



## Statements on Worship (al-'Ibaadah)

(Compiled by Abu Muhammad Yahya)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah's (rahimahullaah) statements on worship (al-'Ibaadah) are deeply insightful and provide a clear framework for understanding worship in Islam.



### 1. Al-'Ibaadah is obedience to Allaah by following which He ordered on the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ

In this statement, Ibn Taymiyyah's (rahimahullaah) emphasizes that worship in Islam is not just about rituals or acts of devotion in isolation but is rooted in obedience to Allah. This obedience is achieved by following the guidance Allah revealed to His Prophets and Messengers.

**Obedience to Allah:** In Islam, obedience to Allah is the foundation of worship. This is the key idea that shapes the entire concept of worship in the religion. It means to submit oneself willingly to the commands of Allah, acknowledging His sovereignty, and adhering to His laws and guidance in every aspect of life. Worship is thus not merely a set of external rituals, but a submission to Allah's will.

**Following the guidance of the Messengers:** The way Allah commands worship is not arbitrary but comes through the **Messengers** whom He sent to guide humanity. Each Prophet and Messenger was tasked with conveying Allah's commands, which were then followed by the believers. The Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ are the two primary sources of guidance. By obeying the teachings conveyed by the Messengers, we align ourselves with Allah's will.

In other words, worship is deeply connected to following the authentic teachings and practices of the Prophets, especially the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, whose Sunnah is a guide for Muslims. To worship Allah properly, one must follow the way Allah prescribed through His Messengers, making any form of worship that deviates from this guidance unacceptable in Islam.

### 2. Al-'Ibaadah is a comprehensive term covering everything that Allaah loves and is pleased with

Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahullaah) provides a more expansive definition of worship, emphasizing that worship is not confined to certain acts of ritual or outward physical acts alone. Rather, worship encompasses all actions and behaviors that are in accordance with what Allah loves and is pleased with. This is a **comprehensive definition** that includes all aspects of life.

**Comprehensive Term:** Worship is not limited to specific rituals like prayer (salah), fasting (sawm), charity (zakat), or pilgrimage (hajj). While these are essential parts of worship... worship extends to every action, intention, or even thought that aligns with Allah's commands. This means that everything a Muslim does in their daily life can become worship if it is done with the correct intention and in accordance with Islamic principles.

**Example:**

- **Actions:** Anything that a Muslim does, such as working, seeking knowledge, maintaining good relations with family, and even eating or sleeping, can be an act of worship if it is done with the intention of pleasing Allah and in accordance with His guidance.
- **Words:** Speaking the truth, making dhikr (remembrance of Allah), giving advice, or offering supplication can all be acts of worship if they are done with sincerity and in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ.

### 3. What Allah Loves and is Pleased With

The key distinction here is that worship is not defined by human desires or cultural practices but by what Allah loves and is pleased with. Many people may engage in activities that they deem beneficial or good, but for those activities to be worship, they must align with Allah's commands and be done with sincerity for His sake. This is why innovation (bid'ah) is so dangerous in Islam—it introduces practices that may seem good to people but are not in accordance with what Allah has prescribed.

**Outward and Inward:** Worship is not limited to external actions alone (like the physical acts of worship, such as prayer or fasting), but also includes internal states and conditions. The inner aspects of worship are just as important as the outward ones:

- **Outward Worship:** These are physical acts like the prayer, fasting, giving charity, and performing the pilgrimage. These acts involve physical effort but are meaningless without the correct inward intention.
- **Inward Worship:** This refers to the state of the heart and mind, which must be aligned with Allah's guidance. It includes having sincerity (ikhlas), repentance, humility, reliance on Allah (tawakkul), love of Allah, and avoiding arrogance, pride, or hypocrisy. Inward worship also refers to maintaining correct beliefs, such as belief in the oneness of Allah (Tawhid) and following the correct understanding of the religion.

### 4. The Essence of Worship in Islam

Ibn Taymiyyah's (rahimahullaah) statements reflect the **holistic nature of worship** in Islam. Worship is not an isolated activity that takes place only in specific settings (like the mosque during prayer times), but a way of life that integrates faith and practice. Every action and thought that is in line with Allah's will is an opportunity for a Muslim to worship.

## 5. Implications of These Definitions:

- **Worship is Not Limited to Rituals:** Many Muslims focus only on the obligatory rituals like prayer, fasting, and zakat. While these are essential, Ibn Taymiyyah's definition makes it clear that **every action** that aligns with Allah's pleasure is part of worship. Even mundane activities, when done with the right intention, can be acts of worship.
- **The Importance of Intention (Niyah):** The intention behind an action plays a central role in determining whether that action is an act of worship. For example, eating becomes an act of worship if the intention is to gain strength to worship Allah, while working becomes an act of worship if the intention is to earn halal sustenance for one's family.
- **The Heart and the Body Must Be in Sync:** Worship is not only about outward actions, but the inward state of the heart is just as important. A person can perform all the outward rituals of Islam, but if their heart is not sincere or they have ill intentions, those actions may not be accepted by Allah. Thus, **purification of the heart** is a critical aspect of worship.
- **Worship is an Ongoing Process:** Islam encourages Muslims to maintain a state of worship throughout their lives. This is not limited to formal acts of worship but extends to every moment when the individual is consciously striving to align their actions with the pleasure of Allah.

## Conclusion

Worship expands the concept beyond traditional acts like prayer and fasting, offering a comprehensive view of worship as a continuous, holistic practice. Worship in Islam is about aligning every aspect of life—both inward (intentions, thoughts, and feelings) and outward (actions and speech)—with Allah's will, as conveyed through His Messengers. This understanding encourages Muslims to live a life of constant consciousness of Allah, turning even the most mundane tasks into opportunities for worship and pleasing Allah.