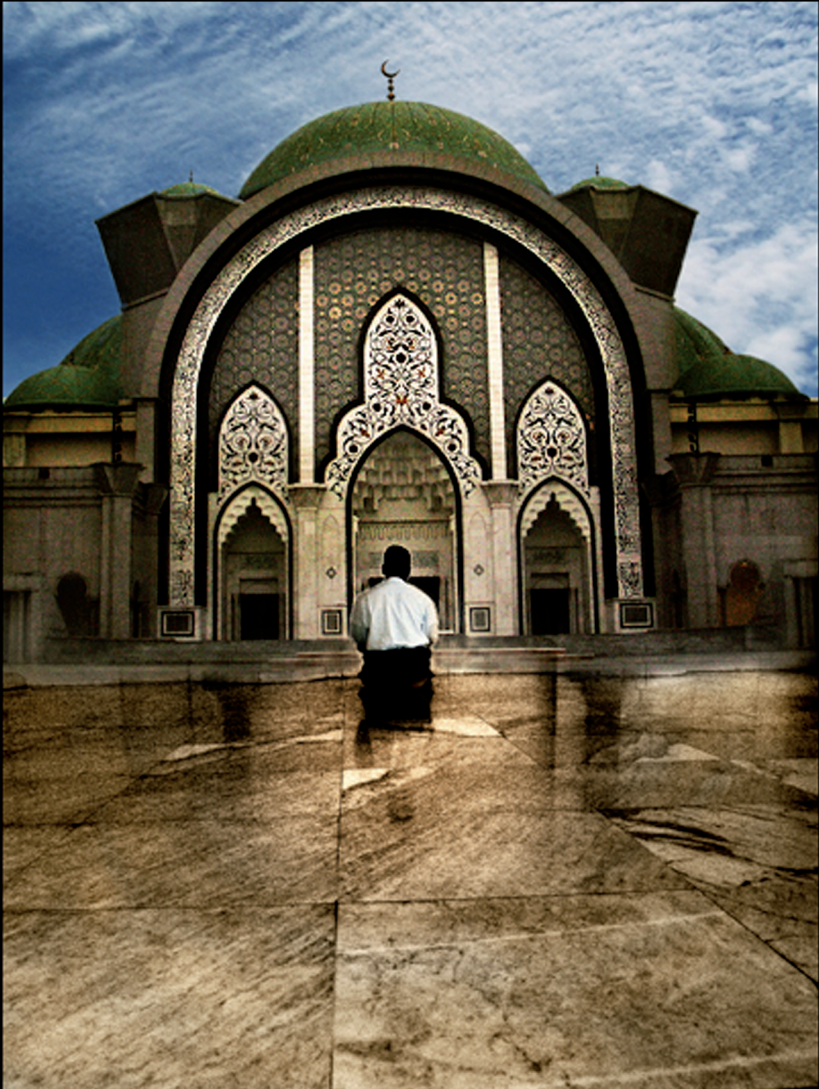


A n I n t r o d u c t i o n t o :

Prayer in Islam



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Introduction

In the name of Allah,¹ the Gracious, the Merciful. Indeed all praises and thanks are due to Him. We humbly seek His help, His forgiveness and His guidance. We seek refuge with Him from the evil in ourselves as well as the sins we commit. No one can lead astray the one whom Allah guides and no one can guide the one whom Allah has left astray. I bear witness that there is no divine being other than Allah and that everything besides him is His creation which is subject to His All-Encompassing Almighty will for them. It is not for any of His creations to be worshipped as He is the only One worthy of worship. And I bear witness that Muhammad son of Abdullah was His final messenger sent to live and teach mankind the peak of utopian humanity grounded in a strong deeply personal relationship with their Creator based on love, gratitude, and devout loyalty.

My very existence is indebted to my beloved Lord and Master who guided me after I had been living in darkness and confusion fooled by the illusion of the material world. In retrospect reflecting upon my acceptance of Islam, I remember the internal change all started by reading a translation of the Holy Qur'an. As my inherent faith in God began to flourish with the help of a comprehensive doctrine, my belief system was slowly being fixed through reading the Qur'an. But I can truly say that my outward character as well as my feeling of closeness with God did not strengthen until I began praying the 5 daily prayers and the optional prayers which come with them. Since that time, I have read many books about Islamic purity and prayer. In hindsight, I wish there would have been a better clearer book for me to read that would give me a simple but comprehensive approach to learning the prayer. The goal of this book is to give a thorough introduction to build a strong foundation for the daily prayers based on only authentic texts and how our scholars understand them.

The goal of this book is to give the reader a solid foundation for the second pillar of Islam. Even though it is an introduction, I did mention some differences among the schools of Islamic Jurisprudence. This is to foster tolerance towards other opinions. The general principle in one's individual worship is to take the safer opinion which is clearer from the Qur'an and Sunnah, although one may adopt the opinion of the scholar they habitually follow. I pray that by this introduction that Muslims may build a strong daily relationship with their Creator.

¹ Arabic for «The God». It is referring to the One Creator who sent Prophets among mankind that they may teach them His message. The word Allah is used by Muslims of all languages as well as by Christian and Jewish Arabs.



Difference between Prayer and Supplication

First of all we must distinguish between Prayer (Salah) and Supplication (Du'aa) in Islam. Most Non-Muslims don't see a difference between the two. The Prayer is an obligation for Muslims five times a day. It consists of a series of movements, remembrances and supplications and must be done in accordance to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be Upon Him).² This is due to the famous Hadith³ of the Prophet (pbuh),

“Pray as you have seen me praying.” (Bukhari 7246)

Supplication on the other hand is closer to the non-Muslim understanding of Prayer. It usually consists of supplicating Allah's help, guidance, forgiveness, etc... It can be done at any time and can be made up by the individual, although it is best to use one of the hundreds of supplications which have been preserved for us in the Sunnah⁴ of the Prophet.

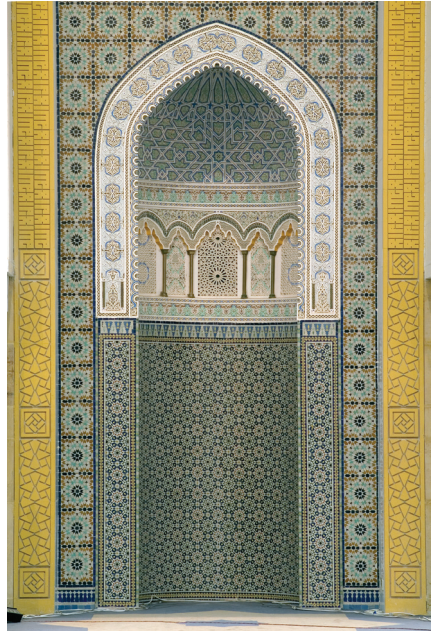
2 After this phrase will be abbreviated (pbuh)

3 A Hadith is an individual narration of a saying, action or approval of the Prophet recorded and verified by a chain of transmission.

