



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

THE CORRECT MANNER TO APPROACH A WOMAN WITH THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Today's problems

1. Hard to find a husband/wife in a halal way
2. Men/Women not married until they get older and then lose opportunities
3. Men/women too busy with career
4. Man/woman NOT allowed to marry people of their choice
5. Very fussy in choosing
6. Choosing man/woman using the unislamic criteria
7. Free mixing – boyfriends/girlfriends – some women even lost virginity before marriage
8. Parents get involved and demand unreasonable dowries
9. Marriages end quickly
10. So-called shariah courts more biased towards men

Guidelines from the Qur'an and hadith

And come not near to the unlawful sexual intercourse. Verily, it is a *Fahishah* [i.e. anything that transgresses its limits (a great sin)], and an evil way (that leads one to Hell unless Allah forgives him). 17: 32

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4802) and Muslim (1466) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who said: "A woman may be married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her

beauty and her religious commitment. Seek the one who is religiously-committed, may your hands be rubbed with dust (i.e., may you prosper)."

The Prophet advised men:

"The best amongst you, are the best for their wives, and I am the best of you for my wives." (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet said:

"Any woman who dies while her husband is pleased with her, she will enter Jannah." (At-Tirmidhi)

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RULING ON LOOKING AT A WOMAN WITH INTENTION TO GET MARRIED

From Jaabir ibn 'Abd-Allaah: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'If one of you proposes marriage to a woman, if he can look at her to see that which will encourage him to go ahead and marry her, then let him do so.' I proposed marriage to a young woman, and I used to hide where I could see her, until I saw that which encouraged me to go ahead and marry her, so I did so.'" According to another report he said, 'a young woman of Bani Salamah. I used to hide from her, until I saw that which encouraged me to go ahead and marry her, so I did so.'" (*Saheeh Abi Dawood*, no. 1832, 1834)

From Abu Hurayrah: "I was with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when a man came and told him that he had married a woman of the Ansaar. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to him, 'Have you seen her?' He said, 'No.' He said, 'Go and look at her, for there is something in the eyes of the Ansaar.'" (Reported by Muslim, no. 1424; and by al-Daaraqutni, 3/253 (34))

From al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah: "I proposed marriage to a woman, and the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Have you seen her?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Look at her, because it is more fitting that love and compatibility be established between you.'" According to another report: "So he did that, and he married her and mentioned that they got along." (Reported by al-Daaraqutni, 3/252 (31, 32); Ibn Maajah, 1/574)

From Sahl ibn Sa'd (may Allaah be pleased with him): "A woman came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and said: "O Messenger of Allaah, I have come to give myself to you (in marriage)." The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) looked at her closely, then he lowered his head. When the woman saw that he had not made a decision about her, she sat down. One of his Companions stood up and said, O Messenger of Allaah, if you do not want her, then marry her to me..." (Reported by

al-Bukhaari, 7/19; Muslim, 4/143; al-Nisaa'i, 6/113 bi Sharh al-Suyooti; al-Bayhaqi, 7/84)

The sayings of the scholars on the extent to which one may look at one's fiancée

Al-Shaafa'i (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "If he wants to marry a woman, he is not allowed to see her without a headcover. He may look at her face and hands when she is covered, with or without her permission. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): '... and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent...' [al-Noor 24:31]. He said: "The face and hands.'" (al-Haawi al-Kabeer, 9/34).

Imaam al-Nawawi said in *Rawdat al-Taalibeen wa 'Umdat al-Mufteen* (7, 19-20): "When (a man) wants to marry (a woman), it is preferable (*mustahabb*) for him to look at her so that he will have no regrets. According to another view, it is not preferable but it is allowed. The first view is correct because of the ahaadeeth, and it is permitted to look repeatedly, with or without her permission. If it is not easy to look at her, he may send a woman to check her out and describe her to him. A woman may also look at a man if she wants to marry him, for she will like in him what he likes in her. What is permissible for him to look at is the face and hands, front and back. He should not look at anything else."

Abu Haneefah permitted looking at the feet as well as the face and hands. (*Bidaayah al-Mujtahid wa Nihayyat al-Muqtasid*, 3/10)

"It is permissible to look at the face, hands and feet, and no more than that." Ibn Rushd also quoted it as above.

Among the reports from the madhhab of Imaam Maalik:

He may look at the face and hands only.

He may look at the face, hands and forearms only.

A number of reports were narrated from Imaam Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him), one of which says that he may look at the face and forearms.

The second says that he may look at what usually appears such as the neck, calves and so on.

