

MLU-9.1: Sincerity, Fulfilling Promise & Truthfulness

Meaning of Sincerity

Sincerity has been interpreted as being upright, sincere, truthful, pure, distant from show and ostentation in one's intention and conduct, and being closed to the things that cloud or foul one's heart. Purity of intention, straightforwardness in thoughts, not pursuing any worldly purposes in relations with Allah, and loyalty in servitude to Him are also included in the meaning of sincerity.

Importance of intentions

The Muslim believes in the great importance of intention and its importance for the remainder of his deeds, both of this world and the Hereafter. This is because all deeds are based on intention. Depending on the intention, the deed is either valid or void.

This belief in the necessity of having an intention for every deed, and the obligation to make the intention proper, is based on Allah's Words (which mean): "And they were not commanded except to worship Allah (being) sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah (poor due). And that is the correct religion." [Quran 98:5].

Allah (SWT) also said (what means): "Say (O Muhammad): 'Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah (being) sincere to Him in religion.'" [Quran 39:11].

On the authority of Tameem ibn Aus ad-Daree (ra): The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The religion is naseehah (sincerity)." We said, "To whom?" He (peace be upon him) said, "To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk." [Muslim]

This belief is also based on the words of Allah's Messenger: "Verily, all actions are but driven by intention and for everyone is what he intended." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Allah's Messenger also said: "Certainly, Allah does not look at your shapes (appearance) or wealth. But He only looks at your hearts and deeds." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

The one who has a sincere intention is rewarded for a good deed and the one who has an evil intention will bear its burden, just like the one who did a sinful deed. All of that is due to intention alone.

At the Battle of Tabook, Allah's Messenger said: "There are people concerning whom you do not travel any distance, nor do you spend anything, nor do you pass any valley but they are with you in that matter." The people said, "How is that?" He said, "They have been restrained due to some excuse, but they are with us because of the good intention." [Al-Bukhaari and Abu Daawood].

Sincere intention is what makes the non-combatant equal in reward to the combatant. It is what makes the non-Mujahid receive a reward like that of a Mujahid (one who fights for the sake of Allah).

Allah's Messenger has also said: "If two Muslims meet each other with their swords, then both the killer and the killed will be in the Hell-fire." Someone said, "O Allah's Messenger, that is the case for the killer but why should that be the case for the killed?" He answered, "Because he wanted to kill his companion." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

All of the above emphasize what a Muslim believes concerning the seriousness of intention and its extreme importance. A Muslim should base all of his deeds upon a pious intention. He also strives his best not to perform any deed without an intention or with an impure intention. The intention is the soul of the deed and what determines its value. The deed is sound if the intention is sound and the deed is wicked if the intention is wicked. The one who performs deeds without good intention is doing so out of disdainful show and pretense.

Furthermore, a Muslim believes that intention is an essential component for the acceptance of deeds, and a condition for the validity of the deed. He also knows that the intention is not simply a statement of the tongue, "O Allah, I intended such and such..." nor is it simply a thought in the mind.

Instead, it is the driving force in the heart towards performing a deed that is in accordance with a sound goal -- of bringing benefit or repelling harm, at present or in the future. The will also directs a person to perform a deed for the sake of Allah and to fulfill His Commands.

A Muslim, therefore, also believes that a permissible act may become an act of obedience, worthy of reward and recompense. At the same time, an act of worship, if it is done for the sake of other than Allah (void of a pious intention), then it becomes an act of disobedience worthy of punishment and burden. A Muslim also does not believe that an act of disobedience can be changed into an act of obedience simply due to a good intention.

For example, the one who backbites a person just to make another person feel better, has disobeyed Allah and has committed a sin. His "good intention" will not benefit him at all in consideration with Allah. Similarly, the one who builds a Mosque with money from prohibited sources will not be rewarded. One who attends singing and dancing parties or who purchases raffle tickets to support good purposes or for the sake of Jihad, is a sinner and will bear the burden of his sin, instead of being rewarded for what he has done.

Similarly, anyone who builds a dome over the grave of a pious person, slaughters an animal on his behalf or makes an oath on his behalf, all in the name of having love for pious people, is disobeying Allah and earning a sin for what he has done.

These previously mentioned deeds are sins, even if it was done with a pious intention. A deed is not transformed by a pious intention into an act of obedience unless it was something permissible in the Sharee'ah (Islamic law) in the first place. As for a forbidden act, it never becomes an act of obedience under any circumstances.

Finally, sincerity in intention is a matter between man and his Creator; nobody else can know the real intentions of people except Allah. A man who attains sincerity in intention does not consider whether others will praise, accuse or exalt or abase him, be aware of his deeds or not, or whether he will even gain reward or not in return for his deeds. He considers only the pleasure of Allah. Whether you speak openly 'or not', He certainly knows what is secret and what is even more hidden. [Quran 20:7]

Allah (SWT) says, "If anyone leaves his home, emigrating to Allah and His Messenger, and death catches up with him, it is Allah Who will reward him." (4:100)

Allah (SWT) says, "Your Lord knows best what is in your selves." (17:25)

Allah (SWT) says, "Their flesh and blood dies not reach Allah but your fear of Him (tawqa) does reach Him." (22:37)

Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "It means that your intentions reach Him."

Imam Abu'l-Hasan al-Wahidi reported that az-Zajjaj said, "The meaning of this is that Allah will not accept an offering of flesh and blood when it is offered without fearful awareness of Allah. He accepts that through which you show Him your fearful awareness of Him." This indicates that no act of worship is without intention. The intention is that you want to draw near to Allah and carry out His command.

Narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA), may Allah be pleased with him, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"Indeed, actions only go by intentions. Everyone gets what they intend. Anyone, therefore, who emigrates for Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration is indeed for Allah and His Messenger. But anyone who emigrates to gain something of this world or to marry a woman, his emigration is for that for which he emigrated."

The Concept of Biddah

An act that looks like Sha'riah, proof of which does not exist in the Quran and Sunnah, doing it with the intention to get nearer to Allah (SWT) and to seek reward from Allah (SWT) is known as a Biddah. Every biddah is going astray, and every astray is in Hellfire. Similarly, Fiqh (jurisprudence) is the knowledge of extracting the laws and provisions from the Quran and Sunnah. We must perform the authentic acts endorsed by Shar'iah only.

Once Hazrat Jibrael (AS) came and asked the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) when would the hour (death) come? Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said: "Allah (SWT) knows better about it. He (PBUH) mentioned some signs about it".

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, "Whoever does any action that is not in accordance with this matter of ours (Islam), Will have it rejected." **[Sahih Muslim]**

In our society, people named different things with different backgrounds as a religion and has made it sacred because they never got through the authentic books, refused to listen to the learned men, prohibited reciting the Quran daily has brought them to this level.

Fulfilment of promise in Islam:

One of the virtues talked about in the Holy Quran is Keeping of the Promise or Covenant. It has been mentioned as one of the special and distinct features of the faithful Mo-mineen. Breaking of promise or breach of a covenant has been called therein as one of the habits of the polytheist Mushrikeen and hypocrite Munafeqeen.

It is important to know that not keeping the word or breaking of promise or trust is one of the offences that break the relation of confidence and trust in the society and thus its foundation. Fulfilling a promise, besides being an Islamic right, is also a human right.

The Fulfillment of Promises in Quran:

Allah says:

“And fulfill (every) covenant. Verily! The covenant will be questioned about.”

(Surah Isrâ 17:34)

“And fulfill the Covenant of Allah (Bai`ah: pledge for Islam) when you have covenanted.” (Surah Nahl 16:91)

“O you who believe! Fulfill (your) obligations.” (Surah Maeda 5:1)

“O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? Most hateful it is with Allah that you say that which you do not do.” (Surah Saff 61:2, 3)

Accodring to Hadith:

Abu Hurairah (RA) reported: Rasulullah (SAW) said *“Three are the signs of a hypocrite: When he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he betrays his trust.”* (Al-Bukhari) Another narration adds the words: *“Even if he observes Saum (fasts), performs Salaat (prayer) and claims to be a Muslim.”*

Its repetition here is meant to stress the point that a hypocrite is recognized by breaking his promise

`Abdullah bin `Amr bin Al-`as (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Four are the qualities which, when found in a person, make him a sheer hypocrite, and one who possesses one of them, possesses one characteristic of hypocrisy until he abandons it. These are: When he is entrusted with something, he betrays trust; when he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he acts treacherously; and when he argues, he behaves in a very imprudent, insulting manner."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Truthfulness

Truthfulness is basis of all ethics and virtues. There is a truth of words, a truth of action and a truth of attitude. It is not enough for any individual what he says is true; he should also act in accordance with what he believes to be true, and his attitude ought to be in conformity with what he considers to be true. How truthfulness can be the foundation of virtues and a sure and effective means of keeping a person away from evil is illustrated in a well-known hadith.

It is reported that a man came to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and confessed that he was addicted to so many vices like theft, telling lies, drunkenness, and fornication. So he has arrived with an earnest desire to be reformed and longs for his advice how to get rid of his moral depravity. But at the same time he asked for only one sinful habit what the Prophet (PBUH) chose as the most heinous and promised to give it up. The Prophet (PBUH) said: Give up telling a lie. The man promised to abide by it scrupulously. During the following night he was tempted to drink but it crossed to his mind if the Prophet (PBUH) asks me about my doings,

I will have to tell the truth but could I dare to tell him about my drinking and face him without shame? The very thought made him refrain from drinking.

Similarly when he was tempted to commit theft in the darkness of the night, the idea of confessing it before the Prophet (PBUH) made him to desist from committing theft. Likewise he did away with all his sinful doings. The next morning he went to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and told him that he was lucky enough to be relieved of all his sins merely by evading untruthfulness.

Before the Prophet (PBUH) invited his people towards Islam, it was his truthfulness and trustworthiness which had earned for Muhammad (S.A.W.) the glorious titles of al-Sadiq (truthful) and al-Amin (trustworthy). So before he told them what was revealed to him, he straightforwardly asked the people of his clan if they had ever found him telling a lie. They unanimously affirmed his truthfulness. Though he failed to induce the Qurash to listen to the warnings of God but by and by he proved the truthfulness of his prophecy without the power and pelf on a global scale. This was because he was true to himself and to others. By virtue of his sincerity and commitment he was able to blow up mountains of opposition.

Allah (SWT) has decreed that truthfulness leads to piety, so whoever loses their truthfulness will in turn lose their piety. Allah says :

“O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true.” (Surah At-Tawbah 9: 119).

Allah (SWT) praised Rasulullah (SAW) when Allah (SWT) says

“And indeed you are of a great moral character” (Surah Al-Qalam 68: 4).

Truthfulness comes at the top of the list of morals and Allah considered it to be the foundation for all principles. Truthfulness, besides being an honorable trait, is a necessity in all our public lives and perhaps it is the greatest gate to happiness of individuals as well as their entire communities

Islam considers truthfulness as the key to righteousness and lying as the key to evil, as Rasulullah (SAW) said: “Truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. Lying leads to evil and evil leads to the Hellfire” Lying is an evil deception as Rasulullah (SAW) said: “The greatest deception is to intentionally make your brother (in faith) believe something which you know to be false.” In fact, lying is one of the major signs of hypocrisy.