

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[Sincerity and Niyyat: Attend to the Motivation of Actions](#)

Allah Swt revealed in the Holy Qur'an:

O you who have arrived at secured belief, do not invalidate your charity by reminders of it, nor by hurting the feelings of the poor, like the one who spends his wealth to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allah and the Final Day. His likeliness is the likeliness of a smooth stone upon which is dust, and it is hit by a heavy downpour, which leaves it hard and bare. Such people gain nothing from what they earn through acts of charity, and Allah does not guide those who cover up the truth. And the likeness of those who spend their wealth out of a desire to please Allah and for the strengthening of their own souls is the likeness of a garden and a high ground, which is hit by a heavy downpour, so that it yields double its fruits. And if it is not hit by a heavy downpour, then a light rain is sufficient, and Allah sees what you do.

Also in Qur'an, Allah says:

A revelation from the Universally Merciful, Singularly Compassionate in a Book whose signs have been clearly spelled out, and an expansive eloquent recital for people who know, bringing good news and warnings. Yet most of those have turned away so they will not hear. And they say, "Our hearts are shielded against that which you are calling us, and our ears are deaf." And between us and you, there is a veil. So do your work. We, too, are working. Say to them, "I, too am a man like you

to whom it has been revealed that your God is one God. So take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness.” Woe to those who associate with others, who do not pay the zakat, and who cover up the truth and about the Final World. Surely, for those who believe and do good deeds, for them there is unending reward.

Alhamdulillah, it's still warm, and it's almost that time of year. Whatever we do and whatever we talk about, I think that what we really need more than anything is sincerity and focus. We know that sincerity is important to us. It's the motivation and the factor that prompts people to do their work in a better way, to strive hard, and to bear trials and tribulations of daily life. It is the motivation that induces us to make effort and sacrifice, and to give of our property and wealth, and in some people, even their own lives. Sometimes it manifests itself in the way we are involved in our work and our community. Another motivation is usually hidden deep in the recesses of the heart and cannot be seen except from inside, which is our deep abiding yearning and faith.

Many times, each one of us performs an act we may not be aware of where it originated from. *Inshā'a-llāh*, on this path, our acts become good or better; and wrong actions are a reminder of Allah Swt, and a cause for repentance, and for shame at times. What we hope for is that it becomes conscious and automatic, and that we are turning to Allah, because of good, and even because of bad. We are very much influenced at times by the secrets of those acts, and the acceptance or non-acceptance of others, or even of ourselves that is often hidden within us. A person who observes can easily often see what the motivations of other individuals are. Part of our observation is not just of good deeds or bad deeds, but also the results of the way a person responds to those deeds. We should remember also that Allah sees everything.

Because Allah sees everything, we are given the capacity, ourselves, to see *some* things. Because we can see *some* things and their relevance, we can determine within ourselves with most sincerity to look at those things that are nearest to us, and that are most effective in our self-viewing. Not only are we watched by Allah Swt, and continuously by those around us, but we should be watched by ourselves. People watch how we work, speak, act and serve; and how we take and how we receive. Those are the clues to us in how we should observe ourselves. If we are involved in very positive goals in the service of Allah, and act with the most sincerity; if we are involved in such a way that we don't have greed for more wealth or desire for acceptance, or recognition, or pride in our actions, or self-importance; if we fear hypocrisy, and abjure wrong actions and repent, then we are on the right path.

Of course, there are inclinations in all of us, in our hearts, that may not be the most charitable or generous, nor motivated by the deepest awareness of consciousness, as we talked about yesterday in terms of Shaytan. But the *taif* of Shaytan leads us, and grabs us, and does much more than touches us. It doesn't bring us clarity; it brings us confusion. It sets us opposed to the Will of Allah, and we excuse it, away from the way. Any act that is performed for the purpose of praising Allah Swt and recognizing the Divine Presence falls into the good categories. In the Qur'an, we have the example that I recited. **"We are feeding for the sake of Allah. We don't expect from you any compensation or any thanks."** To get to that point of non-expectation is a long journey for some people.

These attitudes of sincerity and honesty that we have to pray to be developed within us are most important. They come from the core of our hearts. It is we who have to develop the sincerity through our practices, our *tawbah*, our *taqwa*, and our having

khawf and *kashiyya*. All this goodness that is in the depths of our hearts as potentiality has to become active energy. We are not starting from a place of sin or badness; we are starting from a place of love and goodness. To correct inclinations from the heart, we have to remember that essential goodness, and keep away from the superficial things in life. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Acts depend on their intentions, and if anybody migrates with the intention of gaining the world, or to marry a certain woman, then his migration will be counted for the purpose for which he has left his house.”*** The distance between Medina and Mecca is traversed by thousands of travelers for different purposes. Many people were recently gathering there for the Hajj. But for the purpose of attaining the highest level of *dīn* and keeping oneself alert, the thing that distinguishes the *muhajjiya* from the common traveler, though the physical act is the same, is the *niyyat*.

