

SINCERITY IN WORSHIP: WHAT IS IKHLAS? (PART 1 OF 2)

Rating: 3.0

Description: A discussion of the meaning of Ikhlas and its importance in the life of a Muslim.

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Published on: 08 Sep 2014

Last modified on: 23 Feb 2015

Objectives

- To give a deeper understanding of the concept of *Ikhlas* and offer advice as to how it can be easily implemented into one's life.

Arabic Terms

- Ihsan* - perfection or excellence. Islamically, it is to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him. While one does not see Allah, he or she is aware that Allah see all.
- Ikhlas* - sincerity, purity or isolation. Islamically it denotes purifying our motives and intentions to seek the pleasure of Allah. It is also the name of the 112th chapter of Quran.
- Riyaa* – It comes from the word *ra'aa* meaning to see, to behold, to view. Thus the word *riyaa* means showing off, hypocrisy, and dissimulation. Islamically *riyaa* means to perform acts which are pleasing to Allah with the intention of pleasing other than Allah.
- Shariah* - Islamic Law.
- Shirk* – a word that implies ascribing partners to Allah, or ascribing divine attributes to other than Allah, or believing that the source of power, harm and blessings comes from another besides Allah.
- Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- Surah* – chapter of the Quran.
- Zakah* – obligatory charity.

An Arabic to English dictionary tells us that the word *ikhlas* means sincerity, purity or isolation. The word *ikhlas* comes from the Arabic word *akh-la-sa* and it means to render a deed free of *riyaa* so that there is no consideration other than



Allah. Bearing this in mind, an Islamic glossary will often describes the word *ikhlas* as the act of purifying motives or intentions so that actions are done primarily to seek the pleasure of Allah. When we combine these definitions with the English dictionary definition of sincerity - being free from pretence, deceit or hypocrisy - we begin to understand what *ikhlas* is.

Ikhlas is purifying one's deeds from all contamination by *shirk*, in order to worship Allah in the correct way. For a person to cultivate and maintain real *ikhlas* he must avoid anything that calls into question Allah's right to be worshipped as the One. *Surah* number 112 is called Al-Ikhlās and it explains very clearly the Oneness of Allah. More detailed information can be obtained here, <http://www.newmuslims.com/lessons/253/>

“Say, ‘He is Allah, (the) One. Allah-us-Samad (The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks). He begets not, nor was He begotten; And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.’” (Quran 112)

Ikhlas is being honest with Allah, and worshipping Him with *ihsan*. *Ikhlas* is closely linked to *ihsan*. When a person is consistently aware that Allah sees all he is more likely to remember the importance of *ikhlas*. When a person does something sincerely for Allah, he or she is no longer concerned with receiving praise or reward from anyone but Allah. It does not matter who sees you or who does not see you. Sometimes a deed can be done for Allah's sake but the intention is tainted with boasting and showing off; this is *riyaa* and it may nullify the rewards that a believer is seeking. More information about *riyaa* can be found here, <http://www.newmuslims.com/lessons/96/> and will be discussed further in part 2.

“And whether you hide what is in your breast or reveal it, Allah knows it...” (Quran 3:29)

“...And if you join others in worship with Allah surely your deeds will be in vain and you will certainly be among the losers.” (Quran 39:65)

In order that a believer's deeds and actions are accepted by Allah they must be performed with *ikhlas*, they must be preceded by the right intention and they must be carried out according to the *shariah*.

“And they were commanded not but they should worship Allah and worship none but him alone, and give zakah, and that is the right religion.” (Quran 98:5)

Prophet Muhammad emphasised that, “Allah is Pure and He accepts only that which is pure”^[1] thus the *Sunnah* gives prominence to the fact that Allah accepts only that which is pure and done solely for His sake. For example, Khalid ibn al-Walid was removed from his post as commander of the army by Caliph Umar. Rather than being offended and refusing to fight, Khalid fought even harder. When he was asked why, he said: “I fight for Allah not for Umar.”

Say, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.” (Quran 6:162)

The acceptance of a person’s deeds by Allah depends on purity and sincerity; because it is with such *ikhlas* that a person can attain a high rank in the sight of Allah. In fact with the right intention and a pure heart a person can even be rewarded for an action that they were unable to perform. Prophet Muhammad said, “Verily Allah has recorded the good deeds and the evil deeds.” He then informed those around him that, “Whosoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed...”^[2]

Everyday life causes our levels of *ikhlas* to wax and wane and to rise and fall. There are many ways in which to obtain or increase our *ikhlas*. They include;

- Doing righteous deeds. The more deeds we do, the easier they will become, the more close we will get to Allah and our hearts will become more sincere and pure.
- Seeking knowledge. If we understand what we are doing and why, we can perform all actions in accordance with the *shariah*. Doing so will make our hearts softer, more pure.
- Always checking our intention. Imam Ahmad said that we should ask ourselves before performing an action, “Is this for the sake of Allah?”

Ikhlas has been said to be the foundation on which all our deeds and actions are built. If the foundation is corrupt the structure can be easily broken. Guarding our *ikhlas* is important and will be discussed further in part 2.

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim.*

The web address of this article:

<https://www.newmuslims.com/articles/262/sincerity-in-worship>

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