

Jamila Alqarnain. *The Muslim Family Guide to Successful Homeschooling*. California: Noon Publications, 2011.

Jamila Alqarnain, the co-founder of Noon Publications, which publishes Islamic books and writings for both adults and children, lives in California with her husband and seven children. She began homeschooling in 2000 and a decade later decided to write a book to help readers make better decisions for their families.

Alqarnain's publication, *The Muslim Family Guide to Successful Homeschooling* (2011), serves as a valuable introductory resource for parents considering the path of homeschooling. Distinguished by its narrative style, the book draws upon the experiences of homeschooling parents, facilitating an insightful comparison between homeschooling and public schooling. Unlike many conventional homeschooling guides that predominantly address secular approaches for accommodating diverse children's needs, Alqarnain's work sets itself apart by infusing each chapter with Qur'ānic verses and supplications, emphasizing an Islamic viewpoint. Central to the book is the recurrent theme of integrating Islam into every facet of life, including education, to nurture children to become genuine leaders (*khulafā*) in its truest essence.

Each of the nine chapters focuses on different grade levels, as well as parents' struggles and what expectations they should have, and offers constructive information. Alqarnain's informal style of writing makes the book reader-friendly. Another unique and inspiring feature of the book, "Famous and Homeschooled," provides many examples of successful people from different fields who were homeschooled which can serve as a motivation and encouragement for those who feel lost amidst this journey.

Chapters 1-4 provide the foundation of homeschooling and take a deep dive into important questions that can help the reader decide their motive for this undertaking. Alqarnain often relates her own story which helps readers in connecting with the book. The chapters focus on the purpose of homeschooling, its benefits, and sacrifices. She includes parents' experiences on how Islamic education helped them survive the vicissitudes of life and gives motivation and encouragement to aspiring homeschooling parents. One of the quibbles I have is that it imparts less information regarding statistics and studies on the benefits of homeschooling. The practical advice section is comprehensive and includes one of the most important points, "Man training for Boys" (p. 65).

In Chapter 5, "Unit Studies and Multi-Level Teaching," the task of curriculum planning, often daunting for homeschooling parents, is dissected by Alqarnain with the aid of diverse examples applicable to various subjects. The author's provision of a step-by-step approach for crafting personalized unit study themes from an Islamic perspective significantly simplifies the process. While the chapter serves as a valuable resource, especially for parents of younger children, a similar approach tailored for middle and high school grades would have been beneficial, considering the heightened complexities of incorporating Islamic principles into the academic curriculum at these levels.

Following the foundational information in the earlier sections, Chapter 6 offers valuable insights into managing organizational aspects with toddlers, acknowledged as a

demanding task and a common cause for resignations, as per the author. A key suggestion from this chapter is to avoid replicating a traditional school setting at home but rather to prioritize adaptability and nurturing a strong rapport with the child, ensuring a smooth and memorable learning experience. The chapter addresses various concerns, including stress management, advocating for a gradual approach to maintain a manageable environment. The text also proposes involving toddlers in educational activities, encouraging hands-on learning experiences, and fostering independence in their projects. The emphasis on incorporating prayer is a recurring theme throughout all the chapters.

Chapter 7, the lengthiest section in the book, intends to provide remedies for the pivotal phase of adolescence. An improved organizational structure utilizing subsections dedicated to girls and boys could have enhanced the chapter's coherence. As in previous chapters, the author draws from documented experiences and practical parental advice, presenting readers with a diverse array of suggestions to tailor their approach to homeschooling teenagers. The text notably emphasizes a balance of elective freedom and careful guidance, allowing readers the flexibility to navigate various strategies. Furthermore, the option of taking a break from traditional schooling for a limited duration is also introduced, offering readers an alternative perspective. Briefly addressing the challenges faced by Muslim teenagers in an Islamophobic climate, the chapter could have delved further into this issue. Similarly, the inclusion of additional experiences from African American Muslims would have enriched the reader's understanding of tackling and managing diverse forms of racial discrimination. The chapter concludes by outlining beneficial activities for teenagers, providing an extensive repertoire of practical ideas.

Chapters 8 and 9 shift the focus to public schools and their challenges. The author gives a comprehensive account of the challenges of practicing Islam in a public school setting. Alqarnain acknowledges that homeschooling might not be an option for all and dedicates an entire chapter to public schooling to help readers choose the best path for their children.

Alqarnain's book stands out due to her compelling rationales, encompassing diverse aspects of homeschooling and its correlation with Islamic teachings, thereby offering a distinctive perspective in this sphere. Her efforts are directed towards inspiring Muslim parents to embrace this educational approach, highlighting its significance in integrating and safeguarding Islamic values for the forthcoming generations. Furthermore, her work serves as a source of encouragement, urging the community to actively partake in the holistic development of their children, nurturing a strong Islamic foundation alongside academic learning.

Review by Ayesha Habeeb

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