

Tazkiyah Halaqa
Self Honesty – Session 5
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh
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Overview

In this session, Sheikh Adnan continues the theme of self-honesty (*ṣidq ma‘a al-nafs*), presenting it as an essential, painful, and ultimately healing process. The focus is on the method of reflecting upon key life milestones to uncover spiritual blind spots, understand past behaviour, and identify patterns of response in moments of trial. This level of introspection is compared to applying ointment to a burn—it stings at first but heals over time.

Milestone-Based Self-Honesty

Building on the earlier methods of analysing the self through roles and values, Sheikh Adnan introduces a third, more demanding method: tracing the course of one’s life through key milestones. These moments—periods of great difficulty or triumph—are the moments in which Allah truly tests a person’s character. Unlike cinematic depictions of climax and clarity, these life-defining moments arrive silently, often going unnoticed until after they’ve passed.

Participants are encouraged to:

- Reconstruct their life’s major moments from memory.
- Reflect on how they behaved in those moments: What were their strengths? Where did they fall short?
- Identify patterns of selective memory and suppressed experiences, especially those the self prefers to forget or distort.

This process, Sheikh Adnan explains, helps uncover truths about the self that are often buried for years. It also allows individuals to approach the present and future with heightened awareness of when they are truly being tested.

Benefits of Self-Honesty

When done correctly, this exercise helps an individual:

- Reclaim inner clarity and comfort in solitude.
- Heal internal conflict and dissonance, leading to emotional and spiritual peace.
- Avoid dependency on distractions (e.g., entertainment, social validation, substance use) to cope with discomfort in one’s own company.

Sheikh Adnan notes that one of the Prophet Muḥammad’s ﷺ most striking traits was his comfort in isolation. He could spend long periods alone in reflection (e.g., in the cave of Ḥirā‘) because there were no unresolved issues within him. This trait made the Prophet’s companionship genuine and grounded.

Understanding Others Through Self-Knowledge

True self-honesty fosters greater emotional intelligence and social wisdom. A person who understands themselves is:

- Less prone to idolizing or demonizing others.
- Less vulnerable to manipulation or naivety.
- Better able to hold others accountable without self-righteousness.

Sheikh Adnan emphasizes that the Prophet ﷺ was rarely disappointed in others. When he expressed disappointment, it was not personal, but pedagogical meant to inspire the individual to feel remorse and seek improvement, not to punish.

Case Studies in Prophetic Self-Honesty

1. Prophet Ayyūb (‘alayhi as-salām)

Stripped of all roles—wealth, health, family, status—Ayyūb remained spiritually grounded. He did not complain or demand relief from Allah, even when severely tested. His remarkable patience stemmed from deep self-awareness and humility. Even his du‘ā’ was understated: “Indeed, I have been touched by harm, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.” He neither pleaded nor protested. This example illustrates the pinnacle of accepting trials without ego or resentment.

2. Ka‘b ibn Mālik (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu)

Ka‘b’s honest confession about not joining the Battle of Tabūk stands as one of the most powerful examples of self-honesty in the Sīrah. Though a skilled poet capable of crafting excuses, he resisted the urge and owned his mistake fully. His truthfulness earned divine forgiveness, but not without consequence—he endured 50 days of social isolation. His resilience through that period proved the depth of his sincerity.

The Double Weight of Self-Honesty

Sheikh Adnan emphasizes that self-honesty is a double trial:

1. The pain of confronting one’s shortcomings.
2. The difficulty of facing the consequences of those truths.

Despite this, the long-term reward is peace, authenticity, and nearness to Allah.

The Role of Guidance and Moderation

True self-honesty can lead to exaggerated responses—spiritual overcompensation, self-harm, or unrealistic expectations. The Prophet ﷺ often had to pull companions back from excess:

- Salman al-Fārisī advised moderation in worship and duties to family.
- The Prophet corrected those who abstained from food, sleep, or marriage in pursuit of extreme piety.
- Even sincere companions like ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar and Ḥanẓalah required recalibration.

Sheikh Adnan clarifies that spiritual excess (e.g., extreme asceticism) is a form of bid'ah, a deviation born not from malice, but from unregulated sincerity. The Prophet ﷺ's lifestyle serves as the ideal median, balancing worship, family, leisure, and community responsibility.

Conclusion and Final Reflections

An honest society does not need to be begged to serve, pray, or give—it needs only reminders to stay balanced. A dishonest society, however, requires constant prodding and remains unresponsive. The ultimate goal is to build a community where each member pushes themselves sincerely toward Allah and trusts scholars and mentors to help regulate their pace.

Self-honesty, when practised consistently and guided wisely, becomes the foundation of a sincere, resilient, and spiritually elevated life.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPyQLw_eEFM