

The Rights of Neighbours in Islam (part 2 of 2): Neighbours - Good and Bad

Description: Tips and hints for treating neighbours well and how to deal with unruly or bad neighbours.

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Objectives

- To learn how to fulfil the rights of neighbours in an easy and Islamically correct way.
- To understand that dealing with a bad neighbour should never include backbiting or other bad behaviour.

Arabic Terms

- *Sahabah* - the plural form of *oeSahabi,*” which translates to Companions. A *sahabi*, as the word is commonly used today, is someone who saw Prophet Muhammad, believed in him and died as a Muslim.

Prophet Muhammad said that, *oeThe best of companions with Allah is the one who is best to his companion, and the best of neighbours with Him is the one who is best to his neighbour.”*[\[1\]](#) He also said, *oeThe one who harms his neighbor will not enter Paradise.”*[\[2\]](#)



Thus we can see that treating neighbours well and with respect, is a very important concept in Islam. It makes life more enjoyable for all concerned; when you are surrounded by people you can rely upon, trials and tribulations can be faced more easily with their support and encouragement. If your neighbours are Muslim being a good neighbour is easy because the rights of neighbours are enshrined within the tenants of Islam. Among the rights of one Muslim over another are the following:

- Greet him with the Islamic greeting of *Assalam alaikum*[\[3\]](#).
- Visit when he is unwell.

- Offer condolences and help in times of calamity.
- Offer congratulations at times of joy and happiness
- As much as possible overlook mistakes, bare annoyances and conceal faults.
- Give gifts.
- Help financially.
- Do not look at his possessions with envy.
- Guide him to things that will benefit him in both his religious and worldly affairs.

If your neighbours are not Muslim it does not mean that they should be treated any differently. In fact treating them with the respect Islam insists upon can only be a good thing. At best it may lead them to Islam and at the very least everyone in the neighbourhood lives a peaceful and cooperative existence.

The following are some practical tips for those who live in communities populated by people of various ethnicities and faiths:

- Introduce yourself to the neighbours when you move into a new home or when new neighbours move in.
- Show care and consideration by inquiring about the health of the elderly or chronically ill. A Muslim should not eat if his neighbour is hungry thus you could help by sending food as well as taking care of chores such as mowing the lawn or taking out the rubbish bins. Prophet Muhammad advised a *sahabi* to foster good neighbourly relations when he said, "Whenever you prepare a broth, put plenty of water in it, and give some of it to your neighbours".[\[4\]](#)
- Give gifts. The giving of gifts softens even the hardest hearts.
- Invite neighbours for meals or barbeques or even a simple cup of tea. In your invitation be sure to mention the restrictions Islam has on alcohol and dietary requirements so there are no embarrassing moments. This is also a chance to show that alcohol is not a necessary ingredient to happy social life.
- Accept invitations. Unless there is a good reason not to such as alcohol or dancing.
- While socialising present Islam in the best way. Do not enter into futile arguments about religion or politics.
- If your neighbours show an interest in Islam don't be pushy. Perhaps you could give uplifting books or invite them to events that showcase Islam.
- Be the first to help in times of calamity. Your neighbours may need money, transportation or a shoulder to cry on.

Having established that good neighbours are a blessing and behaving in a good manner towards your neighbours is a requirement in Islam, what should a person do when faced with bad behaviour by neighbours? In a Muslim society or neighbourhood a good way to stop your Muslim neighbour from behaving in an unneighbourly manner is to publicise his behaviour.

One of the *sahabah* mentions that a man asked the Prophet how to deal with a neighbour that caused him harm. The Prophet suggested taking his things and standing in the road. When the man did what was suggested the people gathered around asking what was happening. The mistreated man explained what he was doing and that it was the suggestion of Prophet Muhammad. The people were astounded and the man was disgraced. It was with shame and remorse that the bad neighbour went to the maligned man and said, "Go back to your house. By Allah, I will cause you no harm whatsoever."^[5]

It is important however that if one publicises the fact that he has a bad neighbour he must not indulge in backbiting or exaggerate the bad treatment. What the Prophet advised was to show that his neighbour's attitude towards him had caused him to leave his home. He did not say more than this. That was sufficient for people to recognize that the matter was serious. It is important to remember that when dealing with both Muslims and non-Muslims using the high standard of manners and morals that Islam insists upon will often work wonders.

Renowned Islamic scholar Al-Qurtubi (1214 -1273 CE) said, "Kind treatment of neighbours is enjoined and is recommended, whether they are Muslim or not. And this is the right thing to do. Kind treatment may be in the sense of helping or it may be in the sense of being kind, refraining from annoyance and standing by them."

Endnotes:

^[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

^[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

^[3] The Islamic greeting is 'Assalam Alaikum' (May God grant you protection and security). The response to this is 'Wa Alaikum Assalam' (And may He grant the same to you). These brief Arabic words let Muslims know that they are among friends, not strangers.

^[4] *Saheeh Muslim*

^[5] *Abu Dawood.*

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