



the
art *of*
reconciliation



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The Marriage Landscape Today

According to statistics from the Office for National Statistics, 35% of marriages in the UK will end in divorce.¹ This is amongst a backdrop in society where the number of people getting married as a whole is in steep decline - by 2050, it is predicted that only 3 in 10 people will be married.² There is no doubt that we are in the midst of a marriage crisis and that the Muslim community are not immune to these issues.

We are told by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

إِنَّ إِبْلِيسَ يَضَعُ عَرْشَهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ، ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُ سَرَايَاهُ، فَأَدْنَاهُمْ مِنْهُ مَرْزَلَةً
أَعْظَمُهُمْ فِتْنَةً، يَجِيءُ أَحَدَهُمْ فَيَقُولُ: فَعَلْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا، فَيَقُولُ: مَا صَنَعْتَ
شَيْئًا، قَالَ ثُمَّ يَجِيءُ أَحَدُهُمْ فَيَقُولُ: مَا تَرَكْتُهُ حَتَّى فَرَّقْتُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ امْرَأَتِهِ،
قَالَ: فَيُدْنِيهِ مِنْهُ وَيَقُولُ: نَعَمْ أَنْتَ

“Iblees places his throne over the water and then he sends out his troops. The nearest to him are the greatest at causing Fitnah. One of them says, ‘I have done this and this.’ Iblees says, ‘You have done nothing.’ Another says, ‘I did not leave this person until separated between him and his wife.’ Iblees says, ‘You have done well.’”³

1 <https://marriagefoundation.org.uk/research/divorce-rates-back-to-1970-levels/>
2 <https://www.russell-cooke.co.uk/news-and-insights/news/uk-marriages-predicted-to-decline-to-historic-lows-by-2050>
3 Saheeh Muslim 2813



The Objective and Sacred Nature of Marriage

The Prophet ﷺ said, “One who Allah has blessed with a righteous wife, Allah has blessed and gifted this person in half of their religion. So, fear Allah in the other half.”⁴

Marriage is one of the signs of Allah ﷻ and the favour He has bestowed upon us. Allah ﷻ tells us in Surah Ar-Rum:

وَمِنْ ءَايَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً

“And one of His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find comfort in them. And He has placed between you compassion and mercy.”⁵

Marriage provides companionship and emotional safety. It is a place where hearts find rest and support, where love and mercy soften the harshness of life, and where forgiveness and patience are cultivated.

⁴ al-Mu'jam al-Awsat li Tabarani 992

⁵ Qur'an 30:21

It is a sacred bond between spouses, which, when balanced, leads to a life consisting of peace, affection and mercy. It is far more than merely a legal contract; it is a deeply revered act of Ibaadah, governed by mutual responsibilities and divine principles. The Prophet ﷺ said:

الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَخَيْرُ مَتَاعِ الدُّنْيَا الْمَرْأَةُ الصَّالِحَةُ

“The world is enjoyment, and the best enjoyment in the world is a righteous wife.”⁶

Marriage is among the sweetest blessings Allah ﷻ grants us in this life, yet Islam remains firmly rooted in reality. When a marriage becomes a source of persistent harm, imbalance, or injustice, Islam provides a balanced and principled framework for dignified separation.



The Importance of Reconciliation

Divorce should always remain a last resort. Reconciliation must be the first effort in resolving marital difficulties. Islam places immense value on this, and one who strives to reconcile earns the best of rewards.⁷

The Prophet ﷺ says its reward is more than that of prayer and fasting. Abu Darda reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said, “Shall I not tell you of what is better in degree than extra fasts, prayers, and charity?” They said, “Of course!” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Reconciliation between people.”⁸

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَبْغَضُ الْحَلَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ الطَّلَاقُ

“The most hated of permissible things to Allah is divorce.”⁹

⁷ Please read ‘Our Commitment to Safeguarding’ on page 20

⁸ Sunan at-Tirmidhi 2509

⁹ Sunan Ibn Majah 2018

This process of reconciliation holds great status in front of Allah ﷻ. It is so important that it is permissible to lie to bring people together. The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَيْسَ الْكَذَّابُ الَّذِي يُصْلِحُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَيَقُولُ خَيْرًا وَيَنْمِي خَيْرًا

“A liar is not one who tries to bring reconciliation amongst people and speaks good (in order to avert dispute), or he conveys good.”¹⁰

Allah ﷻ encourages us to reconcile with our spouse, and if we approach our relationship with this mindset, He will grant us immense goodness.

