

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

JOURNEY TO LOVE: MARRIAGE WORKSHOP



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Essential Ingredients for Any Successful Relationship

- Allah says in Surah Ar-Rum:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And of His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them; and He made love and mercy between you. In this are signs for people who reflect.

- Marriage is supposed to give you peace and tranquility. Allah promises this if you bring these two ingredients in your marriage: love and mercy.
- Many relationships are based on extreme love and passion, but there is no mercy in it. Other relationships are based on mercy and there is no love in it. This only results in suffering
- If you reflect on this ayah, then you will understand how to make your relationship successful
- Ibn Hazm says, "Of love - may God exalt you! - the first part is jesting and the last part is seriousness."
 - There is an element of joking and playfulness, but there is also an element of seriousness
 - A lot of people only think of the first part and they do not want to have any responsibilities or take anything seriously.

The First Part of Marriage: Love

- People say, "Love is a mystery. Marriage is not."
 - This means that when it comes to finding out what love means, it is difficult to figure out. Love is a personal experience.
 - No matter how much you try to define it, there is no better definition for love than feeling it. It is very subjective.
- Some say that love is unconditional passion that is given freely without restriction.
- What we know for certain about love is that it causes nonsense to make all sense.
 - When people are in love, they see everything as beautiful, the easy becomes difficult, and the wrong becomes right.
- How do you actualize love?
 - Allah designed us with 2 systems: rational and emotional. They work together to create balance.
 - We need to use both of these systems in order to have healthy conversations with others.
 - If one of the 2 systems shoots up, then the other one goes down. When you are excessively emotional (whether it is positive or negative), your rationality dips down.
 - When people speak while angry, they usually do not make any sense.
 - When you are too rational, your emotional system goes down and you sound too robotic and insensitive.
 - In order for communication to be successful, you need to make sure to balance these 2 things.

- Categories of love:
 - Natural love: this is the natural love we have for our children
 - Obligatory love: this is the love that we have for our parents
 - Allah commanded us to be kind to our parents because it is not always a love that is natural in everyone. He does not mention children because humans have a natural love for their children already.
 - The love between spouses is a combination of these 2
- How do you know that someone is in love?
 - They occupy your mind
 - Always wanting to be close to the other person
 - Talking about the other person a lot
 - If parents love their children, they always speak about them
- Aisha RA said that when the Prophet SAW would come home, he would clean his mouth with a miswak, and then kiss her face all over.
 - This shows the love and passion that the Prophet SAW had for his wife
- What is the ruling on love in Islam?
 - It is not halal or haram because it is natural
 - It is a matter of the heart and the matters of the heart is in the hands of Allah.
 - It could become haram depending on how you act upon that love. If you fulfill it in the wrong way, then that can be haram. If it is done the right way, then it is halal.
 - Sometimes love happens by choice and sometimes it happens by chance/circumstance.

- The word for love in Arabic is حُبّ
 - Every letter in the Arabic alphabet has certain attributes. Based on the articulation of a letter, there is a specific meaning.
 - The strongest letter in the Arabic alphabet is ق. It comes from the back of your mouth, when the back of your tongue touches the roof of your mouth.
 - Any word that has this letter in it has a connotation of strength and power.
 - The letter ش has a connotation of spreading out because of the way the letter is pronounced
 - The letter ح is one of the most difficult letters to pronounce in Arabic. The letter ب is easy to pronounce.
 - This implies that love is difficult in the beginning and it chokes you, but it gets easy later on.
 - Because حُبّ is made up of only 2 letters, it implies that love is only between 2 people.
 - If you extend the letter ب and connect it to the center, the word looks like a pair of lips.
 - The shape that your lips have when saying the word looks like a kiss.
 - A kiss is the manifestation of love
- The Prophet SAW expressed his love publicly to his wife.
 - Amr ibn Al-A'as was one of the people who accepted Islam later in the time of the Prophet SAW. Amr was worried that the Prophet SAW was not going to accept him because he accepted Islam so much later. He went to the Prophet SAW and extended his hand to give bay'ah, but then he pulled his hand back. He told the Prophet SAW that he has one condition: that the Prophet SAW guarantees that Allah will forgive him of all of his past sins.

