

How Can Our Scriptures Assist Us in the Prevention of HIV/AIDS?

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A. What is the cause of problems leading to sin from misbehaviour within common mankind?

1. This refers to the warning given to wider societies, as part of the prohibited actions to steer clear all mankind from the deceptive path of the devil, which is the root cause of all problems in any society: 2:169 *"He enjoins on you only evil and indecency, and that you speak against Allah what you know not."*
2. 24:21 *"O you who believe, follow not the footsteps of the devil. And whoever follows the footsteps of the devil, surely he commands indecency and evil. And were it not for Allah's grace on you and His mercy, not one of you would ever have been pure, but Allah purifies whom He pleases. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing."*
3. This refers to Muslims in maintaining full discipline as expected of them even at most trying times and a Muslim not gets distracted with irrelevant material frailties in this world of certain lusts: 3:13 *"Fair-seeming to men is made the love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and tith. This is the provision of the life of this world. And Allah — with Him is the good goal (of life)."*
4. This passage shows that as exemplary referral, the companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) were absolutely chaste and in full compliance to Scripture, because they did not get influenced by the devil into matters of indecency: 24:21 *"O you who believe, follow not the footsteps of the devil. And whoever follows the footsteps of the devil, surely he commands indecency and evil. And were it not for Allah's grace on you and His mercy, not one of you would ever have been pure, but Allah purifies whom He pleases. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing."*
5. The meaning of this verse is made clear by the conclusive words that nothing impure can be attributed to the pure ones; and they are free from what the impure ones say: 24:26 *"Unclean things are for unclean ones and unclean ones are for unclean things, and good things are for good ones and good ones are for good things; these are free from what they say. For them is forgiveness and an honourable sustenance."*
6. The purpose of this verse is to remind people of the magnificence of reciting the Holy Scripture and continuing with prayers, thus diminishing all opportunities of

committing sins, such as resulting in catching with HIV/AIDS. It reminds mankind of not walking in the directions that will cause God's displeasure, because God knows all that people do – even matters in secrecy: 29:45 *"Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do."*

7. This passage promotes the purity of heart and chastity in relations between the sexes. It also encourages conservative dressing and discourages displaying much of the human body of women, which could lead to illicit activities and perhaps sicknesses and diseases. The verse also speaks about simplicity and obedience and purity of the household: 33:33 *"And stay in your houses and display not (your beauty) like the displaying of the ignorance of yore; and keep up prayer, and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only desires to take away uncleanness from you, O people of the household, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying."*

B. What is the prescribed Muslim behaviour on sexual relations?

1. These verses (23:1 – 23:11) are clear indicators to both men and women to remain chaste, restrain their sexual passions and yet at same time validates liberty between correctly married couples. The verses also hint the bonus of having a place in heavenly Paradise if the couples keep full compliance within wedlock: *"23:1 Successful indeed are the believers, 23:2 Who are humble in their prayers, 23:3 And who shun what is vain, 23:4 And who act for the sake of purity, 23:5 And who restrain their sexual passions— 23:6 Except in the presence of their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for such surely are not blameable, 23:7 But whoever seeks to go beyond that, such are transgressors – 23:8 And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant, 23:9 And those who keep a guard on their prayers. 23:10 These are the heirs, 23:11 Who inherit Paradise. Therein they will abide."*

2. Islam does not permit adultery and homosexuality in any form or description, and sets strict standards to the entire community in maintaining prescribed standards between validly married persons only. If people were to comply with those set standards, then the probability of HIV/AIDS intensifying its deathly spread wide into various communities will be greatly minimised: 24:2 *"The adulteress and the adulterer, flog each of them (with) a hundred stripes, and let not pity for them detain you from obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day, and let a party of believers witness their chastisement."*

C. What is meant by "indecent" to all Muslims?

1. Islam considers indecent to expose peoples' private parts other than to the person's validly married spouse. This injunction also covers servants and maids in employment at their workplace. This is beautifully expressed as "whom their right hands possess" and which means valid married spouse: 70:29 *"And those who restrain their sexual passions, 70:30 Except in the presence of their mates*

or those whom their right hands possess — for such surely are not to be blamed, 70:31 But he who seeks to go beyond this, these are the transgressors.”

