

## 9 Marriage

Marriage as practiced in Muslim societies even in these modern times frequently reeks with inequity. Often young women must marry whomever their families decide. However, thankfully as time goes on more and more of these young women actively participate in the selection of their husbands or they make the selection by themselves.

On the darker side, several areas of the Muslim world still have rape-marriage exoneration laws. This means a man who rapes a single woman can avoid punishment by marrying her. In societies, which practice so called honor-killings of women who have had any sexual relations outside of marriage, whether they consented or not, the pressure to accept marriage to a rapist must be severe. It may literally be an issue of life or death for some women, assuming they even have a choice in the marriage. Thus to save their lives they may be forced into what probably will end up as an abusive marriage. Even if the victim does not face such a horrifying fate, most Muslim men will view her as “damaged goods” and her prospects for a good marriage diminish drastically. Fortunately a growing number of Muslim countries have abolished these laws, with Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon joining that number quite recently. Additionally a number of Muslim countries have adopted laws to curb domestic violence.

We must also look at the issue of child marriages, which in the past were quite prevalent in many Muslim societies, as in others. In some situations, especially for refugees where parents saw marriage as a way of protecting a girl, child marriage became more prevalent according to a Huffington Post article by Lyric Thompson<sup>1</sup>. Ms. Thompson reported among Syrian refugees the rate of child marriages tripled as families strove to protect their daughters from sexual violence. In addition to the human issues involved in child marriage, Thompson reported there are huge financial advantages for countries curtailing or ending child marriage. There are multiple advantages, not the least of which is the fact that with girls continuing their education and becoming educated workers in the society rather than beginning early to raise families, they can contribute enormously to the general economy and their own lives. In fact, Thompson’s article reports: “Niger, which leads the world with a child marriage rate of 75 percent, stands to benefit from at least a \$25 billion boon in the next 15 years, were it to eliminate child marriage.”

Ms. Thompson worked with others on one other issue that relates directly to marriage. Some traditional societies, Muslim ones included, still practice genital mutilation of girls as they have for centuries to make girls more attractive marriage candidates. This painful and often very unhygienic practice has begun to die out, but there exist 200 million females in the world still affected by this barbaric practice. Thankfully, Thompson worked to produce a global strategy to end the practice within 10 years.

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<sup>1</sup> [“Is the United States Doing Enough to End Child Marriage”](#), last accessed 3/25/2020.

When I asked my dear Egyptian friend Susanne why they do this she explained it reduces or eliminates the wife's pleasure and the natural relaxing of her vagina and so increases the husband's pleasure. But at what a cost to the wife!

Susanne's answer is expanded on by the World Health Organization, which lists a number of other cultural reasons for this mutilation in their fact-sheet on the practice. Among these reasons are community pressures, the belief that it reduces a woman's libido thus it makes her less likely to commit adultery, and it is more hygienic.<sup>2</sup>

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In the West, as in the Muslim world, marriage forms an important part of most women's lives. Almost all young girls of my generation just assumed we would, of course, get married and raise a family of our own as our parents had done. We spent hours staging play weddings and setting up pretend households. Our favorite dolls imitated brides all decked out in their pearls and white lace. None of us ever considered we might be just as happy never marrying. Marriage formed the accepted norm and often the stated goal.

While things have changed some in the West since my childhood, from my discussions with friends of other cultures this still seems typical in most countries, especially in Muslim countries.

This makes sense because God encourages marriage in the Quran:

*You shall encourage those of you who are single to get married. They may marry the righteous among your male and female servants, if they are poor.... Those among your servants who wish to be freed in order to marry, you shall grant them their wish, once you realize that they are honest. And give them from God's money that He has bestowed upon you....*

*(Quran: The Final Testament 24:32-33)*

God not only encourages marriage, but as we see here He commands slaves be freed to marry. Thus He encourages marriage and discourages slavery in the same verse.

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The Bible also speaks of marriage. Genesis speaks as if it forms the only way of things. After a short description of God bringing Eve to Adam, Genesis goes on:

*Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they shall become one flesh.*

*(Genesis 2:24 - The Torah: The Five Books of Moses)*

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<sup>2</sup> You can find other reasons at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

Jesus reminds us of the equality of men and women stated in Genesis 1:26-27 (quoted in Chapter 8) and then speaks of marriage:

*“Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”*  
(Matthew 19:4-6 - New Revised Standard Version Bible)

Paul made the sacredness of marriage clear:

*Let marriage be honored in every way and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.*  
(Hebrews 13:4 - New American Bible, 1970)

What makes marriage so divinely supported? From these verses and our common sense, we know marriage discourages immorality and encourages morality. Thus God validates the concept of the family, the core unit of all societies.

