

238820 - To what extent can the husband tell his wife what to do? Can he use force to make her do something, no matter how trivial?

the question

To what extent can the husband tell his wife what to do? Can he use his power to tell his wife to do whatever, even if its regarding a small matter?

Detailed answer

Allah, may He be glorified, has instructed men to live with their wives honourably, even if they dislike them. He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And live with them honourably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good”

[an-Nisa’ 4:19].

Imam at-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Live with them honourably, even if you dislike them, for perhaps if you dislike them but you keep them, Allah may bring about a great deal of good through your keeping them despite your disliking them, such as children with whom He blesses you through them, or making you compassionate towards them after having disliked them.

Tafseer at-Tabari
(8/122)

Mercy, compassion and kindness are the characteristics of the believers who follow the example of their Prophet (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him), whose Lord described him as follows (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily,
there has come unto you a Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) from amongst yourselves (i.e. whom you know well). It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) is anxious over you (to be rightly guided, to repent to Allah, and beg Him to pardon and forgive your sins, in order that you may enter Paradise and be saved from the punishment of the Hell-fire), for the believers (he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is) full of pity, kind, and merciful”

[at-Tawbah 9:128].

Muslim narrated in his Saheeh (2594) from ‘Aa’ishah, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no kindness in a thing but it adorns it, and it is not taken away from a thing but it makes it defective.”

Muslim also narrated (19) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to Ashajj ‘Abd al-Qays: “You possess two qualities that Allah loves: forbearance and deliberation.”

When Allah, may He be exalted, sent His two slaves and Messengers, Moosa and Haroon, to His enemy Pharaoh, He instructed them to speak mildly and gently to him:

“Go, both of
you, to Firaun (Pharaoh), verily, he has transgressed (all bounds in disbelief and disobedience and behaved as an arrogant and as a tyrant).

And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear Allah”

[Ta-Ha 20:43, 44].

Islam is the gentle, pure monotheism with which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was sent. His characteristics included gentleness, compassion and kindness, and one of the most deserving of people to be treated in such a manner is one’s wife, with whom Allah, may He be exalted, has instructed the husband to live honourably, and kindness is part of what is honourable and right; in fact it is one of the most important aspects of what is honourable and right.

Thus we know that when the husband tells his wife to do something, it must be within a framework of compassion and kindness, and that which will preserve the nature of the marital relationship which Allah, may He be exalted, has ordained should be based on love and compassion.

But if the wife neglects one of the rights of Allah, may He be exalted, or one of the rights of her husband, and persists in that despite her husband’s advising her, then in that case she is regarded as defiantly disobedient, and the husband may deal with her in accordance with what Allah, may He be exalted, has prescribed in the case of defiant disobedience, which includes exhortation, shunning her in bed, and hitting lightly without causing pain or injury.

The wife should understand that by being defiantly disobedient, her right to maintenance and a share of her husband’s time (in the case of plural marriage), and all the shar’i rights that Allah, may He be exalted, has ordained that she has over her husband, are suspended. For more information, please see fatwa no. [33597](#)

If what the wife is doing is clearly evil and wrong, and the husband is able to change this evil, even by force, then he should do so, so long as that will not result in a greater evil or serious trouble.

For example, if she goes out wearing adornment, and he is able to force her to observe shar'i hijab, even by force, let him do so, so long as that will not lead to a greater evil or serious trouble, because denouncing evil is obligatory in general terms, and it may occasionally be an individual obligation for some people.

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong may be an individual obligation, in the case of one who sees an evil, if there is no one else to denounce it and he is able to do so. In that case, it is an individual obligation upon him to denounce it, because there is a great deal of established proof to that effect, one of the clearest examples of which is the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him):

“Whoever among you sees an evil action, then let him change it with his hand [by taking action]; if he cannot, then with his tongue [by speaking out]; and if he cannot, then with his heart – and that is the weakest of faith.”

Narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh.

End quote.

Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz

(3/212)

With regard to minor issues, as mentioned in the question and described as small matters, they should not be the concern of either spouse, rather they should be overlooked so that family life will run smoothly.

Otherwise, if each spouse causes a problem with the other because of such matters, life will turn into a living hell.

It is well-known that there will inevitably be differences between the spouses concerning many matters. The wise person is the one who overlooks minor matters and reduces areas of conflict as much as possible.

We ask Allah to set straight the affairs of the Muslims.

And Allah knows best.