D. What is the prescribed expected standard of decent dressing for all Muslims?

2. This set of passages enjoins men and women to lower their gaze to each other as injunctions, preventing against strongly possible evil, such as leading to fornication. They do not only forbid evil but even point out possible situations, which may eventually lead into such evils. Muslim men must be covered from navel to knees as minimum. Muslim women are allowed to show full face from forehead to chin, both hands up to wrists and both feet up to ankles. The rest of women’s body must be clothed, with the following controlled exceptions: *“24:30 Say to the believing men that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions. That is purer for them. Surely Allah is Aware of what they do. 24:31 And say to the believing women that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions and do not display their adornment except what appears thereof. And let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms. And they should not display their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or guileless male servants, or the children who know not women’s nakedness. And let them not strike their feet so that the adornment that they hide may be known. And turn to Allah all, O believers, so that you may be successful.”*
3. There are rules relating to family privacy within a home; and these are equally important for better social relations and preventing women of the household from any scandalous gossips from outsiders: *24:58 “O you who believe, let those whom your right hands possess and those of you who have not attained to puberty ask permission of you three times: Before the morning prayer, and when you put off your clothes for the heat of noon, and after the prayer of night. These are three times of privacy for you; besides these it is no sin for you nor for them — some of you go round about (waiting) upon others. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages. And Allah is Knowing, Wise.”*
4. Slight relaxation in dressing for old women: *24:60 And (as for) women past childbearing, who hope not for marriage, it is no sin for them if they put off their clothes without displaying their adornment. And if they are modest, it is better for them. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*

E. Special respect for all Muslim women:

1. This injunction is conditional warning to prevent women from blame of immoral conduct and which could subsequently lead to social complications: *4:15 “And as for those of your women who are guilty of an indecency, call to witness against them four (witnesses) from among you; so if they bear witness, confine*

them to the houses until death takes them away or Allah opens a way for them."

2. This endows special respect on women that they must not be gambled or taken as prize in war or taken away as part of inheritances; and then subjected to most degrading treatment of women. If however the woman is guilty of adultery, the husband cannot take back the dowry: 4:19 *"O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to take women as heritage against (their) will. Nor should you straiten them by taking part of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifest indecency. And treat them kindly. Then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it."*
3. This particular verse refers to women's rights over their earnings and so they (the women) should never be used in most degrading and unethical businesses such as prostitution: 4:27 *"And Allah desires to turn to you (mercifully). And those who follow (their) lusts desire that you should deviate (with) a great deviation."*
4. This verse sets the standard for democracy and it does not exclude women in its generality. Hence any slur against anybody including women, must be heard most democratically and disputes referred to democratically appointed leaders of the communities: 4:59 *"O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is best and more suitable to (achieve) the end."*
5. This verse clarifies that justice must be seen to be done, even if the slander made is against one's own relative (women), without favouring rich people because of their pride over their wealth; and this brings about uniformity of justice in social and ethical matters: 4:135 *"O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he be rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So follow not (your) low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do."*
6. Islam protects Muslim women to the extent that even if a woman attracted a man and he desired her for marriage, he must not circulate any statements regarding his desire for marriage unless the matter is correctly clarified with her family, as that woman may be a divorcee or a widow: 2:235 *"And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage or keep (the proposal) concealed within your minds. Allah knows that you will have them in your minds, but give them not a promise in secret unless you speak in a lawful manner. And confirm not the marriage tie until the prescribed period reaches its end. And know that Allah knows what is in your minds, so beware of Him; and know that Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing."*

7. Islam does not allow circulation of any scandal against women: 24:19 *"Those who love that scandal should circulate respecting those who believe, for them is a grievous chastisement in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows, while you know not."*

F. Muslim women should not be gambled away as mere chattels:

1. This verse prohibits gambling (using blunt arrows) and which was practised previously and included were the unethical practise of taking a woman as a wife when they gambled upon her: 5:90 *"O you who believe, intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the devil's work; so shun it that you may succeed."*
2. This verse prohibits all indecencies previously practised by communities so that such indecencies are not inherited into the next generation. Such indecencies also included very scantily dressed women who were offered to entertain the idols at temples before Islam. They were later taken by wealthy people as paramours: 7:28 *"And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us. Say: Surely Allah enjoins not indecency. Do you say of Allah what you know not?"*