This was quoted by Ibn Qudaamah in *al-Mughni* (7/454), Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah in *Tahdheeb al-Sunan* (3/25-26), and al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Baari* (11/78)... The reliable opinion in the books of the Hanbalis is the second opinion.

From the above, it is clear that the majority of scholars say that a man is allowed to look at his fiancée's face and hands, because the face indicates beauty or ugliness, and the hands indicate the slimness or plumpness (literally, 'fertility') of the body.

Abu'l-Faraj al-Maqdisi said: "There is no dispute among the scholars that he is permitted to look at the face.. the focus of beauty and the place at which one looks."

It is permissible for a man to speak to a non-mahram woman, subject to important guidelines and conditions, the purpose of which is to prevent fitnah and sin. These conditions include:

- 1- That should be done without being alone with her (khulwah).
- 2- That should not go beyond permissible topics.
- 3- There should be no fitnah (temptation). If his desire is stirred by talking to her or if he starts to enjoy it, then it is haraam.
- 4- The woman should not speak in a soft manner,
- 5- The woman should be wearing full hijab and be modest, or he should speak to her from behind a door. It is better if they speak on the phone, and even better if they communicate via letters or e-mail, for example.
- 6- That should not go beyond what is necessary.

If these conditions are met and there is no fear of fitnah, then it is o.k. And Allaah knows best.

ETIQUETTE ON LOOKING FOR A SPOUSE

1. Ask yourself: Why am I getting married.

This is a good question to ask even if you are meeting the person to make a final decision because it will be a reminder about the real purpose of marriage from an Islamic perspective.

Marriage is part of faith and it is part of the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

As well, "my intention should be I am looking for someone with whom I will build a family," says Imam Muhammad Nur Abdullah, a member of the North American Fiqh Council. He conducted pre-marriage counseling in the U.S. for two decades.

"Marriage is a commitment and relationship that starts in this Dunya (world) and will continue Insha Allah in Paradise together," he adds.

2. Ask yourself: what am I looking for in a spouse.

Abu Hurairah related that the Prophet said: "Men choose women for four reasons: for their money, for their rank, for their beauty and for their religion, but marry one who is religious and you will succeed" (Bukhari, Muslim).¹¹

This of course, applies to women as well.

However, religion it seems, is not always foremost in the minds of many people. In fact, it's probably the last factor on too many Muslims' list.

According to Tasneem Qadeer, one of the seven volunteers who runs the Islamic Society of North America's matrimonial service, being a doctor or a lawyer is much more important to many Muslim women than piety.

And the men are not any better. Many matrimonial advertisements in Islamic publications for instance, demonstrate a key demand for a wife who is "fair, slim and beautiful".

"If we want to have healthy Muslim families then Deen has to be first," says Aneesah Nadir, president of the Islamic Social Services Association of the United States and Canada.

She is one of the co-developers of the program "Marriage the Islamic way", which teaches various aspects of marriage such as how to find a spouse, the wedding and the post-wedding marriage relationship.

3. If you're looking for a spouse lower your gaze.

This may seem like a contradiction, but it's not. Looking for a spouse who has the right qualities and whom you are physically attracted to does not mean throwing out the obligation to lower the gaze for both sexes.

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is aware of what they do" (Quran 24:30).

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms..." (Quran 24:31).

"Scoping the territory", from this perspective, would not be Islamically acceptable.

Imam Nur Abdullah notes that looking at a potential mate is recommended according to the Hadith in which the Prophet said: "When one of you asked a woman in marriage, if he is able to look at what will induce him to marry her, he should do so. ..." (Abu Dawud).

This means the two potential spouses can look at each other but not ogle or stare.

Abdullah also notes there is no limit on the number of times the two people can look at each other. However, both should fear Allah and remember the purpose of this is to satisfy the need for physical attraction to the person you are marrying.

He also notes it is not permissible for a man to see a potential wife without Hijab, since he is not her Mahram (a relative with whom marriage is not possible, or her

husband). Abdullah says seeing her face and hands are enough to determine attraction.

4. Get someone to help

Marriage is not something to throw yourself into all by yourself. Getting the help of someone, especially parents, relatives, an Imam, and/or respected and trustworthy members of the Muslim community to either look for the right spouse or initiate and participate in a communication process is very important.

Involving others, by the way, does not mean signing over your right to say yes or no to a marriage proposal. It simply increases the likelihood of finding out important information about a prospective partner in a way that maintains rules of Islamic modesty (i.e. not meeting alone, see next point).

Getting that third party involved also helps verify if the person you are interested in is decent, honest and respectful. This person(s) often checks out references, asks about the individual's character and behavior, and looks out for your best interest in general.