However, I believe something even more important exists. I think marriage provides a spiritual exercise of the highest form.

One of the first spiritual concepts presented in the Quran states we must kill our egos, the part of us that keeps us from redemption:

*Recall that Moses said to his people, “O my people, you have wronged your souls by worshiping the calf. You must repent to your Creator. You shall kill your egos. This is better for you in the sight of your Creator....”*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 2:54)

Rashad Khalifa’s footnote further clarifies:

It is the ego that led to Satan’s fall. It is the ego that caused our exile to this world, and it is the ego that is keeping most of us from redemption to God’s Kingdom.

In this discussion, I am not using “ego” with the psychological definition of our sense of self. Rather I use the more popular usage of the word meaning our arrogant self or the part of our self that fills us with pride and self-importance. It also consists of the part of us that makes us think ourselves better than other people. This part of ourselves keeps us from God.

If our egos get in our way spiritually no better way to work on them exists than marriage. In marriage, we cannot just walk away from our disagreements as we can in other situations. In reference to problems in a marriage God tells us: *“Selfishness is a human trait”*. So, working out our differences provides the best for us (4:128).

Furthermore, our spouse often acts as a very good mirror for us, showing us our strengths as well as our weaknesses.

All spiritual traditions recognize the concept of the male and female principles and the balance they create. To me, one of the most beautiful expressions of this balance comes from the Quran.

First God tells us men and women have different qualities:

*You shall not covet the qualities bestowed upon each other by God; the men enjoy certain qualities, and the women enjoy certain qualities....*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:32)

Then He tells us the result of pooling those qualities in a marriage. He gives the purpose of marriage as not mainly reproductive, nor economic, nor social:

*Among His proofs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, in order to have tranquility and contentment with each other, and He placed in your hearts love and care towards your spouses. In this, there are sufficient proofs for people who think.*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 30:21)

Thus marriage provides emotional and spiritual support so we may “*dwell in tranquility*”. Twice the verse calls marriage one of God’s signs or proofs.

The intimacy that develops in a good marriage can act as one of the strongest catalysts for the healing of old emotional wounds. This healing alone fosters spiritual growth. Plus when you live with someone who also strives spiritually and they support your spiritual growth, the potential for growth increases manifold.

This changes the whole focus of marriage. As we discussed in the last chapter, someone’s looks or earning ability or social standing do not make up the main factors to be considered in finding a good spouse. Rather spiritual and emotional compatibility matter the most.

How does one find this spiritual and emotional wonder? How does one find a suitable spouse? As I looked (and I finally came to the point of actively looking) I had to keep reminding myself God runs the show. If I were to marry, He would provide a good mate... and when I became truly ready, He certainly did.

It fascinates me that the Quran describes Paradise as providing wonderful spouses (Quran 52:20 and 56:35-7 among other verses). Perhaps if we let God match us in this life too, making the spiritual considerations first on our “want list” and asking for His guidance, paradise can begin here.

But finding the perfect mate often requires research and work.

In the Muslim world, the family often arranges marriages. This concept horrified me until I met some couples who had arranged marriages and I realized what good matches they made. Fortunately, their families worked to find especially compatible mates for them. Their marriages rank among the best I know.

But not all arranged marriages work as well. I also know of a very sad case that ended up quite disastrously, leaving a very sensitive man terribly wounded.

In the West, most of us must find our own mates. This often becomes quite difficult, especially for a Muslim not “into the singles scene”. If you live as part of a large Muslim community you have a much better chance. However, if you have decided to follow just the Quran rather than the traditions of Islam, in many cases you might as well be living on a semi-deserted island.

If these problems sound familiar, don't worry. God tells followers of the Quran they may marry chaste believers among the followers of previous scriptures (Quran 5:5). Of course, you must discuss spiritual and religious matters very carefully. Actually, this proves true no matter who you plan to marry.

Personally, I believe any woman, whatever her faith, should only marry a man who absolutely agrees to support her in her striving to obey God's laws according to her own understanding. Otherwise, she may find herself in the situation of having to go against her husband's wishes or of him trying to make her follow his understanding. This will almost certainly cause strife in the marriage and may eventually bring about divorce.