4 The Sunnah is a compilation of various authentic Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad which can be found in several books the most famous of which is Bukhari. The Sunnah expounds upon and clarifies the word of God (the Qur'an)

Prayer in Islam

Prayer is the main pillar of Islamic worship and is the starting point for becoming a true servant of Allah. This is because Islam is about a strong spiritual relationship between the human being and his Creator. In the Islamic Prayer, we find so many things which strengthen ones relationship with Allah. One becomes a Muslim by testifying as to one's belief in the divine source of Islam by adopting pure monotheism according to the teachings of the final Messenger of God. After this big step which forms the foundation of faith and worship, we are taught to open up a daily channel of personal contact with that divine source of guidance. Prayer is so important to being a Muslim that the Prophet said,



“The covenant between us (God and His messenger) and them (the believers in Islam) is the Prayer. So whoever doesn't pray has without a doubt disbelieved (in Islam).”⁵ (Ahmad 5/356)

The Prayer is a covenant between Allah and the believers. It is well known that Almighty Allah has sent messengers throughout history to provide the believers with an example to follow. This lifts the burden of figuring out the best way to worship Allah. So of course the covenant of Prayer as well as all other types of obligatory worship have been clearly laid out in the teachings of Muhammad (pbuh). Allah the Gracious tells us-

“...And We have also sent down unto you (O Muhammad) the Qur'an, that you may then explain clearly to them what is sent down to them and that they may be mindful of it.”(Qur'an 16:44)

“Surely, in the Messenger of Allah you have been given the best example for those whose hope is in Allah for the Last Day and remember Allah often.” (33:21)

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed God”(4:80)

5 There is no other form of worship in which the Prophet (pbuh) taught that the one who left it is a disbeliever.

Purity (Taharah)

Islam is the only religion which has a large part of worship dedicated to cleanliness and hygiene. Since ritual and physical purity are prerequisites to Prayer, we must properly understand it before going into the details of prayer. Islam teaches that purity is half of faith. The Prophet said,

**“Purity is half of faith”
(Tirmidhi 3519)**

Here purity is referring to all aspects of the word whether it be physical, spiritual, or mental. When talking about the purity required in order to perform the Prayer, we generally focus on the physical meaning although the mental

and spiritual aspects are there. For example- when one makes ablution or washes as a result of following the message of God, then this is a spiritual builder of submission to Allah and His will for us. In other cases when one may be tired, their mind was wandering or was busy in some daily activity then the purification acts as a mental preparation for the Prayer.

Before talking about the different aspects of purity which enable one to pray, we must remember that physical purification is a necessity which must be clearly covered prior to performing the Prayer. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

“The key⁶ to the Prayer is purity, saying Allahu Akbar and raising one’s hands saying Allahu Akbar is its beginning point and saying As-salaamu alaikum wa rahmatullah while turning one’s head to the right is its finality.”(Tirmidhi 3)



⁶ That which allows one to enter the prayer as a key allows one to enter a locked door. Without that key one cannot enter because the door is locked.

The Ritual Ablution (Al-Wudoo')

Probably the most common form of Islamic purification is known as Wudoo. Wudoo is a ritual ablution which consists of washing and rinsing the face, head, and limbs with clean water like tap water. Pure water can be found in tap water as well as natural water coming from the sky such as rain or snow or from the earth such as lakes, rivers or oceans. Other than that if water was put into some container we must look at its amount. The vast majority of scholars hold that if it is less than 270 liters of pure water then it will become impure even if a small impurity is mixed with it. If it is over 270 liters then the impurity must change the taste, smell, or color of the water before it can be seen as impure or not allowed to use for ablution.

What Necessitates Ablution?

Wudoo is the ablution from the “minor impurity”. The Prophet (pbuh) has taught us that there are some things which will cause a ritual impurity therefore necessitate ablution as a precondition to performing the prayer. From them are-

1. Excretions of the anus, penis, or vagina. This includes feces, urine, passing gas, blood, sperm, pre-seminal fluid, and sexual vaginal secretions. This does not include normal vaginal secretions which are often common. This is due to the authentic Hadith which say's,

“Allah does not accept the Prayer of one who has excreted an impurity until he/she performs ablution.”(Bukhari 135)

“A man complained to the Prophet (pbuh) that he felt as though he may have passed gas during the Prayer and the Prophet told him, “Don't leave until you hear a sound or smell the scent (of gas).””(Bukhari 137)

2. Touching one's privates with bare hands. This is from the Hadith-



7 The Prophet is teaching us to not pay attention to doubtful matters and just go upon what we are sure of. So if one is sure they passed gas then they must make ablution.

“Whoever touches his/her sexual organ without any covering between the hand and organ must perform ablution.” (Albani 362)

There is another Hadith which clarifies the ruling. A man named Talaq asked about touching his private and the Prophet said,

“It is just a part of your body”(Ibn Hajar Al-Fath 1/306)

The scholars have different views regarding the meaning of these texts. The meaning anyone reading these texts would get is an apparent contradiction. Of course that can't be right because there is never contradiction between authentic texts. So some looked into the situation in which it was said and found proof that it was during the Prayer and so the ruling in the first Hadith applies that obviously there was clothing between his private and hand when the act occurred. Other scholars weren't convinced about the circumstances and said that the general ruling applies when touching one's own private or ones spouse's private with desire. This group said that even after taking a ritual shower that if you accidentally touched your private or if a parent touched their baby's private then they wouldn't have to make a new ablution because there is no desire. They contend that this is the meaning of the second Hadith. And Allah knows best!

3. Deep sleep. This is from what the great companion of the Prophet narrated,

“When we used to travel, the Prophet would ask us not to take off our leather socks for three days except as a result of sexual intercourse (in which you would have to perform the ritual bath (Ghusl)⁸, but he allowed us to keep our socks on if we urinated, passed stool, or slept.”(Tirmidhi 96)

This Hadith is in regards to the well known rule, that in the time of the Prophet (pbuh), the Muslims were permitted to keep on their thick leather socks for three days for the purpose of ease in travel. If we needed to make ablution (Wudoo') then we may just wipe over the sock instead of taking it off and washing our feet. In this Hadith Safwan mentions that sleep was one in the category of things which break one's minor impurity thus requiring ablution.

