



174999 - A woman is afraid of mixing with her neighbours, so she is asking about Islamic guidelines on interacting with them

the question

I am a woman who is smart, friendly, down to earth and approachable. I am only a housewife and I have very few friends. I deal with my neighbours appropriately and in a good way; I am not an introverted woman, but Middle Eastern society forces a person to keep a distance from all his neighbours. Even if I wanted to be friendly and cooperative, it is possible that they would misunderstand my actions and behaviour. How can I follow Islamic teachings with regard to taking care of neighbours, how can I deal with them, and to what extent should I interact with them?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We praise Allah for what he has blessed you with of good manners and a good attitude, and pleasant characteristics. Generally speaking, we do not see anything in yourself and your character that needs to be changed or given up, but we would like to point out that you should add to all of that giving each person who has a right according to Islamic teachings his right.

So you should understand that the rights of neighbours vary according to their description and situation. Generally speaking, they are of four levels: the Muslim neighbour who is a relative has three rights, because of being a neighbour, being a Muslim and being a relative; the Muslim neighbour who is not a relative has two rights, because of being a neighbour and being a Muslim; the non-Muslim neighbour who is a relative has two rights: because of being a neighbour and being a relative; and the non-Muslim neighbour who is not a relative has one right, because of being a neighbour. Therefore you must pay attention to this matter so that each one who has a



right may be given his right. The more rights a neighbour has, the greater the attention that should be paid to him.

Secondly:

We are not unaware of the problems and issues that happen between neighbours, but you should understand that this is not because they are neighbours; rather it is because of too much interacting and mixing between neighbours, and because of not paying attention to Islamic guidelines on how the relationship between neighbours should be. Too much visiting and meeting between neighbours often leads to too much familiarity and loss of respect, and to interacting in an undignified manner, which could lead to a great deal of trouble, the outcome of which is that neighbours break ties and no longer speak to one another, if not things that are worse than that, and also when neighbours do not pay attention to Islamic guidelines in their interactions with one another. Thus you may find a woman – for example – disclosing her private household matters to neighbours, or you may find a woman not refraining from exposing her charms in mixed visits between neighbours, which could lead to them falling into sin and may result in a great deal of trouble that will end with resentment and grudges, if not something much worse than that.

Thirdly:

What we advise our sister to do is a number of things:

1. Do not think ill of your neighbours from the outset, for not all people are the same in their behaviour and interactions with others. You should realise that a neighbour who is not a relative may be more helpful to you than a relative who lives far away. If someone needs something or goes through a stressful situation, the closest person to whom he can turn is his neighbour.
2. We do not know of anything in Islamic teachings to suggest that the neighbour has the right to visit and mix with his neighbour in his house. So the matter is not as you think, that your neighbours' right over you means that you must visit them. Rather that is something that is permissible; if you wish you may do it and if you wish you may refrain from doing it. We shall



see below that the rights of neighbours do not include visiting and mixing on the grounds that they are neighbours. This is in contrast to the situation if your neighbour becomes sick, in which case his right over you is that you should visit her, or if any member of your neighbour's family dies, you should offer condolences to them.

3. Let your visit to your neighbours – if you do visit them – be brief and moderate, not too long and not too short. It should also be in accordance with Islamic teachings, so there should be no sin such as backbiting, spreading malicious gossip or listening to or watching anything prohibited; rather in your visit you may discuss religious issues or beneficial worldly issues.
4. If you incur harm because of visiting one of your female neighbours and spending time with her, try to rectify the situation. If that is not possible, there is no blame on you if you stop visiting that neighbour. And you must do that if she openly commits sin, or if you fear for yourself that she could have a bad influence on you or cause you to drift from the straight path as a result of your relationship with her.

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: If these visits are of no benefit and the situation is not rectified and the sins are not stopped, then it is prescribed to stop visiting one another, because there is no benefit in these visits.

End quote from *Fatawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baz* (25/378).

5. You should understand that Islam has enjoined upon you duties towards your neighbours, so you must fulfil them to the best of your ability. These duties include:
6. Treating them kindly and honouring them as best you can, in word and deed.

