

WHEN IT IS NOT EASY BEING A MUSLIM WOMAN

By Khadija Watson

Now days it is not easy being a Muslim. It means that one must know their religion which is not only knowing who Allah is but also knowing how to live Islam everyday. Allah has not only left us with the holy Quran but also the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He (Allah) says in the Holy Quran: "It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into a plain error." (Surah Al-Ahzab: 36)

This directive has been given to the Muslim in order to make Islam easy to follow. Allah tells us that our religion is not hard and the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself said that when there are two or more options to follow, that as long as the ways are halal (allowed) we should always take the easiest way. Our religion is not one of asceticism, Islam is not a religion of "do's and don'ts" but one that presents perimeters and guide lines for living.

For instance; wearing the hijab: This includes not only a scarf, but also an outer covering over her clothes when going out, which prevents other males outside of her maharam's (male relatives who are unable to marry her) from gazing at her body, thus eliminating unsolicited remarks, advances, and possible rape Those who don't know better see this as a way of degrading women, when in fact it is a protection from men. Even the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "That a woman should not wear clothes that outline her body or are see through." That eliminates a lot of today's see through materials and clinging styles to say nothing of the shortness.

Women want to be taken seriously by men but dress sexy and wonder why men are not interested in how she thinks!! Women are sending out conflicting messages. Some of the women came to Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and they were dressed in clothes that were made of very thin material. And she asked them if they were Muslims. They said yes, she then went on to advise them that although this would be what a non-Muslim wears it was not proper for a Muslim women. You see, our problem is we don't like to be told what to wear and how to dress. And at times our dress is hot and inconvenient, but this is what Allah has prescribed for us and He will reward us for being obedient. It is not easy to be different or look different. For those who are not born Muslims the first few times in the beginning is difficult for us. I was sure everyone was looking at me and as though I felt a thousand eyes piercing me, so I lowered my gaze and asked Allah for protection and courage. Or at your job the first time you show up wearing a hijab everyone makes fun of you or makes jokes. We have all been through it, sometimes it gets better and sometimes it doesn't. But when you are obeying Allah knowing this makes it easier. Doing what is right always makes us feel better even if the circumstances don't change.

Wives are to obey their husbands. When ever a husband asks something of you, you are to do it as long as it does not go against what Allah has commanded. This does not mean

blind obedience like a servant or dog. However, it means obedience as in respect. It also means giving respect to his mother and father. At times this is difficult especially in the beginning of marriage, we like someone to always be thinking of us. To the non-Muslims this way of thinking is horrible as they think it only shows that you have no rights, but then for every two marriages in the West one will end in divorce.

Sometimes our husbands want us to do something when we are busy doing something else and we feel he should understand this; maybe the children are demanding our attention. Frankly men do not like waiting, but as women and as wives we are expected by Allah to make these sacrifices, and to do these things without grumbling and complaining. Some wives never know how to keep their mouth shut and they talk and talk, driving everyone crazy not just their husbands. There is a hadith that says, if a wife dies and her husband is pleased with her she will go to paradise. Also if the husband calls the wife to his bed for intimate relations she is to stop what she is doing and go to him, this is his right. If she refuses to go to his bed Prophet Muhammad said, that the angels will curse her all of the night. The rewards from Allah are so great that obedience to the husband can be the cause of entering Paradise . And on the Day of Judgment the second thing the women will be asked, is how she treated her husband!

The companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to him and asked him, "Who after Allah should we respect?" He (peace be upon him) answered them, "Your mother." Again they asked him (peace be upon him) "Who after Allah should we respect?" Again he (peace be upon him) answered, "Your mother." Only after they asked him for the third time did he answer, "Your mother than your father." Even in the Old Testament the Jews were told to respect their parents so much so, that to curse them meant being stoned to death! Respect for the parents today is so foreign especially in Western countries. Parents themselves are often to fault for this as they do not teach respect to their children. Children no longer respect their elders, siblings, teachers or classmates. This is one of the reasons for the killings we see in the schools by children and adolences.

Another reason is all of the violence portrayed by rock stars, movies and television. There is no discipline in the homes or the schools. Many times parents don't care about their children because they are so busy with "their own lives." Being a parent is important business, it is not enough to feed and cloth your children, but it is our duty to teach them about Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him), to behave as Muslims, give a good example of Islam and to defend Islam and other Muslims. This can only come about when the parents realize their own responsibility to Allah and to their children. We can not expect our children to follow Islam if we don't do it our selves. Are we praying 5 times a day? If our children see us pray and going to the mosque then they will want to pray and go to the mosque (although going to the mosque is not required of women). If our daughters see us wearing hijab, then they will want to wear hijab. We can't expect our daughters to wear jeans, and shorts when they are little and then suddenly cover up at the age of menstruation. We need also to associate with other Muslims who believe as we do, that it is important to follow Allah and His Prophet in all things. How do we know what theses things are? For this reason it is important to study the Ahadiths and follow what we learn. Islam was not just for Muslims 1,427 years ago but is just as important today.

Many of the troubles we encounter in society would be eliminated if we would only follow what Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon him) has given to us. I have heard many women tell me that they are "Modern Muslims." My dears, there is no such thing as a modern Muslim! You are either following Islam or not. What was given 1,427 years ago is as applicable today as it was then. The women telling me this are only making excuse for themselves because they do not like to obey Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him). They can fool themselves but they are not fooling Allah and on the Day of Judgment they will stand before Him and have to answer why they did the things they did. They are embarrassed now because of what other people say or think, but they are not embarrassed to Allah.

Is it easy to follow what Allah and His messenger (peace be upon him) have commanded us...in wearing our hijab, as a wife, as a mother? It is not always easy and not always what we like or want to do, everything in us at times screams out to rebel. But we need to remember that the more we don't want to do it is the very reason we should do it. It is a point of not only trial for us but a point of teaching. We learn patience through the very things that cause impatience. Patience means acceptance it doesn't always mean that we learn to like it, but rather we learn to turn to Allah (Wa Ta Allah) and ask Him to get us through our impatience.

May Allah help and bless us in this life and the hereafter and may we have an obedient spirit as we grow in this Muslim life.