Even if your spiritual understandings match when you marry, sometimes one or the other changes as time goes on. Unless you agree from the start each has the right to their own understanding you may encounter problems.

Once you have found someone compatible what comes next? The Quran speaks of engagement, though it does not require it (Quran 2:235). However, from my personal experience, I think it a good idea. It gives you both the opportunity to see how you interact once you make a commitment to each other. It is not yet the commitment of marriage but allows you to see how you interact when things between you become more serious and you have the commitment of an engagement. The perspective for some people changes with a commitment. They no longer feel they need to make as much effort. Actually making the commitment means you need to make a greater effort to live up to that commitment. If the engagement means one or both of you will start taking the relationship for granted you need to find it out before you actually marry. Remember you plan to make a lifetime commitment.

Though I touched on the issue of choosing a husband in the previous chapter, let me expand. Forgive me if I sound like a mother here. When I originally wrote this material I wrote it for other Muslim women, but so many people told me to leave it in I decided to do so. If you do not follow Islam yourself I hope you will still find value in this sharing.

When you marry you make a crucial decision. Do whatever you can to ensure you make the right decision. Remember, this man will have the final say in the marriage. Will you be able to live with his decisions? Are you certain he will make decisions with your consultation and with your needs and best interests in mind? Remember he will end up your captain for life. Pick a winner!

Where families arrange marriages they usually try to make certain the two people mesh well together. For those of us who choose our own mates making this determination sometimes becomes difficult. However, since you intend to live with this man for the rest of your life, be sure of your compatibility.

Let me give some common sense suggestions, which you probably would think of yourself. Try to spend as much normal time with your beloved as you can, in as many different types of situations—grocery shopping, doing laundry, visiting elderly relatives, pulling weeds, cleaning, etc. Make sure you live and work well together, not just that you play well together.

If possible meet each other's families and watch the interactions there. How the family members treat each other may tell you a great deal about the person you plan to live the rest of your life with. If things come up that make you uncomfortable, talk about them.

Allow this discovery time together to go on for long enough so some of the blush of new love fades. You need to be sure you choose someone for the right reasons rather than getting fooled by sexual attraction or your own daydreams. Remember Islam allows divorce, but the Quran strongly discourages it. You need to marry someone with whom you fully intend to live out the rest of your life.

Of course during this time you need to be extremely careful not to get into any situations where you end up doing something unrighteous. Remember until you have actually made the commitment of marriage any sexual relations become a very serious matter to God. These next verses show just how serious. Please note: God in the Quran does not make a distinction between fornication and adultery. He calls any sexual relations outside of your own marriage adultery. Here He describes the traits of the righteous first and then those of the unrighteous:

*They never implore beside God any other god, nor do they kill any soul—for God has made life sacred—except in the course of justice. Nor do they commit adultery. Those who commit these offenses will have to pay. Retribution is doubled for them on the Day of Resurrection, and they abide therein humiliated.*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 25:68-69)

These verses class having sexual relations outside of marriage with idol worship and murder, the most serious of offenses. And though 25:70 then clarifies God not only allows repentance for this, He may change the sin into credit. However, a catch exists. No one can knowingly work evil and then just repent without major consequences. One cannot trick God.

Now let us say you have found the perfect man and all has gone well as you get to know each other. What does the Quran say about the process of getting married? The Quran lists a mutually acceptable dowry and mutual attraction as the only requirements (4:24). No requirement exists even for a ceremony, though most of us want to share such a special event with loved ones.

From what the Quran tells me, God considers marriage a matter between the two people and Himself. However, that does not make it a light matter. God calls it a solemn pledge (4:21). How solemn? Marriages forbidden in the Quran which were already in existence at the time of the revelation of Verse 4:23 (see below) remained valid. I believe this also goes for marriages entered into before you first read and accept the Quran because you were not aware of God's law at the time of the marriage:

*Prohibited for you (in marriage) are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, the sisters of your fathers, the sisters of your mothers, the daughters of your brother, the daughters of your sister, your nursing mothers, the girls who nursed from the same woman as you, the mothers of your wives, the daughters of your wives with whom you have consummated the marriage—if the marriage has not been consummated, you may marry the daughter. Also prohibited for you are the women who were married to your*

*genetic sons. Also, you shall not be married to two sisters at the same time—but **do not break up existing marriages**. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:23 - emphasis added)

Note the “*do not break up existing marriages*—even when a man has married a forbidden relative. This tells us how sacred God considers marriage. In the West we diminish the importance and sacredness of marriage. God does not however, and we must do whatever we can to make sure it will last.

