

SINCERITY

REVIVE PACK

QURAN & HADITH | TALKING POINTS | SELF EVALUATION ROADMAP | ACTIVITIES | RESOURCES

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How to Use this Packet

This month's Revive focuses on a very personal and crucial aspect of our faith - **iklhas, or sincerity**. This packet provides facilitators with material that can be utilized to customize a one-time or multi-week program focused on sincerity with a variety of age groups, though most of the material is best suited for the youth to young adults range.

The conversation starters can be used as either standalone reflection questions in introducing the topic or integrated into post-activity reflection sessions. The hadith and Quranic connections included in this packet are also categorized to make it easy to reference during a group discussion and can also be used for the purposes of a larger group activity or as material for a khatiras at the beginning or conclusion of your program. The experiential activities include a funfilled icebreaker activity that is great to use at the start or in the middle of a program, a more visual demonstrative activity that can either be done by the facilitator in front of the group or as a small group hands-on activity, and a larger group activity that encourages critical thinking and active reflection.





Additionally, something new in this packet is a resource guide highlighting main points from each chapter of **"Sincerity: The Essential Quality"**, a publication by Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi translated and adapted by MAS Youth. The resource guide may be used as not only facilitator's notes but also as a hand-out for a one-time program or even in conjunction with the publication itself (linked in the resource section) as part of a multi-week program focused on Sincerity.

To utilize this packet to build out a multi-week program, you can break the weeks down by groups of chapters in the booklet, ask participants to write reflections or prepare and share their own khatiras based on the hadith and Quranic connections, implement one experiential activity per week, and lead facilitated reflection sessions at each gathering.

Sincerity

The Essential Quality



Sh. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi Translated and adapted by MAS Youth





CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- What does sincerity mean to you in your daily life? How can you tell if someone is sincere or insincere? How does that impact how you receive their words or actions toward you?
- What is the relationship between intention and sincerity? Why do we renew our intentions? How do we renew our intentions?
- Think about the majority of actions you take during the day. Reflect upon whether or not you are doing them for the sake of status, wealth, popularity, or esteem from others. Think about whether you need to reform your goals or simply renew your intentions to ensure what you do is primarily and ultimately for the sake of Allah.
- What is riya? What is the relationship between riya and sincerity

 how do they impact each other? Can someone be sincere and yet feel the effects of riya? How can you tell this is happening?
 Did you experience this before if so, what did you do to renew your intentions?
- In what ways are you able to monitor, maintain, and increase sincerity in your words, actions, and deeds?
- Can one be sincere in their word or action and have an impure intention? Can one be insincere in their word or action and have a pure intention? How so?
 - Think about examples in which someone may be sincere in their action and has a pure intention but they are not acting in accordance with Islam. Do you recognize this in your own life?



Resource Notes for Facilitators



Points are shared from the book "**Sincerity The Essential Quality"**, by Sh. Yusuf Al Qaradawi (Translated and adapted by MAS Youth).

In the book, Sh. Al-Qaradawi quotes Sh. Hasan Al-Banna who believed sincerity to be one of the most important essential qualities for a proactive Islamic worker:

"Through this sincerity, the Muslim brother and sister should seek the pleasure of Allah in their speech, actions, and jihad, without looking for material profit, status, or worldly advancement of any sort. They should be soldiers seeking understanding and faith, not individuals seeking their self-interest: "Say: Truly my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds" (6:162).

Allah is our aim, He is the The Greatest, and to Him belongs all praise.



What is Sincerity

- Sincerity is to seek the pleasure of Allah through actions that are free from worldly impurities, uncontaminated by desires; not seeking status, wealth, popularity or the esteem of any creation.
- Riya the antithesis of sincerity, was considered a disastrous sin by the Prophet Mohammed (sws) and his companions
 - "During the life of Prophet Mohammed (sws), we used to consider riya' the lesser shirk." (Shaddad ibn Aws)

• The Challenge of Sincerity:

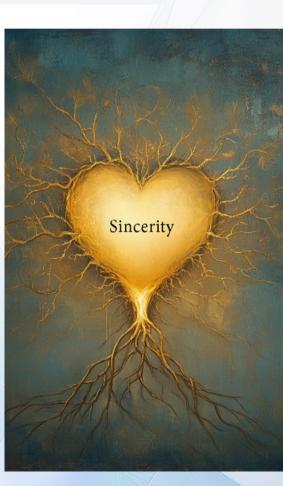
- Cleansing actions from worldly desires and secondary motives is not an easy task.
 - Purifying intentions
 - Shielding oneself from riya' and corruption
 - Riya can be chased out only to reappear in a different way
 - Be on guard from the shaitan (new ways to penetrate the heart)
- A righteous man was once asked, "What characteristic is most difficult for the soul to attain?" "Sincerity," he answered. "For it gains nothing in this world."