G. What does the Scripture state about homosexuality?

1. Islam simply prohibits gay living and practices of homosexuality. There is no exception to such practices. This verse was revealed in reference to Lot, Abraham's nephew: 7:81 *"Surely you come to males with lust instead of females. Nay, you are a people exceeding bounds."*
2. 19:59 *"But there came after them an evil generation, who wasted prayers and followed lusts, so they will meet perdition,"*
3. Abraham's nephew Lot had a community of people who were steeped in homosexuality and this verse was revealed as an exemplary situation of a very corrupted society involved in vices before Islam: 27:55 *"Will you come to men lustfully rather than women? Nay, you are a people who act ignorantly."*
4. Some people are so corrupt in their thoughts on matters of lust that they become bad influence in society: 4:27 *"And Allah desires to turn to you (mercifully). And those who follow (their) lusts desire that you should deviate (with) a great deviation."*
5. Towns which were driven by people full of vice and sin (e.g. Sodom and Gomorrah) and the old Makkah were destroyed, yet people do not learn from history in keeping away from vice: 47:13 *"And how many a town, more powerful than thy town which has driven thee out — We destroyed them, so there was no helper for them. 47:14 Is then he who has a clear argument from his Lord like him to whom his evil conduct is made fair-seeming; and they follow their low desires."*

H. The institution of marriage for all Muslims is a virtue:

1. Islam looks upon the married people's situation as normal situation and enjoins that those who are single and have reached marriageable age must get married and live within that institution of marriage of one pair – one husband to one wife, without fornication outside of marriage. Islam goes further and imposes the same injunction on persons in the employ of a household: *"24:32 And marry those among you who are single, and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves. If they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. 24:33 And let those who cannot find a match keep chaste, until Allah makes them free from want out of His grace. And those of your slaves who ask for a writing (of freedom), give them the writing, if you know any good in them, and give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given you. And compel not your slave-girls to prostitution when they desire to keep chaste, in order to seek the frail goods of this world's life. And whoever compels them, then surely after their compulsion Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."*
2. Islam makes injunctions that marriage is an institution that requires both the male and female families' envoys seek permission traditionally. This preserves the children's respect and at same time prevents likelihood of slander, especially against the girl: *24:59 "And when the children among you attain to puberty, let them seek permission as those before them sought permission. Thus does Allah make clear to you His messages. And Allah is Knowing, Wise."*
3. This verse speaks about the close relationships between a man and his wife. It explains itself about love and compassion and quietness of mind, which a person finds between man and wife as an on-going continuum for further expansion of the human race and for happy living. *30:21 "And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect."*

I. Special care for all Muslim women in a divorce:

1. This verse was revealed when a particular companion of the Holy Prophet wanted to divorce his (companion's) wife and he did; but the Holy Prophet immediately ordered that she be taken back until it is fully satisfied that she also consented to divorce and - that she is certain – that she is not pregnant. Hence women should not be divorced willy-nilly for reasons of sickness, etc, unless she was proven case of adultery: *65:1 "O Prophet, when you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed period, and calculate the period; and keep your duty to Allah, your Lord. Turn them not out of their houses – nor should they themselves go forth – unless they commit an open indecency. And these are the limits of Allah. And whoever goes beyond the limits of Allah, he indeed wrongs his own soul. Thou knowest not that Allah may after that bring about an event."*

J. Preventing and safeguarding all Muslim women from slander:

1. This passage (24:27 – 27:29) is an injunction for multiple reasons, of preventing slander against women and girls in any household, that women and girls may not be properly dressed; and further to prevent any freedom of looseness in relationships between the householders, which may lead to unwanted situations such as communicable diseases: *"24:27 O you who believe, enter not houses other than your own houses, until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates. This is better for you that you may be mindful. 24:28 But if you find no one therein, enter them not, until permission is given to you; and if it is said to you, Go back, then go back; this is purer for you. And Allah is Knower of what you do. 24:29 It is no sin for you to enter uninhabited houses wherein you have your necessities. And Allah knows what you do openly and what you hide."*
2. There are rules for domestic conduct and slandering against people on unfounded grounds (for example sicknesses and diseases) is not permitted: *33:58 "And those who annoy believing men and believing women undeservedly, they bear the guilt of slander and manifest sin."*
104:1 "Woe to every slanderer, defamer!"