Allah ﷻ spoke of the couple who face difficulty in their relationship and of a marriage heading towards a split, and He ﷻ tells us in Surah An-Nisa:

إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا

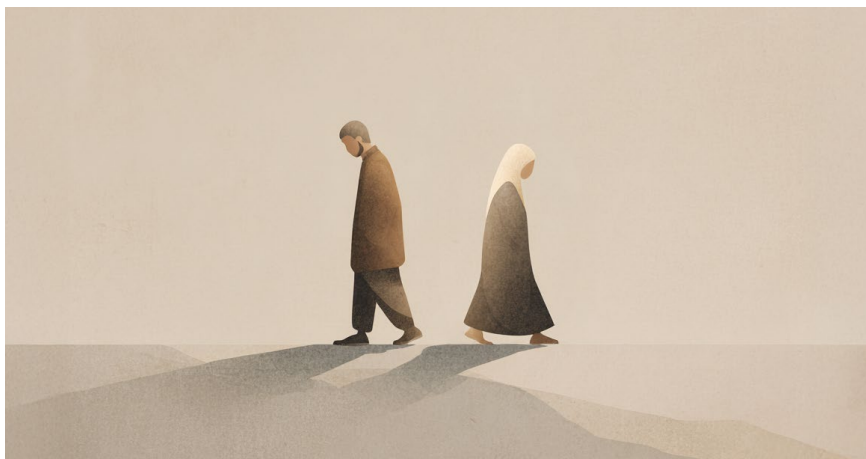
“If the husband and wife intend reconciliation and intend to fix the relationship, then Allah will grant them success and will fix their relationship.”¹¹

Every marriage experiences its share of challenges, and even the most righteous individuals face difficulties in their relationships. The Prophet ﷺ himself encountered struggles in his marriage, including a time when he almost separated from his wife, Hafsa (ra).¹² However, despite these moments of hardship, they eventually reconciled, and their relationship brought about great blessings. One of the most notable outcomes was Hafsa's (ra) role in safeguarding the Mus'haf that we all study and learn from today. This serves as a powerful reminder that even through trials, there can emerge immense goodness and lasting benefit.

¹⁰ Saheeh al-Bukhari 2692

¹¹ Qur'an 4:35

¹² Sunan Abi Dawud 2283

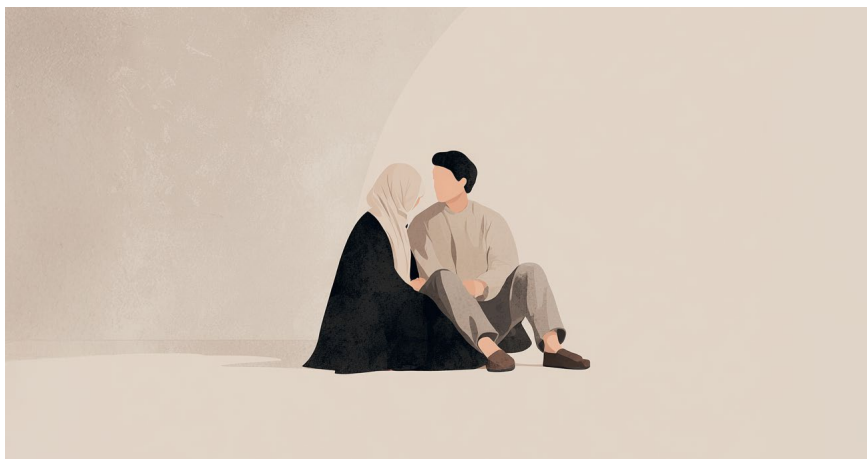


Why Marriages Break Down: Common Causes

Through our experience in mediating between married couples, we have observed recurring themes that lead to a breakdown in the marriage.

- **Poor Communication** - The couple struggles to communicate their needs, which results in frequent misunderstandings and misconceptions. Therefore, they often fail to address problems early, allowing minor issues to escalate into major conflicts.
- **Unrealistic Expectations** - An individual may project romanticised expectations onto their partner, and when these ideals inevitably go unmet, frustration and conflict often arise. This can get worse when you compare yourself to couples who appear to lead happier lives or enjoy greater achievements.
- **Financial Stress** - Differences in spending habits, saving approaches, and financial priorities can create tension between spouses. Disputes often arise over who should serve as the primary provider, as well as challenges in managing childcare when both husband and wife are employed. Within Islamic teaching, Allah ﷻ has entrusted the responsibility of providing for the family to the man.