This brings up marriage prohibitions. The above verse deals with all of the prohibited family relationships except women to whom your father has been married. Verse 4:22 covers that situation. The Quran also prohibits marrying already married women unless they flee disbelieving husbands at war with you (4:24). Of course in the woman’s case the roles reverse and we cannot marry our sons, our fathers, etc.

Idol worshipers make up the only other prohibited category. Before we look at the verse that specifies this prohibition, let me give you a short but comprehensive definition of idol worship: giving power, focus or great importance to anything or anyone other than God. Of course, we all fall into this at times; hopefully, those times do not become long or frequent. However, if they do then we need to beware for we may have become an idolatress or idolater. Here I give the verse giving the last prohibited category for marriage:

*Do not marry idolatresses unless they believe; a believing woman is better than an idolatress, even if you like her. Nor shall you give your daughters in marriage to idolatrous men, unless they believe. A believing man is better than an idolater, even if you like him. These invite to Hell, while God invites to Paradise and forgiveness, as He wills. He clarifies His revelations for the people, that they may take heed.*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 2:221)

We already discussed the importance of spiritual compatibility. Certainly dealing with someone who turns to anything other than God for help and guidance creates difficulties for a Muslim. And raising children in such an environment would be a real problem. It is hard enough to agree on what values to teach your children without basic spiritual values that differ.

In all healthy marriages times of disagreement inevitably develop. You may know each other very well, communicate wonderfully, love each other dearly, and you will still have times when you do not always agree. Or you may suddenly discover things about this wonderful person you really do not like, or your own needs and values may change as you continue to grow. These issues exist in all human interactions: marriages, friendships, business associations, families, or whatever. However as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, in a marriage you cannot just walk away from these difficulties. You must work them out. This takes time, patience, effort and commitment. All of this allows us to diminish our egos, and makes marriage a spiritual exercise and a great gift.

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The dowry provides another issue we have only touched on. In many cultures, including traditional cultures of the West, the groom pays the dowry and sometimes it goes to the bride's family. Interestingly in Exodus 22:17 and Genesis 34:12 the bride's family pays, which is the opposite.

The Quran shows the groom pays the dowry to the bride herself. Mutual consultation sets the amount. It has no limits set on it except that both parties agree:

*You shall give the women their due dowries, equitably. If they willingly forfeit anything, then you may accept it; it is rightfully yours.*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:4).

In the traditional Muslim world the dowry can be very complex and expensive. In most areas, for instance Egypt, the dowry for an educated young woman from a good family may be a great deal more than the normal annual salary for a young man of the same class. I had friends who postponed their marriage for years while the husband saved up the dowry.

In some areas like urban Iran couples often have an arrangement where the man signs an agreement to pay a dowry of a substantial sum only if he decides to divorce the woman. Some women now include a clause in such contracts that forbids their future husbands from taking a second wife.

Some of my friends feel this arrangement for the dowry does not meet God's commandment to "give the women their due dowries". They feel the commandment indicates physically giving the dowry at the time of the marriage. I understand their point but I am not certain I agree. If the bride has no objection to this method, how does it differ from "If they willingly forfeit anything, then you may accept it"? In this case the woman forfeits a tangible dowry right now and gains the promise of a substantial settlement should they divorce. That promise substitutes as the dowry. This practice may actually act as a deterrent to the husband to seeking divorce. In any case both parties must agree to the dowry.

Another friend believes that a dowry must always be offered by the husband because of this part of Verse 4:24:

*.... All other categories are permitted for you in marriage, so long as you pay them their due dowries. You shall maintain your morality, by not committing adultery. Thus, whoever you like among them, you shall pay them the dowry decreed for them. You commit no error by mutually agreeing to any adjustments to the dowry....*  
(Quran: The Final Testament 4:24)

For Indian and Pakistani families the situation with the dowry becomes even more complex. While the groom often gives the bride a token dowry, both families provide the household furnishings, clothing, etc.; everything which the couple will need to set up a new household.

In some rural areas of India, the Hindu tradition strongly influences the dowry. The bride actually pays the groom the dowry there. The expense becomes so great, many young women from poorer backgrounds find themselves doomed to remain single. Unlike the young men who scrimp to save for the dowry, a young woman who must save for her own marriage, with or without having to pay the dowry, may well be too old once



the money finally becomes available to make much of a match. Since most Indian and Pakistani women marry quite young and often earn substantially less than their brothers the situation becomes even worse.

