



THE PRESCRIBED RITUAL WORSHIP (SALAH)

UNLOCKING THE DOORS
OF PARADISE




Five times a day the call to the prescribed ritual worship echoes from the minarets of mosques, buzzes aloud on iPhone apps, and beckons people to come to something greater than what they're doing. The call praises God, affirms His Oneness, affirms the messengership of Muhammad and calls people to success:

“ COME TO PRAYER, COME TO PRAYER ”

“ COME TO SUCCESS, COME TO SUCCESS ”

In the infancy of Prophet Muhammad's messengership, the believers in Mecca were few and far between. Their social status was nearly non-existent and they were exposed to all manners of abuse. There was no call to prayer at that time.



No matter how difficult the believers' situation was, or how disheartened they felt about their vulnerability, they found stability and contentment in worship. Though they suffered through many years of persecution, prayer gave them a connection to God – a way for them to understand that true success was only defined by their status in the sight of God.

Years later when the Muslims grew in number, and felt safe in the city of Medina, the call to prayer was introduced in the second year after the migration of Muhammad from Mecca.

“COME TO SUCCESS.” is the punch line in the announcement.

It reminded them that worldly gain was not the true purpose of their lives. Their lives and their successes were determined by their closeness to God and sincerity of worship.

To this day, the call to prayer remains the same. Every time we hear it, it reminds us of the true and lasting meaning of spiritual success: connection to God, servitude to God, and the remembrance of God.

“Verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest” (Quran 13:28)






WHAT IS SALAH: THE PRESCRIBED RITUAL DEVOTION?

Salah is one of the five pillars of action in Islam. The five daily rituals are dispersed throughout the day from dawn to night. At each of the appointed times, Muslims around the world perform ritual cleansing (ablution), then face the Kabah in Mecca to worship and glorify God alone.

In addition to the five daily rituals, there are voluntary ones

that may be offered throughout the day or in specific circumstances. For example, when you are trying to make an important decision, it's recommended to perform two units of ritual worship, then ask God to guide you to the best choice. Similarly, on the two celebratory Feast/Eid days, special services are performed in congregation.

God says in the Quran, “Be steadfast in ritual worship; practice regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down in worship” (2:43)



In many different passages throughout the Quran, God tells the believers to be steadfast and consistent in their prescribed ritual devotion (as well as other deeds). The importance of this cannot be overstated – in fact, Muhammad the messenger said, “The status of prescribed ritual worship in Islam is like the status of the head in the body.”

Just as our physical bodies cannot function without our minds to steer them, our spiritual well being will be compromised if we are not performing the five daily rituals well.

God says in the Quran, “I only created genies and mankind to worship and serve Me” (51:56).

The entire purpose of existence is to acknowledge God’s Oneness and to devote your life to His worship.

Ritual worship is regarded as one of the most sacrosanct obligations on a believer.

In addition to playing such an integral role in our faith, it is also a means of establishing a solid connection with God. Performing it regularly brings peace to the

heart and courage to stay true to God’s commandments throughout your life.





THE BENEFITS OF PRESCRIBED RITUAL WORSHIP

There are innumerable benefits to the five daily appointments for worship! Taking time out of your busy schedule to properly reflect on the greatness of God and your servitude to Him helps put your everyday struggles into perspective. It gives you time to remind yourself of your true purpose on earth.


Here are some specific benefits of prayer:

A means for your sins to be forgiven:

The Prophet Muhammad asked his companions, "If a person had a stream outside his door and he bathed in it five times a day, do you think he would have any filth left on him?" The people replied, "No filth would remain on him whatsoever." The Prophet then said, "That is like

the five daily ritual devotions: God wipes away the sins by them."

In another instance, the Prophet went out in winter and a lot of leaves were falling from the trees. When he held a branch of a tree, more leaves started to fall off. The Messenger of God said to his companion, "If a Muslim performs the prescribed ritual in order to please God, his sins will be shed like the leaves of this tree are shed."



It helps you stay away from future sins:

“Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish ritual worship. Indeed, ritual worship prohibits immorality and wrongdoing; and the remembrance of God is greater. God knows that which you do” (29:45).

It grounds you and keeps you patient:

“Indeed, mankind was created anxious: When evil touches him, impatient, And when good touches him, withholding of it, Except the observers of ritual worship - Those who are constant in their devotion...They will be in gardens, honored” (70:19-35).

It is the time you are closest to God:

The Prophet Muhammad said, “The closest that a servant is to his Lord is when he is bowing his face on the ground in devotion to God.”

It is the key to paradise:

The Messenger of God said, “Bow your heads in devotion much because there is no Muslim that does so to God except that God raises him one degree in Paradise by it and forgives for him a sin.”


In another instance, the Prophet said, “The key to Paradise is prescribed ritual worship, and the key to it is ritual cleansing.”



IMPROVING YOUR PRESCRIBED RITUAL DEVOTION

Making time for this devotion is often difficult in a demanding jam-packed schedule. It takes planning and dedication to step away from our work, our families, and our constantly-buzzing devices to truly focus on worship.

Here are some ways you can utilize to improve your experience:

- 1.** Study how the Prophet performed the ritual and imitate him. Muhammad the messenger taught, “Perform the ritual as you have seen me performing it.” Knowing that you are performing the ritual worship the same way the messenger did will bring you comfort and ensure that you’re doing so in the best manner possible.
 - 2.** Understand at least the basics of what you are reciting. It’s important to read the translations of the chapters you’re reciting and the statements of praise and devotion you say during and between motions and postures. Understanding the meaning of the words brings depth and focus to your ritual.
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3. Plan ahead! Make sure to schedule in a few minutes during your work or school breaks to perform the ritual. Speak to your employer or teacher about finding a suitable and quiet area where you'll be able to focus, instead of scrambling to find a different spot each day. Try your best to plan your activities around the prescribed times, instead of vice versa.

4. Remove distractions and take a few moments before each ritual to renew your intention and reflect on why you're doing this. Put your phone on silent and use this quiet time to reevaluate your priorities.

5. Perform the ritual as if this is your last chance. When you realize that you aren't guaranteed another day to live or even another chance to perform worship, you'll start to see the importance of each opportunity. Use this state of mind to continuously ask God for His forgiveness and mercy.

The messenger of God said, "When you stand for your ritual devotion, do so as if you are saying farewell. Do not say anything for which you must apologize and abandon the desire to acquire what other people have."

May God make us among those who are steadfast in our prescribed ritual devotions!