• The Benefits of Sincerity:

- In the Quran: Allah commands His servants to observe sincerity (especially in the verses revealed in Mecca).
- Allah's acceptance of your actions

• Criteria for Actions to Be Accepted by Allah:

- It should be a sincere action with the correct intention.
 - Ensures the purity of the heart, which is hidden
- It should be in accordance with the sunnah and Islamic law, as derived from the Quran.





- Ensures the purity of the action itself, usually not hidden
- The best deeds are the ones that are both the most sincere and correct
 - AI-Fudayl: "A sincere action will not be accepted if it is not correct and a correct action will not be accepted if it is not sincere. Sincerity means that the action is for Allah and correctness means that it is according to the sunnah."
- Example: building a mosque for a corrupted intention or purpose
 - Hadith: "Whoever establishes a mosque seeking the pleasure of Allah, Allah, will build for him a house in Paradise."
- Spending long hours in community projects and Islamic work – intentions should only be toward Allah, not mixed with other objectives
 - The reward of an action is lost when intentions are mixed.
- When the motive to please Allah is greater than the worldly motive, we have a deep hope in the Grace of Allah that the deed will not be fully rejected.
 - If our intentions are mixed we pray Allah may grant us a partial reward
 - We require caution and awareness in our intentions
 - Qur'an 4:40
- Seeking the pleasure of people or gaining material benefit not only takes away reward but also invokes the punishment of Allah.
 - This is turning away from one's Creator, chasing after others, making them equals to Allah
 - Qur'an 11:15-16





"Am I Really Sincere?" Here's How to Know:



Avoiding fame

- "He who loves fame cannot be truthful to allah" (Ibrahim Ibn Adham)
- These words of wisdom should not be misunderstood as an invitation to isolation or disinterest in social affairs – only as a caution to believers of the effects of praise and recognition in order to guard the heart's sincerity. Fame in and of itself is not scorned. Rather it is the pursuit of fame and status.

Self-reproach

- A sincere person always worries that he has not fulfilled his duty and that his shortcomings have taken him far from the company of Allah. (the opposite of arrogance)
- The source of taqwa, God-consciousness, is only the heart.

Cherish hidden actions

- A sign of a sincere heart is to love hidden, inconspicuous deeds more than those surrounded by the allure of publicity and attention.
 - "The foundations of buildings hide modestly, though they carry the walls and roofs with firmness." (Shawqi)

Contentment as a follower

 The sincere individual works with the same vigor and enthusiasm whether her position is one of leadership or not. Such a person does not seek out positions of power and leadership. However, if they are given to her she carries them firmly and trusts in Allah.

One objective

 A sincere heart is unconcerned with the opinion of other people. Sincerity frees a person from the stress and concern that results from trying to please everyone. Life is simplified because he yearns only to please Allah.

Loving and rejecting only for Allah's sake

- The sincere Muslim directs his love and anger only through the channels that Allah commands him to – motivated by what pleases Allah, not by personal wants and preferences.
- Our mission of practicing Islam and spreading its message is not the exclusive property of anyone nor is it the monopoly of a few community leaders - it is the responsibility of every individual.



Endurance

- The sincere Muslim endures many obstacles with dedication and perseverance.
- A role model for such is Prophet Nuh who spent
 950 years calling his people to worship Allah and succeeded with only a handful of believers for his millennium of strife.
- When work is performed sincerely for the sake of Alalh, it will be firm and consistent. The sincere person is sure that Allah is responsible for the results which will come at the time and in the manner that He prescribes.

Open arms

 A sincere person is pleased whenever another qualified individual emerges and joins the ranks of the Islamic workers.

Sincerity in Islamic Work

Why is sincerity essential to Islamic work?

- Working for the triumph of Islam is worship on one hand and jihad on the other. Sincere intention strengthens willpower, lights up the road, and makes obstacles seem minor.
- Quran 4:35 "...if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation" - this verse emphasizes the importance of a pure intention when working to achieve a goal because that is what will bring about the help of Allah.
- "Know that the help of Allah is offered in proportion to the purity of the intention." (Umar ibn Abd Al-Azeez)
- Truth, justice, and goodness will not return to this world at the hands of people who work so that they may benefit from this world. Nor will such righteousness be restored by people who work so that others might admire them or for social status.



