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Why Are Inner Peace and Fairness the True Measures of Active Faith in Life?

From Outward Piety to Active Faith: Identifying Trustworthy Character

We have all met someone who seemingly does everything “by the book” when it comes to religion, yet leaves a trail of stress, conflict, and unease wherever they go. This familiar contradiction begs a vital question: Can we really call someone faithful if their presence brings anxiety instead of peace? True faith is not found in a checklist of rituals or outward displays of piety; rather, it is a transformative force that shapes our character, bringing deep inner security and fairness to our daily interactions. If we want to understand the real measure of a person’s spiritual health—especially before welcoming them into our lives as friends, partners, or spouses—we must look beyond the surface and recognize that genuine, active faith always manifests as lasting inner peace and a profound commitment to treating others well.

In everyday life, we often face situations that make evaluating others difficult. Imagine a coworker who presents outward signs of piety, yet in practice, they are overly sensitive, aggressive, envious, and unfair. Or consider someone who knows religious rituals inside out, yet brings absolutely no peace, patience, or emotional security to their own family.

The issue here is not just the mismatch between their outward and inward states. The real question is: Can such a person be considered qualified for companionship, partnership, friendship, or marriage? The answer hinges on the presence of active faith—a genuine understanding of religion that looks beyond external signs to measure its actual impact on a person’s character and human relationships.

If religious commitment is genuine, it must be evident in character development, psychological balance, moral quality, and the ability to create a safe social environment. From this perspective, inner peace, spiritual expansion, an even temper, and fairness are not accidental side effects; they are the intrinsic outcomes of active faith in a person's life.

Conversely, chronic anxiety, envy, hot-headedness, aggression, and abusive language are not just isolated behavioral flaws. They can signal a deeper breakdown in a person's connection to the truth that should otherwise grant them inner security and coherence. Therefore, discussing religiosity here is not about mere ritual or custom—it is about the existential core of a person's character and their social trustworthiness.

Faith and the True Benchmark of Inner Balance

The first step in understanding this issue is recognizing the relationship between active faith and character development. A balanced personality is whole, not fractured or conflicted. Its inner parts work in harmony. In this state, peace, security, and the true sweetness of life are not just passing moods. They are proof that the person is aligned with the universe and at peace with themselves. Therefore, when it is said that the level of a person's happiness and peace reflects the depth of their faith, it does not mean that any pleasing mood alone serves as a measuring stick. Rather, the point is that genuine faith in the soul always has an effect on a person's inner sense of safety and peace. This perspective rests on a clear principle: Truth brings order, and order is the antithesis of chaos. If faith is true, its truthfulness must manifest within the human soul. Such outcomes are, above all, inner peace, spiritual expansion, and a sense of stability in life. Therefore, a life spent in fear, with no sense of security, lacks true inner calm. The teaching attributed to Imam Ali (Peace be upon him)—which identifies detachment from faith as detachment from security

¹—points precisely to this link: Without faith, peace vanishes, and life, even if it continues outwardly, is stripped of its genuine sweetness. Thus, inner security is not a peripheral bonus, but one of the most fundamental fruits of faith present in a person's being.

Behavioral Indicators of a Lack of Faith

If true faith shapes human character, its absence must be equally evident in a person's behavior. Chronic anxiety, envy, irritability, anger, aggression, and abusive language are all warning signs that genuine faith is lacking.

The importance of this list lies in how each quality signals deep-seated inner insecurity:

- The anxious person has not yet found inner rest.
- The envious person wages a silent, internal war against others.
- The aggressive person lacks self-restraint and inner dignity.
- The verbally abusive person has abandoned moderation and basic self-respect in their speech.

Together, these traits paint a vivid picture of a restless soul.

Consequently, faith cannot be reduced to a set of mechanical rituals that leave a person's temperament completely untouched. If a person consistently becomes a source of tension, fear, hurt, and anxiety for others, it is difficult to establish any genuine connection between that person and the true essence of religion. The issue is not conventional morality or superficial etiquette. Rather, a person's character is the clearest outward expression of their inner reality. An inward self connected to the truth does not consistently generate insecurity through one's conduct. Therefore, the assessment of character must move beyond claims to observable effects, which are the clearest evidence of the authenticity or falsity of a person's inner alignment with the truth.

