



COLORADO MUSLIMS FIQH COUNCIL

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“In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful”

I'tikaaf

I'tikaaf is one of the confirmed Sunnahs which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did regularly. This Sunnah has disappeared from the lives of the Muslims apart from those on whom Allah has mercy. It is like many Sunnahs which the Muslims have virtually forsaken.

There are several reasons for this, including the following:

1-Weakness of faith in many hearts

2-Increased focus on worldly pleasures and desires, which leads to an inability to keep away from them even for a short time.

3-Lack of interest in Paradise on the part of many, and their inclination towards leisure and relaxation, so that they do not want to put up with the hardship of i'tikaaf even for the sake of earning Allah's pleasure.

Whoever understands the significance of Paradise and the greatness of its delights will sacrifice his life and that which is most precious to him in order to attain it. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The reward of Allah is precious; the reward of Allah is Paradise.” Narrated by al-Tirmidhi

4-Many people pay lip-service to the love of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), without acting upon it and implementing various aspects of the Sunnah, including i'tikaaf. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much” [al-Ahzaab 33:21]

Ibn Katheer said: This verse represents a major principle: that we should follow the example of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in word and deed in all situations.

Some of the Salaf (early generations of Islam) found it odd that people did not observe i'tikaaf even the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) persisted in doing so. Ibn Shihaab al-Zuhri said: It is strange that the Muslims have given up i'tikaaf when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not give it up from the time he entered Madeenah until Allah took him (in death).

Evidences: -

I'tikaaf is prescribed according to the Qur'an and Sunnah and scholarly consensus.

In the Qur'an, Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and We commanded Ibraheem (Abraham) and Isma'eel (Ishmael) that they should purify My House (the Ka'bah at Makkah) for those who are circumambulating it, or staying (I'tikaaf), or bowing or prostrating themselves (there, in prayer)” [al-Baqarah 2:125]

“And do not have sexual relations with them (your wives) while you are in I'tikaaf (i.e. confining oneself in a mosque for prayers and invocations leaving the worldly activities) in the mosques” [al-Baqarah 2:187]

With regard to the Sunnah, there are many ahaadeeth, such as the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to observe i'tikaaf during the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah took his soul, then his wives observed i'tikaf after he was gone. Narrated by al-Bukhaari, Muslim.

With regard to scholarly consensus, more than one of the scholars narrated that there was scholarly consensus that i'tikaaf is prescribed in sharee'ah, such as al-Nawawi, Ibn Qudaamah, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, and others.

Undoubtedly i'tikaaf in the mosque is an act of worship, and (observing it) in Ramadan is better than at other times. It is prescribed in Ramadan and at other times.

What is the ruling on i'tikaaf?

The basic principle is that i'tikaaf is Sunnah, not obligatory, unless one made a vow to do it, in which case it becomes obligatory, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever vows to obey Allah, let him obey Him, and whoever vows to disobey Him, let him not disobey Him.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari,

And 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “O Messenger of Allah, during the Jaahiliyyah I vowed to observe i'tikaaf for one night in al-Masjid al-Haram.” He said: “Fulfil your vow.” Ibn al-Mundhir said in his book al-Ijmaa':

They were unanimously agreed that i'tikaaf is Sunnah and is not obligatory unless a man obliges himself to do that by making a vow, in which case it becomes obligatory for him.

What is the basic goal of the Prophet's i'tikaaf?

The basic goal was to seek Laylat al-Qadr.

Muslim narrated that Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) observed i'tikaaf during the first ten days of Ramadan, then he observed i'tikaaf during the middle ten days in a small tent at the door of which was a reed mat. He took the mat in his hand and lifted it. Then he put his head out and spoke to the people, and they came close to him. He said: "I observed i'tikaaf during the first ten days seeking this night, then I observed i'tikaaf during the middle ten days. Then someone came and said to me that it is in the last ten days, so whoever among you wishes to observe i'tikaaf let him do so." So the people observed i'tikaaf with him.

This hadeeth teaches us a number of things:

1. That the basic goal of the i'tikaaf of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was to seek Laylat al-Qadr and to prepare to spend that night in worship. That is because of the great virtue of that night of which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "The Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months (i.e. worshipping Allah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e. 83 years and 4 months)" [al-Qadr 97:3].
2. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) strove to seek that night before he was told when it is. So he started with the first ten days, then he observed it during the middle ten, then he continued to observe i'tikaaf during the last ten days, when he was told that it is in the last ten days. This is the utmost effort to seek Laylat al-Qadr.
3. The Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) followed the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), because they started i'tikaaf and continued with him until the end of the month, because they were so keen to follow his example.
4. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was compassionate towards his companions and showed mercy to them, because he knew that i'tikaaf was difficult for them. So he gave them the choice between staying with him or of leaving, and said: "...so whoever among you wishes to observe i'tikaaf let him do so."

There are other aims of i'tikaaf as well, including the following: -

1. Being alone with Allah and cutting oneself off from people if possible, so that one may focus completely on Allah.
2. Renewing oneself spiritual by focusing totally on Allah.
3. Cutting oneself off completely in order to worship Allah with prayer, du'aa', dhikr and reading Qur'an.
4. Protecting one's fast from everything that may affect it of whims and desires.
5. Reducing permissible worldly pleasures and refraining from many of them even though one is able to enjoy them.

Can A Mu`takif (Person observing i`tikaaf) go out of the Mosque?

