

## SALAH: THE STATE OF MIND

### 30 Tips on Improving your Prayer!



- greater concentration and awareness.
- Adopt a whispering technique in your recitation in order to remain focused on what you are saying, and not distract others.
- As you recite the Quran, translate it into your own language so that your attention is held. As you ponder upon the meaning and implications of the words, insha-Allah, all worldly thoughts will disappear.
- On each occasion that you recite the Sifat or attributes of Allah in ruku and sajda, consider how indebted you are and how grateful you should be to Allah and express your true emotions.
- Utilize the occasion of sajda to make additional dua to Allah. The Prophet said: "A servant is nearest to his Lord when he is in sajda, so increase your supplication when in sajda." (Muslim.)
- Make your Prayer of moderate duration so that you do not become physically and mentally tired but be aware that while in Prayer you must take your time praying.
- Give due regard to the proper performance of all the physical postures. Do not 'peck like a crow' when doing rukus and sajdahs as every posture in Salah, even the rests, are important.
- Pray as if it is your last Prayer. The Messenger of God said: 'When you stand up to pray, perform your prayer as if it were your last...' (Ahmad)

Performing your prayer in a satisfactory manner should lead to a radical change in the way you lead your daily life. Salah must be as the Quran states: Surely, Salah prevents indecency and evil [al-Ankabut 29: 45.] Your improved and more disciplined life will in turn help the quality of your Prayer to increase even more. The two should continuously reinforce each other.

Remember, Salah is an obligation. Whether your heart is attentive or not, it must be performed. You cannot give up Prayer because to you it appears useless. There is punishment for a Prayer not performed satisfactorily. It will be a witness against you rather than a witness for you on the Day of Judgment. Don't give up the obligation but try to infuse it with the purpose it seeks to serve - remembrance of Allah. It is important to remember the saying of the Prophet (pbuh): "If a man performs two rakas of Salah without the distraction of any worldly thought, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (Bukhari.)

Compiled from "In The Early Hours" by Khurram Murad



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"Why must I pray when I don't get much out of it?" "Is there anything I could do to make me love the Prayers and stay attentive?" "Why does Salah feel like such a chore?" These are a few of the questions that often trouble our thoughts and minds. What follows are 30 practical ways we can improve and enjoy our Prayers as they are meant to be!

Today we have indeed come to treat the Prayer (Salah) as something insignificant in our lives. Very often we hear our elders say, "I will start praying when the time comes." Others, specially the younger Muslims, do not find much comfort, and joy in their Prayers. Due to our treatment of Prayer as a burden, our love and passion for the Prayer has vanished. Our hearts have become hardened, and we have become a depressed and defeated people. As a result, many are searching for 'cures and remedies' to the distress in our lives, through any means available, but are unable to find any because they have ignored the greatest medicine - Salah!



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If we look deep into our daily lives and diagnose the causes of our spiritual, social and psychological illnesses, we will realize that probably something as uplifting, revolutionary, and empowering as Salah is missing. If we, the youth, realize the potential role of Prayer in changing our lives and as a constant source of hope, we would regret missing even a single Salah.

### The Role of Salah in Changing our Lives

The whole purpose of Salah is to be ever conscious of Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Salah is indeed, one of the most comprehensive forms of Dhikr (Remembrance). No wonder, Allah states in a hadith qudsi: "Out of all the ways through which My servant gets closer to Me, Salah is the dearest to Me." (Bukhari) It is unfortunate, therefore, that we do not always take full advantage of this gift.

We may compare the obligatory Salah to bathing five times a day. If after such frequent bathing, your body still remains dirty, then we may question the usefulness and efficacy of such bathing. Similarly, if after regular observance of Prayer your heart remains unmoved and your morals remain corrupt, we may question the usefulness of your Prayer. If you enter into Salah and come out of it the same person, then you have missed something great.

How can you improve the quality of your Salah? Remember, first and foremost, that as soon as you commence your Salah, Shaytan makes it his duty to fill your mind with anything and everything but thoughts of Allah. He tries ceaselessly to disengage your mind and heart from such remembrance. It is this state of absentmindedness that destroys the quality of your Prayer. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said: "God does not accept the Prayers of an individual until his heart achieves in it what his body has achieved." [Al-Ghazali in Ihya-Uloom ad-Deen]

The ability to concentrate in Prayer may be improved by undertaking adequate psychological, mental and physical preparation before the Prayer and by utilising certain techniques during the Prayer.

### i. Psychological and Mental Preparation before the Prayer

- The planning of your daily activities should revolve around the five daily Salah. Do not plan everything else and then try to fit Prayer into your busy schedule. Allah deserves a greater place in our lives than that!
- Ensure that you are conversant with all the rules and regulations governing your Prayer. Research in depth the Quranic verses and ahadith relating to the virtues of Salah. Uncertainty in how to perform one's prayer perfectly is a major cause of distraction.
- Be punctual with your Prayer. Get into the habit of praying at the earliest hour. Do not procrastinate. The Prophet said, "The deed most loved by Allah is Prayer performed on time." (Muslim) and "only the hypocrites intentionally delay their prayers"!
- Pray as much of your obligatory Salah in congregation as is possible.

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This is not 'just a good thing' but an obligation on every Muslim male. According to the Prophet, if we knew the good in praying in jama'ah we would not miss it even if we had to crawl to the masjid!

- Avoid praying in a state in which you are mentally and physically fatigued.
- Keep your mind free of worldly worries, evil thoughts, and ideas.
- Plan what verses/duas you are going to recite.
- If you do not understand Arabic learn the meaning of what you recite in your Prayer.
- Remind yourself that engaging in Prayer offers you an opportunity to release yourself from the tensions of this world. The Prophet has said that in Prayer was placed the comfort of his eyes. Therefore cherish the opportunity to remove the burdens of this world from your shoulders.
- Use your Prayer to remain focused on your mission in life, which is to bring your entire being to serve only Allah.
- Use your Prayer as a source of strength, inspiration and enthusiasm for your life and activities.

### ii. Physical Preparation

- Fulfill all your personal needs before you commence your Prayer, for e.g., thirst, hunger and calls of nature.
- Pray in a pure physical state. Perform your wudu with care and perfection.
- Although the whole earth is a masjid or a place of worship, choose a place that is clean.
- Pray in an environment free of noise and one where there is no distraction.
- Adorn yourself with clean and respectable clothes.

### iii. Performing Your Prayer

- Assess your mental readiness for Prayer before its commencement, during the various postures, after each raka and ultimately at the end.
- Pray with humility both in your mental state and in your physical manner. Pray with hope and awe.
- Remind yourself continually that you are talking to the most important 'One' in your life - your Creator and Sustainer. He is in front of you. You are facing Him and you are involved in a dialogue with Him.
- Commence your Prayer by seeking Allah's help and protection from the influences of Shaytan.
- Lower your gaze while praying and do not allow the physical environment to distract you. Anas related that the Prophet said: "My dear son, be sure to avoid being distracted during Prayer, for, to become distracted while praying is a disaster." (Tabarani) Remember that Allah will look at you as long as you keep your eyes on the ground.
- Use a variety of Quranic verses and duas in your Prayer to achieve