- The Prophet SAW guaranteed that for him and confirmed it with him by assigning him to lead a military expedition. The people were not very happy with his leadership, so Amr wanted to solve the dispute. Amr went to the Prophet SAW and asked him in front of the people, "Who is the most beloved person to you?" The Prophet SAW said, "Aisha." Amr asked him who it was from among the men. The Prophet SAW said, "Her father (Abu Bakr)." Amr asked who was next and the Prophet SAW said, "Umar."
 - The Prophet SAW did not shy away from expressing his love to his wife.
- When it comes to love, you have to learn to balance between the heart and the mind.
 - When you are choosing someone as a spouse, you have to engage both in the decision-making process.
 - Look for the emotional and rational pros and cons
- Marriage is seen as the serious part of falling in love.
- Love is not just a noun, it is also a verb, meaning it is an action too. You have to practice the actions of love.
- Marriage is a contract and it involves rights and obligations. If you practice those rules, then you will have a successful relationship
 - Book recommendation: The 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work
 - Love is a journey and it is better for you to focus on the journey rather than the destination.
- One of the definitions of marriage is that it is a contract between a man and woman that allows both to enjoy one another. It is also the incorporation and understanding of the rights of each and their obligations.
 - Many people forget about the responsibilities that come with marriage and they focus only on the love part.

- There are many different reasons why people get married and they are not the same for every person. We cannot shame people for their reasons to get married.

Ruling on Marriage

- In fiqh, there are 5 rules: obligation, recommendation, permissibility, disliked, and prohibition
- Marriage can be one of these 5 depending on the circumstance
- If someone has the means to get married, the desire to get married, and if they do not get married, then they will most likely fall into haram, then it is obligated for them to get married.
- If someone is in these same circumstances, but if they do not get married, then they will most likely be able to stay away from haram, then it is sunnah to get married.
- If someone wants to get married, but they do not have the financial means to support a spouse, then it is makruh for them to get married.
- If someone knows that by getting married, their spouse's life will be difficult (because of his circumstances, anger issues, etc.), then it is haram for them to get married until the problem is fixed.
- It was narrated from Anas that there was a group of the Companions of the Prophet, one of whom said: "I will not marry women." Another said: "I will not eat meat." Another said: "I will not sleep on a bed." Another said: "I will fast and not break my fast." News of that reached the Messenger of Allah and he praised Allah and said: "What is the matter with people who say such and such? But I pray and I sleep, I fast and I break my fast, and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of me."
- If someone stays single because of their own circumstances, there is nothing wrong with that.

Criteria to Look For in a Spouse

- What you look for in a spouse will define the meaning of your relationship.
- The Prophet SAW said, "A woman is sought for marriage for 4 reasons: her beauty, wealth, family, and religion. So, seek the one with religion."
- The Prophet SAW said, "If someone proposes marriage to you whose religion and character satisfies you, then you should accept it."
 - Deen = relationship with the creator
 - Akhlāq = relationship with the creation
- Your marriage resume should include:
 - Your general biodata (age, background, etc.)
 - Do not mention extra details that are not relevant
 - Who you are as a potential spouse; mention the qualities that your potential husband/wife will find in you as their spouse (good listener, caring, supportive, family-oriented, etc.)
 - Do not highlight the things that the other person is not necessarily interested in at first.
 - What you are looking for in a potential spouse; mention the qualities that you would appreciate about your potential husband/wife
 - Your social media links
- When it comes to the qualities you look for in a spouse, you have 2 circles: a small circle and a big circle
 - The small circle is for the core qualities that you should not compromise
 - The Prophet SAW gave us 2 core qualities: a person's relationship with their deen and with the creation
 - The big circle is for the preferences and they are different for every person

- The more your small circle inflates, the smaller your pool of options will be.
- Religiosity
 - You should marry someone who is around your same level of religiosity and you can both grow together.
 - Marrying someone who is more or less religious than you will result in frustration
 - If you want someone to be at a high level, then work on yourself first so that you can be on that same level.
 - You should also consider their family's religiosity level and consider what you are willing to compromise on.
- Background
 - The future of the Muslims in America comes through diversity
 - If you are not interested in marrying cross cultures, then you need to make sure that is known.
- Social-economic status
 - It is always better to marry someone who is closer to your level
 - Consider what you are comfortable with and what you are willing to compromise on
- Age
 - Generally, men like to marry someone who is younger and women like to marry someone who is older.
 - Today, it is more common to marry someone who is your same age
 - This is all a matter of preference

Different Types of Marriages

- Traditional marriage: when the husband and wife believe in traditional values
 - The man believes his job is to provide income and the woman believes her job is to take care of the children and household

- Egalitarian marriage: when the husband and wife don't see any differences in their roles
 - The husband expects his wife to provide income as much as the wife expects him to take care of the children
- Transitional marriage: when both the husband and wife believe in the primary traditional role, but they do not mind participating in the other one
 - The husband believes his job is to provide income, but he will still take care of household things.
 - This was the style of the Prophet's SAW marriage. Aisha RA said that the Prophet SAW used to serve himself.
- The problem in marriages today is when people marry across these different types of marriage. For example, a man who wants to be in a traditional marriage might marry a woman who wants to be in an egalitarian marriage and that will cause a lot of conflict.
- When you have conversations with people for marriage, make sure that you understand what your spousal role is and what their expectation is from you and themselves.
- Where can you look for a spouse?
 - It is important for parents to have open conversations with their kids about if their kids are interested in talking to someone for the purpose of marriage.
 - With social media being very present, it is likely that your children might meet a person online.
 - There are online and onsite matrimonial services available
 - These help expand your pool of options
 - You should be actively searching for your children
- If you identify someone who you would be interested in, then you need to be respectful and reach out to the family as quick as possible.

