

## Excerpts from the Quran - Sura 2

221. Do not marry idolatresses<sup>1</sup>, unless they have believed. A believing maid is better than an idolatress, even if you like her. And do not marry idolaters, unless they have believed. A believing servant is better than an idolater, even if you like him. These call to the Fire<sup>2</sup>, but Allah calls to the Garden<sup>3</sup> and to forgiveness, by His leave. He makes clear His communications to the people, that they may be mindful. . .

223. Your women are cultivation for you<sup>4</sup>; so approach your cultivation whenever you like, and send ahead for yourselves. And fear Allah, and know that you will meet Him. And give good news to the believers. . .

233. Mothers may nurse their infants for two whole years, for those who desire to complete the nursing-period. It is the duty of the father to provide for them and clothe them in a proper manner. No soul shall be burdened beyond its capacity. No mother shall be harmed on account of her child, and no father shall be harmed on account of his child. The same duty rests upon the heir. If the couple desire weaning, by mutual consent and consultation, they commit no error by doing so. You commit no error by hiring nursing-mothers, as long as you pay them fairly. And be wary of Allah, and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do.

234. As for those among you who die and leave widows behind, their widows shall wait by themselves for four months and ten days. When they have reached their term, there is no blame on you regarding what they might honorably do with themselves. Allah is fully acquainted with what you do.

235. You commit no error by announcing your engagement to women, or by keeping it to yourselves. Allah knows that you will be thinking about them. But do not meet them secretly, unless you have something proper to say. And do not confirm the marriage tie until the writing is fulfilled<sup>5</sup>. And know that Allah knows what is in your souls, so beware of Him. And know that Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing.

236. You commit no error by divorcing women before having touched them, or before having set the dowry<sup>6</sup> for them. And compensate them – the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means – with a fair compensation, a duty upon the doers of good.

237. If you divorce them before you have touched them, but after you had set the dowry for them, give them half of what you specified – unless they forego the right, or the one in whose hand is the marriage contract foregoes it. But to forego is nearer to piety. And do not forget generosity between one another. Allah is seeing of everything you do. . .

240. Those of you who die and leave wives behind – a will shall provide their wives with support for a year, provided they do not leave. If they leave, you are not to blame for what they do with themselves, provided it is reasonable. Allah is Mighty and Wise.

241. And divorced women shall be provided for, equitably – a duty upon the righteous.

242. Allah thus explains His revelations to you, so that you may understand.

. . . .

### Excerpts from the Quran - Sura 49

10. The believers are brothers, so reconcile between your brothers, and remain conscious of Allah, so that you may receive mercy.

11. O you who believe! No people shall ridicule other people, for they may be better than they. Nor shall any women ridicule other women, for they may be better than they. Nor shall you slander one another, nor shall you insult one another with names. Evil is the return to wickedness after having attained faith. Whoever does not repent – these are the wrongdoers.

12. O you who believe! Avoid most suspicion – some suspicion is sinful. And do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. . . So remain mindful of Allah. Allah is Most Relenting, Most Merciful.

13. O people! We created you from a male and a female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. The best among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous<sup>7</sup>. Allah is All-Knowing, Well-Experienced.

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1. “idolatresses” - an “idolator” (male) or “idolatress” (female) worshipped false idols; in this context the term refers to any polytheist. (The issue of marrying a Christian or Jew isn’t addressed in this passage and brings up a whole other set of complications, traditions, and interpretations.)

2. “The Fire” - a poetic reference to Hell and eternal damnation

3. “The Garden” - a poetic reference to Heaven

4. “Your women are cultivation for you” - doing married stuff is how your “seed” is spread, so you have the right to take your wife pretty much whenever you wish.

5. “...until the writing is fulfilled” - don’t get impatient; go through the appropriate rituals and paperwork before getting married and do it the “right” way

6. In most European cultures, a dowry was paid by the bride’s family to the groom, presumably to offset the new cost and headache of taking care of her. (It also sometimes motivated a higher class of men to marry into the family, which had the potential to help everyone.) There were Asian traditions in which the dowry or “bride price” went the opposite direction - from the groom’s family to the bride’s family. Only in Islam did the groom pay a dowry directly to the bride, which she then controlled - not her family.

7. “... the most righteous.” - 49:13 is one of the foundational sources of the Islamic doctrine of the “equality of believers.” While not always practiced faithfully in every situation, it was nevertheless an important ideal for most Muslims.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_

**Excerpts from the Quran (c. 632 CE) - Small Group Discussion Questions**

*NOTE: For now, don't use technology, textbooks, or other outside sources to answer the following questions. Base your responses on a close, thoughtful reading of these excerpts, your existing knowledge, and helping one another consider various possibilities or approaches.*

(A) Based on Quran 2:221, what's one very important thing both men and women should avoid when choosing a spouse?

(B) It sounds like social class matters in Islamic society, but what matters far more when it comes to choosing a partner?

(C) Verse 223 suggests certain "rights" of a husband. Whose rights do verses 233-241 primarily involve?

(D) In plain, simple English, briefly explain THREE of the rights or protections laid out in 233-241:

(E) Based on Quran 49:10-13, what does Islam teach about castes or other sorts of divisions or rankings within Islamic society?

(F) Think about social standards you've encountered during your life - from family, American culture, various media, or whatever. What are some examples in this excerpt of values or ideas which seem very familiar 1800 years later? What are some examples of values or ideas which do not?