This person should be a trustworthy Muslim, since you are seeking a Muslim in marriage, and would want someone familiar with the Islamic way of doing things.

For those blessed with Muslim parents, remember that they are probably your best allies and helpers in seeking the right husband or wife. They have known you all of your life, and have your best interest at heart.²

However, parents must be open and attentive to what their children are looking for, and never forget the element of choice. Ultimately, it is their son or daughter who is going to make the final decision. They must never become too pushy or aggressive, whether this pressure is being applied on their own son or daughter, or on the person s/he is interested in.

If parents, other family members, an Imam or members of the community are not available, you can also try seeking a husband or wife through the matrimonial services offered by a number of different Muslim organizations.

5. Always ask for references

This is also where your "third party" comes in handy. Not only will they be able to be your reference. They can also check out a prospective mate's references.

A reference can include an Imam who knows the brother who proposed to you, a sister who knows the woman you may want to marry well, a family friend, a boss, a co-worker, and/or business partner.

A note about honesty and references: the people you ask may know something not very nice about your prospective spouse. Remind them that if they reveal this information, they would not be backbiting from the Islamic perspective. In fact, in the case of seeking marriage, complete information should be given about an individual, both good and bad.

The advice of one of the companions of the Prophet, Umar Ibn al-Khattab, can help in this regard:

A man came to Umar ibn al-Khattab and spoke in praise of another. Umar asked him: "Are you his nearest neighbor such that you know his goings and his comings?"

"No."

"Have you been his companion on a journey so that you could see evidence of his good character?"

"No."

"Have you had dealings with him involving dinars and dirhams [money] which would indicate the piety of the man?"

"No."

"I think you saw him standing in the mosque muttering the Quran and moving his head up and down?"

"Yes."

"Go, for you do not know him..."²

And to the man in question, Umar said, "Go and bring me someone who knows you."

(quoted from *Islam The Natural Way* by Abdul Wahid Hamid, p. 66)

This gives you three types of people you can ask about a prospective mate's character: a neighbor, business colleague or someone who has traveled with them.

6. When you meet, don't be alone

The Prophet said: "Whenever a man is alone with a woman the Shaytan makes a third" (Tirmidhi).¹

He also advised men: "Not one of you should meet a woman alone unless she is accompanied by a relative within the prohibited degrees" (Bukhari, Muslim).

Meeting alone, in the hotel room during a conference for instance, is not permissible. The prospective spouses should not place themselves in a situation where no one else can see or hear them.

Instead, a discreet, chaperoned meeting should be set up. The chaperone, while allowing the two to talk, is in the same room, for example.

As well, parents or guardians should set a time limit, recommends Shahina Siddiqui, president of the Islamic Social Services Association's Canada branch. A whole day, for example, is too long for this kind of a meeting.

7. When you speak, be businesslike and to the point.

The purpose of meeting and talking to each other must also remain within Islamic guidelines. That means no flirtatious speech of a sexual nature on either side.

Imam Nur Abdullah says some of the topics discussed can include each other's interests, financial situation of the man, who is Islamically responsible for providing for his wife and children, and the two potential spouses' relationship with their parents.

He notes that conversations between potential mates cannot be talking just for the sake of talking. There should be a firm and clear intention of either pursuing engagement and marriage, or, if one of the two or both the man and woman feel they are not compatible, a quick end to the relationship.

This ensures both sides are safe from getting hurt more than they could in this kind of a situation and remain within the bounds of Islam, Insha Allah.

With regards to questions pertaining to a person's sexual history (for example, has s/he had a boy/girlfriend, does s/he have any type of sexually transmitted diseases), Imam Nur Abdullah says these things have to be investigated at the very beginning, when the communication for marriage begins. This is not something that should be brought up at the last stage.

Other topics that should also be discussed at the early stages include level of Islamic knowledge and practice, future career and education plans, home making skills and where the couple will live right after marriage and in the future (state and/or country, with in-laws or in their own apartment/home).

The Imam also says the couple can even get a blood test to ensure both are healthy. Some states require this before marriage.

Seeking marriage is something highly recommended in Islam. While looking for a potential mate should be something Muslims help each other with, this cannot be done at the expense of Islamic rules pertaining to modesty and respect between the sexes.

OTHER THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

- Make sure you really get to know the sister/brother: through meeting a few times in the presence of wali, emails, telephone, Whatsapp
- Do NOT wait too long – trust Allah
- Do istikharah prayer

ISTIKHARAH PRAYER

Common mistakes

1) Some people believe that **Salatul Istikharah is not valid unless others do it on their behalf** and it should be **followed by a dream**. This is indeed a sheer extremism that Allah (Subhanahu wa Taala) never enjoined nor did His prophet's (Sallalahu Alaihi wa Sallam) Sunnah preach. This extremism was born out from exaggeration - that should be avoided- which led to abandoning one of the greatest of the prophet's (Sallalahu Alaihi wa Sallam) Sunnan and hence the loss of rewards and blessings.

