**Prayer (Salah)**



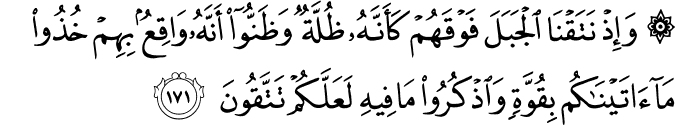


**6.162.** Say: "My Prayer, and all my (other) acts and forms of devotion and worship, and my living and my dying are for God alone, the Lord of the worlds.(1)

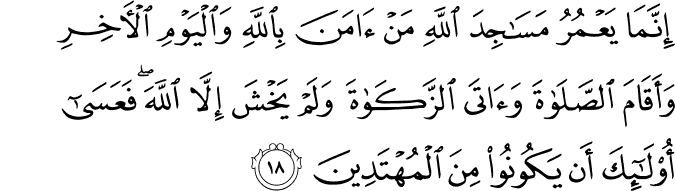
**6.163.** "He has no partners; thus have I been commanded, and I am the first and foremost of the Muslims (who have submitted to Him exclusively). "(2)



**23.2.** They are in their Prayer humble and fully submissive (being overwhelmed by the awe and majesty of God).(3)



7:171. And (remember) when We shook the Mount above them as if it were a canopy, and they thought that it was going to fall on them: Hold firmly to (the Book) that We haven given you and be mindful of (the commands and warnings) that it contains, that you may attain piety and due reverence for God, so deserving His protection (against any kind of deviancy, and its consequent punishment in both this world and the Hereafter. ) (4)



**9:18.** Only he will maintain God's houses of worship (using them for the purposes for which they are built) who believes in God and the Last Day, and establishes the Prescribed Prayer, and pays the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and stands in awe of none but God. It is hoped that such (illustrious) persons will be among the ones guided to achieve their expectations (especially in the Hereafter).(5)

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Narrated Abu Huraira: I heard Allah's Apostle saying, "If there was a river at the door of any one of you and he took a bath in it five times a day would you notice any dirt on him?" They said, "not a trace of dirt would be left." The Prophet added, "That is the example of the five prayers with which Allah blots out (annuls) evil deeds."[[1]](#endnote-2)

Narrated Abu Hurairah (RAA) :Rasulullah (SAW) said, "Allah will prepare for him who goes to the mosque in the morning and in the afternoon (for the congregational prayer) an honorable place in Paradise with good hospitality for (what he has done) every morning and afternoon goings.[[2]](#endnote-3)

Narrated Abu Hurairah (RAA) Rasualullah (SAW) said, "Martyrs are those who die because of drowning, plague, an abdominal disease, or of being buried alive by a falling building." And then he added, "If the people knew the Reward for the Zuhr prayer in its early time, they would race for it. If they knew the reward for the 'Isha' and the Fajr prayers in congregation, they would join them even if they had to crawl. If they knew the reward for the first row, they would draw lots for it."[[3]](#endnote-4)

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What Is the Prayer?

Why is the prayer so important?

The first condition of being a Muslim is believing in the existence and unity of God, and that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the servant and Messenger of God. The most important command in Islam following faith is the prayer (*salâh*). Prayer is the main pillar of the religion, and an uncompromising condition of being a Muslim. Prayer is the connection between the servant and his Creator. The devoted believer stands before God, addressing His eternal compassion five times every day. During every prayer, a Muslim symbolically experiences the Prophet’s union with his Creator on the *Mi‘râj* (the Ascension). This is why the Prophet said: “Prayer is the Ascension of a believer (to His proximity).”

Islam is more particular regarding the establishment of the prayer than any other form of worship. For example our faith allows those journeying during Ramadan to delay the fasts and compensate for the fast on a later occasion. Muslims are commanded to give 1/40 or 2.5% of their wealth, but there is no condition of when the prescribed alms should be distributed, and there are also various other means of convenience for those obliged to give the alms. There is no ruling compelling a person to perform the pilgrimage as soon as the pilgrimage becomes compulsory. However, the subject of the prayer is totally different. In fact, to abandon a prayer a person must be on his deathbed or insane. Islam commands us to pray at all conditions, at times of war or in peace. It further tells us:

*Pray at the prescribed time standing. If you are unable to do so then pray in the sitting position, if you are unable to do so then pray in the lying position, and if this is impossible, make intention to pray with your minds. If you cannot find water, then perform the tayammum (dry ablution). But certainly pray at the prescribed time.*

A Special Message from the Prophet:

“Prayer Comes First”

During the last stages of the Prophet’s illness and only a short time before his death Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle, and Ali helped the Prophet to the prayer niche of the mosque. Those who actually witnessed the Prophet walking towards the mosque reported that he was dragging his holy feet on the ground leaving trails in the sand behind him, obviously in great pain.

The most beloved servant of God, His devoted Messenger was sent to us as guidance. The Master of the Universe, who sent His beloved Messenger as an example for mankind, did not exempt His beloved servant from the prayer just hours before his death. It was almost as if God the Almighty was looking over His servant saying, “I see your condition and your pain, but I want you to continue your prayers. You must convey to your people the importance of the prayer. Let them see that you did not abandon your prayers even in this state of affliction, so that they too will never abandon their prayers, and know that their feeble excuses regarding the establishment of the prayer will not be acceptable. Regardless of any difficulties, they must be able to say ‘Prayer comes first’ in every aspect of their lives.”

