

Aspects of Intention

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Achieve Noble Character

Aspects of Intention

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Table of Contents

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Compiler's Notes](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Aspects of Intention](#)

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[Other ShaykhPod Media](#)

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All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

The foundation of Islam is a person's intention. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. Therefore, this book will discuss the aspects of intention and its importance in respect to Noble Character.

According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day will be Noble Character. It is one of qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which Allah, the Exalted, complimented in Chapter 68 Al Qalam, Verse 4 of the Holy Quran:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Therefore, it is a duty on all Muslims to gain and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to Achieve Noble Character.

Aspects of Intention

The correct intention is the backbone of all good deeds. Actions are not judged on their physical appearance but by the intention behind them. The Devil tricks people who desire to perform good deeds by corrupting their intention. When he is successful then the reward for the most beautiful of deeds for example, offering prayer, becomes nullified. The correct intention can only ever be to please Allah, the Exalted.

The right intention is so important that it applies to all irrespective of their rank. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once described the judgement of three people on the Day of Judgement in order to teach mankind the importance of intention. First a scholar will be called forward for judgement. When he is asked by Allah, the Exalted, how he used the knowledge which was given to him during his life he will respond that he dedicated his whole life learning and teaching mankind about Islam. But Allah, the Exalted, will reply that he only did this for fame which he achieved therefore, there was no reward for him in the hereafter as one is only rewarded when they do deeds to please Allah, the Exalted. He will then be ordered to enter Hell. The second man, a martyr, will be called forward and questioned about how he used his life. He will reply he sacrificed it for Islam. Again, Allah the Exalted, will respond that he only did this for fame so people would call him brave. This he achieved in the world therefore there was no reward for him in the hereafter. He too will be commanded to enter Hell. The final man who spent his life donating his wealth to charity will be called forward and questioned. He will explain the different ways he donated his wealth. Once again, Allah the Exalted, will reply that the person only did it so people call him generous therefore there was no reward for him on this day. He will be ordered into Hell with the others. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4923.

One must never use good deeds for worldly purposes for example, to gain fame. If they do they may share their fates with the three described above. This Hadith is closely linked to another one where the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that on Judgement Day those who performed deeds to please others besides Allah, the Exalted, will be commanded to gain their reward from them which will not be possible. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

All are aware of the high rank of a martyr but as mentioned above it is worthless without the correct intention. In another Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4207, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, once complimented a man who was very courageous during battles. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared he would go to Hell because of his bad intention. He only desired fame and as foretold this man was wounded during a battle and due to the intense pain he committed suicide and sealed his fate.

There are two ways of associating something or someone with Allah, the Exalted. The major type is when one worships more than one God. The minor type is when one performs deeds for a worldly purpose for example, to gain fame. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verse 110:

"...So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord - let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone."

These people are described as those who have taken their desires and passions as their God. Chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 23:

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire...”

This is connected to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989, where the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that even a hint of showing off is polytheism.

Most people have a desire for wealth and in most cases it is an innate feeling. But one must always use their wealth with the correct intention as prescribed by Islam. Muslims should use this world to gather provisions for the hereafter. If one is blessed with the correct intention they will use every worldly thing, every breath and every passing moment as a means to please Allah, the Exalted.

Allah, the Exalted, is so merciful that even if one performs worldly deeds with the correct intention they will earn reward in both worlds. For example, if someone earns an honest living as commanded by Islam they will gain the reward of being raised on Judgement Day with the martyrs. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2139. As advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6373, when one adopts this mentality even the food they feed their family is recorded as a righteous deed.

Many people visit their relatives and friends for the sake of socialising. But if they only changed their intention and performed this act because Allah, the Exalted, ordered Muslims to maintain ties with others then this act will be recorded as a good deed. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1979. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 1:

“...And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs...”

But it is extremely important to note that the proof of one's correct intention is that their actions are based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, when they meet their family or friends they must only converse about good things and avoid all types of evil and vain talk. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 114:

“No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah - then We are going to give him a great reward.”

Some show honour and respect to their guests for the sake of showing off and out of custom whereas the rightly guided show respect for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and gain His pleasure. A man once came to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as a

guest but the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, at the time possessed nothing to offer him. At the request of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, a Companion, may Allah be pleased with him, offered to host the man. As the Companion, may Allah be pleased with him, only had enough food for the guest he requested his wife to present the food before extinguishing the light in their home so that the guest would believe the Companion, may Allah be pleased with him, was joining him for dinner. This led to the revelation of chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 9, and the incident is recorded in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3798:

“And [also for] those who were settled in the Home [Medina] and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what they [i.e., the emigrants] were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.”

This Companion's, may Allah be pleased with him, sole intention was to please Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, he was blessed with such an amazing reward. When one possesses this attitude their reward will always be greater than their struggle.