What Questions Should You Ask?

- Do not make it an interrogation
- It is important to make it a conversation
- Let the questions come from the heart
- It is easier to mention some things about yourself and then ask them a question so that it creates a smooth conversation
- Are you allowed to ask about their past history?
 - You should not ask about past sins because that is only between that person and Allah.
 - It is not your business to ask that question
 - What matters is how the person acts today
 - If someone insists on knowing, then that is a red flag.
 - There are 2 exceptions: if it is related to some health issue or some legal issue (ex: that you have children and are paying child support, that you have been married before, etc.)

Common Myths About Marriage

- "It is all about love"
 - This can be true, depending on how you define love
 - It is not all about your sentiments and feelings
- "Marriage will make me happy"
 - Marriage is not supposed to make you happy. It is supposed to make you responsible
 - You can be happy whether you are married or not
 - Bring happiness to your marriage
- "Love, marriage, and beauty"
 - As human beings, we associate beauty with perfection. So, when we see someone beautiful, we assume that they must also be perfect.
 - This is a false notion because beauty is in the eye of the beholder

- "Marriage will make me quit my haram actions"
 - Do not get married to escape the sin. Escape the sin regardless of your marriage. If you do not do that, then you will carry the sin into your relationship with your spouse.
 - The sin is an addiction and a disease, so it will not matter if you are married or not.
- "If you get married, then you cannot have differences."
 - You can still love each other, even if you do not agree on things
 - The differences should not bring fitnah into the family

The Role of Istikharah in Making the Decision

- Istikharah is asking Allah to help you and guide you to make the right decision
- Istisharah, seeking counsel from the people, should come before istikharah
- Istikharah is not that the decision is made for you. It is that Allah guides your heart to make the right one. So, you are the one making the decision and you take responsibility for that decision.

The 5 Stages of Marriage

- In love stage
 - This is an irrational stage and it is all about the love
 - It is important for you to bring rationale into this phase in order to make the right decision about marrying the person
- Honeymoon stage
 - This is when you move in together and the most important thing that people do in this phase is having first time experiences together.
 - Never stop building new memories, no matter how long you have been married for
 - Social comparison is the number one thing that will destroy every happy memory you had

- Actualization stage
 - This is when you start realizing who the person you married really is. You start seeing the good, the bad, and the ugly
 - This creates the silent killer of all relationships, which is disappointment
- Adjustment stage
 - This is when a person makes 1 of 2 decisions: to stay or to leave
 - The number one problem we have that is causing people to leave their relationships so quickly is the culture of abundance.
 - We have too many options and our kids grow up with so many options.
 - With too many options, the younger people start invoking a sense of entitlement and control and when something breaks, you change it, you do not fix it.
 - We have too much of everything, so we are not satisfied with anything. This is something important to be aware of when raising children.
- Autopilot stage
 - This is when a person decides to stay and the relationship is put on autopilot
 - The number one quality that a husband and wife need to have in order to put their relationship on autopilot is trust.
 - Learn how to build trust with each other
 - Trust is built up over time and it can get knocked down in an instant. It is not just about having trust, but it is about maintaining and safeguarding it.
 - Cross-gender interaction is something that causes trust issues between spouses.
 - It is important for young men and women to identify their boundaries when they are speaking for the purpose of marriage.

Family

- When it comes to family, we believe that it is a divinely inspired institution
- Faith is at the core of it and the instruction to establish that family can be found in the Quran and Sunnah
- We need to make sure to set the boundaries in the right way with respect.
 - There are certain rights that a couple has that other people in the family do not have the right to

The Change in Muslim Families Today

- The size of the family shrunk
 - It was very common to have many children, but now people have less kids
 - Having less children in the house leads to huge emotional dependence. Parents cannot let go easily and children become to dependent on their parents which makes them socially awkward, especially when their parents are too overprotective and do not allow their children to make mistakes and they cannot handle negative emotions and therefore cannot sustain relationships
- Single parent households as a result of the high rate of divorce
 - Divorce is a taboo in many cultures, which leads to people being ostracized
 - It is important to be considerate and create a healthy environment for all community members.

