

# ISLAM & THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE: FAMILY PLANNING

WOMEN IN ISLAM SERIES X

## FAMILY PLANNING

The ability and right of individuals and couples to plan and attain their desired number of children, including the desire to have no children, and the spacing and timing of their births if they chose to have children, and the age at which they wish to have children.

Contraception

Pre Conception Counseling

Infertility Management

Sex Education

Comprehensive Sex Education

STI Prevention

## FAMILY PLANNING IN THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an does not specifically mention family planning or the use of birth control. Without the direct mention of a subject, we can therefore make assumptions based on analogies or similarities within the Qur'an

***And we have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parent. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years.***

**QURAN 31:14**

Breastfeeding infants as method of birth spacing is mentioned 14 times in the Qur'an, including in verses 31:14, 2:233, 46:15. The Qur'an's mention of breastfeeding an infant for two years (or 33 months including pregnancy and breast feeding), emphasizes the importance of this period to ensure the health of both the mother and the infant. Emphasis on this measurement of time indicates the approval and acceptability of birth spacing and therefore family planning to ensure the health of both the mother and the infant.

## THE ROLE OF GOD'S WILL IN FAMILY PLANNING

In analyzing the Qur'an and the Sunnah, one of the foundations for understanding the permissibility of contraception that the scholars identified was the oneness of God and the power associated with Them. One Hadith demonstrating this states:

**"Even if you spill the seed from which a child was meant to be born on a rock, God will bring forth from that rock a child"**

## FAMILY PLANNING IN THE HADITH

**"We [the Companions of the Prophet saw] used to practise al-azl during the time of the Prophet (saw) while the Qur'an was being revealed."**

When the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) approached him to ask for permission, he did not forbid it nor was a verse revealed from the Qur'an prohibiting this practice. That the companions practiced al-azl with the knowledge of the Prophet (PBUH), demonstrates to scholars that pregnancy prevention is a permissible practice for Muslims.

## QUALITY OF LIFE VS QUANTITY OF LIVES

Islamic Jurisprudence consistently elevates the quality of life of an individual over the quantity of individuals in the Muslim community and in a family. The Qur'an specifically states God does not wish to burden Muslims with the notion that the size of a Muslim family is more important than the health & wellbeing of the individuals.

**"No soul should be compelled beyond capacity, neither the mother made to suffer for the child nor the father for his offspring..." (Al-Baqara 2:233)**

## THE ROLE OF MARRIAGE IN FAMILY PLANNING

Far too many scholars cite Qur'an 16:72 to justify procreation as the principal purpose of marriage. However, the Qur'an is explicit in declaring that the purpose of marriage is not simply procreation but rather a way to achieve tranquility and act as a source of love and mercy for both partners (Qur'an 7:189, Qur'an 30:21). The teachings of the Qur'an states that the purpose of sex is not for procreation, but rather it acts as a source of enjoyment for both partners.