99737 - If a woman is impressed with a man’s character and religious commitment, can she offer herself to him for marriage?

the question

I am a religiously committed young woman, twenty-seven years old. I have memorised the Book of Allah and I work as a Qur’an teacher. I am seeking Islamic knowledge, and I have characteristics that make men often come to propose marriage to me. But I have rejected all of those who have come to propose marriage to me because of the weakness of their religious commitment. I am suffering pressure from my family because I always reject suitors, and because I left my government job due to free mixing in the workplace. Recently they have begun to put more pressure on me, and they want me to accept any man. All that matters is that I get married. Of course marrying someone from outside the tribe is not allowed. I am not looking for wealth or a wealthy man, or a man of high position, or a handsome man. Rather I want a man who is righteous and can help me to obey Allah and keep me chaste, and so that I can put an end to these never-ending problems with my family. Therefore I thought of proposing myself to a man among our acquaintances, to whom we are connected through ties of marriage. He is a man of good character and religiously committed; he has memorised the Book of Allah and is seeking Islamic knowledge. I am thinking to do that by sending a cell phone message – in a suitable manner and with all proper etiquette. I have no relationship with this man at all, but I found out his phone number by mistake. I do not want to involve a third party in this matter, and I do not want to involve any other party, because the matter will be awkward for both sides. Also, I do not feel confident that the matter will not be talked about and I cannot find anyone I can trust completely to not disclose my secret. What is the Islamic ruling first of all? Then what do you think about a girl who does such a thing? How would the man regard a woman who proposes marriage for herself? What do you advise me to do?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We ask Allah, may He be exalted, to complete His blessing upon you and to increase you in knowledge, etiquette and modesty. We ask Him, may He be exalted, to make it easy for you to find a righteous husband with whom you can form a righteous family.

You did well to leave your job where there was haraam mixing, and you did well when you refused the suitors who are not of good character and religiously committed, and you did well when you asked before corresponding with that man.

Secondly:

It is not haraam or shameful – for those who think rationally – for a woman to offer herself for marriage to a man who is of good character and religiously committed. If anyone denounces that, then he is not denouncing it on the basis of Islamic standards, but on the basis of customs and traditions, and sometimes women denounce that out of jealousy on their part.

It was narrated that Thaabit al-Banaani said: I was with Anas, and he had with him a daughter of his. Anas said: A woman came to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and offered herself to him (for marriage). She said: O Messenger of Allah, do you have any need of me? The daughter of Anas said: How lacking in modesty she was; how shameful, how shameful! Anas said: She was better than you; she wanted to marry the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so she offered herself to him (for marriage).

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4828)

Imam al-Bukhaari included this report in a chapter entitled: Chapter on a woman offering herself for marriage to a righteous man.

The righteous woman hinted at her desire to marry Moosa (peace be upon him) by saying – as Allah, may He be exalted, tells us (interpretation of the meaning): “And said one of them (the two women): ‘O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy’” [al-Qasas 28:26].

What appears to be the case is that she was the one whom her father offered in marriage to Moosa (peace be upon him), as Allah, may He be exalted, tells us (interpretation of the meaning): “He said: ‘I intend to wed one of these two daughters of mine to you, on condition that you serve me for eight years’” [al-Qasas 28:27].

This is a message to your guardians, telling them that they should fear Allah, may He be exalted, and give up this tribal feeling and look for a righteous man to whom they may give you in marriage. At least they should not reject anyone who is of good character and religiously committed. That righteous man offered his daughter in marriage to Moosa (peace be upon him) after she herself had implicitly suggested that, and that righteous woman offered herself in marriage to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) openly, without hinting. In both cases that was not contrary to modesty; rather it was indicative of strong religious commitment and mature thinking on the part of the woman and on the part of her guardian.

In al-Mawsoo‘ah al-Fiqhiyyah (30/50) it says:

It is permissible for a woman to offer herself for marriage to a man, and to tell him that she is interested in him, because of his righteousness and virtue, or because of his knowledge and honourable status, or because of his commitment to religion, a d there is nothing shameful in her doing that; rather it is indicative of her virtue. Al-Bukhaari narrated in the hadith of Thaabit al-Banaani that he said: I was with Anas… – And they quoted the hadith referred to above. End quote.

Thirdly:

Having stated the above, we will offer you advice that will benefit you – in sha Allah – with regard to your question. We tell you the following:

1.

Avoid corresponding directly with him. You can convey the message to him via another number that he does not know, and that does not belong to anyone in particular. This is something that will be easy for you to do. Send a message to him from that number, letting him know of your interest in marrying him. This message may be sent giving the impression that it comes from someone who knows both parties, and advise him not to miss this opportunity. This is better than speaking to him directly – as we think – because matters may not turn out as you hope, which would cause embarrassment for you and for him. Moreover, there is no guarantee that a person will remain as religiously committed and righteous as he is now, and there is the fear that he may use this to shame you later on. Hence the scholars stipulated, with regard to the “righteous man”, that righteousness is not only knowledge and is not only memorisation of Qur’an; rather righteousness is acting in accordance with knowledge and the Qur’an, and acquiring the characteristics promoted by them.

2.

If you do correspond with him, you should not get carried away in corresponding; rather it is permissible for you to correspond with him concerning a specific matter. This correspondence may lead to temptation for him or for you, or for both of you.

3.

You should avoid telling anybody or asking anybody to mediate between you, because we see that you are aware of this issue.

4.

The man’s circumstances may not be conducive to marriage, or he may have already proposed to someone and does not want a second wife. If you find out that this is the case, then do not contact him again, for there is no reason to continue the correspondence. The purpose of the correspondence will have been achieved by conveying your proposal of marriage to him.

5.

If it turns out that it is not Allah's will for you to marry him, then you should not be attached to him. It will be no secret to you – in sha Allah – how dangerous such attachment may be and how it can distract one from obeying Allah, and distract one from memorising and reviewing Qur'an, and can distract one from seeking knowledge, in addition to what it causes of diseases of the heart (spiritual diseases) and inclination towards sin.

6.

We advise you to pray istikhaarah before you send any message, and after you have sent a message and told him. The Muslim does not know where goodness lies for him in this world and the hereafter, and he is unaware and helpless, so he should ask his Lord, the All-Knowing, All-Powerful, to choose for him and to make easy for him that which is best, and to divert from him that which is bad for him.

7.

You should understand that someone other than him may be better for you than him. So long as you have followed Islamic guidelines in informing him, and offering yourself to him for marriage, and you have prayed istikhaarah, asking Allah, may He be exalted, for guidance, and it has not been decreed that there should be a marriage between you two, then do not despair of the mercy of Allah and do not give up calling upon Him, may He be exalted, and do not compromise on the issue of good character and religious commitment in anyone who comes to propose marriage to you. Bear with patience any pressure from your family, for "verily, with the hardship, there is relief" [al-Inshiraah 94:5].

However, if you have anyone among your mahrams, such as your brother or your paternal uncle, who is close to you and you can talk to him about that, and he can take care of this matter, as many men take care of arranging the marriages of their daughters to men who are of good character, without any objection or disapproval on their part – if that is possible in your case, then the matter will be easier and farther removed from risk, and will give you more peace of mind, in

sha Allah.

We ask Allah to make available to you someone who can take care of this matter for you.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 20916, 89709 and 69964

And Allah knows best.