

An-Nefaq (Hypocrisy)

BS Foad, M.D 2010

Nefaq is a bad character and indicates lack of faith and wrong motivation.

Nefaq is two types:

1-Nefaq Akbar : great hypocrisy: when a person has no faith and denies the existence of God or his accountability to Him, or in other words hides his true convictions and shows something else. Such a person is threatened with great punishment

2-Nefaq Asghar: lesser hypocrisy when a person does something to be praised by others

We will discuss the following concepts:

1-Nefaq is forbidden in Islam for it is against faith in Allah and shows lack of proper Motivation

2-What are the characteristics of hypocrites?

3-Our motivation must be proper, otherwise our deeds are not accepted by Allah

4Hypocrites can cause a lot of damage within a Muslim community as they did at The time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

5-Hypocrites are promised a severe punishment

Nefaq is forbidden in Islam

Nefaq or hypocrisy means that we show faith while we hide our unbelief, in order to fool others and get ahead. Such hypocrisy is forbidden in Islam because it clearly demonstrates lack of faith in Allah and that we have no faith or trust in Him.

The Hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other: they enjoin evil, and forbid what is just, and are close with their hands. They have forgotten Allah; so He hath forgotten them. Verily the Hypocrites are rebellious and perverse.

At-Tawba 9: 67

Allah hath promised the Hypocrites men and women, and the rejecters, of Faith, the fire of Hell: therein shall they dwell: sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of Allah, and an enduring punishment.

At-Tawba 9: 68

The hypocrites come to prayer but they are lazy, and they give in charity only when they are forced to do so. Their deeds are not accepted because they have no faith and do not have the proper intention or motivation:

The only reasons why their contributions are not accepted are: that they reject Allah and His Messenger; that they come to prayer without earnestness; and that they offer contributions unwillingly.

At-Tawba 9: 54

What are the characteristics of hypocrisy?

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained the characteristics of the hypocrites when he said:

(The signs of a hypocrite are three: When he talks he lies; and when he promises, he is not faithful to his promises; and when he is entrusted, he betrays that trust) Bokhari & Muslim

We learn from this Hadeeth (saying of the Prophet) that our actions determine and confirm who we are and what we believe in:

- 1-We cannot lie
- 2-We must be faithful to our promises
- 3-We should be faithful and not betray our trusts

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said:

(Four traits if they occur simultaneously in one person, he would be a true hypocrite; and if any of them are present in one person he will have a trait of hypocrisy till he gets rid of it: they are: When he talks he lies; and when he promises, he is not faithful to his promise; and when he is entrusted, he betrays that trust; and when takes someone for an enemy, he exceeds the limit in his enmity and hatred) Bokhari & Muslim

What we learn from these two sayings is that proper faith in God requires that we are truthful, safeguard our promises and trusts and are not ruthless or transgress our limits. If we lie or do not keep our promises, then we have no real faith, and our faith is only empty words that have no substance

The hypocrites will tell people what they like to hear. Then when they meet other people they have no problem of telling them the opposite of what they just said in order to gain their favor. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(The worst of people is the person with two faces: he tells some one thing, then he faces other people with his second faith) Bokhari

The hypocrites also like to take credit for things they did not do, and want to be praised:

Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done think not that they can escape the Penalty. For them is a Penalty grievous indeed.

Al-Imran 3: 188

Our motivation must be proper, otherwise our deeds are not accepted

The hypocrites came to prayer and gave charity, but did not so with no conviction in their hearts and only when forced to do so. Their intentions were not good and they lacked the proper motivation since they had no real faith in God or in His messenger. Therefore, their prayers and their charity were not accepted by God, and their deeds did not help them:

Say: "Spend (for the Cause) willingly or unwillingly: not from you will it be accepted: for ye are indeed a people rebellious and wicked."

At-Tawba 9: 53

The only reasons why their contributions are not accepted are: that they reject Allah and His Messenger; that they come to prayer without earnestness; and that they offer contributions unwillingly.

