



[Motivations with Sincerity and Right Intention will bring Thawab](#)

Allah has given us 'āyāts in the Holy Qur'an:

Say to them, “I am a man like you, to whom it has been revealed that your God is One, so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness.” Woe to those who associate others with Allah, those who do not pay the *zakat*, and cover up the truth about the Final World. Surely, for those who believe and do good deeds, for them is an unending reward.

Allah Swt has given us a beautiful day to day, with unfortunate tragedies, and an opportunity to taste and smell a little of spring in December. We ask Allah to ensure us of this kind of warming trend in our spiritual lives also. At least, if there is going to be global warming, there should be an internal global warming, too. If eventually things go well, we may have beachfront property soon. Last week, we saw the forsythia blooming and some of the other plants. Then it got to be 24 degrees last night.

We understand that *ikhlas* is very important to us, since it is the motivation that prompts us to do our work, and live in a better way, and strive in a good way, and bear the trials and tribulations of day to day life and work. The more we have the blessing to do, the more we realize how important it is how we use our time, and the more honestly we can spend our time, and know our capacities and capabilities and necessities, and be realistic about our resources also. Allah induces us to sacrifice

and give of our property and wealth, and sometimes even our lives. There are many mysteries in this.

When the world becomes corrupt, then even people of goodness become affected by that corruption. We can't plot out or predict what is going to happen, but we certainly can anticipate certain miseries. One manifests itself in people's involvement in our work, and sometimes it involves another's motivation in our own selves. We never know, but sometimes the motivations are hidden deeply in the recesses of one's heart that they can't be seen from the outside. It's very arrogant of us to try to understand and judge others' motivations, but we can certainly judge their actions. Sometimes it's a narcissistic projection upon others of our own shortcomings, and other times there are real reasons to make judgments.

Many times one performs an act that they are not aware of from where that act originates. Those acts are often very, very good acts that come naturally to an individual with compassion and mercy, who loves other human beings, who cares for humanity, who recognizes the beauty of life and celebrates it. At times, we are very much influenced by those acts. Unconscious acts, secrets behind those acts, the acceptance or non-acceptance of them are hidden deep within our psyche and in our hearts and souls, and in the synapses and neurons of the brain.

When a person observes a good act in themselves or others, they resonate with that good act. Often a doorway opens, and you can sense motivation behind it, and be stimulated yourself for good action. You can have that *dhawq* / taste of goodness. Goodness does have a taste. There doesn't have to be a label: Muslim or non-Muslim, Jew, Christian, believer, unbeliever. Allah says to us that goodness has its own reality. Indeed, those labels come from goodness, the goodness of compassion, peace, mercy, and tolerance. You can almost hear the Prophet (sal) ask about the

revelation that came to him. You can almost hear him say, “What am I going to call this scary things that has been revealed to me? It has made me safe and secure, even though I’m afraid. It has given me peace, even though I’m disturbed. It’s a lesson / *taslim*. That’s it; maybe I’ll call it Islam.” We arrive at reality in that way.

We name things by their qualities. You can hear that mind process and see what happened as it revealed goodness to humanity. I won’t comment today on what’s become of it, but what it is in its essence we do know. Whatever we do is an aspect of what Allah Swt has asked us to do, created us to do. As much as I don’t like anthropomorphic statements or personifications, it’s hard not to use it. What Allah does is what is at the core of His creation: Allah does beauty; Allah does mercy; Allah does compassion; Allah does happiness, righteousness, and goodness, because we have that inside of us. It has to originate somewhere. That’s what makes His creation respond. That’s what His creatures respond to.

We like company. Even the animals like company. The cat walks into the house and rubs up against you... then it scratches your furniture. First thing a dog does is jump on you, lick you, or slobber all over you, which is why we don’t have dogs here. It’s their nature. Everything wants companionship and recognition. At the core of that recognition is a sense of harmony and goodness. What does a flower do? It does beauty. What does a bee do? We talked about that last night. The flower looks good, and what the bee does, tastes good. Then someone owns it, names it, compiles it, files it. You file it in your mental experience file. Then when we observe nature, we observe the goodness and sincerity of Allah’s creation. We link things together.

We see that the goodness and sincerity of others is reflected in the balance and harmony of nature. The motivation is so deep in our hearts that we don’t even understand what motivates us to smell the flower, or tend to the bees, or respect

nature. We do at some level understand Allah's intention, the intention of the dynamic, of the goodness. We put the beautiful flowers together with the intention of sincerity in our minds. When someone gives you flowers, you associate it with love and sincerity. When you add that to the freedom of choice, the lower nature (*nafs ammāra*) takes you in other directions. You become less sensitive. The more sensitive you are, the more it takes you to Paradise / Jannah. The less sensitive you are, the more it takes you to Jahannam. In the middle of that is the *barzakh*, where our choice is shown to us and we know somewhat of the future of our story.

