

23 True Power

Muslim women may find themselves dealing with many types of inequity but that does not reflect their true power.

Women may not appear the movers and shakers of a society but they have tremendous power, regardless of anyone's perception.

Women usually raise the children. This gives them the most important position in the entire society. In this role, they mold future generations. They ultimately pass on the core values of the society.

In a very true sense what we learn in our mothers' laps forms our society. It has been documented a person's essential values become well established by the age of seven with the earlier years more crucial than the later. By the age of three a child's brain has grown to ninety percent of its full size. The child has already established many of his or her most basic values and while they may be somewhat modified throughout life, the core remains set.

I have a dear friend who has struggled against the racial and class prejudices established in her family since she became aware they existed—for over fifty years. Though she corrects her attitude, it still exists and perhaps always will. Our prejudices become values almost knitted into our bones as we stand clinging to our mother's knee.

In almost all cases our mothers give us these essential values. In all societies I am familiar with, the mother cares for the very young. In some situations a nurse or nanny will substitute for the mother, but women almost always have those roles as well.

Only in recent years has the phenomenon of "Mr. Mom" arisen in the West. As the Western economic system forces more and more mothers to work, more fathers become involved in the rearing of their children. Occasionally the father stays home with the children, becoming "Mr. Mom" while the mother pursues her career. Even so the number of infant and toddling children actually raised by men remains minimal. More commonly the mother stays home with very young children. The Quran recognizes this special role of mothers in the following verse:

We enjoined the human being to honor his parents. His mother bore him, and the load got heavier and heavier. It takes two years (of intensive care) until weaning. You shall be appreciative of Me, and of your parents....
(Quran: The Final Testament 31:14)

Our mothers carry us in the womb for nine months, often with great discomfort for much of that time. They endure the pain of childbirth to bring us into the world. And then they care for our every need until we can begin to manage small bits of our own care. Our fathers also expend a great deal of effort and worry over us as we grow. At least partly because of this, God commands us to treat our parents well.

Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship except Him, and your parents shall be honored. As long as one or both of them live, you shall never say to them, "Uff"

(the slightest gesture of annoyance), nor shall you shout at them; you shall treat them amicably. And lower for them the wings of humility, and kindness, and say, "My Lord, have mercy on them, for they have raised me from infancy."
(Quran: The Final Testament 17:23-24)

While totally helpless and then when we grew just capable enough to get ourselves into terrible trouble, our parents cared for us. We have a tremendous amount for which to repay them.

But what about our children? What do we owe them and future generations? We naturally want to give children the best we can. We learned that from our parents and in turn we teach it to our children.

Providing for our children physically has its importance but giving them the latest fashions or the most popular toys does not compare to the values we give them. These values will sustain them for the rest of their time on this earth and give them the basis to make it a good and fulfilling life. Most importantly, the values they learn from us will help them prepare for the eternity of the hereafter.

The values we teach our children determine what they will teach their children. In teaching children we create our culture, our society. As most of us will care for our elderly parents our children will someday care for us. We will reap what we sow.

We teach our children many kinds of values. While others also teach them, parents set the essential tone very early with their modeling. So what do we teach them? Much of it falls into a few basic areas:

Morality

Most human learning begins with what we see modeled as children. We see others doing something and we realize we can do it. When we watch someone we admire, we believe we *should* do what he or she does so we can become like them.

In the area of morality this becomes especially crucial. One can expect a child to lie if he hears his parent lying (9:119). If a parent cheats in a game the child learns to cheat (83:1-4). A parent who has wine with dinner teaches his or her children to drink wine (2:219). Parents who flirt outside of their marriage can expect a child to pick up both the habit and the possible consequences (17:32). When a cashier returns too much money to a parent, the way the parent handles the situation teaches the child a profound lesson.

Something as simple as the movies we watch, the books we read, or the songs we listen to impart moral lessons to our children.

It becomes particularly important to deliver the right message to the very young. As children get older the parents can talk about what the child sees or hears, but a very young child just absorbs everything going on without any intellectual assessment.

The old saying "Do as I say, not as I do" does not work with children, especially the very young. We learn to do what we see our parents doing in spite of what they may say to us.

My own family gives a good example of the way modeling affects children. My parents treated people in a very moral way though they rarely spoke of organized religion positively. They never considered cheating others. They both worked hard and gave charity freely.