At-Tawba 9: 54

And:

The Hypocrites, they think they are over-reaching Allah but He will over-reach them: when they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance;

An-Nesa'a 4: 142

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Deeds are dependant on intentions, and every person gets what his intends for: those whose intention is to gain material things in life, will get what they intended; and those whose intention is to strive for Allah and His messenger, then their effort is for Allah and His messenger) Bokhari & Muslim

In other words if we are only motivated by the desire to accumulate money and power and fame in this life, and neglect our duty towards worshipping and serving Allah, then we get what we want, but we have nothing to show in the Hereafter, during our accountability. The Qur'an confirms this concept:

Those who desire the life of the Present and its glitter, to them We shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein, without diminution.

Hud 11: 15

They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire: vain are the designs they frame therein, and of no effect are the deeds that they do!

Hud 11: 16

On the other hand, those who strive in the way of Allah with their persons and their goods will get their reward:

But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, to them shall We give a Home in Heaven, lofty mansions beneath which flow rivers, to dwell therein for aye; an excellent reward for those who do (good)!

Al-Ankabut 29: 58

Those who persevere in patience, and put their trust in their Lord and Cherisher,
Al-Ankabut 29: 59

And:

And those who strive in Our (Cause), We will certainly guide them to Our Paths: for verily Allah is with those who do right.

Al-Ankabut 29: 69

Hypocrites cause a lot of damage within the Muslim community

They are like cancer eating the community from within. People do not know about their evil intentions, and they see them praying with them and they think they are part of the community and care for its welfare. Whereas in fact they are intent on causing division and confusion. They work hard to enlarge differences and incite some over others, and throw doubt about the integrity and goodness of honest hard-working Muslims. They caused a lot of damage in the Muslim community in Madina at the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Qur'an warns us about their threat and bad influence:

If they had come out with you, they would not have added to your (strength) but only (made for) disorder, hurrying to and fro in your midst and sowing sedition among you, and there would have been some among you who would have listened to them. But Allah knoweth well those who do wrong.

At-Tawba 9: 47

Indeed they had plotted sedition before, and upset matters for thee, until the Truth arrived, and the Decree of Allah became manifest, much to their disgust.

At-Tawba 9: 48

And:

They are the ones who say, "Spend nothing on those who are with Allah's Messenger, to the end that they may disperse (and quit Medina)." But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth; but the Hypocrites understand not.

Al-Munafeqoun 63: 7

They say, "If we return to Medina, surely the more honourable (element) will expel therefrom the meaner." But honour belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers; but the Hypocrites know not.

Al-Munafeqoun 63: 8

And:

Lo! the Hypocrites say, and those in whose hearts is a disease: "These people, their religion has misled them." But if any trust in Allah, behold! Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

Al-Anfal 8: 49

And:

Some of the desert Arabs look upon their payments as a fine, and watch for disasters for you: on them be the disaster of Evil: for Allah is He that heareth and knoweth (all things).

At-Tawba 9: 98

Since the damage that their treachery causes is great, we are ordered to expose them and let others know about them and their bad intentions and deeds:

O Prophet! strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell, an evil refuge indeed.

At-Tawba 9: 73

The hypocrites will have severe punishment from Allah

Because of their lack of faith and the damage that they cause the hypocrites are threatened in the Qur'an with severe punishment:

To the Hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them (but) a grievous Penalty; -

An-Nesa'a 4: 138

Yea, to those who take for friends Unbelievers rather than Believers: is it honour they seek among them? Nay all honour is with Allah.

An-Nesa'a 4: 139

Already has He sent you word in the Book, that when ye hear the Signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme: if ye did, ye would be like them. For Allah will collect the Hypocrites and those who defy Faith, all in Hell.

An-Nesa'a 4: 140

And:

The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire; no helper wilt thou find for them.

An-Nesa'a 4: 145

And:

And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Polytheists, men and women, who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil: the Wrath of Allah is on them: He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination.