O, dear muslim brother/sister, ask for Allah's (Subhanahu wa Taala) guidance in all your affairs and He (Subhanahu wa Taala) will surely guide you to that which is good. He (Subhanahu wa Taala) made asking for his help so easy; just recite the du'a' after performing any [two Rak'ahs] Nafilah Salat or perform two Rak'ahs especially for this purpose and surely you will be granted more rewards and blessings.

2. There is disagreement amongst scholars regarding **repeating Salatul Istikharah** in case one could not decide which way to tread nor was his heart pleased with either doing what he intended to do or abandoning it. There is not, however, any affirmed proof that states the legality of repeating it.

And never do what other people usually do of extremism or asking others to do it on their behalf; just take hold of the prophet's (Sallalahu Alaihi wa Sallam) Sunnah and you will surely be guided and succeed in this world and in the Hereafter. Indeed, how fortune he is who performs it and participate in its revivification amongst muslims.

3. After doing Salatul Istikharah, **do whatever pleases your heart**.

Never do that which you intended to do before doing the Salat; you should abandon such an intention otherwise you would not be asking for Allah's (Subhanahu wa Taala) guidance but your own desires – we seek Allah's (Subhanahu wa Taala) refuge from that.

One should be sincere when asking Allah's (Subhanahu wa Taala) guidance, feeling free from one's own knowledge and power and attributing them to Allah (Subhanahu wa Taala) alone. Once one does that, he has been free from his own desires.

Regretfully, many people are not well acknowledged with the legal Salatul Istikharah; consequently, they invented many ways of doing it, none of which is affirmed in the Qur'an nor the Sunnah, not even reported that any of the righteous Salaf to have done them. These forged ways are frequently practiced, and when one preaches the legal one which the prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam) used to practice, foul tongues will soon severely whip his back and will be considered as an extremist renegade. Indeed, there is no power nor might but with Allah (Subhanahu wa Taala).

4. Believing in **setting a condition prior** to doing Salatul Istikharah;

that is if the matter one wishes to do is good one would see a green or a white colour in one's dreams. And if the matter is evil one would see a red or a black colour.

5. **Using the rosary** by the one who needs Allah's (Subhanahu wa Taala) guidance or others make it for him.

One holds the rosary and then presents one's need secretly then gathers some of its beads in one's hand and counts them. If the number of the beads is an odd one, one would not fulfill what he had intended to do. If the number is an even one, one would consider this as a good sign and would do what he had born in his intention.

Indeed, what is the difference between this way and that which the people of Jahiliyyah used to practice, i.e. the Tiyyarah, which is totally prohibited in our Shar'.

6. **The cup way.**

A cup of coffee is made by a man or a woman for the one who needs the Istikharah. The later drinks the cup of coffee offered to him, then tips it over and after a while gives it to the former to "read" it for him. The former looks inside the cup after the leftover has made different shapes and lines -just like any liquid left over does. Then the "reader" starts making up different stories for the former and fills his head with legends!!

7. **Using necromancy [fortunetelling].**

It is done by placing a cup full of water on a special person's hand which has special lines. This process is done on a certain day of the week. Then the fortune-teller starts humming with unrecognized words calling some of the Jinns in order to bring the thief [as is usually done or tell him about the robbery].

8. **Using the sand.**

It is done by drawing disconnected lines on the sand, then they are counted in a special mathematical way known to those who practice this way. At the end, the fortune-teller gets to know the person's sign [of the zodiac] and picks out all the information about this sign from a certain book he brought for such a purpose. Then

he tells the person about the latter's past and future events -as he claims. Those people with similar signs are told the same thing.

9. Using the palm.

In this way the fortune-teller claims to have the ability of reading one's palm through diagnosing and analysing its lines and starts telling others about their future.

10. Using the Mushaf.

One opens the Mushaf randomly, if one's eyes fell on an Ayah that talks about mercy, he would do the thing he wishes, otherwise he won't.

11. Some people go to Shaikhs and righteous people to do the Istikharah on their behalf which is a mistake!! No doubt that those of sound sense could easily realize that all these ways are part of the forbidden fortune telling believing in which is one of the grievous sins as the 'Ulamah strongly stated.

