

E A S Y

*Good Deeds*



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Copyright: Turath Publishing 1438/2016

ISBN: 978-1-906949-41-9

eISBN: 978-1-906949-58-7

Reprints: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

*Published by:*

Turath Publishing

79 Mitcham Road +44 (20) 8767 3666

London SW17 9PD [www.turath.co.uk](http://www.turath.co.uk)

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*General editor* Yahya Batha

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Usmani, Mufti Taqi

Title Easy Good Deeds

I. Title

*Cover design & typesetting* ARM ([www.whitethreadpress.com](http://www.whitethreadpress.com))

*Printed by* Mega Printers, Istanbul ([mega.com.tr](http://mega.com.tr))

*Distributors for UK & Europe*

Azhar Academy Ltd.

54-56 Little Ilford Lane

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## Good Intention

Intention is an alchemical formula that Allah ﷻ has given the believers, and which can with a little effort turn even dust into gold. The Prophet ﷺ said in one hadith:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

Actions are based upon intentions.<sup>1</sup>

Some people misunderstand this hadith to mean that through a good intention, impermissible deeds become permissible and sins become acts of reward. This is totally wrong. A sin is always a sin and will remain impermissible, regardless of how noble the intention is. For instance, if a person steals from someone's house with the intention of giving the stolen wealth in charity, he will not be absolved of the sin of stealing.

The correct meaning of this hadith is as follows:

1. Any good deed will only earn reward if performed with the right intention. For instance, *ṣalāh* will only earn reward when one prays for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. If a person performs *ṣalāh* to impress others, he will actually be sinful instead of earning reward.

2. The second meaning, which is what we wish to discuss here, is that permissible deeds do not inherently earn a person reward or punishment. However, if they are done with a good intention, they become acts of worship and earn reward.

For example, eating is a permissible act. However, if one eats with the intention to use the strength gained from the food to obey Allah ﷻ, the act of eating will earn reward. Similarly, if one eats

with the intention of fulfilling the rights of the body which Allah ﷻ has ordained, or to enjoy the food and thus sincerely thank Allah ﷻ, eating with these intentions will also earn one reward.

In summary, there is no permissible action in life that cannot be transformed into an act of worship and thus reward through a good intention.

Hereunder are a few examples of how we can make our daily actions a means of reward:

- (a) All aspects of earning a livelihood, whether by trade, employment, agriculture or workmanship, will be a means of reward if done with the intention of rightly fulfilling the duties enjoined by Allah ﷻ towards oneself and one's family. Furthermore, if one intends to spend whatever remains, after fulfilling one's personal and family needs, to help the poor and for other righteous deeds, one will earn further reward.
- (b) When a person is studying and intends to serve humanity through his knowledge, he will continue to earn reward for this intention as long as he is engaged in his studies, *in shā' Allāh*.<sup>2</sup> Examples of this are a student of religion studying to propagate the religion, a medical student to serve the ill, an engineering student to serve his people, or studying any other skill to serve those in need of one's skills.
- (c) Moreover, whatever profession a person adopts, one should think that sustenance is the responsibility of Allah ﷻ. A person will receive it in any case and there are many ways to acquire it, but choosing this particular profession is to serve the creation thereby. In this manner, this profession will also become a means of reward.

For example, if someone becomes a doctor, his intention behind choosing this means of livelihood among others should be to help people who are suffering. In this case, he will earn reward for his intention, even if he charges reasonably for his services. And when



this is genuinely his intention, there will be occasions when he will see a poor patient, and thus treat him for free or at a discounted rate.

Another person wants to trade in clothes, choosing this profession amongst others to help people fulfil the religious obligation of clothing themselves. It is hoped this will also earn a person reward, *in shā' Allāh*. Similarly, a civil servant who hopes to have opportunities to fulfil peoples needs will also earn reward for his intention, *in shā' Allāh*. In short, there is no profession in which a good intention cannot be made.

- (d) Likewise, a person should wear good clothes to show the blessings Allah ﷻ has granted him and to please those who see him, not so they might consider him lofty or wealthy.
- (e) One should love his children, because it was the practice of the Prophet ﷺ to love children.
- (f) One should help out around the home, because the Prophet ﷺ would lend a hand to his family in household chores.
- (g) One should speak cheerfully with one's wife and children, as it was a practice of the Prophet ﷺ and he enjoined treating them well.
- (h) Hospitality should be shown to guests, because honouring ones guest is a practice of the Prophet ﷺ and among the rights of a believer.
- (i) If one is to plant a sapling or tree in the garden or home, the intention should be to benefit people or animals and to please onlookers.
- (j) One should make one's handwriting legible and pleasant, so that people find it easy to read.
- (k) A woman should adorn herself to please her husband, and a man should remain neat and presentable to please his wife.
- (l) One should engage in permissible recreation within limits, to remain active and energetic for performance of

obligatory actions (*farā'id*).