Not only are we seen by Allah Swt at all times, but that seeing is like the air. We are surrounded by the air at all times. A small, tiny portion of that air is used to keep us breathing. The rest is more than we need, but it's there for us. We should continuously be watching ourselves, making *muhasabat*, *muraqabah*, and *mushahadah*; witnessing the beauty of nature and contemplating it; watching our own responses. Remember what we say, that "I bear witness." *Ash-hadu ilāha illa-Llāh*. "I have seen this. I am telling you what I see, what I have tasted, what I have heard and experienced." We can only arrive there when we are sincere in our motivation. Allah is watching us, and yet we have to be watching Allah Swt.

Others are watching us—sometimes how you work, speak, act, serve, and receive, how you learn, how you teach. If we are involved in a very positive goal, and we have a mindset that is utmost sincerity; if we are involved in service *fī sabīli-Llāh*, for the sake of Allah Swt, for all that is good; if we are involved in these ways, we don't have much greed or desire for acceptance. We don't need recognition and are not filled with pride or self-importance. We are not dissatisfied. We are not complaining. We don't do things for our own self-aggrandizement or hypocrisy. We are on the *siratal mustaqim*.

There are inclinations in all of our hearts that may not be the most charitable, or the most generous, the most kind and compassionate, not necessarily filled with the deepest awareness of our potential. Certainly, any act that is performed for other than the purpose of praising Allah, and recognizing the presence of Allah within our own self, falls into that category. In the Qur'an we have many examples, like: **"Feed for the sake of Allah,"** or **"We don't expect from you any thanks or compensation."** These are attitudes of sincerity and real honesty and real truth. They are a matter of fact. We have to pray to develop within us an understanding, for a release from the core of our hearts, to take the accretions away from our hearts, and reveal the core of our heart. What is there is that center of goodness. All this goodness is at the deepest level of our hearts,

We are not starting from a place of sin or badness; we are starting from a place of *fitrah*, goodness. [We want to] correct inclinations in our hearts, and keep it always away from the superficial desires. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, ***"Acts depend on intention. If anyone migrates with the intention of gaining the world or to marry a certain woman, then his migration will be counted for that purpose with which he has left his house."*** That's all you're going to get, in other words. It's limited. No one says for how long. It could be a day, a year, or a lifetime. You can find someone really miserable with wealth, and it could be a lifetime of misery. The distance between Medina and Mecca is traversed by thousands, millions of travelers for many different purposes. But for the purpose of attaining the highest level of the *din* and for keeping oneself alert, the thing that distinguishes a *muhajir* from a common traveler (although the physical act is exactly the same) is the intention by which the action takes place. You can't tell by looking, and you can't tell even sometimes by asking.

The people who left Mecca to go to Medina to save the *din* from danger, and to form a new state or government in a new place were these types of individuals. Another person who traveled for another purpose with no connection to the Hijra, didn't fit into the same profile. Every day we are making these journeys, even the physical journey from our home to our work, from our work to where we take our food, and from there to the *masjid* for our prayers, and back again. The intention we carry on in our mini-Hijra are the most important things, and will determine eventually the meaning of that journey and the end of it. This concept, whether told in a philosophical framework or the framework of a story, remains true throughout history. What was the intention? Then you look at the actions. How strong was the intention? How alive is that intention?

When we came here 37 years ago, by the grace of Allah, it was something good, because we are still here. Many people say, 'Wow, you've been around a long time. You must be doing something right.' Many times we hear this. We hear it with our work at Legacy and with the community. Before that, where we were all led up to where we are. How it can be told what our intentions are is through our attitudes and the way we work, and the way we speak, the way we work with one another, and the way we live together in community; and the way we relax our hearts from anxiety through meditation, prayer, and *dhikr*; and the way we look at the future, which some of you are starting to do.

It is the correctness of the *niyyat* and the *ikhlas* that goes with it that will make the difference, that elevates a person's worldly actions to a level of prayer and *ibada*, that makes a person really an *abda-Llāh*. Whether you are going from here to there for a job, or halfway across the world or across the street, the *niyyat* and the *ikhlas* will determine the length of your prayer and the depth of your worship. It will determine the outcome and the results. It's possible you could have ten years of

constant prayer and service, *inshā'a-Llāh*. If there is a perversion or another agenda in that *niyyat*, or another desire in the hearts of the individual or the people at large, then slowly they degrade themselves.

That's why we have to make *muhasabat*. We can't plan anything without *muhasabat*. That's why we have to have *muraqabah*. You can't plan anything without contemplating and meditating upon it, *tafakkur* – not just opinions or ideas thrown out. What have you contemplated? What are the problems, the needs, the challenges, the solutions? Then enter with no frustration, no judgmentalness, no conflict, only love. Then there can be no failure, no loss, no worry. If Isa (as) represents the state of perfection, *masūm*, and *ikhlas* and the right *niyyat*, and the right direction, then that's right for them at that time. It is the same thing with the Prophet Mohammed (sal). Every day we pray 5 times a day. Why? We get dirty at least 5 times a day and need the *wudu*. Billy Graham, when asked, "Why do people get saved every day? Why isn't being saved one night enough?" said, "You go out into the world and get dirty." People who don't get this degrade themselves and others, regardless of the prayers they offer.