It must be mentioned that our scholars have differed as to what kind of sleep necessitates ablution. This is because of a group of authentic Hadiths which clearly show that the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) would be sitting in the mosque and fall a sleep shortly to the point of snoring and then the Prophet (pbuh) would wake them and they would pray without performing Wudoo'.

The strongest opinion is that if one fell asleep and lost complete consciousness to where they couldn't easily be awake then the possibility of

⁸ We will discuss the Ghusl after Wudoo

passing gas would be high and there would be no way to know, thus requiring ablution. In addition to that when one just wakes up from a deep sleep, the ablution is definitely refreshing and helps one to focus on their prayer.

4. There is no authentic text which requires one to make ablution from bleeding regardless of the amount of blood. Many scholars used weak Hadiths or analogy to hold that blood requires ablution since it is an impurity. Although it would be safe to make Wudoo after washing blood off of your body or cleaning up an open injury, the main principle is that Wudoo is a type of worship that must have a specific text to require it.

Actions Which Require Wudoo' to Perform them

1. The Prayer. This is from the well known verse of the Qur'an,

“Oh you who believe if you stand for Prayer then wash your faces...”(5:6)

2. Touching the Arabic Qur'an. This is due to the famous message that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) sent with 'Amr ibn Hazm to Yemen,

“No one must touch the Qur'an except the pure.”(Agreed Upon)

The majority opinion is that this Hadith means that no one should touch the Qur'an except while purified from ritual impurities. They are also relying on the verse-

“And no one may touch it except the pure”(56:79)

This verse is subject to debate since some of the earliest commentaries as well as Arabic grammar with regards to a pronoun reference show that it refers to the angels who touch the preserved tablet of knowledge located in heaven. There are a group of other scholars who say that the meaning in light of some other texts is not so clear therefore it cannot be established as forbidden to touch the Qur'an without Wudoo'. This group is using the verse from the Qur'an where Allah says,

“...Indeed the polytheists (disbelievers) are filthy (impure)” (9:28)

This is clearly an abstract meaning referring to their corrupt hearts and minds. This group's opinion is made clearly in the famous Hadith,

“A believer doesn't become impure.”(Bukhari 283)

Regardless of this difference as to the meaning of the texts, we must not forget that it is best to be in the purest spiritual state while reading the Qur'an and to be careful of the possibility of the first opinion being correct; therefore in the second opinion it is still highly recommended to perform ablution before touching the Qur'an.

3. Circling around the Ka'bah (Tawaf). This is due to the Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH),

“Circling the Ka'bah is like the Prayer, except you may talk out loud (in Tawaf).”(Albani Irwaa' 1102)

As everyone knows, it is a condition or prerequisite of Prayer to have Wudoo', therefore by this Hadith it becomes a condition for Tawaf. This is the vast majority opinion on the subject. In another narration they used the analogy of the menstruating woman. When A'isha mother of the believers asked her husband the Prophet about doing the pilgrimage while menstruating, He said,

“That is something that God has ordained upon the daughters of Adam⁹, So complete your Hajj as men do except don't make the Tawaf except after taking the ritual bath.” (Muslim 1211)

An isolated group of scholars said that purity is not a condition for an acceptable Tawaf. They hold that the text is not decisive in its meaning and that the analogy is invalid. They still hold that it is a non-obligatory must that should not be left unless the circumstances call for it. That being said, the well established opinion is that it is a condition for Tawaf to be in a state of purity and that the Tawaf will be invalid for the one who does it while ritually impure.

Acts in which Wudoo' is Preferable

1. Before going to sleep. This point is illustrated in the statement of the Prophet (pbuh),

“If you are about to lie down and go to sleep then perform ablution as you would for the Prayer.”(Bukhari 6311)

2. Vomiting. Although not just spitting up a little. This is because of the Hadith related by Abu Dardaa',

“The Messenger vomited and then made ablution.”(Tirmidhi 87)

⁹ The first man husband of Eve



The scholars are split on the implication of this Hadith. Some of the early scholars used this Hadith with others to say that vomiting necessitates ablution.

Other scholars in the last few centuries have proven that this is the only authentic Hadith and that it doesn't imply a commandment or an obligation, but that it shows that it is simply recommended to make Wudoo' after vomiting since the Prophet (PBUH) did it.

3. Eating or sleeping after having sexual intercourse. A'isha reported that,

“Any time the Prophet wanted to eat or sleep after having intercourse he would perform ablution”(Muslim 305)



Wudoo' itself

Before going into the description of Wudoo' itself we would like to mention two points. As we said in the beginning of the book, the ritual ablution is not necessarily cleaning the physical body as it may appear so. It was authentically related that,

“If someone perfects their ablution, then their minor sins will be washed away through his/her fingers.”(Muslim 244)

This Hadith clearly shows that the Wudoo' itself washes away the minor sins as our fingers wash our head and limbs. One of our great scholars Ibn Al-Qayyim mentioned the wisdom of the Wudoo' in light of this Hadith. He said that the minor ablution is done by washing the parts of our body with which we commit sins. Of course, the major sins like murder, alcohol and drugs, disrespecting our parents, adultery, slander etc... require a full conscious repentance. Here the Hadith is referring to minor sins. For example some man looked at a woman with desire and began to stare not lowering his gaze. In this case when the water goes over his eyes in the ablution this would be forgiven. Another example is if someone used foul language. Then the Wudoo' will wash that sin away when the person washes out their mouth. Another example is if someone points at someone or something in ridicule or mockery then the ablution will wash that sin away when washing his/her hands.

The Ablution Step by Step

The basic proof for Wudoo' is the verse of the Qur'an,

“O you who believe, when you stand for Prayer, wash your faces and forearms to the elbows, wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles.”(5:6)

Of course there are many reports of the details of how the Prophet made Wudoo' so we will list them in order.

1. Having an intention in one's heart that they are making Wudoo' in accordance to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) seeking the pleasure of Allah.

“Say, ‘Indeed my Prayer, my rites, my life and my death are for Allah Lord of all Creation’”(6:162)

The Prophet clarified the implications of this verse with regards to all good deeds or acts of worship,

“Deeds are based solely on their intentions and everyone will be judged based upon what they intended (not necessarily what they did).”(Agreed Upon)

2. Say Bismillaah which means “In the name of the One God”. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

“There is no ablution for the one who doesn’t say “Bismillaah” upon making ablution.”(Abu Dawood 101)

There are many scholars who took issue with the meaning and application of this narration, but it has been declared a good reliable chain of transmission. The Arabic suggests it is an obligatory condition, but it was not reported in the full narration of him (pbuh) performing ablution that he would say “Bismillah”. This could be because he said it silently to himself or that it is just a recommended act. The best opinion is that you must say it in a soft voice, yet if you forget to say it then your Wudoo’ is still valid.