Another good example demonstrating correct intention is shown by the third rightly guided Caliph of Islam, Usman Bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him. He possessed much wealth but always used it in the correct way with a good intention. Once he donated an abundant amount of wealth for the sole pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, took some of

this wealth in his lap and confirmed that from then on nothing could harm Usman, may Allah be pleased with him. This meant that Allah, the Exalted, blessed him with such strong faith that nothing could ever uproot it.

In reality, no good deed can be commenced without an intention. For example, if someone is standing upright it would not be regarded as worship. But if one stands the same way and has the intention to offer prayer it will be counted as worship. But it is important to note that some actions are unlawful irrespective of intention. For example, prostrating to anyone/anything except Allah, the Exalted, is strictly forbidden.

Allah, the Exalted, has taught mankind how to avoid forming the incorrect intention. For example, in chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 31, Allah, the Exalted, describes two different ways one can donate charity:

“[O Muhammad], tell My servants who have believed to establish prayer and spend from what We have provided them, secretly and publicly...”

If one is blessed with strong faith and a sincere intention to please Allah, the Exalted, then they can donate charity openly in order to encourage others. But if a muslim believes donating in this way may affect their sincere intention then they can donate in secret.

In another place of the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, differentiates people who place their efforts in this material world believing they have done good in both worlds from those who possess the correct intention and attitude. For example, one may offer the prayer for the sole purpose of fooling people into believing they are pious. In reality, they only fool a few people and gain little temporal respect in this world and because of their bad intention Allah, the Exalted, does not accept their prayer. Allah, the Exalted, declares in these verses that these people are most unfortunate as they do put their efforts into actions but as a result of their bad intentions are left with fruitless deeds. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verses 103-104:

"Say, [O Muhammad], "Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work."

This is connected to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4206, where the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that those who desire to publicise their good deeds Allah, the Exalted, in turn will publicise their evil traits in this world and in the next. Similarly, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, informed mankind that a person who was influential and powerful in the world will not weigh more than a wing of a mosquito in the eyes of Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4729.

As the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite a person will still be rewarded for a sincere intention even if the deed itself is left incomplete. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6491.

But it is important to note, that when one makes an intention to perform a righteous deed they must try their absolute best to complete it otherwise their intention is merely wishful thinking which will not be fruitful.

The correct intention in all aspects of life is summed up beautifully in the declaration of the Holy Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, found in chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 162:

“Say, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

When one uses every aspect of their life to please Allah, the Exalted, then the path of success becomes easy to transverse.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2682, when used in the correct way knowledge opens the gates of Paradise. But with the incorrect intention it will undoubtedly open the doors of Hell instead. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 253. The former nations that were blessed with divine revelation failed to adhere to the correct path and instead chose this material world. Therefore, their deeds were nullified simply because of their incorrect intention to gain material benefits instead of pleasing Allah, the Exalted.

When one intends the hereafter they will always be rewarded in both worlds. But when one intends only this world they may gain it but they will not gain the hereafter. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3517, that everyone wakes up in the morning and either frees their soul or seals their fate in Hell. Meaning, that one either acts according to Islamic law and benefits them self in this world and in the next or they destroy the borders separating the lawful from the unlawful and thereby seal their fate by angering Allah, the Exalted. For example, two businessmen may appear to be exactly the same yet they are completely different. One acts only to gain in this world and remains heedless to the next whereas the second acts with the intention to gain in both this world and the hereafter. The former will do whatever it takes to gain this benefit for example, lie, steal and con others whereas, the latter will always remain within the boundaries of Islam in all his dealings and thereby gain reward in this world and in the next. As mentioned earlier, when one acts according to Islamic law even if it appears to be a worldly deed they will be rewarded in both worlds simply because they obeyed Allah, the Exalted.

The hypocrites in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, claimed to be muslims simply to reap the benefits of being one such as gaining spoils of war. They too offered prayer with the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, behind the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. To the rest of the world they appeared as pious muslims. But as their intention was impure they were cursed by Allah, the Exalted, in this world and are destined to reside in the deepest depths of Hell in the hereafter. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 145:

“Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper.”

The hypocrites lived in the best time period which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6478, they were surrounded by the best of people meaning, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, and were led by the best of creation the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet they were still rejected by Allah, the Exalted, simply because of their bad intention.

Angels record one's actions but Allah, the Exalted, knows the intention behind them. Some muslims often question the reason why the non-muslims who perform righteous deeds will not be rewarded in the hereafter. Allah, the Exalted, rewards based on intention which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1, and as they did not intend to perform righteous deeds for the next world they will therefore be left empty handed on Judgement Day. This is the same outcome for those muslims who perform deeds solely for worldly gain. But those who aim for the next world will be rewarded in both. Chapter 42 Ash Shuraa, verse 20:

“Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter - We increase for him in his harvest [i.e., reward]. And whoever desires the harvest [i.e., benefits] of this world - We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share.”