Over the centuries, there are many examples of people who built palaces and *masajid*, and institutions, and beautiful gardens, and edifices. Yet they don't mean anything because they are dead and empty, unless they have good intentions behind them and a good purpose, unless they bring light to people's lives. If our efforts, and labors and constructions, physical and internal, are to benefit ourselves and humanity, not just to welcome people into our homes or our community, but to give shelter and places of worship and sincerity, and a place for creative thinking and a place for building the future, then we will all reap the benefits. Not that we build them to reap the benefits, but the benefit is there. Though it is not important on one level that we reap them, we will get the *thawab* of Allah Swt. The reward will come

to us in good things, and goodness that comes from our *amal*, and our lives and our homes.

I wonder how you hear this? I wonder how the children hear it. The Messenger (sal) said, ***“Anyone who, without subjecting another person to cruelty or aggression, builds a magnificence 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 are benefited by these things.”*** Think about the trees we have planted here, and how many birds have found homes in them, and ants, and wasps... Can you imagine planting orange, date, or apple groves, and having people eat from them for a hundred years, or olives for 300 years? Each olive is filled with *thawab*. It’s not surprising that we should speak as we do here among ourselves about community. It’s not surprising that we should care about our brothers and sisters here and outside, about the sustainability of our work.

It is absolutely correct and right to do [to think] about the sustainability of Islam in this form of Tasawwuf, about sustainability of the right actions of the *ummah* around the world. It’s very important that we think and act and plan for generations. If you plan for generations, the generations must exist. If you don’t, then you are saying they don’t exist. They don’t exist for us; they don’t exist for you. By the Blessing and the Grace of Allah Swt, we are able to do that mentally and conceptualize things, but are we satisfied with our level of creativity and our energy? In another tradition, the Prophet (sal) said, ***“If a Muslim plants something or does farming, and if a bird or a man eats something grown by him, then he will gain virtue in its place.”*** Fill up those bird feeders. Each grain is *thawab*.

I guess we can’t shoot the groundhogs, unless we eat them... And I guess we could invite the coyotes locally to come and pee around our plants so the deer don’t eat

them. Every time they eat the seed or the plant, it is *thawab*. You are feeding Allah's creatures. At the same time, you have to sustain your community, so it's okay to put the fence around and keep the deer away. It's okay for people to kill them and eat them. That's all fine, if there is a reason. It's not surprising that we should care for our property and our land, but we should surprise ourselves a little more, if you know what I mean. We grow the food we grow in our beautiful gardens... Ya Mustafa... and [there are blessings for] everyone who works in them, Jelal and Diyaa and Abdun Nasr and Sahar, and everyone who goes and picks. But there has to be more to it, to give more, to gain more, to serve more. The Prophet (sal) said,

Whatever you feed your father is a charity from you, and whatever you feed your child is a means of reward for you, and whatever you feed your servant is a charity from you.

These are good guidelines for our daily life, and for our community. The fact is, as long as people remain obedient to Allah, there is awareness, and consciousness, and attunement, harmonization, and balance. As long as the intentions are pure and sincere, as long as our actions, movements, and attitudes reflect those intentions in our sleep and in our wakefulness, then all of this is considered *subhāna-Llāh*, for the praise and pleasure of Allah Swt. It is life-changing, earth changing, society changing, and community changing. Allah knows our society needs to be changed. Allah knows we need to make changes in our community.

It's not that the people aren't good or sincere, it's not that we aren't devoted and dedicated, but what is it that is at the root of our motivation? Is it to convert people to our religion? No. Is it to own them? No. Is it to guide them? Perhaps, to some degree, to direct people in the way that Allah says they should go. How is it that one group cannot praise the exact same work another group does, and not see the

hypocrisy in that? How is it possible a human being can be so blind and cruel to one another? But they are. Their intention has been distorted. Their minds have been corrupted, and have degenerated. There is something wrong with their intention.

Once, in the early days of Islam, and the followers were in dire poverty, a battle was to be fought. Some people came to join the Prophet (sal) and offered themselves to be sacrificed in the cause of Allah, but Allah's Messenger didn't allow them to take part in that jihad because of their incapacities and the needs. They returned with very sorrowful hearts and were deeply grieved at not being allowed to participate. And then the 'āyat came:

As for those who came to you and asked to be provided with mounts, it is acceptable that you said, "I can find no mounts for you," causing them to turn back, eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide their expenses. But firmness in faith and strong faith is never lost and never wasted.

The faith and desire of those people who volunteered wasn't lost or wasted, because Allah appreciated their sincerity and their faith. The Prophet said to the soldiers who were going with him, ***"There are some people who we have left behind in Medina. Wherever place or valley we may camp, they will be with us. For them, their intention is sufficient."*** And that's great. We need to review our intentions and we need to make practical action. I'm glad the process has begun, but we should not let it linger. If you begin to move forward, then move forward with dispatch and seize the moment. Bring your creativity and your talent, your knowledge and your capacities. *Amin.*