I believe from their basic modeling I, their child, drew the values that made me who I am.

Righteousness

Righteousness is not turning your faces towards the east or the west. Righteous are those who believe in God, the Last Day, the angels, the scripture, and the prophets; and they give the money, cheerfully, to the relatives, the orphans, the needy, the traveling alien, the beggars, and to free the slaves; and they observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat); and they keep their word whenever they make a promise; and they steadfastly persevere in the face of persecution, hardship, and war. These are the truthful; these are the righteous. (Quran: The Final Testament 2:177)

This verse defines righteousness for us. Notice Quranic righteousness does not mean following a lot of ritual or having a prominent place in a religious community. It becomes a much more private thing than those, something that happens in the heart. It requires belief in God, the hereafter, the angels, the scripture, and the messengers. And it requires one to give charity, to observe the prayers, to keep contracts and promises, to give help to others, and to remain steadfast.

Modeling provides the best way of teaching such positive traits. When parents pray and encourage their child to join them, the child will learn the joy of praying. The same goes for giving charity, facing life's difficulties with steadfastness, and remaining trustworthy at all times. Seeing their parents in these actions provides a child with much better instruction than just words can deliver.

I always feel a thrill when a little person joins our prayer. The prayers of little children seem special and precious.

Children often become drawn to the Contact Prayer (*Salat*) and many children have a tendency toward charity. Almost all children show natural honesty until they learn about deception.

Of course each child lives as an individual. As they grow into maturity each must find his or her own relationship with God. Many will go through a period of exploration and rebellion. But the values given to them as very young children will remain with them for them to return to as they mature.

Gratitude

One day, at home from work sick, depressed about my life, and generally feeling sorry for myself, I watched the most influential television program I have ever seen. I caught it by accident. Bored, I turned on the TV looking for just about anything to watch.

Thankfully I caught the end of an Oprah Winfrey program where she talked about keeping a gratitude journal. She recommended writing at least one thing you are grateful

for every day even if all you can write is “I’m grateful I can write”. I realized how far I had fallen from my normal sense of gratitude and how it affected my mood and my health.

God tells us gratitude always remains crucial. One of my favorite verses shows this:

Your Lord has decreed: “The more you thank Me, the more I give you.” But if you turn unappreciative, then My retribution is severe.
(Quran: The Final Testament 14:7)

You may think, “Sure it is easy to be thankful when things are good but things have been so bad lately....” However the above verse comes right after Moses reminding his people of the terrible trial they went through when Pharaoh began “*slaughtering your sons and sparing your daughters*” (in 14:6). Fortunately few of us must go through such terrible trials. Yet how many of us ever feel grateful enough for the blessings God gives us?

Many blessings we probably don’t even notice. Have we ever thanked God for keeping the energy of our sun from burning up the earth? Or when have we remembered just a short time ago all people grew up without electricity and running water and a great many still do? Do we ever thank God that polio no longer cripples hordes of children? Millions of things exist, which we never even think about, much less give thanks for.

We first learn gratitude, like almost everything else, by seeing it in members of our family. When we express our gratitude both in front of and to our children that modeling becomes stronger than anything we say to them about it.

I had a friend whose mother was one of the most negative people I’ve ever met. Her daughter, though Muslim for many, many years, constantly fought the negativity she learned from her mother—sometimes failing for long periods of time. Most people from similar backgrounds do not realize the toxic nature of such negativity and they go through their lives in clouds of negative misery. I believe Oprah Winfrey’s show had such an impact on me because she shared with the general public the miraculous healing gratitude can bring.

Education

The Quran never mentions educational institutions like schools or colleges. However it often speaks of learning. The first revelation refers to both reading and writing:

Read, in the name of your Lord, who created. He created man from an embryo. Read, and your Lord, Most Exalted. Teaches by means of the pen. He teaches man what he never knew.
(Quran: The Final Testament 96:1-5)

As we saw in Chapter 18, reading the Quran provides an important practice for Muslims. We must read for our own understanding and we must think about what we read. The following verse shows this:

You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brain, and you are responsible for using them.

