

أَهَمِّيَّةُ الصَّلَاةِ

و أقسام الناس في كيفية أدائها

IMPORTANCE OF THE PRAYER

*And the categories of people in regards to
performing it*

Extracted from Ibnul Qayyim's "Al Waabil As Sayyib minal Kalimi Tayyib"



By:

SHEIKH DR. FARUQ POST



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INTRODUCTION

All praises are due to Allah who has guided us to be Muslims. All glory is due to Him who has clarified to us what our purpose in life is here on this earth, that is to single Him out in all forms of worship, as Allah tells us:

“I didn’t create mankind and jinn except to worship me” (Adh Dhariyat: 56)

One of the greatest, if not THE Greatest and most important forms of worship in Islam, is the ritual prayer. Once accepting Islam, a Muslim must perform the prayer five times a day in its designated times. One of the first things that a Muslim will be asked about after they die is how they performed the five daily prayers. The scholars of Islam mention that if the five daily prayers are correct, perfected, mastered, understood, and performed properly; then most likely the rest of the actions of worship that a Muslim performs and directs towards Allah will be sound, proper, and correct. Such as paying yearly Zakat, fasting Ramadan, performing Hajj, and the rest of the legislated acts of worship. However, it is clearly observed that if a Muslim is negligent in performing his/her five daily prayers; then most likely there will be major deficiencies in the rest of their actions of worship. So there is a direct correlation and relationship between establishing the five daily prayers and the rest of the actions of worship in Islam. The five daily prayers are the life-line and constant connection between the servant and his/her creator. The five daily prayers can never be abandoned as long as a Muslim is alive, and possesses a sane mind and intellect.

أهمية الصلاة و أقسام الناس في كيفية أدائها

The five daily prayers are the most important pillar of Islam, after the testimony of faith. It is commonly said that the role that the five daily prayers play for the life, peace, tranquility, solace, harmony of the mind, body, and soul are detrimental to the health of one's being. The five daily prayers in regards to the how important they are, are somewhat comparable to how important the IV is to a patient that goes into the hospital or the emergency room. The first thing that the patient gets hooked up to or is attached to is the IV to give the patient the nutrients, medications, or fluids that they need to survive. Similarly, the first thing that a Muslim gets attached to after knowing Allah and taking shahadah is making ablution and the five daily prayers. Many emergency room patients will die if not hooked up to the IV. Similarly, a Muslim will die, (heart, soul, mind) lose his connection with his/her Creator, lose his/her religion, neglect his/her soul, abandon his/her covenant with his/her creator when he/she abandons the five daily prayers. Just how the IV is the nourishment for the sick body, or the body needing treatment; the five daily prayers are the nourishment for the soul, the comfort of the mind, the relaxation of the body for the Muslim.

The five daily prayers are the means of communication, a solid connection, and life line between us weak, deficient, created beings with our Strong, Magnificent, Perfect, and All Knowing Creator.

Throughout life we will all experience difficulties, hardships, sickness, loss of life, loss of wealth, loss of loved ones; and many of us seek consultation and mentorship for relief and guidance about how to deal with such difficulties. Some can afford to go to a counselor, or psychiatrist, or mentor; while others cannot.

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Many may hesitate just because of the expensive fees. However, a Muslim must always be reminded that we have the best One who can remove our hardships, difficulties, and problems; who can be our best advisor, provide the best of guidance; and that is our Creator-Allah.

These one-on-one prayer sessions, ‘dhikr’ sessions, contemplation and reflection sessions are free of charge, no fees, no co-pay, all we have to do is keep our appointments, and be there on time-the five daily prayers.

The five daily prayers for the Muslim are like free counseling sessions with THE ONE who has all the answers; THE ONE who can provide the best of guidance, THE ONE who can remove all of our hardships; all we have to do is come on time.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PRAYER

The five daily prayers is a blessing and gift for the Muslim. It distinguishes the believer from the disbeliever. It distinguishes between the one who remembers their Creator and the one who forgets about their Creator. It distinguishes between the one who claims to be a true believer and the one who is not.

We know that Muslims are not perfect human beings; but they strive their best to submit to Allah's commands and try to avoid sins as much as possible. Muslims are not perfect, but Islam is.

A Muslim may fall into sins throughout the day, but if he is praying his five daily prayers, many times the 'adhaan' and the prayer will call him back to obedience to his/her Lord, he will abandon the sin, and his/her minor sins will be forgiven and wiped away from one prayer to the next. Most likely, if the Muslim is establishing his/her five daily prayers he/she will not stray far away from Islam even if they are committing some mistakes and minor sins.