It was narrated from Abu Shurayh al-Khuza`i that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his neighbour."

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5673; Muslim, 48 – the version narrated by Muslim says: "Let him treat his neighbour kindly."

That includes:



i. Giving food to neighbours

It was narrated that Abu Dharr said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "O Abu Dharr, if you cook some broth, add extra water and send some to your neighbour."

Narrated by Muslim, 2625.

That also includes non-Muslim neighbours.

It was narrated from Mujahid that the family of `Abdullah ibn `Amr slaughtered a sheep and he said: Did you give some to our Jewish neighbour? Did you give some to our Jewish neighbour? I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: "Jibril kept urging me that neighbours should be treated well until I thought he would make them heirs."

Narrated and classed as sound (hasan) by at-Tirmidhi (1943); classed as authentic (sahih) by al-Albani in *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*.

Muhammad ibn `Allan as-Siddiqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This hadith urges us to adhere to good manners and attitudes, and guides people to adopt the best thereof, because of what results from that of love and harmony, and because of what that achieves of bringing benefits and warding off want and troubles. For a neighbour may be upset by the nice smell of his neighbour's cooking, and that could also upset his dependents and children, when he is not able to provide them with similar food. Thus the children desire that food, and that hurts the one who is in charge of the children because he cannot afford to give them similar food. And perhaps the neighbour is an orphan or widow, so the hardship is greater for them and they feel more sad and hurt. All of that could be avoided by sharing some of your cooking with them, and there is nothing worse than withholding this little gift of food that could ward off this great harm. End quote from *Dalil al-Falihin li Turuq Riyad as-Salihin* (2/438).

ii. Giving gifts to neighbours, even if the gift is something small

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be



upon him) used to say: “O Muslim women, no woman should think of anything as too little to be given as a gift to her neighbour, even if it is a sheep’s foot.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2566; Muslim, 1030.

Shaykh Salih Al ash-Shaykh (may Allah preserve him) said: The words “let him honour his neighbour” include honouring the neighbour by saying kind words, honouring the neighbour by taking care of his family, protecting his honour and dignity and not looking into his home. That also includes taking care of the neighbour by fulfilling the general rights that belong to him with regard to the wall between them, or windows that overlook the neighbour, or in the parking lot – for example – or not letting one’s children hurt the neighbour’s children, and so on. All of that comes under the heading of honouring neighbours. That also includes honouring the neighbour by offering him food and clothing as gifts and the like. In other words, if he has food, he should give some of it to his neighbour.

End quote from *Sharh al-Arba`in an-Nawawiyyah* (hadith no. 15).

b. Refraining from hurting or transgressing against neighbours in word or deed

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not annoy his neighbour.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5672; Muslim, 47.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This indicates that it is prohibited to harm neighbours, whether that is by word or deed. In terms of words, it means that the neighbour should not hear from him anything that could hurt him or disturb him, like those who put on the radio or TV or other audio equipment that could disturb the neighbours. All of that is not permissible, even if it is playing a recitation of Quran. If that causes disturbance to the neighbours with its sound, then he is transgressing against them, and it is not permissible for him to do that.



In terms of deeds, that includes throwing garbage in front of the neighbour's door, or impeding his access to his door, or banging on the walls or other actions that would bother him. That also includes when a person has a palm tree or other tree near the neighbour's wall, and he waters it to the extent that it causes harm to his neighbour. That is a misdeed against his neighbour, so it is not permissible for him to do that.

Therefore it is prohibited for a neighbour to cause harm or annoyance to his neighbour in any way, and if he does do that, he is not a believer. What that means is that he does not have the characteristics of believers in this issue in which he is behaving contrary to what is right.

End quote from *Sharh Riyad as-Salihin*, 3/178.

This is sufficient to explain the rights that neighbours have over you. So do as much of that as you can. It is not obligatory for you to visit them and mix with them; rather we advise you to be moderate in that regard, if you want to do that. And you should check and see which of them is the best in manners and adheres most to Islamic teachings, then strengthen ties with her, for a good neighbour is the one who could help his neighbour in both religious and worldly terms.

And Allah knows best.