



Being Truthful and Lying

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Being truthful means speaking the truth and also saying things that reflect reality. Being truthful is one of the necessities of a human society, one of the virtues of human behaviour, and brings great benefits, whilst lying is one of the major elements of corruption in human society, and the cause of the destruction of social structure and ties, one of the most evil features of bad conduct, and causes widespread harm. Hence Islam commanded truthfulness and forbade lying.

﴿يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ﴾

(سورة التوبة)

Allaah said: **“O you who believe! Fear Allaah, and be with those who are true (in word and deeds).”**

(Qur'an 9:119)

Ibn Katheer said: “It means: be truthful and adhere to truthfulness, and you will be among its people and will be saved from calamity, and this will make a way out for you from your problems.”

﴿فَلَوْ صَدَقْتُمْ اللّٰهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهَمْ﴾

(سورة محمد)

Allaah says: **“... if they had been true to Allaah, it would have been better for them.”** (Qur'an 47:21)

‘Abd- Allaah Ibn Mas’ood said: “The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: ‘You must be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man will keep speaking the truth and striving to speak the truth until he will be recorded with Allaah as a siddeeq (speaker of the truth). Beware of telling lies, for lying leads to immorality and immorality leads to Hellfire. A man will keep telling lies and striving to tell lies until he is recorded with Allaah as a liar.’” (Muslim)

This Hadeeth indicates that truthfulness leads to righteousness, an all-embracing concept that includes all kinds of goodness and different kinds of righteous deeds. Immorality is basically an inclination towards deviation from the truth, and the immoral person is one who is inclined to turn away from the path of guidance. Hence immorality and righteousness are incompatible.

Al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Abi Taalib ؓ said: “I memorized from the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ: ‘Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt, for truthfulness is certainty and tranquility, whilst lying is doubt and confusion.’” (Tirmidhi)

In the lengthy Hadeeth of Abu Sufyaan رضي الله عنه describing his meeting with Heraclius, Abu Sufyaan رضي الله عنه said: “(Heraclius) said, ‘What does He (the prophet ﷺ) command you to do?’ I said, ‘He says: worship Allaah alone and do not associate anything in worship with Him, and abandon that which your forefathers did. He commands us to pray, to be truthful, to be chaste and to uphold the ties of kinship.’ ” (Bukhaari and Muslim)

Hakeem Ibn Hizaam reported that the prophet ﷺ said: “Two parties to a deal have the option of changing their minds until they part; if they are open and honest, their deal will be blessed, and if they conceal and tell lies, the blessing of their deal will be diminished.” (Bukhaari and Muslim)

Truthfulness includes being truthful towards Allaah by worshipping Him sincerely; being truthful towards one’s own soul by making it adhere to the laws of Allaah; and being truthful with people in one’s words and by keeping one’s promises, and in dealings such as buying, selling and marriage, so there should be no deceiving, cheating, falsifying or withholding of information. Thus a person should be the same on the inside and the outside.

In regards to lying, it is highly forbidden, and is of varying degrees of abhorrence and sin. The most obnoxious form of lying is falsely attributing things to Allaah and His Messenger, because this involves fabrication about the religion and is an act of outrage against Allaah. Hence one of the characteristics of the prophet ﷺ is that he truthfully conveyed that which Allaah commanded him to convey. So Allaah said:

﴿فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (سورة الأنعام)

“... who does more wrong than one who invents a lie against Allaah, to lead mankind astray without knowledge. Certainly Allaah guides not the people of oppression” (Qur’an 6:144)

﴿وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أُولَٰئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (سورة هود)

“And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against Allaah? Such will be brought before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, ‘These are the ones who lied against their Lord!’ No doubt! The curse of Allaah is on the oppressors” (Qur’an 11:18)

Equally bad is lying about the prophet ﷺ, as he is reported to have said: “Whoever lies about me deliberately, let him take his place in Hell.” (Bukhaari and Muslim)

The basic rule with regard to lying is that it is not permitted, but there are certain circumstances in which Islam permits lying to serve a greater purpose or to prevent harm.

One of these situations is when a person mediates between two disputing parties in order to reconcile between them, if reconciliation cannot be achieved in any other way except lying. The prophet ﷺ said: “He is not a liar, who reconciles between people and conveys something good or says something good.” (Bukhaari)

Another example is a man’s speaking to his wife, or a woman speaking to her husband, with regard to matters that will strengthen the ties of love between them, even if that is accompanied by exaggeration. Asma’ Bint Yazeed (radi Allaahu anha) said: “The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: ‘Lying is not permitted except in three cases: a man’s speaking to his wife to make her happy; lying at times of war; and lying in order to reconcile between people.’” (Muslim)

One of the most important forms of both being truthful and lying is in the area of promises and covenants. Being truthful in promises and covenants is one of the characteristics by which the believers are known. Both promises and covenants involve saying something about an issue to confirm that you will do it, especially with regard to one’s duties towards Allaah. Allaah said, praising some of His slaves:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴾ (سورة المؤمنون)

“Those who are faithfully true to their trusts (all the duties which Allaah has ordained, honesty, and moral responsibility etc.) and to their covenants.” (Qur’an 23:8)

﴿ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة)

“... Such are the people of the truth and they are AlMuttaqûn (pious)” (Qur’an 2:177)

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