What do Men and Woman Look for in a Relationship?

- The ultimate goal of any relationship is to find peace or emotional fulfillment with each other
 - If you disturb that peace, then people will struggle
- The number one reason for people to quit a relationship is because they feel emotionally dissatisfied. They feel emotionally dissatisfied because there is a lack of appreciation. The reason they do not feel appreciated is because they do not get complimented for anything (physically or verbally).
- The way to bring peace into a relationship is with compliments
- If we do not compliment others, then we are silent and the first thing that will come out of your mouth will be negative. Negative judgement and criticism is what eventually leads a person to quit their relationships
- Reduce your criticism, increase your compliments, and show your appreciation more frequently in order to be satisfied and find peace.
- The Prophet SAW was speaking to some women and he said, "You women need to give more charity because I saw that a lot of women end up in Jahannam." They were shocked and asked him why. He said, "Because of their denial." They asked, "Denying Allah?" He said, "Denying their husbands."
 - Qadhi 'Iyadh said this hadith can also be applied to the husbands, meaning a man can also be ungrateful to his wife. This is only about women because the Prophet SAW was speaking to them in that moment.
 - You need to frequently appreciate each other in the household in order to keep the peace.
- It is important to still be reasonable. Do not expect your spouse to show appreciation to you if you are doing something objectively wrong.

How Can We Bring the House Together?

- Remember that the one who brings the house together is Allah
- No matter how much effort or money you spend, it is Allah who brings the house together
- Make dua for Allah to bring your hearts together and make your marriage healthy
 - Do not wait for troubles to make dua. You can make dua no matter the state of your marriage.

The Silent Killer of Relationships

- Unmet expectation is the silent killer of relationships
- When someone does not meet your expectation, you get disappointed. When that happens often, you start to become angry because uncertainty/doubt has been building up and the brain hates uncertainties.
 - Allah designed the brain to always give us a safety net. The moment you deal with uncertainty, the brain kicks in the first defense mechanism, which is anxiety.
 - When your mind is put in an uncertain situation, it always expects the worst.
 - Anxiety leads to fear of the unknown. There can never be a sure solution to emotional uncertainty, so the brain gets confused and the thoughts are all put into your subconscious. Eventually, it all builds up and the next time you have a problem with your spouse, it all comes out because those issues were not resolved.
 - We always browse our problems and never solve them. As a result, we go into safety mode, which is resentment and being number. Then, we go into chronic resentment and compassion fatigue (sick of being a nice person), start fighting each other, go into depression, and then anger becomes the manifestation of that.

How Do You Remove the Uncertainty?

- Effective communication
 - There are 3 layers:
 - Basic communication: having a healthy husband and wife routine together (ex: having breakfast together, going to sleep together, having tea together, etc.)
 - Connection: connecting with each other
 - Just because you communicate, that does not mean that you connect with your spouse
 - You need to connect in a way that is meaningful to your spouse, on their terms, not on your terms.
 - Your spouse might need your time more than your gifts, so it is important to connect with them through their needs.
 - Men and women communicate differently.
 - Men generally speak about information and women generally speak about their feelings. Men focus on the contents and what was said. Women focus on how and why it was said. As a result, when a man listens to his wife, he is looking for information and misses the point. When a woman listens to her husband, she is wondering why he is speaking to her like that.
 - Synchronization: being on the same page and thinking alike
 - It is important for a couple to have a future plan together so that they are on the same page
 - This can be achieved by simply having a conversation about how you want your relationship to grow in the next few years.

- If communication fails, then you want to steer the relationship in a way that makes you feel better. That is when the spouses start fighting for control.
 - Conflict is not necessarily a problem. It is just an indication that something different is happening that requires your attention.
 - The way that you deal with conflict is what makes it good or bad
- The first sign of control is criticism. When you start seeing a lot of criticism, that means that you are headed towards conflict.
 - Instead of fighting for control, work on your communication.
- When people want to control their relationship, they use 2 things that cannot be argued with: deen and tradition
- Instead of avoiding conflict, learn to negotiate.

The Art of Forgiving

- The Quran uses 3 words with the meaning of forgive:
 - Maghfirah: this is when you conceal someone's mistakes
 - 'Afw: this is when you conceal and forget someone's mistakes
 - Safḥah: this is when you never even make someone else feel guilty for their mistakes
- It is always better for you to forgive your spouse, but it is up to you which type of forgiveness you choose.

Love Languages

- There are 5 love languages: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical contact
 - These can all be found in the life of the Prophet SAW
- Many women love to see their husbands help around in the house without being told. Many men love to be complimented by their wives.