However, if one abandons the five daily prayers, then in most cases that individual will stray far far away, leave Islam, and may stray so far away that it is hard for anyone to reach them. This is why the prophet Muhammad said that once a Muslim abandons the prayer, then he leaves Islam.

“The covenant that stands between us and them is the prayer, whoever abandons it has apostate/disbelieved” (Sunan An Nisaa’ee #463 with a sound chain of narration)

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The prayer is the most important pillar of Islam after the testimony of faith. It is the first thing a new Muslim must be invited to do after accepting the faith of Islam. As the Prophet Muhammad told Muadhth ibn Jabal when he went to Yemen:

“...let the first thing that you invite them to is the shahadah, if they get to know Allah, then tell them that Allah has obligated upon them five daily prayers.” (Saheeh Muslim #19c)

The five daily prayers in Islam are of utmost importance. It is a means of success in this world and the next, as Allah the Most Magnificent described His believing servants in the Quran saying:

“The Believers have succeeded, those who have focus, concentration, humility in their prayers.” (Al Mu’minoan: 1-2)

Allah told us that the believers will succeed, as long as they pray, and as long as they are focusing, concentrating, and training themselves to have humility, tranquility, peace, focus, and comfort in their prayers.

The Prophet Muhammad used to say to Bilal ibn Abee Rabah:

“O Bilal, call the ‘iqamah’ so that we can find comfort in our prayer” (Sunan Abee Dawud #4985 with a sound chain of narration)

And the Prophet Muhammad said:

“the comfort of my eyes is in my prayer” (Sunan An Nisaa’ee #3939 with a good chain of narration)

May Allah make the five daily prayers a comfort for our minds, bodies, and souls, as it was for the Prophet Muhammad and his righteous companions.

أهمية الصلاة و أقسام الناس في كيفية أدائها

Abandoning the five daily prayers, being lazy and lax in regards to them is a means of humiliation, distress, pain, and regret not only in this world; but also in the Hereafter.

Abandoning the five daily prayers is a means of misguidance, weakness, uncertainty, mischief, and loss in this world and the next. When the inhabitants of the paradise see the inhabitants of the hellfire, they will ask them:

“What caused you to enter the Hellfire, they will reply: We were not from those who used to pray” (Surah Al Mudatthir: 42)

May Allah make us of those who understand the importance of the five daily prayers, perform them on time, and perform them in the way that pleases our Lord.

Be informed, that the Muslims in regards to their prayers and how good/bad they perform them can be categorized into five categories. Yes, when Muslims (Sunni) pray, basically the movements throughout the prayer are the same: the qiyaam (standing), the rukoo (bowing), the sujood (prostrating), the jalsah (sitting), the tasleem (salam left and right). However, some may recite different supplications in the prayer, or read different surahs in the prayer and each Muslims focus, concentration, ‘khushoo’, and humility will be different. Some may be focused 100%, 80%, 50%, 30%, or even only 5%. May Allah help us all to focus and concentrate more in our prayers. Based upon this, the rewards, removal of sins, and benefits that the individual receives from his/her prayers depends solely on how sincere, focused, calm, peaceful, and concentrated they are while praying. The worshipper should be 100% engaged in his/her prayer, supplicating, concentrating on each movement and statement, and knowing and understanding what he/she is reciting while praying.

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Not only should the worshipper be focused and concentrating, but should not be distracted by things around them, in their heads, in their hearts, etc...the prayer should be 100% complete and total dedication towards Allah. The more distracted we are in our daily prayers, the less rewards and benefits we receive. The prophet Muhammad said:

“A man may pray his prayer and it may only be written a reward of one tenth part of his prayer, or a ninth part, or an eight part, or a seventh part, or a sixth part, or a fifth part, or a third part, or half of it, is recorded for him.” (Sunan Abu Dawud #796 with a good chain of narration)

The servant is only rewarded for the part of the prayer that he was focusing, concentrating, conscious of what they are saying and reciting, and dedicating himself completely to Allah and the prayer.

May Allah grant us khushoo, focus, peace, and tranquility in our prayers so that we can be from amongst the successful.

So what are the five categories of Muslims that pray and perform the prayer? What category do we as individuals fall into? Could you imagine that there is a category of those that pray who will actually be punished because of their prayer? Or there will be people who will pray and will only receive an expiation of sins from their prayers and not be rewarded?