3. Washing your hands thoroughly three times including between the fingers.



4. Wash/Gargle mouth out three times

5. Wash out the nose by sniffing some water and blowing it out three times.



6. Wipe over the face three times from hairline forehead, past the lower cheek bones and bottom of the chin. If one has a beard then to rub the waters through the beard and to the skin if possible.

* Or where the hairline would be if he was bald.

7. Wash the arms 3 times starting with the right and washing the arm from the hands to the elbow.



8. Wipe over the head with wet hands once starting from the forehead hairline and going down to the end of the hairline on the neck and back up. Then without wetting hands again wiping out the inside and outside of the ears with the thumbs and index fingers.

9. Starting with the right, wash the feet thoroughly from between the toes and up to the ankles. The prophet once warned his companions about just running water over their feet and not thoroughly washing them.



10. Then one should supplicate Allah with one or all of the following supplications.¹⁰

“I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.” (Muslim 234)

“O Allah, make me of the pure and repentant”(Tirmidhi 55)

“Glory be to you and your praise, O Allah. I bear witness that there is no deity other than You and I seek Your forgiveness and I repent to you.”(Nisaa’i 9909)

Final Notes about the Ablution

•In making a sound Wudoo' these steps must be done in order with exception of step three which may be done with step seven as per the order mentioned in the verse of the Qur'an. The washing of the hands in step 3 is a preparatory Sunnah and not an obligation.

•The water should touch all parts of the body mentioned in entirety not just haphazardly washed. Remember this is an act of worship and the Prophet said, **“Allah loves that if any of you did something that you perfect it”** (Albani 1113)

•It has become a widespread innovation to wipe over the neck while making ablution and the Hadith it was taken from is only one and its chain of transmission is weak and we do not build our obligatory worship or belief upon weak Hadiths.

•Some part of the Wudoo' are not obligatory but simply recommended and if the ablution is done without them then it will be enough to pray with. They are; saying bismillah, washing the hands at the beginning as mentioned, washing each three times, and starting with the right in the hands and feet.

•Those who are fasting should just lightly wash out their mouths and nose so that there is no chance of water entering the throat.

* Note:In none of these supplications was it established that the Prophet (pbuh) looked to the sky while supplicating as some have reported

The Ritual Bath/Shower (Ghusl)



Ghusl is an Arabic word which means to wash the entire body. There are two realities which create what scholars call the major ritual impurity thereby necessitating the Ghusl. They are,

1. Ejaculation or if the tip of the penis enters the vagina. Allah said in the Qur'an,

“...And if you have had intercourse then purify yourselves...”(5:6)

2. After completing a menstruation cycle or postpartum bleeding.¹¹

“If you a woman began her menstrual cycle then she must stop praying and when the cycle is completed then she should make Ghusl and start praying again.” (Bukhari 320)

“Umm Salamah¹² said that women would stop prayer for 40 days for postpartum bleeding in the time of the Prophet.”(Abu Dawood 62/1)

Other acts which require Ghusl

1. Someone dying other than a martyr who died in the battlefield. This is due to the Hadith when the Prophet was telling Abdullah ibn Abbas what to do with the dead,

“Perform the Ghusl on them with water and flowers then bury them wrapped in two clean white cloths.”(Bukhari 1266)

2. It is also highly recommended and even held to be obligatory to perform Ghusl before the Friday prayer (Jumu'ah). The Prophet said,

“Ghusl is a must for all adults before the Friday Prayer” (Bukhari 858)

11 God willing we will write a separate book for this deep subject. There are some good ones out there so we will see if we can add something and/or make it simpler.

12 The wife of the Prophet and mother of the believers.

3. It is highly recommended for someone to make Ghushl before embracing Islam since the Prophet commanded some of the new reverts among his Companions to do so.

4. It is also well known that it is recommended to perform Ghushl upon entering the Ihram before the pilgrimage or even if one wanted to enter Makkah for any reason.

The Way the Prophet Performed Ghushl

It is narrated by A'isha the mother of the believers,

“The Prophet would make Ghushl by first washing his hands three times, then he would wash his private area, then he would make Wudoo’,¹³ then he would wash his hair to the roots with his fingers, then he would pour a scoop of water over his head three times, then he would wash his whole body.”(Bukhari 248)

From this Hadith and many others like it with minor variations in text the scholars have said that the full Ghushl is performed by these steps-

1. To sincerely intend from the heart that one is doing Ghushl in order to remove the ritual impurity in order to worship Allah.
2. Say Bismillaah. (In the Name of Allah)
3. Wash the hands three times.
4. Wash one's private area.
5. Then make a full wudoo'.
6. Then wash one's hair rubbing with the finger tips.
7. Then pour water over the whole body starting with the right side.

Note: Our scholars say that it would be sufficient to lift the ritual impurity by simply pouring water over the whole body and rinsing out the nose and mouth. Except that in following the mentioned seven steps is a big reward in following the Prophet's (pbuh) Sunnah exactly as he performed it.

13 As mentioned in the previous chapter.



Physical Purity before Praying

In the previous chapters we covered the major condition known as ritual purity. In addition to that, one must make sure that there are no physical impurities on their cloths or body such as urine, feces, blood, or vomit. In addition to that we must clean ourselves with toilet paper and water after either urinating or defecating. Salman al-Farisi said,

“The Prophet used to command us not use our right hand when wiping and to not wipe less than three times.”(Muslim 262)

“Purify yourselves from urine because it is the most common punishment of the grave.”(Albani Irwaa’ 28)

In addition to one’s body and clothes the place upon which one will prostrate also must be clean and pure. The Prophet said,

**“The whole earth is a place to pray except graveyards and bathrooms”
(Albani 2767)**

It is clear that the Prophet is shutting the door to people deviating by worshiping saints in their graves. Many have fallen into this blasphemy before and we seek Allah’s protection from this heresy. The bathrooms of today are much different than when the Prophet (pbuh) taught this ruling. That being said we are also taught that in the world of the unseen that some wicked Jinn who seek places where nakedness is revealed and/or filth accumulates. These Shayateen try to influence us with their evil whispers. Therefore, we should avoid praying in the bathroom at all costs. Al-Hamdu lillah as the Hadith states we can pray anywhere else in the whole world.