Faith and the Insufficiency of Outward Piety

One of the most critical points in this discussion is that outward piety alone is never enough to evaluate a person. Someone may be constantly surrounded by religious symbols, environments, or traditions, but this exposure by itself does not prove the soundness of their inner reality. This is where the distinction between the outward form of religion and its true essence becomes crucial. The outward form is external and readily observable, whereas the true essence is known through its effects.

If these effects are absent, outward form alone cannot serve as proof of truth. Hence, a person who is not joyful or at peace, and who is constantly consumed by envy and aggression, does not possess active faith—even if they are closely associated with the sacred practices of religion.

This proposition has both an epistemological and a social dimension. From an epistemological perspective, it becomes clear that the criterion for evaluating a person is not mere affiliation with, or proximity to, the sacred, but the way in which it has been embodied in the formation of their character. From a social perspective, it also becomes clear that public trust must not be founded on outward signs alone. Society, families, and workplaces go wrong in their choices when they substitute appearances for the deeper criteria.

Here, reliance on outward appearances is not merely a moral error but a practical one with direct consequences, for it may lead people into friendships, partnerships, or other close companionship with individuals who, in their inner reality, are a source of insecurity.

The Faith Factor: How to Choose Friends, Spouses, and Business Partners

The natural conclusion of this discussion is that evaluating individuals for major life relationships must be grounded in their ability to foster security and their sense of fairness. A spouse, a friend,

a business partner, and a colleague are not merely companions in the outward journey of life; each of these relationships helps shape a person's practical destiny. For this reason, the criteria for choosing them cannot be limited to shared interests, short-term advantage, or even superficial similarities.

Someone who lacks inner balance will, sooner or later, bring their insecurity into the relationship. Envy, injustice, and unfairness take root within the self before they manifest themselves in human relationships. Thus, at this level, practicing religion serves as a criterion for assessing whether someone is capable of building relationships marked by justice, trust, and security.

This principle explains why, for example, in choosing a business partner, the mere fact that someone performs the daily prayers is not considered sufficient; greater weight is given to a demonstrated commitment to congregational prayer. The point of this emphasis is not the performance of an isolated religious act, but what it signifies: an active and socially embodied commitment to religion—a commitment that must also be reflected in collective conduct and in one's sense of responsibility.

Within this framework, a person who is genuinely committed to the true essence of religion is neither envious nor unjust, for their relationship with others is not rooted in unfairness. By contrast, even when unfairness is concealed beneath outward signs of piety, it reveals that the person's inner reality has not yet attained the security required for trustworthiness and justice. Ultimately, the criterion for choosing a business partner or a colleague comes down to this question: Is this person someone with whom others can feel secure, or someone who poses a threat?

First, we must accept that active faith, in its authentic form, is never without effect in a person's being. Second, we must recognize that its primary manifestations are peace, balance, good temper, and fairness. Third, we must avoid the error of judging by appearances and distinguish between

outward signs of piety and the truth embodied in a person's character. Finally, this knowledge must shape the concrete decisions of everyday life—specifically, our choice of those whom we trust, with whom we work, and to whom we entrust part of our lives. In this light, true faith is not a mere ceremonial title but a criterion for discerning security, justice, and trustworthiness in human relationships. Wherever this criterion is genuinely realized, peace and reassurance naturally follow. Wherever it is absent, no matter how familiar and sacred the outward practices may be, insecurity will, sooner or later, reveal itself.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the people we choose to surround ourselves with—whether in friendship, marriage, or business—shape the very trajectory of our lives. We simply cannot afford to be blinded by superficial displays of devotion while ignoring the glaring red flags of envy, aggression, or chronic unrest. True faith is meant to be an anchor, providing a profound sense of inner harmony that naturally spills over into fair, kind, and trustworthy behavior toward others. When we learn to measure active faith by the peace someone carries within and the security they offer to those around them, we protect our own well-being from the chaos of fractured personalities. At the end of the day, authentic spirituality is never a mask someone wears; it is a steady, reassuring reality that makes the world a safer, more just place for everyone it touches.

References

¹. “... departing religion is departing peace and security ...” (“The Book of Intelligence and Ignorance.” *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, ch. 1, hadith 30. *Thaqalayn.net*, thaqalayn.net/hadith/1/1/0/30. Accessed 29 July 2026).