(Quran: The Final Testament 17:36)

We cannot just take what the scholars, religious leaders, or anyone else tells us. We must verify it for ourselves. This commandment affects all aspects of our lives not just our religion. To verify things for ourselves we must have enough knowledge to do so. In today's modern society, for most of us acquiring that knowledge requires an education.

Education trains the mind and helps us learn how to use the faculties God has blessed us with. In Verses 35:28 and 58:11, God speaks of the knowledgeable and thus seems to encourage education.

Here also what you model for your children becomes crucial. While my older sister and I were young, my mother had the time to read to us every day. She often took us to the library. We saw her reading for her own enjoyment. By the time my younger sister came along my mother worked outside of the home and she had little time to read to that sister or indulge in the literary luxuries my older sister and I enjoyed. To this day I am a voracious reader like my older sister was, while my just as intelligent younger sister rarely reads anything except what she must.

Courtesy

Courtesy remains one of the things that make living in a group of people bearable. God tells us in several places to treat each other well. Here He tells us to greet each other courteously:

When greeted with a greeting, you shall respond with a better greeting or at least an equal one. God reckons all things.

(Quran: The Final Testament 4:86)

If you have ever been in a situation where people did not return your greeting, you understand the importance of this commandment. Not having your greeting acknowledged is unsettling and can cause negative feelings.

Children who learn basic courtesy have a great advantage over those who do not. Other people respond in kind when treated with courtesy. Though it seems like a small thing, courtesy can make life much more pleasant.

In this next verse God tells us to treat each other "*in the best possible manner*":

Tell My servants to treat each other in the best possible manner, for the devil will always try to drive a wedge among them....

(Quran: The Final Testament 17:53)

Treating people well remains a good policy spiritually and even from a selfish point of view. If you treat others well and with courtesy they usually will treat you well and with courtesy. The above verse can refer to courtesy and leads into the next topic of tolerance.

Tolerance

My parents came from diverse backgrounds and met in cosmopolitan San Francisco. Their life experiences taught them respect for all cultures and peoples. They passed that respect on to their children.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Quran's principle of tolerance first drew me to it. God tells us it does not matter what you call your religion, if you submit to God alone and lead a righteous life you will be rewarded.

Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the converts, and the Christians; any of them who (1) believe in God and (2) believe in the Last Day, and (3) lead a righteous life, have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.
(Quran: The Final Testament 5:69 [and 2:62])

The Quran teaches not only religious tolerance but tolerance of racial and ethnic differences. In fact, God says those differences provide some of His signs.

Among His proofs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors. In these, there are signs for the knowledgeable.
(Quran: The Final Testament 30:22)

Finally, in this next verse God tells us why He made us different peoples.

O people, we... rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most righteous....
(Quran: The Final Testament 49:13)

We need to recognize each other and know the physical differences we see mean nothing. They do not reflect our real selves. Only our righteousness gives us value and sets us apart in God's eyes.

Freedom

One of the greatest gifts God bestows on us in the West remains our freedom, especially freedom of religion. The founders of the United States built this nation on that crucial freedom. Their concept fits very well with the Quran:

Let there be no compulsion / In religion....
(The Holy Quran II:256 [2:256])

The word "Islam" simply means "submission", submission to God. True Islam, true submission to God requires religious freedom, otherwise we may have to appear to submit but not really do so in our hearts.

God decreed different laws and rites for different faiths:

... For each of you, we have decreed laws and different rites. Had God willed, He could have made you one congregation. But He thus puts you to the test through the revelations He has given each of you. You shall compete in righteousness....
(Quran: The Final Testament 5:48)

He tests us through the differences in our faiths. We have the responsibility to research for ourselves, to study and investigate, then take the best. God describes the believers as:

They are the ones who examine all words, then follow the best. These are the ones whom God has guided; these are the ones who possess intelligence.
(Quran: The Final Testament 39:18)

To really submit one must have freedom in all ways. Otherwise, how can you tell whether you submit because of your convictions or because your society forces it on you?

According to God in the Quran, little else other than idolatry causes more harm than oppression:

*You may kill those who wage war against you, and you may evict them whence they evicted you. **Oppression is worse than murder....***
(Quran: The Final Testament 2:191—emphasis added)

I have placed emphasis on the statement “*Oppression is worse than murder*” because of its importance. We all need to know and teach this to our children. As soon as we allow oppression, we kill the best of the society.