Other pre-prayer musts

1. If it is an obligatory Prayer then the time must have arrived. One may not pray the Thuhr prayer before its commencement which is when the sun begins to decline from its zenith (just after noon). And one may not pray the sunset prayer (Maghrib) in the afternoon and the sun is still visible. This is as Allah said in the Qur'an,

“Indeed the Prayer has been decreed upon the believers at appointed times.”(4:103)

The time for Fajr Prayer is Dawn. In other words when the darkness from the east begins to turn to a dark blue. Fajr continues until the whole sky becomes light blue and the sun has become partly visible. The Thuhr prayer is from just after noon when your shadow has gone from one side to nothing and is beginning to appear on your other side. Thuhr continues until the beginning of Asr. The Asr Prayer is when the sun is at a 45 degree angle and continues until the sun begins to set¹⁴. The Maghrib Prayer time is when the sun has just disappeared and the sky is still light orange in the west and a light blue/gray across the sky. The Ishaa' prayer begins when the sky has become dark blue/black and ends halfway between sunset and sunrise.¹⁵

2. Properly covering the body. The Prophet said,

“A young woman's¹⁶ Prayer is not accepted except with a full covering¹⁷.”(Tirmidhi 377)

“A man's nakedness is between his belly button and knee-caps.”(Weak chains but generally accepted)

3. Facing the Qiblah.¹⁸ Allah said,

“So face the sacred mosque (when praying)”(2:144)

¹⁴ It is disliked to delay the Asr prayer to the end portion after the sun loses its bright yellow color and becomes reddish.

¹⁵ These are the official times one should know if they don't have a list of the astronomical calculations which can usually be found at most Islamic Centers as well as at www.islamicfinder.org

¹⁶ The Arabic word is Ha'id which refers to reaching puberty as a result of the onset of the monthly menses. This is the time in which the modest covering is obligatory.

¹⁷ The word for «full covering is Khimar which refers to a cloth which drapes over the head and body thus only revealing the face and hands. This dress is known as Hijab and is the way a Muslim woman dresses when leaving her home or praying

¹⁸ The Qiblah is the direction of Makkah for outsiders and the direction of the Ka'ba for Makkans

The Status of Prayer in Islam

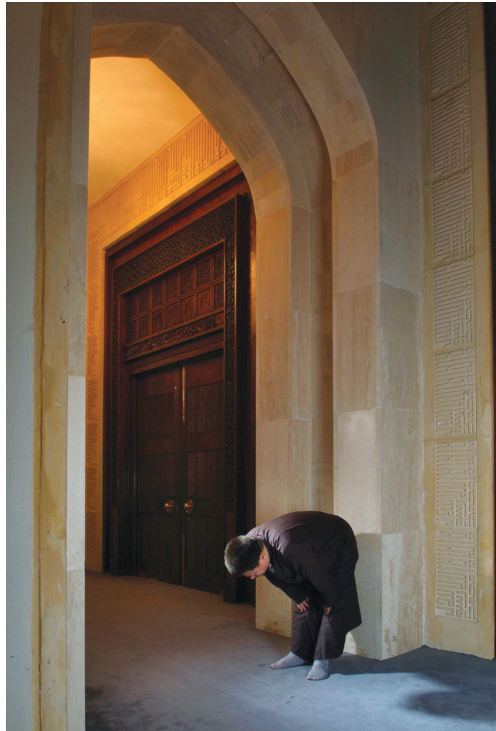
It was authentically narrated that the Prophet said,

“Whoever takes advantage of the time of the obligatory Prayer by perfecting its ablution, concentration, and movements will have his/her past sins forgiven as long as he/she didn’t commit a major sin.” (Muslim 228)

It is also well known that the prayer is the gauge for all of our deeds which we will be accounted for on the day judgment. The Prophet said,

“The first thing people will be called to account for on the Day of Judgment is the Prayer. If it was befitting¹⁹ then the rest of one’s deeds will also be found to be good. But if it was corrupt then the rest if the deeds will be corrupt as well.” (At-Targheeb 189/1)

As a result of these teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, anyone who reads into the life of his companions will find amazing stories about how seriously they took the Prayer. There were many who would pray non-stop for a couple hours every night. We read about Abdullah ibn Az-Zubair praying and birds sitting on his body as though he was a tree. We hear about the man named Muslim son of Yasaar praying in the mosque and didn’t flinch when the wall collapsed next to him. Then there’s Sila ibn Ashyam. While he was praying a lion approached him and stood in front of him and he didn’t move until finishing his prayer saying May the peace and mercy of Allah be Upon you and the lion walked off in peace.



¹⁹ In accordance with the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah



A Ritual not Meant to be Routine

One of the terrible afflictions facing Muslims these days is ignorance. The worst categories a Muslim may have ignorance in are matters of belief as well as in the core aspects of worship like Prayer. The Prayer for example is itself made of pillars, necessities, and preferable actions. The spirit of Prayer can be found in one's sincerity of intention, concentration, and presence of mind. It contains the remembrances of Allah, supplications, and physical movements. The purpose of remembering Allah or supplicating Him will not actualize if one's mind and heart are not focused on it.

The truth is that most Muslims are not Arabs, yet say their prayer in Arabic²⁰ by memory and many of them don't really understand what they are saying. There are still others who are either Arabs or have mastered the prayer's meaning in Arabic but have regrettably taken the Prayer as a daily routine. This group has reduced the Prayer to some movements with a wandering mind habitually repeating phrases from memory. We are taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah that the Prayer is supposed to have a dramatic effect on our character and attitude. The Qur'an say's-

“...Indeed the Prayer prohibits one from immorality and disgraceful acts...” (Qur'an 29:45)

²⁰ They do this in hopes to pray exactly as the Prophet (pbuh) did and for the Prayer to be a source of unity among Muslims, although ones prayer is acceptable in any language as long as the Qur'anic portion is in Arabic, as it is established that the Qur'an is only in Arabic.

So naturally if one prays the obligatory prayers and we still see them doing major sins or disgraceful deeds then it seems they are not benefiting from the Prayer as was intended. Of course it is established that anyone who performs their prayers will be rewarded for their answering Allah's call to submission regardless of their other deeds.

