

## Honesty

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Honesty is one of the greatest of all moral virtues. From it springs forth many of the noblest of human qualities like integrity, chastity, and valor. Some people might suppose that honesty is restricted to words. This is not the case. Honesty can manifest itself in our actions as well as in our innermost state of being.

The great scholar and ethical thinker, al-Muhâsibî, once said: *“For honesty to be complete, it must exist in three things. It must exist in the heart as one’s faith, it must exist in the intentions behind one’s deeds, and it must be present in the words that one speaks.”*

Honesty penetrates to the innermost fiber of a person when his inner being is in harmony with his outer self. A person’s deeds are honest only when he practices what he professes. Dishonesty in deed is more despicable than dishonesty in word, for it is naught but a hypocritical display of sincerity. This is what the brothers of Joseph (peace be upon him) did when they came with Joseph’s bloody clothing to their father. Allah says: *“So they came with his shirt stained with false blood.” [Sûrah Yûsuf: 18]*

Allah warns us saying: *“O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is loathsome indeed with Allah that you say what you do not do.” [Sûrah al-Saff: 3]*

Truth in word is the most familiar and obvious kind of truth, since every statement that is inconsistent with reality is obviously a lie. Allah says: *“Verily those who fabricate a lie against Allah will not find success.”*

Allah commands the believers, saying: *“O you who believe, fear Allah and be among those who are honest.”*

Allah gives glad tidings to the believers who are honest. He says: *“Allah will reward the honest people for their honesty.”*

Allah informs us that our honesty will bring us good even in this world: *“And when a matter is resolved upon, it would be best for them if they were true to Allah.”* And of course, honesty will be of doubtless benefit to us in the Hereafter. Allah says: *“This is the day that the honest people will benefit from their honesty.” [Sûrah al-Mâ’idah: 119]*

Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) was renowned for his honesty long before he began to receive revelation and became Allah’s Messenger. He had been known among his people for years as al-Amîn (the Trustworthy).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) informed us of the effects that both honesty and dishonesty have on our personalities when he said: "Honesty brings about security and lying fosters doubts."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: "Honesty leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man remains honest and concerned about honesty until he is recorded as an honest man with Allah. Lying leads to sinfulness and sinfulness leads to the Fire. A man keeps lying and remains partial to lies until he is recorded as a liar with Allah." [*Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim*]

He also explained the effects that honesty and dishonesty have on our interpersonal dealings: "Honesty and clarity are blessed for both parties to a sale, while concealment and deceit destroy the blessings of their sale." [*Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim*]

We must be honest in our relationship with Allah. There are many dimensions to this most important expression of honesty. There is our sincerity to Allah. Then there is being cognizant that Allah is ever watchful of what we do. There is the sense of humility and shame that we must feel before Him. If we truly want to be honest in our relationship with Allah, we must become so fully sincere to Him that there remains in our hearts no other motive for what we do but to seek His pleasure. We must care nothing for the thanks and appreciation of our fellow men. We can achieve this by making our greatest concern the attainment of Allah's mercy. We must be constantly aware that Allah is ever watchful over us. This will make us feel too shy to ever willingly disobey Allah.

Honesty with other people is also extremely important. There are many aspects to this as well.

First, we must be honest in our dispensation towards others. We should not behave deceptively and present a false face to people. Instead, we must be genuine and straightforward with people as much as possible.

We must be honest in what we say. This requires from us to be careful to ascertain the truth of the news that we hear before we go ahead and pass it on to others. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "It is enough to make a person a liar that he tells others everything that he hears."

We must be honest in giving advice to people. We should be sincere in our advice and truly do our best to help people avoid misfortune and attain what is good for them.

We need to be even more honest with our spouses. We must be able to confide in them and speak freely to them about our concerns, our secrets, and our ambitions. A husband or wife is a life partner, a friend, a confidant. The more openly a husband and wife are able to communicate with each other in an atmosphere of trust and confidence, the stronger their relationship will be.

Honesty, in fact, engenders strength on every level. On the personal level, it provides

integrity, self worth, and inner fortitude. On the social level, it lends depth and substance to our relationships with other people. On the spiritual level, it brings about the sincerity to our Lord that is the key to our salvation.