If the mu'takif (person observing i'tikaaf) goes out of the mosque, his i'tikaaf is invalidated, because i'tikaaf means staying in the mosque to worship Allaah.

That applies unless the mu'takif goes out for an unavoidable reason, such as to relieve himself, to do wudoo' or ghusl, or to bring food if he does not have anyone to bring food to the mosque for him, and other similar matters which cannot be avoided and which cannot be done in the mosque.

Al-Bukhaari and Muslim narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used not to enter the house except for things that a person needs when he was observing i'tikaaf.

The Sunnah is that the mu'takif should not visit one who is sick during his i'tikaaf, or accept any invitation, or attend to his family's needs, or attend any funeral, or go to work outside the mosque, because it was proven that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Sunnah is for the mu'takif not to visit any sick person, or attend any funeral, or touch his wife or be intimate with her, or to go out for any purpose except those which cannot be avoided." Narrated by Abu Dawood.

Can women sit for I'tikaf in a mosque in the last ten days of Ramadan?

Yes, it is permissible for a woman to observe i'tikaaf in the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Indeed, i'tikaaf is Sunnah for both men and women, and the Mothers of the Believers (may Allah be pleased with them [i.e., the wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)]) used to observe i'tikaaf with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) during his lifetime, and after he passed away.

Al-Bukhari (2026) and Muslim (1172) narrated from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to spend the last ten nights of Ramadaan in i'tikaaf until he passed away, then his wives observed i'tikaaf after he died.

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: I'tikaaf is Sunnah for both men and women, because it was proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to observe i'tikaaf during Ramadaan, and finally he settled on i'tikaaf during the last ten days, and some of his wives used to observe i'tikaaf with him, then they observed i'tikaaf after he died. The place for i'tikaaf is the mosque in which prayers in congregation are performed.

What are The Do's and The Don'ts of 'Itikaaf

The Do`s: -

1. Do Have the right intention, think what is your intention? Namely that you are doing 'itikaaf to worship Allah.
2. Do utilize your time, every second; make the most out of it.
3. Do occupy yourself in constant remembrance of Allah. Whether it be reading the astounding words of Allah Himself or, even reading on some Islamic knowledge.
4. Do try to sleep separate to your friend (even if it means less space) as it can lead to excessive chatter.
5. Do Keep talk to a minimum.
6. Do Help fellow Muttakifs (those doing 'itikaaf).
7. Do Keep yourself to yourself except when needing to learn something.
8. Do structure your time, you only have 10 or none days which are in fact really small, once they are gone, their gone.
9. Do Produce a plan (either in your head or even in writing, preferably brief) Usually the brothers join together to at least read some portions if not all of the Qur'an (khatam) which is an excellent way to accomplish some worship.
10. Do pray extra prayers, (such as nafl , make-up prayers and so forth)
11. Do read more of the book of God (Qur'aan) with tafsir.
12. Do talk or teach (to) others about the deen (but not where it construes time and involves joking and laughing) ...
13. Do Try to pray tahajud night prayer (last portion of the night)
14. Do Treat everyone with utmost respect especially if they give respect to you status.
15. Do be respectable to each other especially those older and have mercy (kindness) on those younger.
16. Do be kind and mannered if your fellow muttakif, is disturbing you(such as breathing loudly in sleep or loud speech).
17. Do Consult the caretaker or the Imam for what action to take. Don't take it into you own hands without seeking guidance first.
18. Do respect peoples time and tasks, such as sleep and so reduce the sound of your reciting/speaking accordingly.
19. Do always be prompt and ready for prayers.

The Don'ts

1. If someone happened to do something to you see or know as wrong, Do not 'tell people' or tell them off, rather, seek proper means to let them know and focus on yourself first.
2. Don't bring too many items, don't bring snacks or keep to a bare minimum, it is not a picnic! Snack away, one should not bring snacks in.
3. Don't eat loudly especially when in the secluded areas.
4. Don't waste time.
5. Don't chat away and giggle. Seclusion is the opposite of social!
6. Don't talk loud especially in secluded read and when brother sleeping or in the deep night.
7. Don't 'over-help' people.
8. Don't talk to people in the wudu area, stairs & its area, side rooms and shoe area except very necessary.
9. Don't over eat, it produces excessive sleep, too much burping, smells, (disturbance to fellow Muttakifs), less worship, less concentration and so forth
10. Don't wait around
11. Don't swear – obvious sin
12. Don't talk about worldly(talk a part from Allah and things related) things, chat especially such as backbiting, many forms of talk can be a sin especially in the house of Allah.
13. Don't invite people to your secluded area for useless things such as for 'chit chat' and to 'show them around' Phone anybody except in necessity.
14. Do not create little groups or...If...Don't play any Nashid or Qur'an loud or on loudspeaker (if you happen to have such devices)
15. Don't get into arguments, quarrels, excessive talk.
16. Don't spend extra time in when in areas which outside mosque but which a necessary, should not prolong stay after his need is fulfilled.
17. Don't try solving problems without the necessary means
18. Don't feel extremely sad, if you think you haven't done enough worship etc, as Allah is The most Kind the Provider and The Forgiver.

Finally make use of the blessed scared moments and nights in the house of the one who stood you up, Allah.

Important Note:

Some of the 'don'ts' can get you into trouble, with yourself, masjid comers, masjid helpers and most importantly Allah. If you exceed the boundaries of respect for the masjid and its residents (i.e fellow Mutakifs) you may be given warnings and ultimately may lead to you being asked to leave from 'itikaaf which ultimately is a loss to none but yourself.

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