The prophet (Sallalahu Alaihi wa Sallam) forbade it saying:

'Whoever attends a fortune teller or a soothsayer and believes whatever he says [the former] has indeed disbelieved in that which was revealed on Muhammad (Sallalahu Alaihi wa Sallam)'.

- Ahmad; Abu Dawud; Ibn Majah

He (Subhanahu wa Taala) also said:

'Whoever attends a fortune teller, asks him about any thing and believes him, his Salat would not be accepted for forty days'.

- Muslim

I wonder how could people seek such nonsense and falsehood and get away from the prophet's (Sallalahu Alaihi wa Sallam) guidance??! It is worth-mentioning here that some people violate the manner in which Salat is done such as: adding the du'a false statements or believing in the necessity of setting conditions before doing the Salat: such as doing it in matter one is confused about, reciting the du'a while doing Sujud. Another mistake people make after doing Salatul Istikharah is saying: 'We made Istikharah and got no benefit' or other statements that indicate that one is not fully submitted to Allah's (Subhanahu wa Taala) will. In his "Al-Fawa'id" (p. 174), Ibn Al-Qayyim said:

'The warm hearted father always does that which is best for his son; he would even cut one of his organs if necessary. And he would deprive him sometimes from money or desires if this is for his own good.'

Allah (Subhanahu wa Taala) the All-wise and Most merciful who always showers His creatures with mercy when afflicting them with misfortune for their own good. Only those with deep faith in Allah (Subhanahu wa Taala) would understand and

believe in this, unlike those who lack knowledge in Allah's perfect names and attributes and resorted instead to their deficient minds, such would gain nothing at all.

Du'a of Istikharah

Allahumma innee astakheeru-ka bi-'ilmik wa astaqdiru-ka bi-qudratik wa as-alu-ka min fadlikal-'azeem fa-inna-ka taqdiru wa laa aqdir wa ta'lamu wa laa a'lam wa Anta 'Allamul-ghuyoob. Allahumma in kunta ta'lamu anna hadhal-amr khairul-lee fee deenee wa ma'aashee wa 'aaqibati amree faqdur-hu lee wa yassir-hu lee thumma baarik lee feeh. wa in kunta ta'lamu anna hadhal-amra sharrul-lee fee deenee wa ma'aashee wa 'aaqibati amree fasrifhu 'annee wasrifnee 'anh waqdur liyal-khayra haythu kaan thumma ardhinee bih.

"O Allah, I ask You to show me what is best, through Your knowledge, and I ask You to empower me, through Your power, and I beg You to grant me Your tremendous favour, for You have power, while I am without power, and You have knowledge, while I am without knowledge, and You are the One who knows all things unseen.

O Allah, if You know that this matter (mention the thing to be decided) is good for me in my religion and in my life and for my welfare in the life to come, then ordain it for me and make it easy for me, and then bless me in it. And You know that this matter is bad for me in my religion and in my life and for my welfare in the life to come, then distance it from me, and distance me from it, and ordain for me what is good wherever it may be, and help me to be content with it."

When to recite the du'a of Istikharah

It is permitted to recite the du'a of Istikharah either before or after the tasleem. Some scholars recommend before, because Prophet Muhammad himself used to make a lot of du'a before the tasleem.

When to pray Istikharah

Islamic scholars agree that Istikharah is suggested when a person does not know the right decision to make. If one is unsure about whether or not his possible actions would bring about good in both this world and the hereafter. If a person is hesitating, not knowing if "it" is the right thing to do then Istikharah is the du'a that may set his mind at ease. It is the du'a that acknowledges Allah as the only strength and only power in this world. His guidance is necessary to ensure that human beings follow the straight and correct path that leads to a blissful life everlasting. For instance, if a person wants to find out the right time to do something, such as whether or not to do voluntary Hajj this year, or to propose marriage to a particular person, then it is acceptable and recommended that he or she prays Istikharah. Understand carefully that Istikharah is for matters that are considered either recommended or permissible. It is for cases in which there is a conflict. Should I give to this charity or the other? Should I apply for this halal job or another? One should

prays Istikharah concerning the thing he or she thinks is more likely to be better and then go ahead with doing it.

Istikharah is not prayed for matters that are considered obligatory acts of worship, or for staying away from sins and evil actions.

It is recommended, before praying Istikharah, to consult someone whom you knows is sincere, caring and has experience, and who is trustworthy with regard to his or her religious commitment and knowledge.

ONCE PERMISSION IS GRANTED FROM WALI OF THE WOMAN:

1. You can have a short engagement
2. Agree on the mahr
3. Set a date for nikah
4. Set a date for walimah
5. Don't be too extravagant for the walimah
6. Make lots of du'a