whatever they agree upon, and if she agrees to that then it becomes binding and she has no right to demand anything after it has been agreed. This is in accordance with the Sunnah and it is the correct way and there is no justification for anything else.

Zaad al-Ma'aad (5/152).

5 - If you cannot be patient in keeping her and treating her kindly, and you cannot take a second wife, or she refuses to reconcile, then you have nothing but the final option, which is to divorce her and part from her in a kind manner, and give her her rights in full, and perhaps Allaah will choose someone better for you than her, and will choose someone better than you for her. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But if they separate (by divorce), Allaah will provide abundance for everyone of them from His Bounty. And Allaah is Ever All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Wise”

[al-Nisa' 4:130]

Divorce is permissible in this case, and it is not haraam or makrooh, but it is the last resort as it says in al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (29/9):

It is permissible in cases of necessity in order to ward off the woman's bad attitude or behaviour, or because he does not love her.

End quote.

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We ask Allaah to choose that which is best for you and for her, and to help you both to do that which pleases Him, and to set your affairs straight.

And Allaah is the Source of strength.