We are taught that whoever shows great concern for their prayer according to the teachings of the Prophet then they will have an easy time on the Day of Judgment and that they will eventually enter Heaven by such a noble deed. The Prophet said when someone mentioned the Prayer,

“Whoever takes good care of it will be illuminated by divine light and it (the Prayer) will be a testimony in his favor and a cause for salvation on the Day of Judgment. And whoever was neglectful of it will not have that light and it will not be a testimony for them nor will they be saved by it.”(Ahmad 83/10)

The Step by Step Unit of Prayer (Raka'ah)

As mentioned in the introduction, Prayer is the central part of Islamic worship. The Prophet (pbuh) taught us that it is the way to salvation and that the one who left it has become a disbeliever. A true Muslim's day to day worldly life is intertwined with this spiritual pillar of worship which brings a balance between this life and the inevitable hereafter in which we will return to our Maker. As it relates to salvation from sin the Prophet says,

“The similitude of the five daily prayers is like unto a river which flows in front of the door to one's house and the tenant baths in it five times. At the end of the day will there be any dirt or sweat on that tenant.”(Muslim 668)

The analogy in this Hadith is in comparing how the water washes the body each time it comes from work and running errands and such with how the Prayer erases the sins throughout the day as we commit them. By the grace of Allah, through the five obligatory Prayers salvation is achieved by retaining a strong relationship with Allah. You see Allah is forcing His Love and Mercy upon us by obliging us to perform these Prayers. He knows He must do this because it is the only way to rise above the animal self, thus becoming enlightened repentant spiritual beings.

The following is a comprehensive step by step of the Prayer according to the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) prayed. This is according to the famous Hadith,

“Pray as you have seen me praying.” (Bukhari 7246)

1. Making the correct intention within your heart without saying it. This consists of two parts-

- a. Intending to pray for the sake of God. For example you may not pray for show so that people will think you are pious. That is unless you plan to truly pray for the sake of God, but you combine that with an intention of Da'wa so that non-Muslims or non-practicing Muslims will see the worship of a true servant of Allah.
- b. Intending to pray the correct prayer. For example you cannot intend to pray maghrib and it is time for Asr.

2. Raising one's hands and saying Allahu Akbar (God is the greatest) and placing them on one's chest right over left and focusing his sight on the place of prostration. The Prophet (pbuh) said,

“Indeed the Prayer is not complete unless one completes the Wudoo’ as Allah commanded and then says Allahu Akbar (upon beginning the prayer).(Abu Dawood 858)



“The Prophet would raise his hands parallel to his shoulders (or ears) when beginning the prayer as well as in going into rukoo’, raising from rukoo’ and he didn’t raise his hands when prostrating.”(Bukhari 735)

“After raising his hands and saying Allahu Akabar, he would put his right hand over his left covering his wrist and part of his forearm.” (Abu Dawood 727)

* It has been authentically narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) would then place his hands anywhere between his lower belly to his mid chest, but is not narrated that he put his hands to his side. The prayer of the one prays with thier hands to the side is valid, although missing a Sunnah.

“When the Prophet prayed in the Ka’bah his eyesight did not move from the direction of place of prostration”(Albani ‘Irwaa 73/2)

3. You must recite in a soft voice to yourself the opening supplication. The Prophet supplicated,

“O Allah, distance me from my sins as you have made between the east and the west and purify me of my sins as one purifies their white clothes from filth and defilement.”(Bukhari 744)



وجهت وجهي للذي فطر السماوات والأرض حنيئا وما أنا من المشركين إن صلاتي ونسكي ومحياي ومماتي لله رب العالمين لا شريك له وبذلك أمرت وأنا أول المسلمين اللهم أنت الملك لا إله إلا أنت، أنت ربي وأنا عبدك ظلمت نفسي واعترفت بذنبي فاغفر لي ذنبي جميعا إنه لا يغفر الذنوب إلا أنت واهدني لأحسن الأخلاق لا يهدي لأحسنها إلا أنت واصرف عني سيئها لا يصرف عني سيئها إلا أنت لبيك وسعديك والخير كله في يديك والشر ليس إليك أنا بك وإليك ، تباركت وتعاليت أستغفرك وأتوب إليك

“I have directed myself to the one who created the heavens and the earth in submission and I am not of the polytheists. Indeed my prayers, my rites, my life and my death are for Allah the Lord of the Universe. He has no partner in divinity or dominion. This is what I am commanded and I am the first of those who submit...”(Muslim 771)

سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك وتبارك اسمك وتعالى جدك ولا إله غيرك

“Glory be to you and your praises O Allah, Blessed be your name and your greatness is exalted. There is no deity other than you”(Tirmidhi 242)

اللهم رب جبرائيل وميكائيل وإسرافيل فاطر السماوات والأرض عالم الغيب والشهادة أنت تحكم بين عبادك فيما كانوا فيه يختلفون اهدني لما اختلف فيه من الحق بإذنك إنك تهدي من تشاء إلى صراط مستقيم

“O Allahm Lord of Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael; Creator of the Heavens and the Earth; Knower of the Seen and Unseen; You will judge between your servants in that which they used to differ. Guide me to the truth of that which was differed according to your will. Indeed you guide whoever you will to the straight path.” (Muslim 770)

الله أكبر ثلاثا ذو الملكوت والجبروت والكبرياء والعظمة

“He would say Allahu Akbar three times and then say ‘Possessor of universe with authority, majesty, and grandeur.’” (Abu Dawood 874)

4. Still, while standing with your right hand over your left, you must recite the Opening chapter of the Qur’an (Al-Fatihah)²¹. The Prophet clearly said,

**“There is no prayer for one who does not recite soorah al-fatihah”
(Bukhari 756)**

* The vast majority of scholars hold that this Hadith and others like it make the reading of Al-Fatihah a must for the validity of the Prayer. This ruling covers all prayers done by oneself. As far as congregational prayers are concerned there are a couple points to mention.

21 It is well known that the Prophet would recite the Qur’an aloud in a nice melodic tone in the Fajr, Jumu’ah and eid prayers prays as well as in the first two rak’as of the Maghrib and Isha prayer. Other than that he would recite it silently to himself.



- a. The apparent meaning of obligation is also taken when given the opportunity to recite the Fatihah in the silent prayers and in the silence of the Imam in the loud prayers after reading the Fatihah.
- b. Some scholars hold that one should not recite to oneself while the Imam is reciting except when reciting Al-Fatihah. In case of al-Fatihah you may read it due to the Verse and its clarifying Hadith, **“And if the Qur’an is recited then listen closely to it that you may receive mercy”(7:204)**

The Prophet (pbuh) said after he finished the prayer, **“Are you reading the Qur’an while the Imam is reading? The Companions said, Yes! The Prophet then said ‘Don’t do that except with soorah al-fatihah since there is no Prayer without it’.”(Abu Dawood 823)**

If for one reason or another one doesn’t read it in the congregational prayers, they still have an excuse in the famous Hadith. This shows the great blessing of praying in congregation which many scholars hold to be obligatory upon men.