- **Incompatibility** - Differences in personality, lifestyle, or goals can cause friction if not acknowledged and managed early.
- **Lack of Religious Knowledge** – Failing to recognise the rights of your spouse and not fulfilling them. Transgressing the limits set by Allah ﷻ can strip away the Barakah from a marriage. As a result, not recognising actions and behaviours which may lead to conflict, such as excessive anger, careless speech or neglect of intimacy.
- **Inadequate Pre-marital Preparation** - Entering marriage without knowing roles, responsibilities, communication techniques, conflict resolution, or how to nurture emotional and intimate connection.



Five Essential Steps Towards Reconciliation

1. Forgiveness

One of the first pieces of advice for a couple going through turmoil is to forgive one another and overlook your spouse's shortcomings.

It is narrated that Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) said:

أَعْقِلُ النَّاسِ أَعْدَرُهُمْ لَهُمْ

*"The wisest of people, make excuses for others."*¹³

We know that in Islam, the ability to forgive others is highly praised.

Allah ﷻ says in Surah An-Nur:

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*"Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."*¹⁴

Forgiving your spouse is one of the most difficult yet essential characteristics for you to possess. It is an act of both strength and wisdom, one that can only be exercised by those who possess self-awareness and maturity. The human being is prone to error and making mistakes, and therefore, it is natural that every marriage will face moments of difficulty. The true measure of a relationship is not the absence of hardship, but how the couple respond to it.

Forgiveness is a defining trait of a great spouse and often marks the difference between a thriving marriage and one that falters.

Some may argue that by forgiving your spouse, you are showing signs of weakness or a way of backing down. Know that this is not the case in Islam. Rather Allah ﷻ encourages us to have humility and forgive others for His sake. Instead, when you show great character and forgive your spouse for the sake of Allah ﷻ, all it means is that your virtue in front of Him increases. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلَّا عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ

*“No one forgives another, but that Allah increases his honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah, but that Allah raises his status.”*¹⁵

However, it is equally pivotal to acknowledge and take responsibilities for your own mistakes. You can only fix yourself and reconcile with your spouse if you identify what the problem is, in the first place. Once you have identified this, apologise sincerely to your spouse and seek forgiveness, and take solid steps to rectify these issues. If you do not destroy your ego, it will destroy your marriage.

2. Communication

Good communication is a key to a healthy relationship and to resolving conflicts between spouses. Sadly, many conflicts stem from poor communication. Many people also fail to set aside dedicated time for their spouse. Husbands often struggle to express their feelings to their wives, unlike the example of the best of humanity, Muhammad ﷺ. Imam ad-Dhahabi records how the Prophet ﷺ interacted with our mother, A'ishah (ra)

واحبها حبا شديدا كان يتظاهرها به

*“He loved her intensely and would outwardly display his love for her.”*¹⁶

He would also actively listen to A'ishah (ra) and would show her that he was doing so. There is a notable incident where A'ishah (ra) relayed a long story of 11 women speaking about their husbands and how they would treat them. After this, Prophet ﷺ commented that “he is to our mother A'ishah (ra), like one of the men Abu Zar’ was towards Umm Zar’, except that he ﷺ would never divorce A'ishah (ra).”¹⁷

Whilst the topic of good communication requires far more depth than this short booklet can cover, we will provide brief advice on how to resolve a conflict through effective communication.

Before anything else, enter the conversation with the right frame of mind: a sincere intention to address the issues between you and your spouse and to restore harmony. Remember that your spouse is not the enemy and you are both on the same side. Listen attentively and with empathy, resisting the urge to prepare rebuttals while they speak.

Keep the discussion focused on the issue, with the intention not to prove your spouse wrong. Make sure to maintain a calm and suitable tone throughout. Raising your voice or speaking without thinking often leads to regret and is ultimately counterproductive.

¹⁶ Siyar A'lam al Nubala', vol. 2 pg. 142.

¹⁷ al-Tabarani (23/173) (270)

Insha'Allah, taking these steps will mean that the conversation ultimately leads to a constructive and meaningful solution.

3. Positive mindset

Another important skillset to employ is thinking right and avoiding negative assumptions. Positive thinking is a quality we need in all our social interactions. It is easy to focus on the faults of a person, especially our spouse, with whom we spend so much of our daily lives.

Negative thoughts about others can twist how we see things and take us away from reality.

Imagine a husband who notices his wife has started putting his dinner into the fridge before he gets home, instead of leaving it out for him the way she used to.

He wonders: "Why did my wife put the dinner away?"

A husband who is thinking positively might assume: "She probably wants to keep the food fresh or perhaps she was busy and forgot."

