

IKHLAS

(SINCERITY)

Definition:

In Arabic *Ikhlas* means purity; therefore when we speak of *Ikhlas* as a desired character it means purity of intention and motivation and that our goal is to worship and serve God alone in all our actions. Whatever we say or do or conceal in our hearts must be pure with the sole motivation of serving Allah alone. *Ikhlas* is part of being truthful to God.

We will limit our discussion of sincerity to the following concepts:

1. Sincerity is the basis for accepting our good deeds.
2. Sincerity is necessary for our Du'aa to be accepted.
3. Sincerity increases the reward of our good deeds.
4. Sincerity is one way for benefiting from the intercession of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
5. Our sincerity protects us from Satan.
6. Our sincerity will deliver us from our difficulties.
7. *Ikhlas* ensures happiness and inner peace.

IKHLAS IS THE BASIS FOR ACCEPTING OUR DEEDS

In order for our deeds to be accepted and counted in our favor two conditions must be fulfilled:

1. Our deeds must be good deeds.
2. Our motive and intention must be pure, to please Allah and serve Him.

The Qur'an emphasizes both of these two aspects:

﴿ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴾

[الكهف: ١١٠]

"whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner"

(Al-Kahf 18 : 110)

Hoping to meet our Lord means awaiting His reward for our devotion and our good deeds; therefore, if the motive driving our actions is to get ahead in this world, paying no attention to our eventual accountability, then in the Hereafter we will receive no reward. Alternatively, if we are patient seeking God's reward and what motivates our actions is sincere devotion to Allah, then, He has promised to give us the best reward.

How do we know that our deeds are good deeds or that our behavior is proper and acceptable to Allah? We know by following the guidelines of the Qur'an and by following the Sunnah (Tradition) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), then, we can be sure that we are following the right way.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was ordered to serve Allah with sincerity and devotion and to submit to Allah in Islam. Such an order is also binding on all Muslims who take the Prophet (PBUH) as their example.

﴿ قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ ﴾ [الزمر: ١١]

"Say: Verily, I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion;" (Az-Zumar 39 : 11)

﴿ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴾ [الزمر: ١٢]

"And I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah in Islam" (Az-Zumar 39 : 12).

Ikhlas as stated is part of expressing our gratitude to Allah for all His blessings. Whatever we have and enjoy is a gift from Allah. He gave us our existence and provided for us. He gave us our souls and conscience and the intellect to know Him and serve Him.

﴿ هُوَ الْحَيُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۗ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

[غافر: ٦٥]

"He is the Living (One): there is no god but He: call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!" (Ghafir 40 : 65)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained the importance of pure intentions as a basis for accepting our good deeds when he said,

Omar Bin Al-Khattab (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"Deeds are dependent on intentions, every person gets what he intends; whoever intends to migrate and please Allah and His Messenger, his effort is regarded as for Allah and His Messenger; those whose intention is to avail themselves of this life or to marry a woman, they get what they intended."

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

In another Hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) stressed that Allah's reward is reserved for those who seek His pleasure and whose actions are motivated only by sincere devotion to Him,

Abi Umama Al-Bahili (May Allah be pleased with him) said, "A man asked the Prophet (PBUH), Do you see a man who fights seeking reward and fame, what does he get?" The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "He gets nothing." The man asked him again three times, each time the Messenger of Allah said, "He gets nothing." Then he said, "Allah does not accept any deed that is not done purely for Him seeking His pleasure."

Narrated by Nesa'ee, Ahmad and Baihaqi

IKHLAS IS NECESSARY FOR ACCEPTING OUR PRAYERS

We are ordered to call on Allah seeking His help, guidance and mercy. Our Du'aa (call to Allah) will be answered in the way that Allah sees fit and good for us. One of the conditions that allows our Du'aa to be responded to is our sincerity and devotion.

As evidence for this concept is the Hadith related by Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

“Whoever stands up praying to Allah on the Night of Power with belief and devotion seeking his reward only from Allah, his previous sins will be forgiven; and whoever fasts Ramadan with belief and devotion to Allah seeking reward only from Allah, his previous sins will also be forgiven.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

IKHLAS INCREASES OUR REWARD

We are promised a reward for our good deeds. Allah promised to reward a good deed from ten to seven hundred times, perhaps even more depending upon the degree of difficulty and the purity of our intentions.

When we leave our home to pray in the mosque and the only motivation is that of seeking Allah’s pleasure, then, our reward is increased multiple folds. In the Hadith related by Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

The prayer of the man in a group (Jama’a prayer) is better than his prayer at home or in his work place more than twenty times because if one of you does his Wudo (ablution) well, then goes to the mosque nothing motivating him to go to the mosque except the prayer, then every step that he takes his status is elevated one degree and one sin is remitted, until he enters the mosque. When he enters the mosque, he is in prayer as long as the prayer is what keeps him there. The angels pray on his behalf as long as he is in his place of prayer. They say, ‘O Allah have mercy on him; O Allah forgive him; O Allah turn to him and accept his repentance’ as long as he does not harm anyone or breaks his ablution.

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

We learn from this Hadith:

1. When our intention and motive is pure and involves sincere devotion to Allah, our reward is increased.
2. Allah’s angels will continue to pray on our behalf as long as we are sincere and do not harm or offend others.
3. Doing our best to perfect our ablution and prayer also increases our reward.