Performing righteous deeds solely for worldly gain is like placing fresh and clean milk into a dirty bowl. How can the milk possibly remain pure when subjected to the dirty bowl? These people will enter the plains of

Judgement Day believing that their mountains of good deeds will save them from the punishment of Allah, the Exalted, but this will not be the case. A deed by itself is neither small nor significant instead it is one's intention that makes it important or insignificant. For example, as advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2363, a man was forgiven for providing water to a thirsty dog. Similarly, another man will enter Paradise for removing a tree branch from a road. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6671.

It is important to note, that a good deed can become evil depending on the intention for example, showing off, but an evil deed can never become good irrespective of the intention for example, stealing in order to give charity.

Depending on how one uses the things in their life they can either become a blessing in this world and the next or a curse. Islam has outlined exactly how to use each thing within this material world correctly.

Many bad characteristics can cause a muslim to become veiled from Allah, the Exalted. One of these veils is a lack of sincerity in one's intention. Many attend religious and spiritual gatherings regularly yet fail to change for the better. This may be due to a lack of preparation and their bad intention. These muslims are like the child who attends their school but fails to take their schoolwork and stationery with them. Due to this behaviour these muslims rarely adopt piety and it is the main reason why their worship and good deeds have little spiritual effect on them. The bad intentions adopted by some today include attending these

gatherings for the sake of showing off; taking part in the meal at the end and winning any prizes that are on offer. How can one possibly receive any blessings if they perform religious acts for worldly reasons? When one adopts this mentality then there remains no difference between them visiting the markets or the Mosques as the environment has no effect on them. In contrast the righteous predecessors completely changed their lives over a few pieces of knowledge they obtained due to their correct intention and preparation.

Those who desire to adopt piety and ultimately the closeness of Allah the Exalted, must adopt truthfulness in their intention. Intention is an action of the heart and not a physical deed but in certain cases a lack of sincerity can be recognised due to a person's half-hearted attempt at a task. When one uses certain terms such as, I will try, I will think about it and we will see, it shows a lack of sincerity in their intention. Preparing for actions is a great sign of one's sincere intention. For example, if one claims they wish to travel to another country but have not packed any clothes, not bought any tickets nor chosen a departure date then this behaviour shows a lack of sincerity in their intention. All Muslims admit that they will die one day but how many have made preparations for it? Prior to moving into a temporary home in this world a person asks many questions regarding it yet, they prepare very little for their grave where they will rest until the Day of Rising.

A major mistake some make is that they claim to help others for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, yet demand compensation from those they helped such as respect. Their declaration and intention completely contradict each other which was the behaviour of the hypocrites in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Muslims must make a choice and decide who exactly they perform favours for. If it is for Allah, the Exalted, then they should desire nothing from anyone else after performing a deed as they should hope for

reward from Him. But if they do it for people then they will obtain no reward from Allah, the Exalted, in this world or in the next. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154.

The Holy Quran in the following verse mentions the purity of intention and its importance. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verse 110:

"...So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord - let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone."

The proof of the purity of one's intention is that a muslim is always prepared to please Allah, the Exalted, with righteous deeds. If a muslim sincerely desires to meet Allah, the Exalted, but fails to prepare for this meeting they are only fooling themselves. When a person desires and intends to meet an important worldly person they spend days preparing for a single and short meeting but how much do they prepare when they claim that they desire to meet Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the Worlds? They fail to prepare by not replacing their bad characteristics with good ones under the guidance of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. And by failing to use the resources they have been provided in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

Many complain that even though they perform righteous deeds and acts of worship they still feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted. Many reasons can account for this such as their real intention for performing these deeds. Some only perform righteous deeds for worldly reasons

such as gaining respect and love from their community. They will never achieve any type of connection with Allah, the Exalted as their whole focus is shifted to the creation.

Even though, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was always clean yet he was commanded in the Holy Quran to keep his clothes free from all impurities. Chapter 74 Al Muddaththir, verse 4:

“And your clothing purify.”

This was only directed at the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to show the importance of this order. In reality, this was a command and a lesson for all muslims. This verse teaches mankind that one should purify their outer and inner selves. But this requires preparation and a sincere intention. If one cannot perform prayer without purifying their body, clothes and place of worship then how can they possibly enter the court of Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day without a purified intention? Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88-89:

“The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.”

Throughout the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, has described different amounts of reward for performing good deeds. In some cases a person will be rewarded ten times for each good deed, in other cases 700 times more and in other cases an uncountable reward. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 261:

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...”

This varying amount of reward is based on one's sincerity. The higher sincerity one possesses the greater their reward will be. The highest level is reached when one performs deeds solely for the pleasure, of Allah, the Exalted, instead of doing it for worldly gain or out of fear of Hell and the desire for Paradise.

To conclude, all muslims must assess their intention for every action and word deeply if they desire to achieve success in this world and in the next as the determining factor for the acceptance of all deeds is their intention. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1.

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