Prayer: The Shield against all Evil

In the Qur’ân, the Sustainer of the universe bestowed the tidings, *“Establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions. Surely, the Prayer restrains from all that is indecent and shameful, and all that is evil”* (‘Anka bût 29:45). Those who pray say *Ihdinas-sirâtal-mustaqîm* (“guide us to the straight path”) when they recite *Al- Fâtihah* in every *rak’ah* (unit) of the prayer, a supplication that is repeated forty times every day. Therefore, those who are fully aware of the words proclaimed during the prayer remember the covenant made to God before committing any sin, and considering the promises and words supplicated to the Creator during the prayer, they will make every effort to avoid sin. Prayers performed to perfection and with total submission prevent a person from committing sin, dishonesty, and injustice and from causing harm to others. Prayer is the shield of protection against every kind of evil.

Does praying five times daily become tiring?

The idea that prayer can be boring or tiresome because it is repeated five times daily is an excuse, a clear display of idleness and heedlessness of the human soul. A person eats food and drinks water regularly on a daily basis, but never becomes bored or tired of doing so. In fact, eating and drinking gives a person pleasure. So can a person whose soul demands spiritual satisfaction possibly grow bored or tired of praying? Prayer is the means of spiritual contentment for the human soul. Satan aims to encourage these types of negative assumptions in humans, but mainly inspires such idle conceptions in people when they initially begin to pray. Those who perform the prayer on a regular basis, and reach the spiritual abundance of the prayer, recognize the irrationality of such excuses. A human does not consist merely of flesh and bones; the soul is also an entrustment bestowed upon every human by the Creator and therefore must never be neglected.

Are worldly duties an excuse for neglecting the prayer?

Our Creator blessed us with twenty four hours of life every day we exist on earth and only expects us to spend an hour performing our daily duty of worship. The five daily prayers, together with the ritual of purification, require at the most an hour to perform. The remaining twenty three hours is more than sufficient to enable us to execute our worldly duties. If a human can allocate time for routine, and on many occasions unimportant duties, then the only logical explanation for the excuse of not being able to dedicate time for the prayer, is submission to the evil influence of Satan. If somebody offers us money or an expensive gift in return for a certain duty, without doubt we would continue that duty for days in expectation of receiving whatever we were promised. Regardless of the prospect that the person may not abide by his promise, we could work for days without becoming bored or tired of performing that duty. However the Creator, the One who never breaks His promise, guarantees us the greatest reward of all: He promises us Paradise in return for performing a duty as simple as the prayer. Therefore, not allocating just one hour of an entire twenty four hours for the prayer in return for such a reward seems somewhat illogical.

Is the prayer only compulsory when you get old?

The idea that prayer is a duty to be performed in old age is a common conception that, unfortunately, often prevents people from performing their religious duties. As we mentioned previously, the prayer is compulsory upon every Muslim, from the age of puberty, until the time of death. Age has no bearing on the compulsion of the prayer, and every missed prayer continues to be the duty, an obligation of the individual in this life and the hereafter. The only means of escaping from this obligation of the prayer that must be redeemed before death is performing every missed prayer. Death can come to any of us at any moment. There is no guarantee of living a long life, and those who neglect the prayer will go before the Creator with the heavy burden of unfulfilled duties. If we consider the fact that every single prayer neglected is a burden of debt upon every Muslim, it is clear that a Muslim who begins to pray in the later stages of life will stand before the Creator with quite a significant burden. Another point to consider is that a person may not be capable of compensating for every neglected prayer in old age, and regardless of the conception of praying in old age being unfounded, there is a great contrast between the prayers which are performed at a young age with those performed at an old age. Worship performed during the years of youth, a period in which a human battles with the worldly pleasures and inner desires to fulfill the duty of worship, is much more valuable to God. As a person reaches old age, the desires of worldly pleasures begin to fade, and a person who gradually senses death approaching feels compelled to pray mainly due to fear. This is why the Prophet stressed in one of the hadith: “The most excellent youth is the one who thinks of death like an old person, prepares for the hereafter, and avoids drowning in blindness among the passions of youth.”

When should daily prayers be performed?

Why is the time for the prayer so important?

There are five obligatory prayers every day: the morning, noon, late afternoon, evening, and the night prayers. These five prayers are called the prescribed prayers. The prescribed prayers must be performed within the prescribed periods of when the time for the prayer begins and ends. Praying during the prescribed time bears great importance because this is the act of duty that pleases God the most. The greatest reward is ascribed to the prayer performed in the earlier part of the prescribed duration of time, or immediately following the call to prayer. In one of the hadith, the Prophet says: “The earlier part of the prescribed prayer time is the source of God’s good pleasure, the middle His Mercy, and the latter part the means of His forgiveness.”

A Muslim is not excused for the prayers not performed within the prescribed period, and prayers that are missed must be made up at the earliest possible time. When a delayed prayer is performed, the individual may be relieved of the burden of that prayer, but this does not eliminate the sin of not performing the duty of worship within the due period. The delayed prayer is by no means equal to the prayer performed within the prescribed time. (6)

1. **6:162 The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**
2. **6:163The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**
3. **23:2 The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**
4. **7:171 The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**
5. **9:18 The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**
6. **The Young Person’s Guide to Living Islam, Asli Kaplan, Tughrabooks**

1. (Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book [10](http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=10&translator=1&start=0&number=506), Hadith [#506](http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=10&translator=1&start=0&number=506#506)) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. (Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book 11, Hadith # 631) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. (Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book 11, Hadith # 688) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)