- (m) One should wear a watch to know *ṣalāh* times and to help spend one's time in good deeds, by appreciating the value of time.

These are just a few miscellaneous, brief examples. Otherwise, as Imam Ghazālī رحمته الله has rightly stated in *Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm*, there is no permissible action in a person's life which, if done with the right intention, cannot be changed into an act of reward. Even if the husband and wife make love, with the intention of fulfilling each other's rights and keeping themselves chaste, they will be rewarded for this action too.

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<sup>1</sup> Bukhārī (1) and Muslim (1907).

<sup>2</sup> *In shā' Allāh* translates as: 'if Allah wishes'. However, it has been written in its transliterated form throughout the work instead of its translation. This is because *in shā' Allāh* is a phrase which Muslims use habitually, and maintaining the transliteration helps to preserve this [Tr. note].

## *Du‘ā’ (Supplication)*

Allah ﷻ loves His servants making *du‘ā’* to Him. If a person is constantly asked for one thing or the other, no matter how generous he may be, he will eventually get fed up and become angry. With Allah ﷻ, however, He becomes more pleased the more one asks of Him. A hadith even states that whoever does not ask of Allah ﷻ, He becomes angry with him.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, *du‘ā’* is not just a means of achieving one’s goals, but rather an act of worship in itself. In other words, *du‘ā’* for one’s personal and worldly needs is considered an act of worship and one is rewarded for it. The more one engages in *du‘ā’* the closer one draws to Allah ﷻ. Moreover, a person should not only engage in *du‘ā’* at times of constraint and difficulty, but rather one should regularly make *du‘ā’* during times of happiness too.

A hadith states that whoever wants his *du‘ā’* to be answered during difficult times should make abundant *du‘ā’* during comfortable times.<sup>2</sup>

Allah ﷻ has promised in the Qur’an: “Call Me, I will respond to you.”<sup>3</sup>

This promise of Allah ﷻ can never be wrong. Thus, one should make *du‘ā’* with conviction of its acceptance.

However, acceptance has different forms. At times, one receives what he made *du‘ā’* for, but sometimes Allah ﷻ knows the desired object not to be appropriate or beneficial for this person, so Allah ﷻ grants something better and more beneficial, either in this world or in the Hereafter. Thus, every *du‘ā’* has three benefits:

1. One’s needs are fulfilled through *du‘ā’*;

2. One is rewarded for every *du‘ā’*;
3. Abundant *du‘ā’* strengthens one’s relationship with Allah ﷻ.

Furthermore, although it is part of the etiquette of *du‘ā’* to face the *qiblah* (direction of the Ka‘bah), raise one’s hands, make *du‘ā’* verbally, and to begin the *du‘ā’* with praise of Allah ﷻ and blessings (*ṣalāt*) upon the Prophet ﷺ, one can also make *du‘ā’* without these things if the opportunity does not allow. In this way, Allah ﷻ has made the act of *du‘ā’* so simple that one can make *du‘ā’* almost anywhere and at any time, for example, whilst one is on the move or busy working. And if one cannot make *du‘ā’* verbally, such as in the bathroom, one can still make *du‘ā’* in one’s heart.

Also, *du‘ā’* is not only for major affairs, but rather one should ask Allah for every need, large or small. A hadith teaches us to make *du‘ā’* even when one’s shoelace breaks.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, one should develop the habit of making *du‘ā’* to Allah ﷻ whenever the smallest of needs arise. Even when faced by the most ordinary trouble, one should ask Allah ﷻ for its removal. Just as a child calls upon its mother when in need of something or when experiencing the minutest difficulty, a servant should call upon Allah ﷻ and do so continuously. No matter what work one is engaged in, one should keep asking Allah ﷻ for something or the other. Make a habit of this and see for yourself. *In shā’ Allāh*, one will progress rapidly as a result.

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1 Tirmidhī (3373).

2 Tirmidhī (3382).

3 Qur’an 40:60.

4 Tirmidhī (3604).

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