Many people travel back and forth between those cities, but what is the *niyyat*? The *niyyat* determines what you are going to receive. Another person who travels for another purpose with no connection to the *hijra* doesn't fit the same profile as the person who is making the Hajj. Every day we have to recognize that we are on a journey, and making new journeys. The physical journey from our home to the place of work or wherever we are going, to the *masjid* and back again, should have intentions that we carry out this journey at the most important level. How it can be told is through our attitudes and our actions, the way we speak, the way we work with one another, the way we live together in community, the way the children are with one another, and the way they are toward their parents.

As part of the *ummah*, how we behave in this *jamat* is very important. Is our intention correct? If it is, then we have sincerity. If we have sincerity and our intention is correct, then the acts coming out of the worldly acts and out of this gathering have a lot of power and potential to them. But if there is a perversion and

another agenda in the intention; if there is at the core another desire in the heart, or just fear, without trust in Allah Swt, then there is no need to plan, because our plan is not going to work out. We are only going to degrade the value of our own existence and our own selves. In that degradation of ourselves, we degrade others and force them to deal with our own degradation and our own faults, regardless of the prayers that are offered. Over many centuries, there have been many examples of people who built palaces and masajid, and institutions and gardens; yet those edifices mean nothing unless they are built with the right intention.

If our efforts, labors, and constructions are to benefit humanity even in the building of our homes, not just to welcome people there but with the intention to give shelter, that they will be places of service and welcoming, if not worship, then we will reap full benefits from even where we live. It's not important on one level that we read benefits, but we will get the *thawab* from Allah. It will come in good things, in goodness that comes through our work, our lives, our homes, our voices, our actions, our health and well being, and that of our families. The Messenger (sal) said,

Anyone who, without subjecting another person to cruelty or aggression, builds a magnificent building or plants saplings without indulging in cruelty or rancor, will get a reward for the fullness of the time in which Allah's creatures have benefited by these things.

You can plant a tree or create a beautiful building for learning, and it may outlive you by a hundred years, but the *thawab* keeps coming to us. In the saying, "*Anyone who, without subjecting another person to cruelty or aggression,*" that is different from saying anyone who has the intention not to do certain things. People say, "I intended to go this way. I hope everything's okay. It was not my intention that

someone got hurt or upset, but this person didn't understand... or "other people interfered..." or "the circumstances weren't right." Forget it. That's just one long line of rationalizations that we give ourselves, and they lead to our own destruction. That's like saying, "Well, I was on the right track with my train, but somehow I crashed into another train and had a train wreck," not recognizing the fact that you weren't reading the signals that were ahead of you.

We often speak in the community about ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and about the future. We have been speaking more often about that, and about the sustainability of Islam, and the right actions of the *ummah*, and the sustainability in the world, the environment, and all of our responsibilities. But it is important that we think and speak and plan for generations to come. By the blessings and grace of Allah Swt, we will be able to do that, *inshā'a-Llāh*. If we do that, perhaps we might find that more people are attracted to the path, that there are new ways of looking at things. We might find there is new enthusiasm in ourselves and others. These things loom in front of us, and we have to address it, just like the national debt, or we will "go over the edge," as they say.

Even though we are able to conceptualize things, and the concept is like an intention, let's make it an intention, so that actions follow. In another tradition of Prophet Mohammed (sal), he said, ***"If a Muslim lays a garden or does farming, and a bird or man eats something grown by him, then he will gain virtue in his place."*** Today, I filled up m bird feeders, and all kinds of birds came. The squirrel chased all the birds away... and I chased the squirrel away, and then the birds came back. Some birds just jump in, take a seed, and go fly off and eat it. Some of them sit there. One of them fell asleep right next to the feeder. I wasn't thinking I wasn't going to get any *thawb* for that, but you do. Do you mean that just because a person calls themselves a Muslim, because they have the name Muslim, or if they have a

Muslim working for them tilling the soil that everything is going to be okay? Of course not. It's not in the name; it's in the intention.

It's not surprising that we take care of our property, and grow the food we grow, and give it to whom we give it, and eat it, hopefully, and don't let it go to waste like the boxes of food in the walkout today. Broccoli soup for dinner, folks! Lettuce. We are wasting food; it's not good. It's not good. It's not good. We try hard, and had a beautiful organic garden. We had lettuce from the garden today. I had salad today from our own garden, and it's mid-November. *Alhamdulillah!* Thank you Mustafa and everyone. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Whatever you feed your father is a charity for you, and whatever you feed your child is a reward for you. And whatever you feed your servant is also a charity for you.”*** By extension, whatever you let rot... what is that? Who wants to make broccoli soup tonight? Who wants to have a big lettuce salad for people to take home tonight? Go look in the walkout. And while you are there, children, look at the floor in the dining hall. Look at the crumbs under every table. This is not the way we should live. Everyone is responsible; everyone. There has to be a way to get rid of the ants.