A husband who is thinking negatively might assume: "She doesn't care anymore, and she can't be bothered to look after me as she once did."

But then the truth is revealed. She puts the food away early because their child recently started crawling, and she fears he may touch the hot pots or spill something on himself. Out of love and concern, she cleans up early to keep the child safe while managing the evening routine.

This shows how a positive-thinking spouse gives a generous, understanding interpretation, while the negative-thinking spouse assumes lack of concern or neglect.

Thinking positively and turning things to be seen in a good light was a characteristic regularly practiced by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. For example, when the people of Quraysh used to mock him and call him horrible names, such as Mudhammam, meaning the ‘dispraised one.’ He would say:

أَلَا تَعْجَبُونَ كَيْفَ يَصْرِفُ اللَّهُ عَنِّي شَتْمَ قُرَيْشٍ وَلَعْنَهُمْ يَشْتُمُونَ مُدَمَّمًا
وَيَلْعَنُونَ مُدَمَّمًا وَأَنَا مُحَمَّدٌ

*“Doesn’t it astonish you how Allah protects me from the Quraysh’s abusing and cursing? They abuse Mudhammam and curse Mudhammam while I am Muhammad (and not Mudhammam).”*¹⁸

We should avoid black-and-white thinking. One mistake should not make us forget all the good our spouse has done, nor lead us to see them as a negative force in our lives.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another.”¹⁹

4. Seeking the right counsel

The default approach should be to resolve disagreements with your spouse privately, just between the two of you. There are several reasons for this: it helps preserve the couple’s privacy, particularly for issues that may be minor in the broader context of the marriage. Additionally, involving others too soon can create a lasting, distorted perception of your spouse among family and friends, even if the matter is later resolved amicably.

This approach of first resolving conflict privately can be seen in the lives of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ. There is a famous story, when the Prophet ﷺ visited his daughter Fatima (ra) at her house, he asked her where her husband Ali (ra) was, and she replied:

¹⁸ Saheeh al-Bukhari 3533

¹⁹ Saheeh Muslim 1468

كان بيني وبينه شيء ، فغاضبني فخرج فلم يقل عندي

"We fell out and so he left the house and chose not to take his siesta nap here. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ eventually found Ali (ra) resting in the masjid covered in dust, and this is the origin of his nickname Abu Turab." ²⁰

During this incident, neither Ali (ra) nor Fatima (ra) complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about why they had a disagreement. They kept the problem between themselves. Allah ﷻ praises this approach in Surah An-Nisa:

وَإِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ

"And if a woman fears from her husband cruelty or desertion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of reconciliation between them – and reconciliation is best." ²¹

Despite this, there are situations where external intervention is vital, especially when the couple have tried to reconcile privately but failed to do so.

Allah ﷻ says in Surah An-Nisa:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا

"If you anticipate a split between them, appoint a mediator from his family and another from hers. If they desire reconciliation, Allah will restore harmony between them. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." ²²

20 Saheeh Muslim 2409

21 Qur'an 4:128

22 Qur'an 4:35

It is unfortunate when advice is sought from people who may mean well but do not have the necessary wisdom in settling disputes. What is even more concerning is that we now turn to strangers online to discuss our marital issues and seek advice. It is unknown whether these people have our best interests at heart or are even well-wishers. This also excludes both sides from giving their perspective and deprives a couple of the ability to work towards a resolution.

Even those close to you, such as families or friends, they are not experienced in reconciling between couples and will be the first to admit that this is not their field. A suitable mediator must be found to support the couple, be it respected elders from both families or knowledgeable Imams and Scholars who are experienced in family counselling. It is important to bring the case to someone who will listen to both, husband and wife and guide them to a solution rooted in Islamic teachings.

5. Your relationship with Allah

A person who fixes their relationship with Allah ﷻ, He fixes the relationship with the rest of the creation. Ultimately, it is Allah ﷻ who places love between a couple, and it is He who can take it away. If your relationship with Allah ﷻ is weak, how can you expect your relationship with your spouse to be strong?