Al-Fath 48: 6

Even with hypocrisy there is hope if we change our behavior and do good and work with others to improve life for everyone, then Allah will accept our repentance and will reward us for our effort:

Except for those who repent, mend (their life), hold fast to Allah, and purify their religion as in Allah's sight; if so they will be (numbered) with the Believers. And soon will Allah grant to the Believers a reward of immense value.

An-Nesa'a 4: 146

On the other hand, if we continue in our hypocrisy and treachery and dishonesty then our hearts will be sealed and our abode is Hell fire forever:

Amongst them are men who made a Covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous.

At-Tawba 9: 75

But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their Covenant), averse (from its fulfillment).

At-Tawba 9: 76

So He hath put as a consequence Hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last) till the Day whereon they shall meet Him: because they broke their Covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again).

At-Tawba 9: 77

Hyocrisy (Nefaq)

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What is hypocrisy? To show faith in order to deceive others, but you hide other things in your heart; or you do something in order to be praised

Hypocrisy is forbidden in Islam

“The hypocrites, men and women are alike, they enjoin evil and forbid what is just, and do not spend (in charity); they forgot Allah, so Allah has forgotten them. Indeed the hypocrites are rebellious and perverse. Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women and the unbelievers the fire of hell: therein they shall dwell” At-Tawba 9: 67 & 68

The characteristics of the hypocrites

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (The signs of a hypocrite are three: When he talks, he lies; and when he promises, he is not faithful to his promise; and when he is entrusted, he betrays his trust) Bokhari & Muslim after Abou Horaira

(Four characteristics who has all four of them is a pure hypocrite, and if any has one of them, he has a trait of hypocrisy till he gets rid of it: when he talks, he lies; and when he makes a covenant, he breaks it with no warning; and when he promises, he does deliver on his promise; and when he takes an enemy, he is ruthless) Bokhari & Muslim

(The worst of people is the one with two faces: he meets those with one face, and he meets others with a different face) Bokhari

The hypocrites want to be praised for things they did not do

They are restless and insecure and give all kinds of excuses and make all types of promises

Our motivation must be proper for our deeds to be accepted by Allah

“Say: “Spend willingly or unwillingly, it will not be accepted of you, for you are people rebellious and wicked. The reason their contributions are not accepted is that they rejected Allah and His messenger; that they come to prayer without earnestness; and that they spend unwillingly” At-Tawba 9: 53 & 54

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (Deeds are dependant on intentions, and every person gets what he intends. If his motivation is to strive in the way of Allah and His messenger, then his effort is for Allah and His messenger. But if his motivation is to get ahead and acquire material things, then his deeds are motivated by that) Bokhari

“Those who desire this present life and its glitter We shall pay their deeds therein with no loss, but they will have nothing in the Hereafter but the fire: vain are what they did therein, and of no effect their deeds will be” Hud 11: 15 & 16

Hypocrites cause a lot of damage within the community

They cause division and doubt and confuse people and they pit one group against another, and cause weakness and disunity. They are like cancer from within:

“If they had come out with you, they would not have added to your strength, but only made for disorder, hurrying to and fro from your midst and sowing sedition among you, and there would have been some among you who would have listened to them. But Allah knows well those who do wrong” At-Tawba 9:47

“The hypocrites say, as well as those in whose heart is a disease: “These people, their religion has misled them” But if any put his trust in Allah, indeed Allah is exalted in might and wise” Al-Anfal 8: 49

We are ordered to expose and fight the hypocrites:

“O Prophet strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them”

At-Tawba 9:73

The hypocrites will have severe punishment from Allah

“To the hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them a grievous chastisement” An-Nesa’a 4: 138

“Allah will collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith all in Hell” An-Nesa’a 4: 140

If the hypocrites continue in their wrong behavior, Allah will seal their hearts:

“Among them are those who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on us from His bounty, we will give in charity and be among the righteous. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became covetous and turned back from their covenant averse from fulfilling it. So He as a consequence He put hypocrisy in their hearts to last till the Day when they shall meet Him, because they broke their covenant with Allah and because they lied” At-Tawba 9: 75-77

The door of repentance is always open and Allah will accept our good deeds if we repent.