K. Seduction and animal-type instincts generally in mankind:

1. This verse refers to those communities which have stooped so low in their sexual lusts and desires that they are comparable to dogs; and no matter how much effort is expended to correct them, they will continue with their stooped lowliness: *7:176 "And if We had pleased, We would have exalted him thereby; but he clings to the earth and follows his low desire. His parable is as the parable of the dog — if thou drive him away, he lolls out his tongue, and if thou leave him alone, he lolls out his tongue. Such is the parable of the people who reject Our messages. So relate the narrative that they may reflect."*
2. This verse refers to the historical event Joseph (s/o Jacob the progenitor of "Israel") was sold by his brothers and he was bought by General Potiphar of the Egyptian Army. Potiphar took Joseph home as his manservant. Joseph was very handsome and Potiphar's wife was very beautiful. She locked the house and seduced Joseph but Joseph was running away from her and in the ensuing struggle, she tore the back of his shirt. She then complained to Potiphar that Joseph was trying to rape her. This verse hence establishes that not only men getting to seduce is immoral, but women also cannot keep chaste: *12:24 "And certainly she desired him, and he would have desired her, were it not that he had seen the manifest evidence of his Lord. Thus (it was) that We might turn away from him evil and indecency. Surely he was one of Our chosen servants."*

L. What references are there about other Scriptures for Muslims?

1. This is an all-encompassing verse, which takes full recognition of previous scriptures and their prohibitions (e.g. The Torah and the Bible and the Ten Commandments): 5:49 *"And that thou shouldest judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their low desires, and be cautious of them lest they seduce thee from part of what Allah has revealed to thee. Then if they turn away, know that Allah desires to afflict them for some of their sins. And surely many of the people are transgressors."*
2. Straying away from the facts and preaching of previous religions and their principles of truth is not recommended: 5:77 *"Say: O People of the Book, exaggerate not in the matter of your religion unjustly, and follow not the low desires of people who went astray before and led many astray, and went astray from the right path."*

M. Is there any forgiveness from God in the Scripture?

1. 33:35 Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and women who remember — Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.
2. The injunction sets performance standards of success expected from Muslims seeking forgiveness after realisation of having done wrong: 3:134 *"And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong their souls, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins. And who forgives sins but Allah? And they persist not knowingly in what they do."*

N. What is the reward for full compliance with Scripture (in the case of all Muslims, in the Holy Qur'an)?

1. The Holy Qur'an reminds that straight, clean and honest living in this world as prescribed has its reward in the "Garden" which is taken to refer to Heaven: 9:40 *"And as for him who fears to stand before his Lord and restrains himself from low desires, 79:41 The Garden is surely the abode."*
2. God rewards all communities: 2:62 *"Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve."*
3. 2:112 *"Nay, whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve."*

4. 3:199 *"And of the People of the Book there are those who believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to you and (in) that which has been revealed to them, humbling themselves before Allah — they take not a small price for the messages of Allah. These it is that have their reward with their Lord. Surely Allah is Swift to take account!"*
5. 4:134 *"Whoever desires the reward of this world — then with Allah is the reward of this world and the Hereafter. And Allah is ever Hearing, Seeing."*
6. Preventing others from contacting HIV/AIDS also has its rewards regardless of the ethnicity doing good to the wider communities: 6:84 *"And We gave him Isaac and Jacob. Each did We guide; and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants, David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. And thus do We reward those who do good (to others):"* (All prophets as descendants of Abraham).
7. 12:57 *"And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and guard against evil."*
8. Men and women, boys and girls are equally recognised and eligible for reward for their deeds, provided they are in full compliance to the Scripture: 33:35 *"Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and women who remember — Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward."*
9. 34:37 *"And it is not your wealth, nor your children, that bring you near to Us in rank; but whoever believes and does good, for such is a double reward for what they do, and they are secure in the highest places."*
10. 39:10 *"Say: O My servants who believe, keep your duty to your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and Allah's earth is spacious. Truly the steadfast will be paid their reward without measure."*

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