

MANNERS OF ATTENDING A MOSQUE (PART 1 OF 2)

Rating: 4.9

Description: Not knowing what to expect, attending the mosque can be an intimidating experience. These lessons will teach the most important aspects to make mosques more accessible for new Muslims.

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Objective:

- To appreciate the role of the mosque in Muslim life in the West.
- To learn 6 etiquettes of attending the mosque.

Arabic Terms:

- Masjid* - the Arabic term for mosque.
- Imam* - someone who leads the prayer.
- Adhan* - an Islamic way of calling Muslims to the five obligatory Prayers.
- As-Salamu Alaikum* - peace and blessings be on you.
- Salam* - The Islamic greeting such as '*As-Salamu Alaikum*'.

The *masjid*, translated as mosque in English, is the heartbeat of the Muslim society in Islam. In the West, most often Muslims buy land and build a *masjid* on it. Other times, they buy a church or some other building and convert it into a *masjid*. Sometimes, they even rent a room, garage, or a basement and use it as makeshift *masjid*.



In all cases, a *masjid* is a place for Muslims where they meet one another daily to perform the prayers and also to conduct other acts of worship and activities that are beneficial for the Muslim community.

The most important act of worship done in the *masjid* is the Friday prayer. Five daily prayers are also offered in most of them. Many *masjids* will have a dedicated *imam*, a prayer leader, who will lead the daily prayers. Some of them do not have a dedicated

imam, but one of the attendees will lead the prayer when the prayer time comes. Similarly, the regular *imam* might also deliver the Friday sermon and lead the prayers or there might be different speakers who rotate weekly and deliver the Friday sermon.

Prophet Muhammad taught us that the *masjids* are houses of Allah and that certain etiquettes and rules should be learned and observed by every Muslim who attends them.

Following are some of the etiquettes and manners of a *masjid*:

1. Worship is the first priority. The primary purpose of going to the *masjid* is to worship the One true Lord of the heavens and the earth. Everything else is secondary. Many mosques provide gaming and social events like basketball, community dinners, picnics, etc. They are all worthwhile, but serve a secondary purpose. The *masjid* is primarily a place for the worship of Allah and that typically means prayer and reading or reciting the Quran.

2. The general rule is that a Muslim should be clean, wear clean clothes, and not smell bad when he or she comes to the mosque. He should avoid everything that has an offensive smell like that caused by eating raw garlic, raw onions, or smoking.

A Muslim should also wear clean clothes and socks when he comes to the *masjid*. Not only do bad smells bother fellow human beings, but they also offend the angels who are present. Remember, that a *masjid* is the house of Allah after all.

If a person performs work that makes him sweat or other bodily odors, then he should take a shower and change clothes before coming to the *masjid*. It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad said:

"Whoever eats garlic or onion, then he must keep away from our masjid because the angels get offended from what offends the children of Adam." (Saheeh Muslim)

3. A Muslim should enter the *masjid* with his right foot first, and then say what was reported from Prophet Muhammad:

"Allah-hum-maf-tah lee abwaaba rahmatik."

"O Allah, open the gates of your Mercy for me."

This supplications is optional, however saying it is a rewarding act.

The Prophet liked to start with his right side in everything. The famous companion of Prophet Muhammad, Ibn Umar, in imitation of the Prophet used to step with his right foot first when he entered the masjid, and step out with his left foot first when he

walked out of the masjid. (Saheeh Al-Bukhari).

4. In order to keep the carpet clean, where people put their faces, it is appropriate to remove one's shoes before entering the prayer hall. This goes for children as well, who may drag dirt all over the carpet - not to mention that they shouldn't be running around inside the prayer hall.

Many mosques have a rack for shoes that should be utilized to keep the space clear of shoes in walkways and other spaces. It also makes it easier to find shoes later on.

5. A Muslim should greet people by saying "*As-Salamu Alaikum*" to the people in the *masjid* as he enters it, even if he sees the people are praying. He does not have to shout it out. Saying it in an audible voice is enough. The Companions of Prophet Muhammad used to say "*As-Salamu Alaikum*" to the Prophet while he was praying, and he used to reply with a gesture. There are many reports about that. For example, Suhaib, a Companion of the Prophet, said: "I passed by the Messenger of Allah while he was praying and gave *Salam* to him, (and) he replied to me with a gesture." (Nasai)

In another instance, Ibn Umar asked Bilal, another Companion of Prophet Muhammad, 'How did you see the Prophet reply to the Companions when they said Salam to him while he was engaged in prayer?' Bilal said: "By spreading his palm." (Tirmidhi)

6. A Muslim should try to be punctual in arriving for the Friday prayer, the regular prayers, or attending lectures and classes. Late arrivals disrupt the class already in attendance, and it is rude to the teacher and the rest of the class or audience. Of course for the Friday prayer, there are angels sitting at the door to record who comes in, and at the *Adhan* they go inside to listen to the sermon. So if you arrive after that, your name is not written down!

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