Sincerity the Crest of Islam's soldiers

- The true carriers of the message are those who seek to please only Allah through their actions and look beyond any personal benefit.
 - "Perhaps a man who is disheveled and ignored upon entry is overlooked - but were he to call upon Allah, Allah would respond." (hadith -Muslim)
 - "It is by the supplication and sincerity of the weak that Allah will bring victory to Islam." (hadith)
- The prophet (sws) was commanded to be patient and content with the humble, sincere people - not to run after the popular personalities who had wealth and rank.
- The ultimate objective of every Islamic worker is one and only one: to win the pleasure and reward of Allah.

Beware the False Front

- Be cautious of those who seem well-meaning and dedicated yet have hearts that are empty of all but their desires.
 - These people are described in a hadith: "There will come at the end of time men who will deceive the world they will wear clothes of sheepskin and their words will seem sweeter than honey, but their hearts will be the hearts of wolves."

Two Groups

- 1) a person who lives for themself and their desires
- 2) a person who lives for the truth, prepared to sacrifice whatever is needed, expecting no worldly payment or status.

The Fruits of Sincerity:

- Inner tranquility
- Willpower
- Commitment
- An entire life of worship

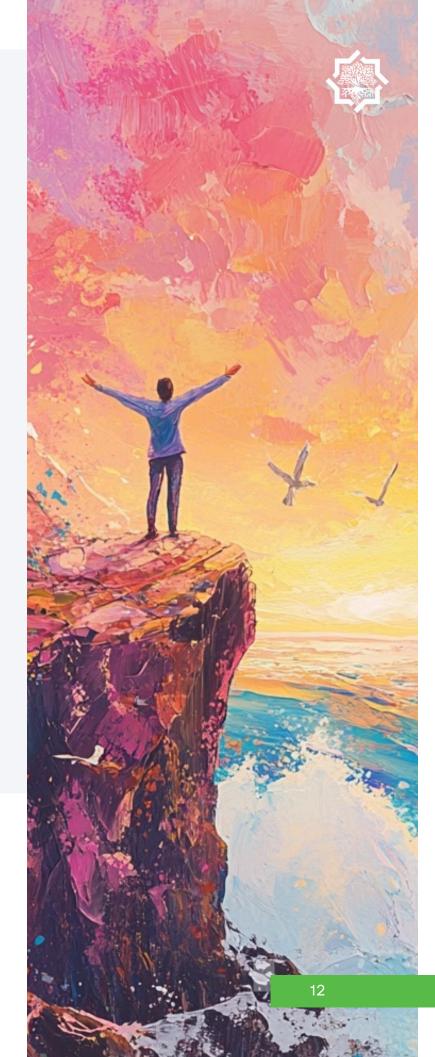




Conclusion

(Reminders and Tips):

- The challenge of maintaining sincerity in your heart will grip you for your entire life.
- Even the greatest believers struggled to purify their intentions. Use this as motivation, not discouragement.
- Work and restore your hope in Allah. Allah would never put before you a challenge that you cannot handle.
- Think about the tools that you have to help you build and maintain sincerity - including the five prayers, daily interaction with the Quran, acts of worship.
- Reflect on and renew your intentions frequently.
- When you feel discouraged by yourself, an environment, or a situation being far from ideal, remember that only means there is work to be done and utilize that as an awakening and call to action.
- There is no limit to the heights to which sincerity can soar, nor an end to the struggle of rooting sincerity in the heart.
- Companionship of righteous peers who remind you of your duties to Allah is indispensable.



