

Six Good Things That End Up Badly

By

Maulana Khalid Dhorat (Masjid Sayyadina Hamzah, Erasmia)

Truth has a tongue, but falsehood has fangs. Goodness has a soft touch, but evil has a powerful grip.

If these words were uttered only twenty years ago, no one would've believed it, but today, it cannot ring more true. We are living in a time of capsized values to the extent that when people intend doing good, they find themselves hesitating; but when it comes to evil, they find the courage to do so. People fear that the shabbily dressed hitchhiker may turn out to be a hijacker, the student you tutored in the comfort of your lounge may accuse you of raping her, the beggar at your door may turn out to be a thief, and the collector from some Madrasah in India may just be a hobo on holiday!

Indeed, it is becoming increasingly difficult to do good without feeling a sting to it. It seems no one appreciates anything anymore. Today, lawyers pray that you get into any type of trouble, plumbers wish that your geyser could bust everyday, doctors hope that some rare disease afflicts you so that you could stay in hospital for six months, and even our burial committees and undertakers are dying for you to die! The only people who wish for your prosperity are two: the thief and the tax-man.

In the good old days, good was repaid with good, but today, good is repaid with a boot. However, this should not discourage anyone from doing good, but we should do it a little differently. Remember that a person who criticises your good work in any form – either the speech of Maulana Ismail at Jumuah, the architecture of a building on 19th Ave., a cold plate of

beans at the feeding scheme in Mamelodi, or the teaching of Appa Imaan at Mighty Muslim School – is actually reflecting their own insecurities and character. It's not a reflection of you. A lion will not attack you simply because you don't hunt lion. He will attack you, nevertheless, because for a lion, you are just a meal. So don't feel down at being a victim of good.

Here are seven common mistakes people make in their goodness nowadays:

1.Loan: Only a close friend, one who is informal with you, will ask you for an interest-free loan. He would expect you to agree to it, and understand when he doesn't pay, especially now that banks do not grant loans easily. So, decide which is dearer to you: the money or the relationship. If you value the relationship, refuse the loan, and if you don't value the relationship and do not need the money, give him the loan. You will lose both in any case. Such loans are based on informality; Islam teaches us to live like brothers, and deal like strangers. It's a sad fact of life that today people instead of appreciating the kindness of others, rather exploit it to their own benefit. Only grant a loan if you are dead sure of the person's morals; or ask for surety or collateral.

2.Friends with Partner's Spouse: My friend doesn't automatically become my wife's friend, nor does my wife's friend automatically become my friend after marriage. Yes, your mother-in-law can become "*Mummy*," but your sister-in-law doesn't become "*Barbie*"
". Your father-in-law may be called "*Abba*"
, but his other sons don't become "*Dabba*"
". If you value your friend's marriage, don't have supper with his wife - even with his consent - when he is absent. Many people have found out after many years that their children were not theirs, but it was too late. Remember, who doesn't like a platter of hot malva pudding after supper? The line between trust and invasion of privacy is very fine here. 'Umar ibn Abdul 'Aziz said in this regard: "*Don't be alone with a woman, even if you are teaching her Qur'an*"
."

3.Business Partnerships: Although partnerships can eliminate financing charges, but in today's times, there is no shortcut to fortune. Rather start small and grow big, rather than start big and grow small. Your business partner who maybe now your blood brother, neighbour or close friend, who feels every pin prick you experience, will not tolerate your success and fortune one day. Greed, envy, hatred and contempt will take the place of love, compassion and loyalty.

He will attribute your success to his effort only, and will want to enjoy all the profits alone. Because business is a place where one's values are tested, more than often, the decision of whether to buy cosmetics from the factory or the truck will arise, or the question of whose son should take charge of "governing" the computers, so instead of the takings of eight tills being reflected, only six would appear. As usual, the family will also get involved, and matters will become complicated. Families who have split due to partnership or inheritance disputes normally only reunite after three to four generations. Those in smooth partnerships at the moment, please dissolve it before it's too late.

4.Asking Favours: Gone are the days when people do things solely for the pleasure of the Almighty. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) advised us to ask the Almighty for anything, even if it's just a shoelace. People who do you a favour will expect a favour in return. The Qur'an refers to this abhorrent habit thus: "*O you who Believe, do not nullify your charity by asking of favours, and harming (the recipients)*"

.(2:264) If your cousin once helped you in the middle of the night with a breakdown, besides expecting you to return the favour a 100 times over, the whole town will get to know what a rundown jalopy you drive! This will place a strain on your relationship. Humble yourself before your Lord in asking, and do not disgrace yourself in front of people. Remember the advice of Sayyadina 'Ali in this regard: "

Give somebody something, and become his lord; accept something from someone and become his slave, or don't expect anything from anyone, and the kings and the wealthy will be your equal

."

5.Confiding a Secret: Two things must always remain hidden: your money, and the ups and downs of the relationship with your wife. Never trust anybody with your money or your wife, and never leave them exposed for everyone to see. Remember, secrets are ammunition in the hands of your friends, your lawyer, your accountant, and your own wife too who may use it against you she becomes your enemy one day. Some people may even become so mean as to ruin your relationship with your wife as at times of vulnerability, you took them into confidence. The past always comes back to haunt you. Even in business and family affairs, reveal only how much is necessary. Never reveal your master plan to anyone. Trust is buried a long time ago and don't be an open book for everyone to read - you will lose your edge and your friends will scoff you. The time which our Noble Prophet prophesized that trustworthy people will be very few, is really now. Remember the golden rule: "

Only tell a person a secret if you want others to know about it

."

6.Arbitration: The basic rule of arbitration is that the arbitrator should not have any background knowledge of the people before him; if he knows the parties, such knowledge should not

influence his judgement. Never arbitrate between two people informally and never let your enmity of a person cloud your judgement. Establish all the facts first and pronounce your judgement after careful consideration. Many people have blamed arbitrators for the breakdown in their marriage, especially when both parties were known to them. If this is a possibility, rather excuse yourself. People generally can't swallow the truth and want to only hear what they like. Many people will only befriend you if you agree with them in everything. Once you have a different opinion, you are suddenly a "traitor." So be careful about giving your opinion on everything, it may just end your relationship.

I end with the story of the scorpion and an old man. A kind old man once saw a scorpion drowning in a pond. He extended his hand to help it, but it stung him. He did this a few times, and the scorpion stung him every time. A wise boy who was standing next to him asked him: "*My dear uncle, why do you keep on helping the scorpion when it stings you every time*?" to which he replied: "

I only know how to help, and it only knows how to sting

."

The young boy smiled and held out a twig to the scorpion. It gripped on to it and reached the shore safely. "*You see, my dear uncle, never let the sting of the scorpion change the goodness in you. Don't be a goody gumdrops and trust everyone. Do good, but do it smartly*

."