This remains true with the oppression of any group of people whether based on gender, race, religion, or anything else.

Equality

Throughout this book we see God views men and women as having different qualities and roles in the family and society, but as equal:

“The best among you in the sight of God is the most righteous.”
(Quran: The Final Testament 49:13)

This equality in the sight of God applies to all people, no matter what their social status:

Those among you who cannot afford to marry free believing women, may marry believing slave women. God knows best about your belief, and you are equal to one another, as far as belief is concerned....
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:25)

Our superficial differences do not make us superior or inferior— our gender; white, black or brown or any skin color; free or slave—God judges us on our righteousness alone. He created us all equal, though society may not treat everyone equally. This highlights the importance of mothers teaching equality. It becomes one of the most powerful things a woman can do. She may not see equal treatment in her own life but for her children and her grandchildren she leaves a priceless legacy.

As the guardians and teachers of our own culture women have an unequalled opportunity to create major social change. Change may not take place right away, but it will remain for a long time, God willing. We owe it to ourselves and even more to our children to teach them the basic Quranic principles of Morality, Righteousness, Gratitude, Education, Courtesy, Tolerance, Freedom, and Equality.

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Quite a few years ago, all the employees of the school district where I worked saw an amazing video by Jane Elliott. It illustrated the old maxim “you get what you expect”, but with an unexpected twist. This video convinced me it is crucial to treat everyone in society with equality and respect if you want to have a productive society. Here I, as Iman, write about this video.

Blue-Eyes Brown-Eyes

Jane Elliott taught fourth grade when James Earl Ray assassinated Martin Luther King. Her class had studied Dr. King as a “Hero of the Month”. The kids became very confused by the assassination and in trying to answer their questions Jane Elliott devised a demonstration for them of prejudice and how it works. Later she arranged to have the exercise filmed by an outside camera crew and repeated it. We got to see this film of children actually going through the exercise in the late 1960s.

Jane Elliott divided the class into two groups based on eye color. On the first day, she made the children with brown eyes “on top”. She gave them extra recess time and told the entire class how good and intelligent the children with brown eyes were. Elliot praised their successes. They got to boss around the blue-eyed children and they took full advantage of the privilege.

To make identifying kids from a distance easier the kids with blue eyes had to wear a special collar. Elliot told the class the blue-eyed kids had the negative traits of unintelligence, laziness, and they lacked trustworthiness. They could not drink directly from the drinking fountain nor have a second helping at lunch.

Surprisingly the brown-eyed children really excelled, even where it seemed impossible. Dyslexic kids could suddenly spell words they had never been able to spell and read words they had never been able to read. Conversely normally bright, self-confident blue-eyed children became uncertain, timid under-achievers.

The next day the children changed roles. Eliot made the blue-eyed children “on top” and they received preferential treatment. They got to take off their collars and put them on the brown-eyed children. Now they had their turn to be the bosses and their behavior toward their former oppressors showed no difference from what they had received. Again the change in position reflected in the kid’s academic performance and sense of self-worth.

This exercise deeply affected the children involved, as an interview with them years later shows. For many, it changed their attitudes for life.

Just watching the video had an enormous effect on me. It made me realize how very crucial it becomes to treat people well, to encourage and treat them with courtesy. In short, it made me realize when you treat people in the best possible manner, as the Quran commands, you enable them to become their very best and thus to contribute the most to society.

From a purely selfish standpoint it only makes sense to enable all people, regardless of their race, sex, age, religion, ethnic background, etc., to do their very best. A productive society becomes a benefit for all of its members.

—*Iman, U.S.A.*

Please note: recently a friend and brother sent me a link to a portion of Jane Elliot's video. It spurred me to do a search on the Internet and I discovered you can find the full video as presented for a PBS Frontline program. ¹

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Watching a video like the one described above gives a sense of how it feels to experience prejudice but it doesn't compare to living "the script". In my years as a Muslim, I have been blessed to meet some of the most beautiful sisters imaginable who have come through the smelter of racial prejudice, refined and purified to a degree that has inspired me. The following story comes from one such sister.