Let's learn together:

THE FIRST CATEGORY

Which are the worst of all who pray. They are those who pray, but they will unfortunately be punished because of their prayer. The Prophet Muhammad informed us about them, when he said:

“Allah, the Exalted, has made five prayers obligatory. Whoever perfects his ablution, and perfects the prayers, praying them on time, while perfecting their rukoo and their khushoo in them, it is the guarantee of Allah that He will pardon/forgive them. Whoever does not do so, there is no guarantee/promise for him from Allah. This individual may either be forgiven by Allah if He wills, or punished by Allah if He wills.” (Sunan Abee Dawud #425 with a fair chain of narration) These individuals are the ones who are negligent and wrong themselves, in turn wrong and neglect their own souls. They are negligent and deficient in making ablution. They are always rushing through it, not washing their feet properly, nor their elbows all the way. They are the ones who disregard the proper times of prayer, they don't pray on time, they are always delaying their prayers for invalid, unacceptable, and inexcusable reasons. They are just there to go through the movements of the prayer. Prayer to them is like exercise to the body, with no benefit to the soul, mind, and heart.

If and when he does pray congregational prayer he always comes late. This lack of dedication and concern he shows in regards to his five daily prayers many times manifests in his behavior, manners, words, appearance, and demeanor. This is why you find many of these people constantly miserable, angry, sad, depressed, and uncomfortable in this world, and if they don't repent and rectify their prayers they will be even more miserable in the Hereafter.

The five daily prayers to the people of this category is a heavy burden to them, that is why they rush through it. This is why many of them rush through it pecking at the ground like a rooster, not straightening their backs in rukoo, and the likes of these hasty and rushed movements in the prayer.

This category of people actually oppress themselves, robbing themselves of great rewards. The people of this category are the worst types of thieves who steal from their own prayers, they diminish their own rewards as the Messenger of Allah told us:

Abu Qatada reported God's Messenger as saying, **"The worst individuals are those who steal from their own prayers.** The Companions asked, how can someone steal from his own prayer? He replied: **"By not performing his rukoo and his sujood perfectly."** (Musnad A; Imam Ahmed #22642 with a fair chain of narration)

Even the great companions of Allah's Messenger knew that perfecting the bowing 'rukoo' and prostration 'sujood' in the prayer is an essential pillar of the prayer being accepted, as Abu Hurairah said:

"A person may pray for sixty years, he may perfect the rukoo but not perfect the sujood, or he may perfect his sujood but not perfect his rukoo" (Musanaf ibn Abee Shaybah #2992 with a fair chain of narration)

Allah tells us about the people in this first category:

"Woe to those who pray and are unmindful and inattentive in their prayers" (Al Ma'oon: 4-5)

THE SECOND CATEGORY

Those who pray and will be asked about their prayers and be held accountable for their deficiencies. They guard and protect their prayers by praying on time and making ablution with care and fulfilling the pillars of ablution and prayer. However, his ablution and prayer are wasted because he/she is not able to control the whisperings of Shaytaan and distractions in his/her prayer.

He/she has little to no focus/concentration 'khushoo' at all, but a little more than the first category. His/her lack of khushoo is shown outwardly upon his limbs as well as in his heart. You find them praying but fidgeting with their hands, or constantly scratching their body, or looking left or right, up and down.

The individuals in this category don't seek refuge in Allah from the Shaytaan coming to whisper him in the prayer, as the Prophet Muhammad advised us to do:

Uthman b. Abu al-'As reported that he came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said, O Allah's Messenger Shaytaan distracts me and whispers to me in my prayer and interferes with my reciting of the Qur'an and he confuses me. Allah's Messenger replied: "That is a Shaytaan known as Khinzab, and when you feel affected by him in your prayer, then seek refuge with Allah from him and spit/blow three times to your left." Then Uthman said: "I tried that and Allah dispelled Khinzab from me." (Saheeh Muslim #2203)

If you find yourself constantly being affected by whisperings of Shaytaan in your prayers, try what the prophet Muhammad diagnosed for this illness. It's better than anything anyone could ever prescribe.

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This category of people, are those who are looking around everywhere, turning to the left, the right, pulling out their phones, text messaging while in prayer, constantly moving or fidgeting without a valid excuse, and many times this category of people don't even remember or understand what was recited in the prayer. The prophet Muhammad told us about looking around in the prayer and what it will result in:

Aishiah said: I asked the messenger of Allah about looking around during the prayer. He replied: "It is how the Shaytaan steals from the servant during the prayer" (Saheeh Bukhari #751)

These individuals will unfortunately be held to account about their prayers solely because their hearts were not completely focused, concentrated, and dedicated to Allah in their prayers. Their minds, eyes, bodies, and senses were directed and focused on other than Allah and pre-occupied with other worldly things and distractions.