In another Hadith, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) explained how to avail ourselves of the mercy of Allah by doing what is good and avoiding what is wrong. Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) related that Allah's messenger (PBUH) said,

“Allah has written the good deeds and the evil deeds.” Then he explained, “Whoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah will write it in his favor as one good deed. If he goes ahead and performs that good deed, Allah will write in his favor as ten good deeds to seven hundred good deeds or many more than that. Whoever intends to do a bad deed, but refrains from that bad deed, Allah will write it in his favor as one good deed; if he goes ahead and commits that bad deed, it will be written against him as only one bad deed.”

Narrated by Bokhari

We learn from this Hadith:

1. The importance of our good intentions for they count in our favor, even if we were prevented from doing the good deeds.
2. By fearing our accountability to Allah and refraining from committing bad deeds, we also earn good deeds.
3. We should avail ourselves of Allah's mercy and generosity as He multiplies our good deeds.

IKHLAS IS A WAY OF GAINING INTERCESSION

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) intercession on the Day of Judgment will serve several purposes:

1. A group of believers will be allowed to enter Paradise with no accountability.
2. Allah will forgive the sins of those who have gained the Prophet's (PBUH) intercession.
3. Some of those who enter Hell will be delivered out and their suffering ended because of the Prophet's (PBUH) intercession.
4. The status of the believers in Heaven will be elevated because of the Prophet's (PBUH) intercession.

How can we avail ourselves of such a blessing and gain the intercession of the Prophet (PBUH)? Obviously the best way is to exhibit firm belief in Allah and follow the Prophet's example and obey his

orders. Another way is to be sincere and devoted in our service to Allah. Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that he asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), "Who is the most happy with your intercession on the Day of Judgment among mankind?" The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"I thought no one but you would ask me about this O Abou Horaira, because I see that you are keen on my Hadith. The one most happy with my intercession on the Day of Judgment is he who says, 'There is no god but Allah' with full conviction, sincerity and devotion in his heart."

Narrated by Bokhari

IKHLAS PROTECTS US FROM SATAN

Allah promised to protect His righteous sincere servants from the evil influence of Satan. The Qur'an states,

﴿ قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴾ [ص: ٨٢]

"(Iblis) said: Then by Thy Power, I will put them all in the wrong,"
(Sa D 38 : 82)

﴿ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴾ [ص: ٨٣]

"Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy grace)" (Sa D 38 : 83)

When we are sincere and devoted in serving Allah and we obey His orders following His way, then we can see our way and focus on our goal. We will be able to receive God's guidance and control our desires, thereby being less likely to be influenced or tempted by Satan.

IKHLAS DELIVERS US OUT OF DIFFICULTY

Sincerity and Taqwa (God-Consciousness) go hand in hand. Allah promised those who have these qualities His help and that they will be delivered out of difficulty.

﴿ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴾ [الطلاق: ٢]

"And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out,"
(At-Talaq 65 : 2)

﴿ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ﴾ [الطلاق: ٣]

"And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine appointed a due proportion" (At-Talaq 65 : 3)

We should understand that tests and trials are the Sunnah of Allah, and that we must exhibit our faith in Him by patiently persevering.

﴿ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ ﴾

[المالك: ٢]

"He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving;"
(Al-Mulk 67 : 2)

IKHLAS GIVES US CONTENTMENT

When we serve Allah with sincerity and devotion, we submit our will to Him and accept His judgment. This gives us peace in our hearts and contentment. We realize that He controls our fate and we trust His will and know that He is Just and Wise. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) expressed these feelings of a true devoted sincere servant of Allah when he said in his Du'aa related to us by Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him),

“When the Prophet woke up at night for night prayer, he would say, ‘O Allah all praise is due to You. You are the light of the Heavens and the earth and all in between. You have all the praise; You are the sustainer of the Heavens and the earth and all in between. All praise is due to You for You are the truth and Your promise is the truth and Your word is the truth. To return to You is the truth, Heaven and Hell are the truth and the prophets are the truth and Muhammad is the truth. O Allah to You have I submitted and in You I do depend and put my trust. I believe in You and You are the Judge. Forgive my sins whatever I have

done before or whatever I may do later, whatever I reveal or hide. You are the First and the Last; there is no God but You.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

BENEFITS OF IKHLAS

1. Our good deeds are accepted.
2. Our Du'aa to Allah is accepted
3. We gain the pleasure of Allah and gain His paradise
4. Our good deeds are multiplied many times
5. Ikhlas gives us inner peace
6. We are delivered out of difficulties
7. The Muslim community improves if its members are sincere and devoted and cooperate in virtue.

SURAH AL-IKHLAS

This Chapter of the Qur'an signifies the true meaning of sincerity and devotion to Allah, since it stresses that God is One and there is none like unto Him. He is Eternal and every being derives its existence from Him. This Oneness of Allah or what is known as Tawheed is the essence of Islam.

﴿ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴾ [الإخلاص: ١]

"Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;" (Al-Ikhlās 112 : 1)

﴿ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴾ [الإخلاص: ٢]

"Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;" (Al-Ikhlās 112 : 2)

﴿ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴾ [الإخلاص: ٣]

"He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;" (Al-Ikhlās 112 : 3)

﴿ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴾ [الإخلاص: ٤]

"And there is none like unto Him" (Al-Ikhlās 112 : 4)