Muslim Sister / African American

It is a complex task to explain what happens with African Americans who embrace Islam as their religion. There are clearly cultural differences from those born in countries where Islam is in widespread practice but there are also understandings about race and this U.S. society that those who are not from this country have difficulty understanding. To live a double consciousness of who you are not only as a person but as a black person is a challenge. We speak as equal souls from Allah but also as marginalized, historically second class citizens in this society. African Americans who say "Allah" to reference God are often the first in their family to be called Muslim. Increasingly we reflect second generation Muslims. There are hundreds of thousands of us. However, the growth in the numbers does not necessarily reflect a comfortable transition to Islam. In fact, for some it has been a difficult journey in many respects, one that reflects a great deal of struggle to hold onto the rope of Allah's mercy.

The message of worshipping God alone and adhering to the teachings of the Quran was shared with me more than 13 years ago by a wonderful sister from Egypt. But I declared a belief in worshipping one God, was making *salat*, fasting and striving to be a Muslim more than 16 years before that. Washington D.C., my birthplace, was like many urban settings, home to thousands of African Americans who embraced Islam as practiced by Africans, Arabs, Persians and the Nation of Islam. In the early sixties and seventies more than a dozen small, community-based *masjids* (mosques) were established

¹ Here is the link for that program:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE, last accessed 3/11/2021.

in Washington by African Americans. Houses, store fronts and even apartments were places of congregational worship right along with the larger masjids established by the Nation of Islam and those primarily servicing immigrant brothers and sisters. This period reflected a searching time in the African American community. Nationally and internationally, black people were interested in combating the lasting effects of a society based on white supremacy, racial inferiority, and wealth held in the hands of a few. The vast majority of blacks worked low-income jobs to barely escape the grip of poverty.

In 1970, a friend from college asked me to come to one of these masjids in a big warehouse and there I saw a group of black men and women reciting, standing, bowing and prostrating on the floor. Their words were meaningless to me but there was clearly a sense of unity of movement and voice. My curiosity was stirred but when I asked one of the women what they were doing she said so many unfamiliar words that I merely nodded. (Months later I came to know those words as practices in my own worship: *khalima, salat, fajr, dhur, asr, maghrib, isha, zakat, seyam* and *hajj*.) She had shared what she knew of the familiar ‘pillars’ of Islam and had overwhelmed me. Nevertheless, I stayed around the group. A few months later my friend from college became my husband and we parented two sons. We were not introduced to *hadith* and *sunnah [sunna]* traditions and were told that our worship reflected verses from the Quran. It was, for me, in my early twenties, an affirmation of what I already had known as a child raised as a Baptist and then Jehovah’s Witness, God is! But so what? These earlier Christian teachings had not addressed race, class and gender oppression. These issues concerned me as a young black woman raised in the era of the civil rights struggle, the Pan Africanist movement and women’s fight for equal treatment under the law. I could now practice a religion wherein God cared about my belief but also my life as a black woman.

As I studied the Quran I made connections between who we were as submitters and who we were as African Americans. The book spoke of oppression and injustice and God’s love for those who fight against injustice. I began linking belief in God to an understanding of what many African Americans experience on an everyday basis—racism in an historically unjust, classist society. Islam provided answers: How can we raise our families, how to conduct business, why there is so much violence, and how can we respond. Another sister and I started a school for our little community’s children. We understood the importance of educating our children with a different belief system. We wanted our children to learn about reading, mathematics, science and social studies but not from a traditional nonreligious curriculum. We wanted them to develop a love for Allah and the things created by God, to be comfortable stopping and praying in the day, to be reinforced by the day to day Muslim fellowship an educational setting can support. I began to understand the importance of studying the Quran and Allah’s system of creation.

What I did not understand was marriage in Islam. My husband wanted to be married to someone else, pursued the relationship and I left the group of brothers and sisters. I went back to live in my mother’s home with my two small children. Confused, hurt and struggling, I started attending one of the largest *masjids* [mosques] in Washington, D.C., the Islamic Center. The Islamic Center, built on embassy row, had muslims attending prayers from all over the world, from Pakistan and Indonesia to the Sudan and Sweden. Over the next four years I went back to college, married again and got a bachelor’s degree in education. Working with a group of ‘*sunni*’ muslims we

established a school and summer camp at the Islamic center. It was one of the largest muslim operated schools in the city, educating primarily African American children but also a few Iranian children. We surmised that many of the ‘foreign’ born muslims were afraid to entrust their children’s education to black people. But the Iranians were not. They trusted us to care for their children, volunteered to work with us and saw supporting the school as their Islamic responsibility. My husband began working at the Iranian embassy and began to study Shiite Islam. Several other African American families began to contrast the practices of Shiite and Sunni Islam and left one practice for the other, finding the message of the Iranians a more politicized one that actively fought against the capitalist mindset of US culture. While my husband fully embraced the Shiite teachings and traveled to Iran’s holy city of Qum, I remained ambivalent and continued to practice Islam the way I thought the Africans and Arabs did—the *sunnah*. But several events came together to change all that.