**“Whoever has an Imam²², then his²³ recitation suffices him.²⁴
(Albani al-Irwaa’ 500)**

In addition to this Hadith, it is well known that the point in which the latecomer to prayer is counted to have completed a given unit of prayer (rak’ah) in which

²² Someone to lead them in prayer

²³ The Imam’s

²⁴ The follower’s

he/she entered as long as he/she entered the prayer before the imam begins rising from the bowing position (step 8). Of course this would be after having the opportunity to recite Al-Fatihah so the Hadith indicating the obligation to recite it isn't applicable. In conclusion, one is obligated to recite Al-Fatihah when given the opportunity and if one doesn't then that prayer could be invalid. And Allah knows best.

The Meanings of the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an (Al-Fatihah)

- 1) (Say) In the Name of the One God²⁵, The Gracious²⁶, The Merciful²⁷.
- 2) All Praise and gratitude is due to God, the Lord (Creator, Master and Sustainer) of the Universe.
- 3) The Gracious, The Merciful.²⁸
- 4) Sovereign of (the time and events of) the Day of Judgment.²⁹
- 5) We worship none other than you and We rely solely upon your assistance.³⁰
- 6) (O Lord) Guide us to the straight path (which leads to eternal bliss with You in heaven)
- 7) The Path of those whom You have favored³¹ and not of the path of those who have earned (Your) displeasure³² or those who have gone astray.³³ Aameeeen!³⁴

5. After reading Al-Fatihah in the first two rak'as it is recommended to recite another portion of the Qur'an. This is due to the established practice of the Prophet (pbuh) and that he would allow some to suffice by reciting Al-Fatihah.

25 The word «Allah» in Arabic is correctly translated to «the one God» in English. He teaches us about Himself throughout the Qur'an.

26 The word «Rahmaan» reflects God's love, mercy, and beneficence for all of His creation and how these characteristics are manifested everywhere which in English theological terminology is commonly referred to as Grace.

27 The word «Raheem» carries the same base meaning as Rahman, but that our scholars tell us from the early generations that Raheem is specifically dealing with the treatment of the believers in the Hereafter namely them being forgiven and living in eternal bliss. This reward as result of His abundant forgiveness is known as Mercy.

28 God Almighty repeats these characteristics to make emphasis upon them in relation to the reader

29 One day- which only God knows- all of mankind will be called to account for their chosen faith and actions and then all will either go to Heaven or Hell based on the merciful, yet just judgment of God.

30 This means that a true believer supplicates God alone when he/she needs something in life and in the hereafter. Then, after putting one's complete trust in God, then he takes the wordly steps in achieving his goal.

31 Those who sincerely follow His pure guidance according to the teachings of His Prophets.

32 The disbelievers or arrogantly disobedient who don't repent.

33 Those who rely on interpretations of corrupted scripture or those who believe in and love God but don't sincerely seek His guidance and live by it.

34 This is a supplication which means «O Lord, accept our prayer». The Prophet used to say this out loud in the prayers which were said aloud.

6. After reciting the Qur'an say "Allaahu Akbar" and bend over grasping your kneecaps in a resting position with your back flat. This position is called rukoo' and is in accordance with the authentic narrations of the Prophet,



“And when you bend (rukoo’) grasp your kneecaps with your palms and straighten your back.”(Abu Dawood 859)

7. While in rukoo' position you should glorify, praise and ask Allah's forgiveness. It was narrated that the Prophet used to make many supplications and remembrances. For example-

سبحان ربي العظيم

“Glory be to my Lord, the Exalted (repeat 3x)”(Muslim 772)

سبحان ربي العظيم و بحمده

“Glory and Praise be to my Lord, the exalted.”(4734)

سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك اللهم اغفر لي

“Glory and praise be to You- O Allah forgive me.”(Bukhari 4968)

اللهم لك ركعت وبك آمنت ولك أسلمت وعليك توكلت أنت ربي خشع سمعي وبصري ودمي ولحمي وعظمي وعصبي لله رب العالمين

“O Allah I have bowed to You, believed in You, and submitted to Your will. My hearing, sight, mind, bones and tendons yield in submission to You.”(Muslim 771)

سبحان ذي الجبروت والملكوت والكبرياء والعظمة

“Glory be to the possessor of the dominion, the kingdom, the granduer, and the glory.”(Abu Dawood 873)

سبوح قدوح رب الملائكة والروح

“You are the Glorified, Most Holy, Lord of the Angles and the spirit.”(Muslim 487)

Note: The Prophet forbade reading the Qur'an in Rukoo and Sujood (Prostration).(Muslim 480)

8. After rukoo rise up saying, «Sami Allaahu liman hamidah» (Allah hears those who praise Him) to a straight standing position with your hands to your sides.



9. In the standing position while keeping our sight focused on the ground, there are a few remembrances which were legislated in the time of the Prophet (pbuh).

ربنا لك الحمد

“O our Lord, to You is all praise.”

ملء السماوات وملء الأرض ومل ما شئت من شيء بعد

“O our Lord, to You is all praise. The praise that fills the Heavens and the Universe and all that is between them.”(Muslim 771)

أهل الشاء والمجد لا مانع لما أعطيت ولا معطي لما منعت ولا ينفع ذا الجد منك الجد

“O our Lord, to You is all praise. You deserve praise and glorification. There is no one to prevent from that which You give and there is no one who can give that which you have prevented. Worldly wealth will not benefit anyone in the hereafter.”(Muslim 477)

رينا ولك الحمد حمدا كثيرا طيبا مباركا فيه

“O our Lord, to You is all praise. Many good blessed praises.”

(Abu Dawood 770)

Note: As in all other parts of Prayer, we are expected to move calmly and smoothly between positions and then to settle in the next position in a calm straight posture. Ponder the seriousness of being lazy or hasty. The Prophet said,

“Allah will not reward the prayer of one who did not come to a straight relaxed standing posture between bowing and prostrating.”(at-Targheeb 243 / 1)

10. Then say, «Allahu Akbar» and move down into the prostrating position. The position of prostration («sujood» in Arabic) is comprised of your knees, toes, hands, nose tip and forehead touching the ground and your elbows in the air. Your hands will be parallel with your shoulders just a small distance depending on if you are praying alone or in a row. Of course in a row there might not be enough space to properly prostrate.



