

Why do we pray?

It is difficult to find a religion that does not require its members to engage in some sort of prayer, and Islam is no exception. Prayers generally consist of statements or sentences spoken humbly or ritually. In Islam, the term “prayers” may conjure a visual image similar to prayers in other faiths, that is, sentences being said or repeated. Yet, prayers in Islam differ in that they involve precise actions, recitations, and calls. This is why it is called “Salah,” and I shall use this word in my talk about prayers.

Muslims pray five times each day: the Dawn prayer (at dawn,) the Noon prayer (at noon,) the Afternoon prayer (approximately 2.5 - 3 hours after the noon prayer,) the Fall of Night prayer (right after the sun sets,) and the Night Prayer (right after the night is completely dark). Each prayer starts at a specific time. You may have noticed that they are timed by the sun’s positions (and no, Muslims do not worship nor do they revere the sun) and have a window during which it must be completed.

Salah (Prayer) is fundamentally important in Islam. It is justifiable to argue that it is the most fundamental act of worship, one that must be observed irrespective of one’s present physical

circumstances. So, why is prayer significant? I aim to explain this here.

In Islam, prayers are called Salah. Salah is derived from the word “silah,” which means connection or direct relation. It is the connection that keeps one directly connected with one’s Creator. Prophet Muhammad described performing Salah as someone who is being checked five times a day by one’s maker, and he then asked, “Do you think this person will have any malfunction?” (spiritually or emotionally)

The first thing Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was commanded to do was to pray. The Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) came to him, and a spring of water gushed from the rocks before them. Jibreel then showed Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) how to perform ablution. He then showed him how to offer Prayers to Allah. He began to pray twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. He then went home and showed his wife Khadijah what he had learned from the Angel Jibreel.

From that time, the Prophet never went through a day without Praying.

Allah, the Almighty, has stressed the importance of Salah in the Quran when He said, “And perform the prayer, and give the



Guest Column

HATIM HEGAB

purifying alms. Whatever good you forward for yourselves, you will find it with Allah. Allah is Seeing of everything you do.” [Quran 2: 110], Quran also says, “Perform the prayer at the borders of the day and during the approaches of the night. The good deeds take away the bad deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful.” [Quran 11: 114] and Quran also says, “Guard (keep) your prayers, and the middle prayer, and stand before Allah in devotion.” [Quran 2: 238]. With all these verses and many more, one can conclude the importance of Salah.

In Islam, it is customary to recite the Azan, which is the call for prayers. It serves to remind people of the approaching prayer times. The Azan typically begins with the well-known phrase “Allahu Akbar.”

The phrase “Allahu Akbar” has been mistranslated by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. They often translate it as “God is great” or “God is greatest,” whereas it means “God is greater”! The latter translation is the correct

one. It logically prompts one to ask, greater than what? When we consider the importance of prayer and recognize that this is a call to worship, it makes sense to remind people that prayers (and, therefore, God) are greater than anything else. Whether studying, working, or engaging in any other activity, God is greater than all these pursuits. Connection with God is superior to anything that might hinder one from maintaining this connection.

It is essential to mention that some people are to be exempt, such as a surgeon in an operation room or an officer watching for the safety of others.

One approaches prayers by first performing ablution. Ablution is purifying oneself by washing the face, hands up to the elbows, and feet up to the ankles. The Quran instructs, “O you who believe! When you rise to perform the prayer, wash your faces, your hands, and your arms to the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles. If you had intercourse, purify yourselves. If you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you returns from the toilet, or you had contact with women, and cannot find water, then purify yourselves with clean sand by wiping your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to burden you,

but He intends to purify you and to complete His favor upon you so that you may be thankful.” [Quran 5: 6]

Ablution is a symbol of purifying one’s body and soul. It is the initial step required to retreat from the hectic everyday life and remind oneself of the true purpose of life: worshipping God.

Prayers commence when one stands facing the Ka’abah, a cubic building in the city of Makkah, presently in Saudi Arabia. Once more, it is essential to clarify that Muslims do not worship the Ka’abah or Makkah; instead, they follow the directive to face the Ka’abah as ordained by God, the Almighty. Adherents typically face a specific direction stipulated by their religious tradition when preparing to pray in any faith. In Islam, this direction is towards the Ka’abah. If one finds themselves in a location where determining the direction of the Ka’abah is not possible, they may face the nearest point they believe to be in the direction of Makkah.

Muslims begin their prayers by reciting verses of the Quran. Following this, they kneel to glorify God, stand back up, and then prostrate while praising God. These actions (called Raka’ah) are repeated three to four times, depending on the specific

prayer.

Keeping prayers means maintaining a direct connection with God, the Almighty. It serves as a reminder of one’s Creator to Whom everything is subservient and Who holds power over all things. When one performs prayers, they are mindful that they stand before the Almighty. Prayers prompt them to recall the true purpose of life: worshipping the Creator and preparing for the Day of Judgment. The awareness that we will all ultimately meet God, the Almighty, and face judgment encourages individuals to ensure that their deeds, regardless of their scale, are righteous, thereby avoiding punishment for wrongdoing. Muslims are encouraged to perform their prayers in groups. Individuals who conduct their prayers in a mosque will be missed if they miss a few prayers. They will be looked for, offered help if they need assistance or be visited if they are sick.

Prayers are the ultimate type of connection between one and one’s God. It can be performed at any place and between designated times. Keeping it keeps one connected with his Creator and reminds him of his purpose in life.

To contact the author: hatim@gmx.us

For more information, please visit: www.icstillwater.org/islam

World’s major religions take varying stances on policies toward trans people

The Vatican has issued a new document rejecting the concept of changing one’s biological sex – a setback for transgender people who had hoped Pope Francis might be setting the stage for a more welcoming approach from the Catholic Church.