Through friends I was encouraged to read a new translation of the Quran by Rashad Khalifa. It altered my life. Along with several other muslim brothers and sisters we began a regular study Quranic group at the home of my friend from Egypt. The teaching of *hadith* and *sunnah* soon stood in conflict to what I read in the Quran. A small contingency of African Americans from Pittsburgh, New York and Washington D.C. attended the first national conference of submitters in San Francisco. We were inspired by the camaraderie. Back home, my husband was furious. He was angry that I no longer wanted to practice Islam according to what we had learned at the Islamic Center, or with followers of the Iranian leader, Imam Khomeini. I stopped covering my head; I changed my *salat*, no longer saying the familiar words of blessing on prophet Muhammed in my prayers. Perhaps what was even greater than his anger about my worship was that he wanted to be involved with another woman. He had met someone and again I was not going to be in a polygamous relationship. Despite more than twelve years together and four sons, we divorced. He remarried immediately.

My sons remained in our family home with their father and his new wife. Confused, hurt and struggling I went, once again, back to my mother’s house. But this time I was better prepared, I had the message of worshipping God alone. I had a degree in education and began teaching in the public schools. Allah blessed me so much. I was offered a fellowship to do my Master’s studies at Miami University in Ohio. It was with great difficulty that I accepted the offer because it would mean leaving my children in another city but Allah blessed me with support and encouragement from all my friends. I not only received my master’s but continued to study and got a doctorate’s as well. Every month I would drive back to Washington, D.C. to be with my children, fellow submitters, to attend *Jumaa* prayers and get revitalized in spirit.

Allah has continued my blessings and I am now a tenured faculty member at a Midwest University. Four of my sons live with me, make *Jumaa* prayers in our home, and sometimes share the message of worshipping Allah alone with their friends. They too struggle with their identities and the images that the larger society has of African American males. As their mother I have many concerns that they may stray from the righteous path—the availability of drugs in our community, police brutality, promiscuity—but I maintain them in my prayers, knowing that Allah is the protector and guide.

There isn't much in the literature about African American Muslim women. By "not much" I mean in comparison to the thousands of books, articles, and personal memoirs written by, and about, white women and their religious convictions. Closing the gap is an important task because the folklore surrounding black women's lives are filled with whore stories, bitch tales, and matriarch myths. The mediated textual imagery and the printed literature is grossly exaggerated because the real truth is that many African American women are deeply religious and have held onto their beliefs in God because it is the only way to survive and be successful.

—*Khaula, U.S.A.*

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As I mentioned at the end of the last chapter, I have never raised children. So in many ways I have not experienced the real power of womanhood. However, I have been blessed to know many children among the families of my mosque and to watch them grow. Sometimes I have even had a small part in that growth, which has been very rewarding.

I have often wondered how my life would have changed if my one pregnancy I am certain of had not miscarried and I had given birth to that child—that pure soul, which I knew I carried for a short while. I know my life would have been very different and I would not have had many of the wonderful experiences I have been blessed with. I would have had different experiences instead.

However, what-ifs never seem like a healthy line of thought. For God tells us:

Anything that happens on earth, or to you, has already been recorded, even before the creation. This is easy for God to do. Thus, you should not grieve over anything you miss, nor be proud of anything He has bestowed upon you. God does not love those who are boastful, proud.

(Quran: The Final Testament 57:22-23)

Knowing God wrote everything in a record before creation always comforts me. Thus, I cannot make a wrong decision and what happens to me depends on what my Most Wise Creator knows I need in order to redeem my soul. God did not mean for me to have children so I need not feel sad about it. I just need to appreciate the wonderful life He chose to give me and recognize that He had other plans for me. And by His grace, it has been a wonderful life indeed.