Hadith Connections



- On the role and meaning of sincerity:
 - It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said: "Religion is sincerity, religion is sincerity (Al-Nasihah), religion is sincerity." They said; "To whom, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the imams of the Muslims and to their common folk." (Sunan an-Nasa'i 4199, Sahih Muslim, and Tirmidhi)
- On sincerity in heart and action:
 - Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah (s) said: "Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather He looks at your hearts and actions." (Sahih Muslim 2564)
- On intention:
 - "Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended." (Sunan an-Nasa'i 3794, Sahih)
 - Narrated `Umar bin Al-Khattab: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, "The (reward of) deeds, depend upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for the sake of Allah and His Apostle, then his emigration will be considered to be for Allah and His Apostle, and whoever emigrated for the sake of worldly gain or for a woman to marry, then his emigration will be considered to be for what he emigrated for." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6689)



- Ubayy ibn Ka'b related that the Messenger of Allah (sws) said, "Let the ummah rejoice with the promise of facility, brilliance, and loftiness in their religion, as well as strength on earth and victory. So whoever of them performs a deed of the Hereafter for the sake of this life, no share of it shall they get in the Hereafter." (Ahmad, Ibn Hibban in his collection of authentics)
- On riya as minor shirk, showing off:
 - Mahmoud ibn Lubayd narrated that the Prophet (sws) said, "The thing I fear for you the most is the minor shirk." "O Messenger of Allah, what is minor shirk?" asked the companions. "Riya," answered the Prophet. "Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection when people are receiving their rewards, 'Go to those for whom you were showing off in the material world and seek your reward from them.'" (Ahmad, Sahih)
- On the reward of doing something for the sake of Allah (swt):
 - Abu Huraira reported: "The Prophet (ﷺ) said: If anyone acquires knowledge that should be sought seeking the Face of Allah, but he acquires it only to get some worldly advantage, he will not experience the arf, i.e. the fragrance, of Paradise." (Sunan Abi Dawud 3664, Sahih)

Quranic Connections



On sincere devotion to Allah, the connection between sincerity and tawhid:

- "Verily, it is We Who have revealed the book to you in Truth, so serve Allah, offering Him sincere devotion. Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due?" (39:3-4)
- "Say: It is Allah I serve, with my sincere devotion. Serve what you will besides him..." (39:14-15)
- "Say: Truly, my prayer, my life and my death, are all for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds. No partner has He; this I am commanded and I am the first of those to bow to His Will" (6:152-163)

The connection between sincerity, being a Muhsin, and being successful in this life and the next:

- "Whoever submits his whole self to Allah, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold." (31:22)
- "Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, and does good..." (4:125)

On the mukhlaseen - the term used to describe the servants of Allah who will be rewarded. In some translations the meaning of "sincere servants" is lost by being translated to "chosen servants", but the word mukhlaseen relates to those of ikhlas or sincerity.

- "But the sincere servants of Allah for them is a sustenance determined." (37:40-41)
- "Then see what was the end of those who were warned, except for the sincere servants of Allah." (37:73-74)



Sincerity in acts of charity and worship:

- "They 'are those who' fulfill 'their' vows and fear a Day of sweeping horror, and give food—despite their desire for it—to the poor, the orphan, and the captive,'saying to themselves,' "We feed you only for the sake of Allah, seeking neither reward nor thanks from you." (76:7-9)
- "It was not until this clear proof came to the People of the Book that they became divided 'about his prophethood'—even though they were only commanded to worship Allah 'alone' with sincere devotion to Him in all uprightness, establish prayer, and pay alms-tax. That is the upright Way." (98:5)

Allah warns us about riya and insincerity:

- "O believers! Do not waste your charity with reminders 'of your generosity' or hurtful words, like those who donate their wealth just to show off and do not believe in Allah or the Last Day. Their example is that of a hard barren rock covered with a thin layer of soil hit by a strong rain—leaving it just a bare stone. Such people are unable to preserve the reward of their charity. Allah does not guide 'such' disbelieving people." (2:264)
- "So woe to those 'hypocrites' who pray, yet are unmindful of their prayers;those who 'only' show off,and refuse to give 'even the simplest' aid." (107:4-7)

On judgment of intention:

- "Allah will not hold you accountable for unintentional oaths, but for what you intended in your hearts. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Forbearing." (2:225)
- "There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the Cause), if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger: No ground (of complaint) can there be against such as do right: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (9:91)

Taarruf/Team Building Activity

Objective

On riya, intention, effort, and reward

Materials needed

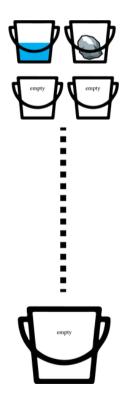
- Two buckets/pails per small group
- Rocks or other heavier items that would take up space quickly
- Water
- Three larger bins or bucket per small group
- Stopwatch or stopwatch function on phone ready

Set up

- Set up a starting point for each group at the starting point place two larger bins (one filled with water and the other filled with the heavier items) behind two empty buckets
- In a straight line determine a good distance for the end point and place the other larger empty bin or bucket at the end point – the distance for each group should be the same (think relay style).