In many parts of the Muslim world, the dowry goes to the bride's family and she may or may not see any benefit from it. Again, the Quran specifies the dowry must go to the bride not to the groom or to the bride's family.

For most of us in the West, the dowry does not become as big an issue because women can more easily make their own living. Here many of my friends have accepted their wedding rings as their dowry. I asked for and received a beautiful piece of stained glass my husband made. It remains one of my greatest treasures.

In regards to the dowry, it is up to the couple to decide what the Quran requires for a dowry and if they choose to adjust it.

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I feel compelled to mention one more issue here, so-called temporary marriage. The Western idea of "living together" has its parallel among many traditional Muslims, particularly among the Shia community. (For those who might not know, the Shia form one of the main Muslim sects. Most Muslims in Iran consider themselves Shia, as well as other smaller groups calling themselves Shia throughout the Muslim world.) In Iran, this concept of temporary marriages even has official sanction.

We saw above that God calls marriage a "*solemn pledge*" (4:21). As we will see in Chapter 11 ending a marriage requires arbitration and efforts to reconcile (4:128), a cooling-off period, and the witnessing of a divorce agreement.

Marriage cannot be entered into lightly with the idea of it being temporary. God does not sanction such a "marriage".

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*The following story tells of the beginning of one of the best marriages I know. In it, sister N. gives more insight into arranged marriages.*

### **An Arranged Marriage**

Being born in an Indian "Muslim" family, arranged marriages were the norm. My elder sister had an arranged marriage and by GOD's grace was happily settled. My uncle (Dad's younger brother) had come from the US to get married and was planning to "meet girls" in Bombay—since I had vacations, he requested me to accompany him and my aunt from Calcutta. My parents did not accompany us on this trip. We met quite a few girls, but he could not make up his mind.

It was usually the elders of the family who planned these “meetings,” generally after considering suitable family and other background. As GOD willed it (and I got to know later on) my grand aunt (Dad’s aunt) happened to be a neighbor and cousin of an eligible young man’s sister. We were often at this grand aunt’s place, as my uncle was staying there. So I was not surprised when I was told that we were going to visit her on a particular evening. However what intrigued me was that my aunt was paying extra attention to what I was to wear. I was 21 but in those days, one was not brought up to question “why?” We reached this grand aunt’s house and there were some visitors there—her neighbors.

There was some general conversation, but I found myself the center of a lot of polite questions—particularly about my religious beliefs, also my likes and dislikes, whether I was fond of reading, cooking and so on. Most of these questions were from the young man’s sister and family members, while he was apparently shy and hardly spoke anything. The meeting was followed by tea—by which time I was quite self-conscious and I was very relieved when it was all over. Afterwards I was asked how I had liked “the young man.” All I could say was that he was a pleasant person and there was nothing I disliked about him. What could I judge in a short meeting with not much interaction!

A few days later we returned to Calcutta and my uncle returned to the US without any tie-ups. About a year later he married a girl with whom he had an arranged meeting for a few hours at an airport in a neighboring country on his way in to India. After getting together a number of other times, they were married. (Their marriage ceremony was performed over the telephone with the bride and groom on two different continents.)

In the community we were brought up in, it is the boy’s family that proposes the engagement and then the girl’s family makes independent check-outs about the suitability of the boy and the family, considering any specific aspects observed. Well one day, after I had been back home for awhile, there was a phone call from Bombay requesting my parents for further meetings. Since we were not planning to visit Bombay, the young man visited our hometown. We met on two days. We went out for meals along with my parents, and my parents left us to chat for awhile. We spoke about our personal interests, etc. I do remember that one of our common interests was that we both enjoyed reading the *Readers Digest*!!!!

Well he left for Bombay after a couple of days and a short while later his family proposed our engagement. I told my parents that I had liked what I had seen of the young man but left the final decision to my parents. After that my parents made appropriate inquiries over many weeks and after receiving very positive feedback we were engaged for several months, during which we wrote and spoke to each other and met when I went to Bombay with my family.

When I look back over 29 years of our marriage and try to appreciate all the awesome blessings from GOD, I realize that in fact it was only GOD in His infinite grace and mercy who had arranged, nurtured and guided everything so perfectly. He has blessed us and our two grown up “children” so awesomely with a great common faith and bond of being submitters to GOD Alone.

