

## Chapter 47: Straightforwardness

Telling lies is a very abhorrent habit and is one of the major sins. All the races of the world condemn lying. The persons who lie are looked down upon. A person known to be a liar has no confidence or respect of his compatriots. A noble and good person never tells lies. Islam has categorically condemned this bad habit.

Imam Muhammad al Baqir says:

“Lies are the cause of faithlessness.”<sup>1</sup>

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq says:

“ Isa said that who lies repeatedly will not be respected.”<sup>2</sup>

‘Ali has said:

“There is no action more inferior than telling lies.”<sup>3</sup>

All the prophets of Allah and every reformer has invited people to say the truth. Truth is a natural instinct. Everyone likes the truth. Even a compulsive liar would always like to hear the truth. If a child is left to his own scruples, it is in his nature to tell the truth. It is the influence of the external factors that make a person adopt the habit of telling lies.

A child is absolutely incapable of lying. In later life when he is exposed to circumstances that force him to lie, he might get into that bad habit. Any amount of sermonizing, reference of verses of the Qur'an and Traditions of the Infallibles may not have any effect on the person.

It is the duty of the parents that they ensure their children are truthful from childhood. They should carefully remove the causes of falsehood and inculcate truthfulness in their natures. They should not neglect to promote truthfulness in the children.

The parents who are interested in good upbringing of their children and feel their responsibility in this regard should consider the following facts:

1. The one thing that will have salutary effect on the child's upbringing is the atmosphere in the family. The child grows in this environment. He learns good manners from the parents and others in the house. If the atmosphere in the house is one of truth and correctness, the parents and others are treating each other correctly, then the child will follow suit.

To the contrary, if the atmosphere at home is one of falsehood, the parents lie to each other and the children; then the innocent children will pick up the same habits. The children whose ears get habituated to hearing lies uttered all around them, can never be expected to think in any other way. Some ignorant parents not only tell lies but also encourage their children too to tell lies for obtaining some momentary benefit. The father remaining at home tells his son to tell a visitor that he is not home. When a child misses school the parent asks him to tell the teacher that he was not well.

Thus the habit of malingering is encouraged. There are hundreds of lies that are traded around the houses every day such parents are doing a grave injustice to their innocent and impressionable children. Telling lies is a sin and teaching children to lie is a greater sin

Therefore, the parents who wish their children to be truthful have no other way than being truthful themselves. It is just leading by example!

Russel writes:

"If you wish that your children don't get into lying habit, then the only method is to always tell the truth in their presence." [4](#)

I wish Russel had said, "Adopt truthfulness in the presence of children as also with everyone else !" The child's nature is affected with all falsehood, even if it is hidden.

Imam as-Sadiq says:

"Invite people to good without use of your tongue. People should see your piety, diligence, prayer and good deeds that are a role model for them."[5](#)

2. The child by nature does not lie. His natural instinct urges him to uphold the truth. He needs a very strong reason to tell a falsehood. If the parents get to the depth of the reason for the falsehood, and remove these reasons, the child will become truthful. One reason that makes a child lie is the fear of the parents admonishment.

When you ask him if he had broken the window pane, he would say, "No!" Remember, the reason for the child uttering a falsehood is his fear of the parents. Then he shifts the responsibility of the broken glass pane to some other person. If the parents are clever and thoughtful, the reason for the child telling lies will never be there. There can always be the possibility that the window glass was broken unintentionally. Then there is no reason to reprimand the child. The parents need to tell the child softly to be more careful in the future.

In these circumstances the child doesn't deserve to be reprimanded or beaten that it takes shelter behind lies. Even if he has broken the window-pane and is blatantly denying the act, severe punishment is not the solution to the problem. The child cannot be reformed through beating and punishment alone. Nor can there be any guarantee that the child will not commit similar acts again. The parents in such circumstances must bear in their minds that the child by nature is not aggressive. There is always an external reason for such behavior.

Therefore, they must investigate the matter carefully to determine the actual reasons and cause for the act of destruction. When the cause for the breaking of the glass is determined, then there will not be motivation for the child perpetrating such an act again. Perhaps, the act of vandalism was a direct result of some insult caused to the child by some one. Perhaps, the child had not been receiving proper attention and he took out his spleen by causing damage to the window. It could be the reaction to some undeserved punishment the child had received from his parents.

If the parents make efforts to remove the psychological complexes from the mind of the child, there is every possibility of setting him right. If such a breakthrough is achieved, there will not be any need for punitive action. The child will then refrain from destructive acts and there will nod be need to shout at him or beat him.

1. If you learn that your child has done something wrong, and you desire to guide him to the right path, then don't interrogate him like a policeman. It is possible that to protect his ego the child might have recourse to lies. It is better in such circumstances not to interrogate him and say as, for instance, that he must return the book that he had borrowed from his friend. Tell him that it is not proper to keep other's things for long. Return your friend's book immediately with an apology.
2. Don't threaten the child with a punishment that you are not intending to give. For example, don't tell him that if he did such and such a thing, you would beat him, or you would hand him over to the police, or that you will send him out of the house. Also don't tell him in your anger that you would not take him to the forthcoming dinner he had been eagerly looking forward to. With such false threats you would be teaching the child to tell lies. You must convey to the child only such things that you really intend doing, and you think that they are right by him.
3. The parents who are strict with their children and expect from them much more than their capability, are perhaps pushing them more towards lying. For example, if the child is not good at studies and unmindful of this the parents insist on his coming first in the class, keep nagging him every day about his lessons and shout at him.

Because the child has limited capability and with his best efforts he is unable to rise to the occasion. Since the child wants the goodwill of the parents, he may take shelter behind lies. Or he will make an excuse that at the time of the examination he suffered from a headache. Sometimes he would say that the teacher doesn't like him and has given him a poorer grade.

If the parents had properly assessed the capacity of the child, they wouldn't have put him in the position of making false excuses.

4. There are parents who attribute any wrong act of their child to his companions at school or at play. Sometimes they even blame animals and plants for such things. For example: they might say that a cat or a rat has been responsible for that. These ignorant parents think that they are doing something good by their child not attributing an act to him that he has really committed. But there are two very pronounced disadvantages of this: firstly, they are encouraging the child to tell lies and secondly, the child will learn to shift the blame for his own acts on others.

5. If sometimes your children tell lies unintentionally, then explore the reasons thereof and search for a remedy. But this exploration should be done in a subtle way that the children don't start feeling that an investigation is on against them.

[1.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v4, p. 32

[2.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v4, p. 33

[3.](#) Mustadarak al-wasail, v2, p. 100

[4.](#) Dar tarbiat, p. 148

[5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v 2, p. 780

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