

The Good Son, Husband and Father

Amidst current economic hardships, and the immense effort required to secure a livelihood—a struggle exacerbated by regimes in the Muslim World that embrace a rapacious capitalist system that widens the gap between rich and poor, and that deliberately impoverish Muslim populations to keep them consumed by the daily quest for sustenance despite their lands' abundant wealth, thereby leaving them no time to contemplate the change that would please their Lord, meet their needs, and ensure a dignified life with minimal strain—many men feel they have failed to be righteous sons, husbands, or fathers. As with all other aspects of life, the Shariah of Allah (swt) offers vital guidance in this regard, including the following:

1. Work family balance

Economic times are hard. Earning is demanding. In addition, the world is dominated by consumerism and materialism. We need to decide how much is enough. Then there is individualism, too, which makes us tend to isolate and avoid others.

Despite these pressures, our contact with families and relatives, is a way to please Allah (swt). We are not personalities that just seek to make trade, profit and earnings. Our familial and collective tendency becomes strong through pleasing Allah (swt). We must be mindful of obeying Allah (swt) in all matters, including family. So, despite time constraints, we must grant our family, their due. The Islamic Shariah directs us to actions that yield the humanitarian value.

2. Allah (swt) is pleased with those who are good to their spouses

Islam asks us to seek the humanitarian value with our spouses. Good cohabitation, love, compassion and raising children. So, we take time out of earning, to care for our spouses, with empathy and support, through the stresses and challenges of raising children. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «تَزَوَّجُوا الْوُدُودَ الْوُلُودَ» **«Marry women who are loving and prolific in fertility, for I shall outnumber the peoples by you.»** [Abu Dawood].

3. Taking care of siblings and offspring, whether male or female

Particularly after marriage, whilst children are small and demanding, we may weaken contact with our brothers and sisters. Due to work pressures, especially during career building, we may not spend time with our own children. Let us focus on what is really important in our short lives. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ أَوْ ثَلَاثُ أَخَوَاتٍ أَوْ ابْنَتَانِ أَوْ أُخْتَانِ فَأَحْسَنَ صُحْبَتَهُنَّ وَاتَّقَى اللَّهَ فِيهِنَّ فَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ» **«Whoever has three daughters, or three sisters, or two daughters, or two sisters and he keeps good company with them and fears Allah regarding them, then Paradise is for him.»** [Tirmidhi].

4. We are caring towards our parents, at any age and in any illness

Aging and ill parents are a burden, but one with great reward. We can view them as a trial. In reality, they are an opportunity for great reward. Abu Huraira (ra) reported

that a person asked, “Allah’s Messenger, who amongst the people is most deserving of my good treatment?” The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «أُمُّكَ ثُمَّ أُمُّكَ ثُمَّ أَبُوكَ ثُمَّ أَدْنَاكَ أَدْنَاكَ» **“Your mother, again your mother, again your mother, then your father, then your nearest relatives according to the order (of nearness).”** [Muslim]

5. Family relatives beyond our immediate, nuclear family

We struggle making time for our nuclear family, spouses and children. Yet, Islam also directs us to enquire of our other relatives, taking care of their needs as much as we can. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ، فَلَمَّا فَرَّغَ مِنْهُ قَامَتِ الرَّحِمُ فَأَخَذَتْ بِحَقْوِ الرَّحْمَنِ فَقَالَ لَهَا مَهْ. قَالَتْ هَذَا مَقَامُ الْعَائِدِ بِكَ مِنَ الْقَطِيعَةِ. قَالَ أَلَا تَرْضَيْنَ أَنْ أَصِلَ مَنْ وَصَلَكَ وَأَقْطَعَ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ؟» **“Allah created His creation, and when He had finished it, the womb, got up and caught hold of Allah whereupon Allah said, ‘What is the matter?’ On that, it said, ‘I seek refuge with you from those who sever the ties of kith and kin.’ On that Allah said, ‘Will you be satisfied if I bestow My favors on him who keeps your ties, and withhold My favors from him who severs your ties?’ On that it said, ‘Yes, O my Lord!’ Then Allah said, ‘That is for you.’”** [Al-Bukhari]

6. We maintain family ties to please Allah (swt), even without reciprocation

We will prioritize family when we give it the value that Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw) do. We will pursue family ties, even when we are being dealt with badly. We seek the reward with Allah (swt), even when people are not pleased with us. The Prophet (saw) said, «لَيْسَ الْوَاصِلُ بِالْمُكَافِي وَلَكِنْ الْوَاصِلُ الَّذِي إِذَا قُطِعَتْ رَحِمُهُ وَصَلَهَا» **“The person who perfectly maintains the ties of kinship is not the one who does it because he gets recompensed, but the one who truly maintains the bonds of kinship is the one who persists in doing so even though the latter has severed the ties of kinship with him.”** [Al-Bukhari].

Even if a family relative has severed ties with us, we do not join them in sin. We open our doors to them. We approach them warmly. We deal with them kindly. Our recompense is with Allah (swt), not the people.

7. We care well beyond ourselves for the pleasure of Allah (swt)

We care beyond ourselves to those around us, giving up their right to others before demanding our rights. The relationship with our spouses is not that of two individuals battling for their mutual rights. We are in a sharing, caring partnership where they are sources of comfort and love for each other. Parenthood is not regarded as an incursion on our individual aspirations. It is an opportunity to raise a child in goodness and care. Elderly parents are not regarded as inconveniences. They are a chance to gain blessings from Allah (swt).

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