Those in this category and the first category should be wearisome and fearful that they don't fall under what Allah said in the Quran:

"Surely the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but He outwits them. When they stand up for prayer, they do it half-heartedly only to be seen by people—hardly remembering Allah at all." (An Nisaa: 143)

THE THIRD CATEGORY

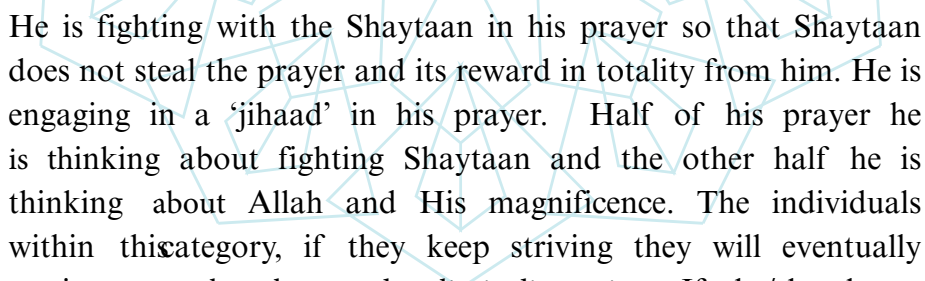
The individuals from this category are those who guard their prayers, they pray on time, they fulfill the pillars of the prayer, they fulfill the obligations and essentials. However, these individual will only receive an expiation of their sins from their prayers, and the reward they will receive will be very little if any. The problem with this category is that their khushoo, focus, and concentration is weak. Slightly more than the second category. He/she has khushoo outwardly, he/she is not fidgeting, nor moving around a lot; but he/she is fighting internally with doubts and whisperings of Shaytaan in his/her head and heart.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "When anyone of you stands for the prayers, Shaytaan comes and puts in his mind doubts until he forgets how many rak`at he has prayed. So if this happens to anyone of you should perform two prostrations of forgetfulness while sitting." (Saheeh Bukhari#1232)

Abdullah ibn Abaas reports that the Prophet said:

"Shaytaan comes to you while you are praying and blows in your rear-end/back side to make you think or imagine that you have passed gas/wind, and it did not really happen. If one of you experiences this while praying, then do not leave the prayer until you hear or smell something from your backside" (Al Bazaar in his Musnad, and Ibn Hajr mentioned it in At Talkhees Al Habeer 1/128)

The individuals praying in this category are as if they are in a boxing match. He wins one round and the Shaytaan wins another round.



He is fighting with the Shaytaan in his prayer so that Shaytaan does not steal the prayer and its reward in totality from him. He is engaging in a 'jihad' in his prayer. Half of his prayer he is thinking about fighting Shaytaan and the other half he is thinking about Allah and His magnificence. The individuals within this category, if they keep striving they will eventually attain success but they need to limit distractions. If he/she keeps repelling Shaytaan and fighting against his whisperings and allies, as Allah says:

“Those who fight/struggle in our cause, we will indeed guide them to our path” (Al Ankaboot: 69)

Those in this category will receive an expiation of his/her sins, but his reward will be little if any at all. Solely because his/her prayer was not completely and entirely dedicated to Allah. He was dedicating half of it to fighting Shaytaan, thinking about him, worrying about him; and not completely dedicated to Allah alone. As all acts of worship should be completely, totally, and sincerely dedicated to Allah.

THE FOURTH CATEGORY

Those who pray are those who will receive a good reward for their prayer. They establish the prayer on time, they fulfill the pillars and essentials of the prayers, and they focus and concentrate in the prayer with khushoo. This category of people receive an expiation for sins as well as a good reward for their prayer. Their hearts become engrossed in safeguarding the prayer so that nothing is wasted from it. His/her whole concern is directed towards establishing the prayer, its completion, and perfection, as it should be. He/she is focusing on fulfilling the obligations, pillars, sunan, wajibat of the prayer; but is still lacking a major factor in the prayer. That factor is having complete love, compassion, desire, and longing for Allah.

Those in this category are like commanded soldiers who listen to their generals. They are obedient to their general, even though sometimes they may not like him, or like everything that they are told to do. They have not yet reached the highest category of complete love, devotion, and dedication to their Lord. Their love of Allah is developing and they are training themselves to love their master and leader. They are nurturing their hearts and minds to love what Allah loves unconditionally, and dislike what Allah dislikes unconditionally. They have not mixed complete devotion, love, longing, and desire with their prayers even though they are performing them close to perfectly and mastering the movements and concentration of the prayers.