We cannot espouse what we espouse, and live in these ways. Allah is merciful, but this is about *thawab*. What's the opposite? There are great guidelines for our day to day life – sincerity, good intentions, and the actions that follow them. The fact is, as long as we are obedient to Allah; as long as our intentions are pure and sincere, as long as our actions, movements, and attitudes reflect those intentions, in our sleep as well as our waking, in our meditation as well as our actions, then all these for the pleasure or praise of Allah will be earth-changing and society-changing. We need society to change, today. The same forces will allow our community to grow and change properly and draw the right people.

Once, during the early days of Islam when the followers were in dire poverty, a battle was to be fought. Some people came to the Prophet (sal) to join his forces, and they offered themselves to be sacrificed in the cause of Allah swt. But Allah's Messenger didn't allow them to take part in that jihad because of their incapacities. They returned home with very sorrowful hearts, and were deeply grieved at not being allowed to participate in this jihad. Then this verse appeared : "About those who came to you to be provided for mounts. It is acceptable that you said, 'I can find no mounts for you,' causing them to turn back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resource wherewith to provide their expenses."

Firm and strong faith is never lost and never wasted. There is a purpose in Allah's *tadbir*. The firm faith of those who volunteered was never lost, because the Prophet (sal) appreciated their faith. He said to the soldiers who were going with him, ***"There are some people who we left behind in Medina, and whatever place or valley we may camp, they will be with us. For them, their intention is sufficient."*** Even those whose intentions are sincere, but they are not capable for whatever reason, physical reasons perhaps, and they can't participate in what is necessary for the good of the whole community, they *are* participating, and their share is equal in the reward. It's true here now, as it was then.

It's important that we look at every day of our lives, especially those of us who are blessed to work in this kind of environment and in the work we do. We have the responsibility to do that work with the best of intention, and to educate our children in the good ways we educate them, *inshā'a-Llā*. And we have the opportunity to be an example for others. Many people believe we are. Do we? It doesn't mean you can't make *tawbah* and repent, see your own faults, and at the same time do good

works. We all have flaws, and things to repent of. But how do we sustain that high state we were created with or placed in, and not become complacent? We need to put into perspective our lives.

At a time in history that is fraught with a lot of doubts and questions and difficulties, there are a lot of ethical and moral questions that remain unanswered. We need to know that what we have access to is so important for society at large as well as to ourselves. How are we using it? Are we squandering it? Only when we can live by those intentions and with that sincerity will we be able to communicate and translate to others in a good way, which will bring equity and equality, even to those we are above for whatever reason. We will be able to understand the lessons of our *shuyukh*, and fulfill our duties and responsibilities for the reasons why we were placed on this earth.

These are the reasons we are placed on this earth, not to just indulge ourselves, not to deny everything of ourselves, not to distract ourselves, but to be focused in such a way to see what comes from ourselves, what comes from Allah, and what comes from our *nafs*. If our hearts are filled with sincerity, they are like the land in the springtime. It's like today. It almost feels like spring is coming. It's going to be interrupted by winter, but it is coming. Things are lying dormant, and all of a sudden the flowers will start to come up and the land is fertile. At the same time, we don't forget that 3 days of 50 degrees will bring out the ticks. Sometimes with ease comes hardship. The heart without sincerity is barren, like a desert of rocks. We know deserts have their blossoms, too; but very infrequently. If you choose to make your heart a desert, or make a living desert in faithlessness or self-guided faith, believe me, the blossoms will be few and far between.

There are very few people in this world who are unhappy on certain days, like their wedding day, or the day their children are born; yet, at the same time, there is a 51% divorce rate. It's like that. We have to remain pious and respectful, and to some degree, anxious. We don't control what's going to happen, but we don't also *not* control some of the things in our lives. We don't control our destiny, but we certainly can control how it unfolds. We have to keep these things in mind. Whatever it takes to keep it in mind is very important. We can only respond in the best way that 'I' can respond, or you can respond. We can pray to Allah, however, to give us understanding, to give us better responses, to be grateful for what we have. But most of us really don't do that very often.

There is nothing stopping us while we are driving, or walking, or cooking, or in between phone calls or giving lessons in the school, to remember. Though it's cold now at night, and the frosts may come, we have the warmth of the days when the flowers will start to blossom. While we are celebrating the warmth of these winter days, this understanding the necessity of the frost to bring a better fruit the next year, we have to understand that we can only do so much. But we can take the time to appreciate what Allah Swt has provided for us, *inshā'a-Llā*. Why not contemplate sincerity and gratitude, and faithfulness and submission? What harm can there be in that? It doesn't take a lot of effort; it just takes remembrance. *Asalaam aleikum*.