*Lory, a convert to Islam, shares with us some of the many dilemmas she faced as a new Muslim, especially around the subject of marriage.*

### **New Muslim in Traditional Islam**

God Most Gracious, Most Merciful, blessed me to officially become Muslim in December, 1978. After the ceremony, I was given the name of a sister to contact who lived in Berkeley and hosted a women's Quranic study group. I did so, and thus began my strange odyssey into the world of *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and *Sunna* (practices of the Prophet). For though the study was called Quranic, it really wasn't. We did spend some time each week reading the Quran, but the greater part of the study was given over to my instruction in the proper attire and conduct of a Muslim woman. Most of the women in the group were either foreign students or the wives of foreign students attending the University of California at Berkeley. They hailed from all over the Muslim world. And each woman found a different *Hadith* or *Sunna* to corroborate her opinion on attire, conduct, etc. Whenever I summoned the courage to ask why these varied opinions were not based on anything I had read in the Quran, I was politely but firmly told not to question. The inference was that I was an American convert and they being "born" Muslim had superior knowledge. The idea of not questioning is, of course, a direct contradiction of Chapter 17, Verse 36, which commands us not to accept any information without verifying it for ourselves.

The matter of dress having finally been got through, the real "fun" began. I was informed that as a Muslim woman I should begin seeking a spouse as soon as possible. These women found it even stranger than the brothers had that I had converted to Islam without prompting by a man. I was dismayed by their seemingly casual attitude regarding the selection of a mate. It seemed to be put on a par with shopping for a new dress or a pair of shoes. The concept of arranged marriages was both foreign and frightening to me. The prospect of marrying an unknown man just because he happened to be Muslim without necessarily having any other redeeming qualities was downright terrifying! And while I knew the Quran encourages single believers to marry, I couldn't believe that this was what God intended. One of the single sisters held interviews with prospective husbands and had a list of requirements they were expected to meet. This wouldn't have been so bad had these men not been complete strangers. Many of the men were just passing through town and read her advertisement in one of the Muslim journals.

It seemed every woman in the group knew of some Muslim man in need of a wife. I felt gently pressured to accept someone's recommendation. They were sincerely trying to be helpful and couldn't understand my reluctance. I was, in turn, gentle in my refusals.

But one night things took a turn for the worse. I received a middle-of-the-night phone call from one of the sisters who was assisting a traveling brother in finding a wife.

Being awakened from a deep sleep, I was disoriented and muddled. I thought she was telling me that there was a brother on the rack who was looking for a wife immediately. I couldn't understand why a brother would be on a rack in the first place, and secondly, why he would need a wife in the middle of the night. I wondered if his being on a rack made his need for a wife more urgent. The conversation became more ludicrous until finally I was awake enough to understand that she was trying to get me married to a brother from Iraq. Well, my first question was answered, but I still could not understand the urgency. At last I realized that he wanted a temporary marriage. He was in town for the night and wanted a sexual encounter in the guise of marriage.

I was really shocked! I didn't know about the practice of temporary marriage in so-called Islam. In my opinion, this sister was acting as a panderer for this brother. To this day I shudder when I think what could have happened if God Most Merciful had not protected me. What if I had agreed to this temporary liaison, conceived, and then never heard from this man again? Would this same sister have been equally willing to track this man down for me if I later needed to find him? And what would my dowry have been? Would he have given me money for the encounter? God forbid!

What an experience for a new Muslim. I don't know if this practice of temporary "marriage" is still as prevalent today. Thank God I now am far removed from those who follow *Hadith* and *Sunna*. God willing, my experience may serve as a deterrent example for a sister who may find herself in a similar situation and not know what to do.

—Lory, U.S.A.

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*Though the Quran does not require a public ceremony, getting married becomes a very special event. Most of us want to share our marriage with those dear to us. Each couple forms a unique and special unit. I believe the ceremony with which they bind their lives should reflect that unique specialness. Here you will find two lovely examples of ceremonies, slightly adapted with permission from Masjid Tucson's website.<sup>3</sup>*

### **First Ceremony**

Person doing the marriage service: I seek refuge in God, from Satan the rejected. In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Peace be upon you.

We are gathered here to witness the marriage of Mr. (Groom) and Ms. (Bride).