The Messenger of Allah, ﷺ said: “When Allah loves a slave, He calls Jibreel and says: ‘I love so-and-so; so, love him.’ And then Jibreel loves him. Then Jibreel announces in the heavens saying: Allah loves so-and-so; so, love him; then the inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) also love him; and then people on earth love him. And when Allah dislikes a slave, He calls Jibreel and says: ‘I dislike so-and-so, so dislike him.’ Then Jibreel also dislikes him. He (Jibreel) then announces amongst the inhabitants of heavens: ‘Verily, Allah dislikes so-and-so, so you also dislike him.’ Thus, they also start to dislike him, and he becomes an object of dislike upon the earth.”²³

Sufyan Ibn ‘Uyayna (رحمه الله) said,

كان العلماء فيما مضى يكتب بعضهم إلى بعض هؤلاء الكلمات : من أصلح سريره أصلح الله علانيته, ومن أصلح ما بينه وبين الله أصلح الله ما بينه وبين الناس, ومن عمل لآخرته كفاه الله أمر دنياه

“The scholars of the past used to write to one another with the following words: ‘Whoever corrects his secret affairs, Allah ﷻ will correct for him his public affairs. Whoever corrects what is between himself and Allah ﷻ, Allah ﷻ will correct what is between himself and people, and whoever works for his Hereafter, Allah ﷻ will take care of his Dunya.’”²⁴

The question to ask yourself is not only about your marriage, but about your connection with Allah ﷻ: Have I committed any sin recently? How is my relationship with Allah ﷻ? Have I shown gratitude to Allah ﷻ for the peace I once enjoyed in my marriage? Have I raised my hands and asked Allah ﷻ to protect and preserve my marriage? Now that I face some difficulty in my marriage, what is my relationship with Allah ﷻ? Have I asked Him to forgive me?



Conclusion: The Mindset Needed for True Reconciliation

In the end, every married couple must recognise that reconciliation only bears fruit when both spouses truly want it. It cannot be approached half-heartedly or as a mere formality before moving toward divorce. Allah ﷻ reminds us in Surah An-Nisa:

إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا

*“if they desire reconciliation, Allah will bring harmony between them.”*²⁵

Thus, the key condition is the hearts involved, genuinely intend to repair what has been harmed.

If a husband or wife enters the process already convinced that the marriage is over, then no amount of advice, mediation or effort will succeed. But when both spouses humble themselves, acknowledge their shortcomings, and sincerely seek to restore peace for the sake of Allah ﷻ, then the door to goodness is flung open. In such moments, Allah ﷻ places Barakah in their efforts, softens their hearts, and grants them openings in ways they would never have imagined.

Reconciliation is not weakness. It is strength, maturity, and worship. It is a sign that a believer values what Allah ﷻ values, and that they recognise the sacred nature of the bond He has placed between spouses. When we return to our marriages with sincerity, patience, and a true desire to fix what has gone wrong, Allah ﷻ will place immense Khayr in that decision.

So, we ask Allah ﷻ to heal the hearts of every struggling married couple, place love and mercy between spouses, and guide us all to what brings His pleasure. Ameen.



Our Commitment to Safeguarding

The principles and guidance offered in this book are designed to assist couples navigating the difficult process of marriage breakdown and reconciliation. The guidance we publish, such as this book, is part of our goal to promote an approach that improves the lives of couples, their families, and their children.

At Islamic Council, we place the highest priority on safeguarding and the well-being of all, especially those who may be at risk and we operate a rigorous Safeguarding Policy. While this book offers guidance, it should be noted that it does not supersede our responsibility to prevent harm, and to stop abuse or neglect wherever possible.



About the Author

Shaykh Khidir Hussain is a graduate of the esteemed Al-Azhar University in Egypt, where he studied in the Faculty of Sharia and specialised in Fiqh. Prior to this, he completed his Madrasah education following the traditional Dars Nizami curriculum.

In addition to his Islamic studies, Shaykh Khidir holds a BA (Hons) in Arabic and International Relations from The University of Westminster. His diverse academic background and strong grounding in both Islamic and contemporary disciplines have enabled him to engage effectively with a wide range of audiences.

Since 2006, Shaykh Khidir has served as an Imam at various mosques across the UK, and is currently the Resident Imam at Masjid Ayesha in North London. Over the years, he has joined Islamic Council as an adviser and become a prominent voice within the British Muslim community, frequently invited to deliver lectures and represent the community at national events and media platforms. He is a regular guest on several television channels, where he appears on programmes dedicated to Fiqh and contemporary Islamic issues.



About Islamic Council

Islamic Council is dedicated to promoting and defending Shari'ah (Islamic law) as a solution to the challenges facing humanity, particularly in the West. Our mission is to educate and empower Muslims to live by Islamic guidance, providing services such as mediation, Islamic financial guidance, family reconciliation and arbitration. The Council's vision is to see the justice and mercy of Islam benefit all of humanity, offering support grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. With a team of experienced scholars and imams, the Council ensures its services are both professional and accessible to diverse Muslim communities.



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