11. Supplicate Allah in this pure state of humility. The Prophet said,

“The closest a worshipper could be to his lord is in prostrating. So increase in supplication while in it.”(Muslim 482)

The Prophet would also make the same remembrances as he did in rukoo. The most famous is,

سبحان ربي الأعلى

“Glory be to my Lord the Most High (repeat 3x).”(Muslim 772)

اللهم لك سجدت وبك آمنت ولك أسلمت سجد وجهي للذي خلقه وصوره وشق سمعه وبصره تبارك الله أحسن الخالقين

“O Allah, I have prostrated to You, believed in you, and submitted to You. My face has prostrated to the One who created and shaped it. He gave me the ability to hear and see. Blessed is Allah the most perfect creator.”(Muslim 771)

أعوذ برضائك من سخطك وأعوذ بمعافاتك من عقوبتك وأعوذ بك منك لا أحصي ثناء عليك أنت كما أثنيت على نفسك

“I seek refuge with Your pleasure from your anger, with Your forgiveness from your punishment; I seek refuge with You from You. I am incapable of properly praising. You are as you have praised yourself.”(Muslim 486)

12. After completing the first prostration, rise up to a sitting position and relax. It is recommended to sit back with your left under your rear and with your right foot propped up to the right of your rear.



13. You should supplicate Allah’s forgiveness in this sitting posture. Reciting-

اغفر لي وارحمني واجبرني وارفعني
واهديني وعافني وارزقني

“O Lord forgive me, have mercy on me, compensate me, guide me, give me health and provide for me.”(Abu Dawood 850)

ربي اغفر لي

“O Lord forgive me (3x)”(Abu Dawood 874)

14. Then prostrate a second just as in the first.

15. After this prostration you have completed one unit of prayer known as a Rak’ah and generally you will stand and perform another rak’ah just as you did the first rak’ah from step 1 through 14. Each prayer is made up of Rak’as; Fajr has 2, Thuhr 4, Asr 4, Maghrib 3, Ishaa 4.



16. At the end of the second raka'ah you will rise up to a sitting posture just as you did before the second prostration in step #12, except this time raising your right index finger symbolizing the oneness of Allah.³⁵

In this position you must say the prayer of compliments known as at-Tahiyyaat. This supplication is as follows-



التعجيبات لله والصلوات والطيبات السلام عليك أيها النبي ورحمة الله وبركاته
السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله الصالحين، أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأشهد أن
محمدا عبده ورسوله

“All compliments, prayers, and good deeds are for Allah. May the peace blessings and mercy of Allah be upon you³⁶, O Prophet. May the Peace of God be upon us and the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god other than Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.”(Bukhari 1202)

اللهم صل على محمد وعلى آل محمد كما صليت على إبراهيم وعلى آل إبراهيم إنك حميد مجيد اللهم بارك
على محمد وعلى آل محمد كما باركت على إبراهيم وعلى آل إبراهيم إنك حميد مجيد

O Allah, extol the remembrance of Muhammad and his family as You did Abraham and his family. Indeed You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. O Allah, send Your blessings upon Muhammad and his family as You did to Abraham and his family. Indeed You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. (Agreed Upon)

Remembrances after the Prayer

It is established in multiple authentic Hadiths that the Prophet (pbuh) would continue in a mode of worship quietly reciting a group of remembrances for another 5 minutes or so. Here is a list of those athkaar (remembrances),

1. I seek Allah's forgiveness 3x (Muslim 591)
2. O Allah You are perfect and peace and perfection come from you. Blessed be You, the Glorious and Sublime. (Muslim 591)
3. There is no God other than Allah who is alone without partner. His is the praise and dominion and He is over all things competent. There is nothing to prevent that which You bestow and nothing to provide that which You prevent. And the wealth and power of the rich will not avail them against Your decree.

(Bukhari 6330)

³⁵ It is recommended to focus ones sight on their raised right index finger as the Prophet did. (Abu Dawood 989)

³⁶ It may seem by the usage of the second person when referring to the Prophet instead of the third that this portion of our prayer is to Muhammad. In fact the consensus of our scholars reject that claim and say that it is not a supplication directed to the Prophet, but it is a supplication to Allah to send His Peace, Blessings and Mercy upon the Prophet who will receive it in its second person form by the command of Allah

4. «There is no God other than Allah who is alone without partner. His is the praise and dominion and He is over all things competent. There is neither power nor might except with Allah. There is no God other than Allah and we do not worship other than Him. His is the blessing and the grace and the good praises. There is no God other than Allah. We have sincere devout faith to Him regardless if the disbelievers like it or not.» (Muslim 594)
5. Say «Glory be to Allah», «Praise Allah», and «Allah is Greater» 33x each and then complete 100 by saying, «There is no God other than Allah who is alone without partner. His is the praise and dominion and He is over all things competent.»(Agreed Upon)
6. O Allah, I seek refuge with You from greed, cowardice, becoming an old weak crippled man, from the trials of life and from the torment of the grave.(Bukhari 6370)
7. O Allah, help me to properly remember You, thank You and worship You well. (Abu Dawood 1522)

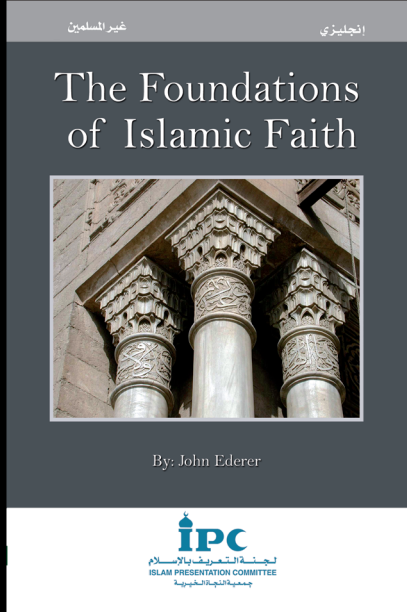
Conclusion

The whole purpose of Islam is that we may live our lives on a spiritual level where everything revolves around our pleasing our Creator. He has given us life, intellect and reason and we should use these great blessings for a higher purpose than pleasing the self and its carnal inclinations. Allah has sent Prophets with revelation that we may be guided and live our lives according to His will. Prayer is the fundamental building block of this spiritual lifestyle. Without it, one would be like a car with no engine. It is through the prayer that we are reminded of the greatness of God and His innumerable blessings with which He has filled our lives. It is through prayer that patience and steadfastness will materialize through the trials of life. Prayer is a primary means of salvation which fosters a regular consciousness of our responsibility to our Creator, thus keeping our souls close to His holy loving presence for eternity. The Almighty says-

“And When My servants ask you about Me, then (tell them that) I am near. I respond to the call of the one who prays to Me. So they should respond to Me and have faith in Me, so that they may be on the right path.”(2:186)



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