Marriage, like all of God's provisions is a sign and a gift for us:

*"Among His proofs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, in order to have tranquility and contentment with each other, and He placed in your hearts*

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<sup>3</sup> Please see:

<http://www.masjiduntucson.org/submission/perspectives/more/family/marriage/marriageceremony.html>. Last accessed 08/13/2020.

love and care towards your spouses. In this, there are sufficient proofs for people who think. “ (30:21)

This gift is thankfully accepted, for God tells us:

*“...The more you thank Me, the more I give you...” (14:7)*

Bride: God, I thankfully and joyfully accept this gift from God of (Groom) as my husband.

Groom: God, I thankfully and joyfully accept this gift from God of (Bride) as my wife.

Person doing marriage service, as he lights candle:

*“God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The allegory of His light is that of a concave mirror behind a lamp that is placed inside a glass container. The glass container is like a bright, pearl-like star. The fuel thereof is supplied from a blessed oil-producing tree, that is neither eastern, nor western. Its oil is almost self-radiating; needs no fire to ignite it. Light upon light. God guides to His light whoever wills (to be guided). God thus cites the parables for the people. God is fully aware of all things.” (24:35)*

Husband and wife together:

God, take our will and our life. Guide our marriage. Show us how to live.

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## **Second Ceremony**

Person doing the marriage service (Officiant):

*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the universe. Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help. Guide us in the right path, the path of those whom You blessed; not of those who have deserved wrath, nor of the strayers. (1:1-7)*

*Among His proofs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, in order to have tranquility and contentment with each other, and He placed in your hearts love and care towards your spouses. In this, there are sufficient proofs for people who think. (30:21)*

Love has given you wings, and your journey begins today, (Bride) and (Groom), wherever the wind may carry you, you will stay side by side, day after day. Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other. Now there will be no loneliness, for each of you will be companion to the other. Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you. May God’s blessings surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years. May happiness be your companion, on this earth and in the Hereafter, and your days together be good, righteous and long upon the earth.

I ask you now in the presence of God and this congregation to declare your intent. Will you, (Bride), have this man to be your husband, to live together in a holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

Bride: I will.

Officiant: Will you, (Groom), have this woman to be your wife, to live together in a holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

Groom: I will.

Officiant -*The Blessing of the Rings:* The wedding ring is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual bond which unites two loyal hearts in endless love. It is a seal of the vows (Groom) and (Bride) have made to one another. Bless O God these rings, that (Bride) and (Groom), who give them, and who wear them, may ever abide in thy peace. Living together in unity, love and happiness for the rest of their lives.

*The Exchange of rings:* Groom: (Bride's name), I give you this ring as a symbol of our vows, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you. In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful. With this ring, I thee wed.

Bride: (Groom's name), I give you this ring as a symbol of our vows, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you. In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful. With this ring, I thee wed.

Officiant - *Declaration of Marriage:* In as much as you have each pledged to the other your lifelong commitment, love and devotion, I now pronounce you husband and wife, In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

*"Our Lord, direct us to appreciate the blessings You have bestowed upon us and upon our parents, and to work righteousness that pleases You. Let our children be righteous as well" (46:15),*

*"...and admit us an honorable admittance and let us depart an honorable departure. Grant us from You a powerful support" (17:80).*

*"...and shower our parents with Your mercy for they have raised us from infancy" (17:24).*

*"Our Lord, let our spouses and our children be a source of joy for us, and keep us in the forefront of the righteous" (25:74).*

*"Grant us what you promised us through Your messengers and do not forsake us on the Day of Resurrection. You never break a promise" (3:194).*

God bless you and Congratulations.

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My husband of over twenty years and I wrote the first ceremony shown above for our wedding. Brother Abdullah Arik, who wrote the forward for this book, married us in a small ceremony at home with just my two sisters and a few very close friends attending. We then had a reception at the mosque where my whole spiritual community joined us.

As I look back on that day, I realize that my birth sisters really did nothing but come to the wedding and reception. My husband, spiritual family, and I did all the work involved in the simple ceremony and reception of sandwiches, punch, and cake. To some, this may seem strange. However, God tells us the believers form our real, eternal family (please see 49:10 and 11:46 for example).

Now I only have one living birth sister, Susie, and while I love her she does not play a big part in my life or my marriage. On the other hand, my spiritual family does play an important part for both my husband and me. When we need people we can depend on, we both turn to them. God has provided a wonderful safety net in those dear brothers and sisters.