1808 - Advice: Separating women from non-mahram* men in family visits

the question

What advice can you give Muslim families in regards to family visits and gatherings?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

People are civil and sociable by nature: they must have friends, and friendship involves visiting one another.

When visits are between families, we must pay attention to an important matter which will close the door to evil, by not allowing mixing between the sexes. One of the indications that mixing is haraam is the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): " And when you ask (the Prophet's wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen, that is purer for your hearts and for their hearts" [al-Ahzaab 33:53]

If we examine the evil results of mixing in family gatherings, we will find many examples of corruption and immorality, for example:

1. In most cases, women's hijaab in mixed gatherings is either non-existant or not correct. These women display the beauty which Allaah has forbidden them to show to anyone before whom they is not allowed to uncover, as it says in the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): " and not to reveal their adornment " [al-Noor 24:31] It even happens that women who adorn themselves in mixed gatherings never adorn themselves for their husbands.
2. When men see women in mixed gatherings, this destroys their religious commitment and morals, and provokes forbidden desires.
3. Terrible arguments and marital separations may result, when one looks at or winks at the wife of another, or they laugh and joke together. When the couple returns home, the settling

of accounts begins:

Man: "Why did you laugh at so-and-so's words, when he never said anything funny?

Woman: "And why did you wink at so-and-so?"

Man: "When he speaks you understand him readily, but when I speak you never understand me!"

So the exchange of accusations goes on, until it ends in hatred or even divorce, in some cases.

4. Some men and women may begin to regret their luck in marriage, when they begin to compare their spouses with those of their friends. A man may say to himself, "So-and-so joins in discussions and is well-educated, but my wife is ignorant and is not educated at all" And a woman may say to herself, "So-and-so is so lucky, her husband is so eloquent and smart, and my husband is so boring and speaks without thinking" This destroys the marriage relationship and leads to bad treatment on the part of both spouses.
5. Some may show off to others by making false claims about what they do not have, so that one man may issue instructions to his wife in front of other men so that he can pretend to have a strong personality, when at home he is like a tame pussy-cat. A woman may borrow gold so that others in the gathering may think she owns so much, but the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The one who claims to have what he does not own is as it were wearing a garment of falsehood." (Reported by al-Bukhaari, al-Fath, 9/317)
6. These mixed night-time gatherings are often a waste of time, filled with idle gossip and other sins of the tongue, whilst small children are left at home (so that the gathering will not be spoiled by their crying!)
7. These night-time gatherings may become even worse and involve other major sins, such as drinking and gambling, especially among the so-called upper class. Another of the major sins that may result is the desire to follow the kuffaar and be like them in dress and other habits and customs. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, al-Musnad, 2/50; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 2828)

In family gatherings, women should be separated from non-mahram men, and the gatherings should serve some useful purpose, such as remembrance of Allaah (dhikr), seeking beneficial knowledge or discussing social problems or things that can benefit the family in this life. We ask Allaah to keep us safe and healthy. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.

* Translator's note: "mahram" refers to a blood-relative to whom marriage is permanently forbidden, such as a woman's father, brother, son, uncle, etc.