Facilitator Instructions

- Divide the group into smaller groups based on how many stations you have set up
- Instruct the members of each group to gather at their respective stations at the starting point
- Explain that the goal of this activity is to see which group can fill the large empty bin placed at the end point the fastest (depending on the size of the bins and resources available in terms of heavy items/water you can adjust the goal to filling the empty bin at the end point to a certain mark)





- Explain that each group can decide how to reach the goal in whatever way they want - it can be just the water or heavier more voluminous items or a mixture, explain that the time at which each group meets their goal will be recorded and the activity will finish once all groups have reached the goal and only then will the winners be announced
- Give them only a few minutes to discuss their strategy before starting
- Once announcing the start, begin the stopwatch make a note of the end time for each group when they meet their goal

Reflections/Lessons Learned:

- After each group is finished, go ahead and gather everyone in a circle

 announce the groups in terms of time (whoever was the fastest at
 meeting the goal that was given to them), allow time for
 acknowledgment
- Open the floor for general reflections from the activity: teamwork, strategy, matching duties with strengths of each individual, etc. whatever came from their experience in this iteration of the activity
- Then explain you will be reflecting on this activity with new information connecting it to what you are discussing today: sincerity more specifically correct intention + correct action and the concept of *riya*
- Explain that in terms of sincerity if the water represented both correct action and correct intention then only the teams that met the goal using only water would have "won" regardless of whether or not their time was the fastest open the floor to reflection on connecting this in our daily lives (for example seemingly faster or easier ways to achieve something in our life that in the end are actually heavier and take away our reward).
- Then turn the conversation to riya draw a connection between someone showing off their strength in something with a sharp focus on the apparent, short-sighted (worldly or social) goal in life just as if we only focused on filling the bin with the rocks (or whatever heavier more voluminous objects you used in the activity). What does that mean in terms of our strengths, how we utilize them, our efforts, and our goals in life and beyond?



During this facilitation be mindful of framing the reflection so that no group feels judged for how they completed the first part of the activity with the instructions and goals that you gave them. Keep in mind that you are not changing the rules of the activity afterward and if sensitivities arise when you pivot the reflection session remind them that they were working within the framework you gave them and the winning team still won – you are merely utilizing a fun, interactive team-building activity to refocus and go deeper into the topic at hand through metaphors and reflection/discussion. (Similarly you can relate how the framework you first gave them is similar to the societal framework we may find ourselves operating in that does not have the same ways and goals in mind that we do as believers.)



Visual Lesson or Small Group Activity: Purifying Intentions

Objective

Purifying intentions, being mindful

Materials needed

- Big jug of water (enough water to "flush" the color out of the glass)
- Clear glass of water
- Big bin to place the glass in (somewhere for the water to overflow into)
- Juice or food dye

Facilitator Instructions

- If you want to do this demonstration for younger ages, simply prepare one facilitator's station with each item listed above or at a sink station/outside hose station if available in your space where everyone can observe. For older ages, you can make this into a small group activity by ensuring each group has the items listed above for their small group stations.
- First, tell the group that the glass represents our hearts and the water represents pure intention. As you drop the dye or pour the juice into the glass, talk about each of the things in life that can "color" or "contaminate our intentions.
- Then ask the group to share ways in which we can purify our intentions

 for each way that is mentioned pour water from the jug into the colored, contaminated water. Have the group make note of how many pours of water it takes to make the glass of water clear again after only a few drops of contamination.
- Most groups will be conditioned not to mention one way of purification more than once – remind them that it takes continuous acts over the course of time to purify one's intentions. Similarly, remind the groups that these drops of contamination in our lives are continuous as well.
 Open the floor to discussion and reflection on what impacts our intentions and the ways in which we are able to purify and renew our intentions.



