

Prophetic Narrations: Sincerity

Description: A brief introduction to Imam An-Nawawi and an explanation of the first *hadith* in his collection known as Imam An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith.

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Category: Lessons > [Prophet Muhammad](#) > [Selected Sayings](#)

Objective

- To understand who Imam An-Nawawi is, the importance of his *ahadith* collection and a concise explanation of the first *hadith*.

Arabic Terms

- *Hadith* - (plural " *ahadith* ") is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Niyyah* - Intention
- *Ibadah* - worship
- *Fiqh* - Islamic jurisprudence
- *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 the Quran.

Introduction

Imam An-Nawawi (1233 " 1278 CE) was born in a small village named Nawa, situated in the vicinity of Damascus. Before the age of ten he had memorised the entire Quran and at the age of nineteen he went to Damascus to study. There Imam Nawawi learned from more than 20 celebrated masters in various fields and disciplines including the study of *ahadith* and Islamic jurisprudence.



It is said that *Imam* An-Nawawi was an ascetic and pious man, often sleep deprived due to worshipping or writing. He is known to have enjoined people to do good and prevented them from evil doing. Although he wrote more than 40 books, the most well-known of these is undoubtedly his collection of "The Forty Hadith".

For over 800 years scholar and student alike have benefitted from this book. Each

hadith in this collection teaches us about one of the fundamentals of Islam and the *ahadith* were taken predominantly from the collections of Saheeh Bukhari and Saheeh Muslim.

This is the first in a series of *ahadith* from the book.

Hadith 1

The first *hadith* in this collection is one narrated to us by Umar ibn Al-Khattab. He said that he heard Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, say the following:

oeActions are judged by their *niyyah*, so each man will have what he intended. Thus, he whose migration (*hijrah*) was to Allah and His Messenger, his migration is to Allah and His Messenger; but he whose migration was for some worldly thing or for marriage, his migration is to that for which he migrated."

This *hadith* occurred at a time when a man migrated from Mecca to Medina in order to marry and not for the sake of Islam. It is said to be one of the greatest *ahadith* in Islam because it can help a believer evaluate and judge actions of the heart and decide whether or not they can be considered *ibadah*. Imam As-Shafi (767 -820 CE) called it one third of knowledge and said it related to about seventy topics of *fiqh*. It is believed that Imam An-Nawawi started with this *hadith* because he wanted to remind every person who reads the book about the importance of *ikhlas*.

Prophet Muhammad began this *hadith* with a principle " actions are judged by their *niyyah* (intentions). He then gave us three examples; the first is an exemplary action, migration for the sake of Allah. The second and third actions are examples of situations in which we might need to evaluate our *niyyah*, migration for a worldly thing in general and migration more specifically in order to get married. Assuming that our intention is to make all aspects of our daily lives *ibadah* by doing them for the sake of Allah, we need to understand that actions will be sound if their intentions are sound but if their intentions are corrupted then the actions will be corrupted. If we make the *niyyah* for Allah Alone then the permissible actions become rewardable.

Being sincere, truthful and honest in our *ibadah* is one of the conditions that must be fulfilled if our good deeds are to be accepted by Allah. One of the root causes of insincerity is doing things in order to fulfil our own earthly desires. Imam Al-Harawi, who died in 846 CE, warned us that there were seven types of desires that could corrupt our *ikhlas*. The desire to:

1. Make ourselves appear good in the hearts of others.
2. Seek the praises of others.
3. Avoid being blamed by others.
4. Seek the glorification of others.

5. Seek the wealth of others.
6. Seek the love of others.
7. Seek the help from something other than Allah.

Therefore it is wise for a believer to check their intentions and their *ikhlas*, not only before the obligatory acts of worship, but also throughout the course of the day. If necessary we can boost our *ikhlas* in three easy ways.

1. By doing more righteous deeds.
2. Seeking knowledge.
3. Remembering to check our *niyyah*.

Four main things contradict *ikhlas* and will therefore nullify any good intentions we are trying to cultivate. They are:

1. Committing sins.
2. Associating others with Allah.
3. Performing an act of worship in order to show off.
4. Being a hypocrite.

It is worth remembering, that whether we are aware of it or not, every single act we perform when going about our daily lives has an intention attached to it. Therefore, teaching ourselves to remember Allah often during the day, and thinking about pleasing Him, will help us to make sincere, correct, and rewardable intentions.

Imam Ibn Uthaymeen said that this *hadith* teaches us that if a person intends to do a good deed, but is then unable to complete it due to any obstacle in his way, the reward for what he intended would still be recorded for him. This is due to the fact that Prophet Muhammad said: "Allah has recorded the good deeds and the evil deeds. Whoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it with Himself as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times, or more than that. But if he intends to do an evil deed and does not do it, Allah records it as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it as one single evil deed."

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