THE LAST CATEGORY

Those who pray are those who pray like the previous category. Mastering the performance of their prayers. They are constantly obedient to their master. However, on top of this they are from those who seek constant closeness to their Lord, they are completely devoted to their Lord, dedicated to Him, His religion, and everything He orders them to do. They know that whatever their creator tells them to do it is for their own good, and whatever their creator prohibits them from, it is for their own good as well. This category of people look forward to the five daily prayers, they wait for it to come in. This category of Muslims are constantly looking forward to pray with anticipation. They know that the prayer time, is the time within their day to realize true comfort, relaxation, and a relief of their everyday stress, difficulties and hardships. Prayer time is their one-on-one time to talk with their Lord. Their counseling session, their time to meet their advisor, the best mentor and leader-their Creator.

Many times you may find that a counselor, mentor, or advisor may be busy, may not answer your phone calls, may not respond to your emails, may not open the door when you knock, may be late for their appointment, and sometimes may not even show up to meet you because they're too busy with other clients.

However, be reminded brothers and sisters...that Allah is always there for us. He will never abandon us. He is always listening. He is always ready to respond, to guide, to help, to aid, to give, and to remove all difficulties. All we have to do is knock on the door.

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You told us Ya Allah:

“When My servants ask you ‘O Prophet’ about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one’s prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond ‘with obedience’ to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided ‘to the Right Way’.” (Al Baqarah:186)

And the knock on the door is thru prayer and supplication to Allah.

Allah orders us to supplicate to him and the best time to supplicate to him is in our five daily prayers, and the closest we are to our Lord is in prostration/sujood:

“Your Lord has proclaimed, “Call upon Me, I will respond to you. Surely those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell, fully humbled” (Al Ghafir:60)

Be informed that prayer time is the time to speak to our Creator and tell Him all that is bothering us, worrying us, troubling us, even though He already knows all of these things. He orders us to do so, so that He alone can completely alleviate all of our pains and discomfort. All other remedies will only provide temporary comfort and relief. As for Allah, and the Comfort, Relief, Peace, Tranquility, and Mercy He provides is eternal and everlasting. Only Allah can completely and perfectly alleviate for us of all of our difficulties and hardships in this world and the next.

The people in this final category are the best, they have perfected their Islam, are certain about their faith ‘Iman’, and have graduated to a level of perfection ‘ihsaan’.

They are those who are in the masjid before the mu'adthin and the imam come in. When the imam says: Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest/ The Best/The Most Important) to enter the first rakat of the prayer, they put everything away and aside, and these individuals realize and know that nothing is greater or more important than Allah and thinking about him, supplicating to him at this time and place. These people are in their prayer, standing and focusing with khushoo, outwardly as well as inwardly, they are praying as if Allah is standing right in front of them. Even though they don't see Allah, they know Allah is watching them, supervising them, overseeing them. These people pray with 'Ihsan', perfecting their prayers, their khushoo, their movements and their supplications in the prayers.

May Allah enable us to reach this category. Brothers and sisters, work on perfecting your prayers, work on focusing, concentrating, and making your prayers solely for Allah.

Finally, our sins are numerous, our acts of disobedience are endless, weighing us down in this world, and they will be even heavier in the Hereafter. May Allah save us. One of the best ways, brothers and sisters to release some of the burdens of those heavy sins, is thru prayer, is by making rukoo and sujood to Allah.

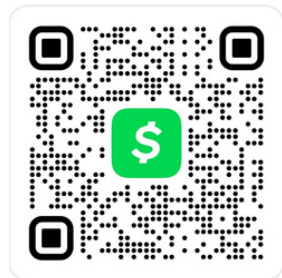
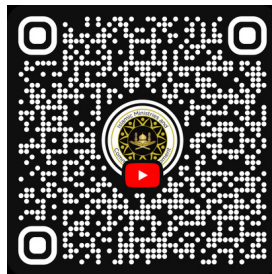
Abdullah ibn Umar ibn Al Khattab saw a man who was praying and was making his qiyam/standing and recitation extremely long. So he said: "If I knew him I would advise him to make his rukoo and sujood longer, because I heard the Prophet Muhammad say: "When the servant comes to pray, he comes with all of his heavy sins on his head and shoulders, and every time he makes rukoo or sujood the sins fall off." (Al Bayhaquee in his Sunan 3/10 and Saheeh Jami #1671 with an acceptable chain of narration)

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Whoever makes their five daily prayers, the delight and pleasure of their days and nights, and makes their prayers the comfort of their mind, bodies and souls, will have nearness to Allah. They will attain happiness, bliss and success in this world and the next. These individuals will love and long to meet Allah in the Hereafter and Allah will love to meet them. May Allah make us from them.

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