Interactive Activity Full or Small Group: For the Sake of Allah

Objective

On action and intention alignment, how your actions are accepted

Materials needed

• Pieces of paper/cards (optional: can be three different colors)

Preparation

- Print or write a couple of different scenarios down on the pieces of paper/cards that would fall under each category 1) acceptable action, unacceptable intention 2) unacceptable action, acceptable intention, and 3) acceptable action, acceptable intention. Have enough blank pieces of paper/cards for the participants to brainstorm and write their own as part of the reflection once they understand the point. Optional you can designate a specific color of paper/card for each category.
- Acceptable Action/Unacceptable Intention:
 - Praying or beautifying your prayer to impress the people around you at the time.
 - Calling a friend to check in on them because you know you want to ask them for a favor in the near future and want them to feel like you are a good friend to them.
 - Volunteering in the community for a service event because the person you like is involved.
 - Showing appreciation or doing acts of service for your parents because you want them to be more lenient on you about a specific expectation or rule next week.
 - Giving a donation for a good cause so the organizers will maintain a good opinion of you.
- Unacceptable Action/Acceptable Intention:
 - Stealing something from someone you know wouldn't miss it to be able to give it as charity to a person who needed it.
 - Actively lying to your friend to protect their feelings or shield them from unnecessary stress.
 - Defending your faith and identity as a Muslim through violent speech or action in a case where no direct physical threat was made toward you.



- Earning money through a haram route to be able to help your parents pay for the rent/food/education.
- Spending time with your friends, observing or even participating in something you know is haram, because you've been making dawah to them and they've expressed interest and you want to be able to influence them in a positive way.
- Acceptable Action/Acceptable Intention:
 - Visiting a sick friend in the hospital for the sake of being beside them during a difficult time.
 - Giving of your money or time to a cause because you feel passionate about contributing to the cause and want to make a positive impact in some way regardless of recognition.
 - Doing a small act of kindness for a stranger you recognized was struggling (opening the door for someone with their hands full).
 - Returning to prayer after being inconsistent with your prayers because you are seeking forgiveness from Allah (swt).
 - Refraining from spending time or chatting with a friend whose habit is to gossip and backbite about someone else you know when you are together despite your requests or attempts to change topic.

Facilitation

This can be done in one large group or in smaller groups if the number of participants is high.

- Place the mixed up pieces of paper/cards in the middle of the group(s).
- Instruct the participants to take turns choosing a piece of paper/card from the middle.
- Prompt the participants to read the scenario and open the floor to discussion.
 - What are your reflections on this scenario? Is there something that could be optimized in either the intention/motivation or action? What makes the intention or the action acceptable or unacceptable in this scenario? Why?
- After a few people have gone (at least two from each type of scenario) tell the group that there are three different categories and ask them to work together to figure out the difference between the scenarios (or colors).



- Once the group has identified the categories, ask each of them to write an example scenario on the blank pieces of paper/cards – either differentiated by the color of the paper/card they have or based on your assignment.
- Continue with the share-out either having each person read the one they wrote or mixing them and having the participants continue to draw randomly.
- Open the floor to discussion on the different categories, the importance of both acceptable actions and intentions in our words and deeds to ensure that they are accepted by Allah (swt), highlighting compassion over judgment especially for others while also highlighting the value of knowledge in knowing what is acceptable/unacceptable, the life-long path of striving to better ourselves and live a life in alignment with our values
 - What type of scenario did you find the most difficult to come up with on the spot - why? If something is good to do but the intention is corrupted in some way, do we still do it? How can we be aware of the intention? How can we renew our intention? If the intention is good but the action is unacceptable how do we change or improve the action? What barriers do we experience that can sometimes result in these types of scenarios? What can we do to live a life in which our actions and intentions are aligned?
- End with personal, private reflection time prompting participants to think about their own lives, identifying ways in which their actions or intentions may be misaligned and what steps to take to realign them.

Related Resource:

- Short video from Yaqeen related to this topic:
 - Ep. 19: Good Intentions With Wrong Actions | Road to Return
 - https://youtu.be/wizukBKyzwE?si=3BESfc479nAsoPvJ

Resources



MAS Publications

https://publishing.muslimamericansociety.org/sincerity/attaini ng-sincerity

Videos

<u>Quality, Not Quantity - A Story Of Sincerity HD</u> by Dr. Mohannad Hakeem

What Are Your Real Intentions? Khutbah by Dr. Omar Suleiman

Articles, Papers, and Books

https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-guidingprinciples-of-faith-sincerity-honesty-and-good-will-in-islam

• PDF version: <u>The Guiding Principles of Faith: Sincerity</u>, <u>Honesty</u>, and Good Will in Islam

Our Deeds and Sincerity, 2nd edition, Zeinab Hassan Ashry

• Provides an overview with excellent resource material, pages 35 of the book includes section of questions and scenarios that can be utilized by facilitators for interactive application activities or discussions A Handbook of Spiritual Medicine

A Handbook of Spiritual Medicine