

In the Name of God

What are the different parts of the course "Family in the Quran"?

This course is composed of three main parts:

1. Fundamentals of family in Islam.
2. Family structure:
 - a. The man's role.
 - b. The woman's role.
3. Empowering the family.

In this lesson you will learn about:

1. Men and women's status in the Quran;
2. Whose deeds are more valuable?

Introduction to Family Life in the Quran

Before we get into the topic of discussing the family unit and the coming together of men and women in a family life, we would like to first evaluate the individual positions of a man and a woman in terms of humanity and value.

Are men superior to women in these aspects? Are the deeds of one considered higher than the other? Do the answers to these questions play a role in gender role distinctions? Moreover, the answer to these questions become of even more significance when we look at the great degree of misconception that exists against Islam and its family system. In a world where the Muslim woman is always deemed as oppressed, suppressed, taken advantage of, and secondary, it is of the utmost importance to clarify Islam's stance on the status and responsibilities of each gender. That and the fact that the roles and duties of each gender have been confused in the last few decades, it's vital for us to understand what the religion of God has to say about these issues.

So, shall we take a look at the Quran and see what this divine book has to say?

Men and women's status in the Quran

When it comes to comparing men and women from the status of human and value, they are considered absolutely equal. A believing individual is held esteemed in the Quran, whether woman or man. Take a look at Isra', verse 70:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

And We have certainly honored the children of Adam. [17:70]

These children include both women and men.

Also pay attention to chapter Hujurat, addressing all people, saying,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

O people, we have created you of a male and female. And made you into different nations and tribes so that you know each other; verily the noblest one is the most pious one. [49:13]

Yet there is still a question which has been the topic of debates, discussions, books, lectures, congregations, wars, revolutions, and even divorces for centuries, the answer to which is provided by the Quran. The question is: Which one is superior, man or woman? Black or white? Arab or non-Arab?

The answer is:

(إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ)

verily the noblest one is the most pious one.

The yardstick of nobility and superiority is piety. If a woman is more pious, she is more honorable. If a man is more pious, he is more honorable. Regarding a husband and wife, he/she who is more God-fearing is more honorable. Hence, when comparing a man and a woman based on their value status and quality of creation, they are initially both equal and what makes one superior over the other is his/her level of piety and how much they consider the satisfaction of God before they want to do anything.

There is another verse which further supports our claim.

Man and woman created in the best of stature and structure

In chapter At-Tin, the Quran starts the chapter with four oaths in verses 1-3. The result of these oaths is verse number 4 where the Almighty says,

“لقد خلقنا الانسان في احسن تقويم”

Verily we have created man in the best of stature and structure

However, there is always the possibility that he/she might fall from his/her elevated position, if either of them disobeys God.

أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَافِلُونَ

They are like cattle; indeed, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless. [7:179]

So, basically, what we can gather from the verses of the Quran is that only believing individuals who do virtuous deeds can maintain this position. But the point here is that with respect to the worth and value of a human being, a male and female human have both been created in the best manner possible.

Whose deeds are more valuable?

So, we have established that in the eyes of God, both genders within His creations have the same status. But how about the evaluation of an individual in terms of his/her deeds? Whose deeds are more valuable? A man's or a woman's?

Let's see what the Quran says, Chapter Nahl, verse 97 states:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely revive him/her to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do. [16:97]

Belief in God and righteous deeds revive the human being with a new life different from his/her worldly material life and when they are to be rewarded, it will be done while considering their best deeds. Or as some have interpreted the verse, they will be rewarded with better than their good deeds. In other words, the believing woman who does righteous deeds, will be revived with a good life,

so will a believing man with righteous acts. Meaning everything boils down to an individual's conduct.

A similar concept is mentioned in chapter Ghafir, verse 40:

مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا ۗ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ
يُرزقون فيها بغير حسابٍ

Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except by the like thereof; but whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - those will enter Paradise, being given provision therein without account. [40:40]

Another similar statement is provided in chapter Nisa, verse 124 where it says,

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِمَّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed. [4:124]

So far, we have understood and found answers to the question that has been asked throughout the ages, which based on chapter Isra and Hujurat, men and women are equal in terms of their human status and also equal in terms of the value of their deeds based on chapters, Nisa, Ghafir and Nahl. If they live and do things with the intention of the satisfaction of Allah, then they will be rewarded and their status will be elevated accordingly. But if they should disobey Him and neglect His commands then they will fall from grace to a level lower than that of animals, no matter their gender. As simple as that!