Around the world, major religions have diverse approaches to gender identity, and the inclusion or exclusion of transgender people. Some examples:

Christianity

The Catholic Church’s disapproving stance toward gender

transition is shared by some other denominations. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention – the largest Protestant denomination in the United States – adopted a resolution in 2014 stating that “God’s design was the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female.” It asserts that gender identity “is determined by biological sex, not by one’s self-perception”

However, numerous mainline Protestant denominations welcome trans people as members

and as clergy. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America elected an openly transgender man as a bishop in 2021.

Islam

In Islam, there isn’t a single central religious authority and policies can vary in different regions.

Abbas Shouman, secretary-general of Al-Azhar’s Council of Senior Scholars in Cairo, said that “for us, ... sex conversion is completely rejected.”

“It is God who has determined the ... sex of the fetus and in-

tervening to change that is a change of God’s creation, which is completely rejected,” Shouman added.

In Iran, the Shiite theocracy’s founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issued a religious decree, or fatwa, decades ago, opening the way for official support for gender transition surgery.

Hinduism

In Hindu society in South Asia, while traditional roles were and are still prescribed for men and women, people of non-binary gender expression have been rec-

ognized for millennia and played important roles in holy texts. Third gender people have been revered throughout South Asian history with many rising to significant positions of power under Hindu and Muslim rulers. One survey in 2014 estimated that around 3 million third gender people live in India alone.

Sanskrit, the ancient language of Hindu scriptures, has the vocabulary to describe three genders – masculine, feminine and gender-neutral.

– AP

Worship at the church of your choice this week

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Romans 6:23

Stillwater Bible

Proclaiming Christ, Training Believers

JB Bond, Senior Pastor

Sundays

Worship Service 8:30 a.m.

G.R.O.W. Groups 9:45 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

Kids' Church 11:20 a.m.

Tuesdays

Cornerstone @ The Union (RM 297) 7:30 p.m.

Wednesdays

Stillwater Bible Institute 6:30 p.m.

Impact Youth 6:30 p.m.

Bible Kids 6:30 p.m.

7617 W. 6th Ave.

Stillwaterbible.org (405) 564-5794

Crosspointe

CHURCH

Sunday School - 9:30

Sunday AM Worship - 10:30

Sunday PM Family Service - 6:00

Wed PM Bible Study - 7:00

1807 N. Jardot

gocrosspointe.com

FIRST BAPTIST

CHURCH

701 S. DUNCAN • 405-372-5212

SUNDAY

Bible Study • 9:30am

Worship Service • 11:00am

WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES

Begin at 6:00pm

Watch our worship service on Facebook

www.fbcstillwater.org

FIRST UNITED

METHODIST CHURCH

www.fumcstw.org

400 W. 7th • 372-5854

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Worship.....8:30am & 11:10am

Sunday School.....10:00am

Closer Walk.....10 am Family Life Center

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

BAPTIST CHURCH

4th & Knoblock • 372-2744

Sunday School

9 am

Worship Service

8 am & 10:30 am

GRACE BAPTIST

CHURCH

Independent Baptist

Expository Preaching

CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 10:30am

Thursday 7:30pm

723 E. 17th

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

524 S. Duncan • 405-372-5580

www.stillwaterfpc.org

Sunday Worship

9:45 a.m. - Sunday School

11:00 a.m. - in person, online

On KSPI radio AM 780 & FM 94.3

and the Stillwater FPC Facebook page

Sunnybrook

Christian Church

421 E. Richmond Rd • 377.0923

www.sunnybrookcc.org

SUNDAY SERVICE

9:45 am

11:15 am

SUNDAY SCHOOL

8:30 am

9:45 am

KIDS CHURCH 9:45 & 11:15 am

GO • GATHER • GROW

Stillwater

Church of Christ

stillwatercoc.org

Your place for

"Faith, Family and Friends"

SUNDAY

Meeting Times

Bible Study.....9:30 AM

Worship.....10:30 AM

Bible Study.....5:00 PM

WEDNESDAY

Bible study.....7:00 PM

821 N. DUCK • 372-7439

Southside Baptist

Church of Stillwater

1223 S. Perkins Rd.

Perfectly • Purposely • Placed

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:45 AM

SUNDAY WORSHIP 11 AM + 6 PM

WEDNESDAY

YOUTH & ADULT BIBLE STUDY 6:30

Paul Hatcher - Pastor

Address - 1223 S. Perkins. Rd.

Phone: 405-372-2411

Email: southsidesillwater@gmail.com

The Islamic

Society of Stillwater

616 N. Washington St.

Friday (Weekly) Prayers

1:40 PM - 2:10 PM

For Daily Prayer Times

www.icstillwater.org

St. Francis Xavier

Catholic Church

711 N. Country Club Rd.

Sunday Mass

8:30 | 11:15 a.m.

en Español 1 p.m.

Tuesday Mass

12:10 | 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday Mass

12:10 p.m.

en Español 6 p.m.

Thursday Mass

12:10 | 5:30 p.m.

Friday Mass

12:10 p.m.

Saturday Mass

9 a.m.

Saturday Vigil Mass

5 p.m.

Confessions before every

12:10 Mass at 11:30 a.m.,

Wednesdays at 5 p.m. and

Saturdays from 9:45-11 a.m.

372-6886

www.sfxstillwater.org

Zion Lutheran

Church - LCMS

Sunday - 8:00, 10:30 AM

www.zionlutheranstw.org

John E. Wackler, Pastor

504 S. Knoblock • 372-3703