101776 - Husband Forcing Wife to Divulge Private Conversations

the question

My husband forces me to tell him the whole dialogue I had with my mother or brothers or anyone else. He justifies this by saying that my mother may say something that can spoil our relationship. It causes problems between us if I refuse to tell him. Shall I respond to his request?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

1-

What this husband should do – if what his wife is saying about him is true – is fear his Lord with regard to this demand that he is making of his wife, and he should realize that he is sinning by doing this, and that it is not permissible for his wife to obey him in this matter.

2-

We advise this husband to focus on himself rather than other people, and to look at his own faults and correct them, and to look at his own shortcomings and strive to perfect his own self that is inclined towards evil. That is better for him and is more appropriate than focusing on other people and what they say and do. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The greatest loser is the one who is distracted from Allah by himself, and even worse off is the one who is distracted from himself by other people. [Al-Fawaa'id].

3-

He should not think badly of people and believe that he is perfect, because not everything that people say concerns him or has to do with him, rather it is his desire to hear people's stories and find out about their situations, and to rejoice at their shortcomings.

4-

It is to be hoped that this husband does not approve of his wife telling him what her family and other people say to her, even if they are talking about him, because by doing that she would be a gossipmonger and one of the salaf (righteous predecessors) said: A gossipmonger and a liar could cause more damage in an hour than a practitioner of witchcraft could do in a year. So how about if he is the one who tells her to do that, and even orders her to do so, and threatens to punish her if she does not do it?

Al-Nawawi said, quoting from Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on them both):

The one to whom gossip comes, saying so and so said this about you, or did that to you, should do six things:

1- He should not believe it, because the one who gossips is an evildoer.

2- He should tell him not to do that, and advise him, and condemn his action.

3- He should hate him for the sake of Allah, for he is hateful before Allah, may He be exalted, and he should hate the one whom Allah hates.

4- He should not think ill of his absent brother.

5- He should not let what he is told lead him to spy on others or try to find out about it.

6- He should not approve for himself what he told the gossipmonger not to do, so he should not transmit the gossip and say “So and so said such and such”, in which case he would also be a gossipmonger and would be doing that which he told someone else not to do. End quote. [Al-Adhkaar]

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What this husband wants from his wife is nameemah (gossip) which is a major sin. Undoubtedly passing on such gossip will lead to evil consequences, severing of ties, resentment and enmity,

and undoubtedly the wife's family would hate for their words to be passed on. He should understand that gossip is not merely passing on what people say for the purpose of causing trouble, rather it may be for the purpose of enjoyment.

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What should be avoided and shunned totally is gossip which means transmitting words from one person to another, or from one group to another, or from one tribe to another, with the aim of causing trouble and creating problems between them. It means disclosing that which should not be disclosed, whether it is disliked by the one from whom it is transmitted or the one to whom it is transmitted or a third party, and whether it is disclosed verbally, in writing, in symbols or by gestures, and whether what is transmitted is words or actions, and whether it refers to a fault or shortcoming in the person from whom it is transmitted or not. A person should keep quiet about whatever he sees of people's situations, unless speaking of it will bring some benefit to a Muslim or ward off some harm.

The motive in spreading gossip is either ill will towards the person of whom one speaks or to show love to the person to whom one speaks, or to indulge in unnecessary talk and falsehood. All of that is haraam.

There is a great deal of evidence in the Quran and Sunnah (prophetic traditions) to show that gossip is haram (impermissible), such as the verses in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (O Muhammad) obey you not everyone Hallaaf Maheen (the one who swears much and is a liar or is worthless).

A slanderer, going about with calumnies" [68:10,11]

"Woe to every slanderer and backbiter" [104:1]

It was narrated that Hudhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "No gossipmonger will enter Paradise" [Agreed

upon]. And it was narrated from Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Shall I not tell you what is falsehood? It is nameemah (gossip), transmitting what people say." [Muslim].

Gossip is one of the things that incur the punishment in the grave, because of the report narrated by Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by two graves and said: "They are being punished, but they are not being punished for anything that was difficult to avoid." Then he said, "No. One of them used not to protect himself from his urine, and the other used to walk around spreading malicious gossip." [Agreed upon].

Rather backbiting and gossip are forbidden because they involve attempts to cause trouble among people and create splits and chaos, and fan the flames of enmity, rancour, destructive envy and hypocrisy, and to take away love and friendship, by causing rifts and disputes and resentment among brethren. It also involves lying, deceit, betrayal and trickery, and making accusations against those who are innocent, and giving in to slander and reviling and mentioning bad deeds and qualities, and because they are a sign of cowardice, meanness and weakness; moreover those who indulge in them commit sins which incur the wrath of Allah and a painful punishment. Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz.

It was said that al-'adhu (translated above a falsehood) means witchcraft in the language of Quraysh, and it was said that it means lies and fabrications.

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Jibreen (may Allah preserve him) was asked:

My husband tells his family what I say, then he tells me what they say, and that leads to many problems. I have often asked him not to do that but he does not pay any heed. What should I do?

He replied:

This is called nameemah (malicious gossip), which means transmitting what people say by way of stirring up trouble. As for the warning, Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): " A slanderer,

going about with calumnies” [68:10,11]. This is a description of some of the people of Hell. And Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Woe to every slanderer and backbiter” [104:1]. This refers to the gossipmonger. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “No gossipmonger will enter Paradise.” And according to a report: A gossipmonger could cause more damage in an hour than a practitioner of witchcraft could do in a year. And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated that “The gossipmonger will be punished in his grave.” Undoubtedly the prohibition is more emphatic if the gossip is among a man and his wife and relatives. He has to fear Allah and remember that He is always watching him, and he should keep away from things that will incur punishment in this world or the next. He has to avoid lying, backbiting, gossip, slander and stirring up trouble among people. He should be honest, protect people’s honour, fear Allah and remember that He is always watching, and that He is stern in punishment. End quote. Al-Hulool al-Shar’iyyah li’l-Khilaafaat wa’l-Mushkilaat al-Zawjiyyah wa’l-Usariyyah by Shaykh ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Jibreem.

So the husband must stop asking his wife to do this, and if he persists then it is not permissible for his wife to respond to his request. By agreeing to transmit what people say, one is persisting in sin and listening to it, but by refusing one is refraining from it and putting a stop to it.

If the wife is afraid that it will lead to troubles between her and her husband, there is no sin on her, if her husband insists that she should tell him what her family says, if she tells him that they praised him and said good things about him, and other such words that will spread love and friendly feelings, and will extinguish the flames of fitnah (tribulation) and disputes between her husband and her family.

We ask Allah to guide your husband and bring you together in a good manner.

And Allah knows best.