

VOLUNTARY PRAYERS

Rating: 4.5

Description: Basics of the voluntary prayers known as *nafl* will be taught in this lesson.

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Basics of the voluntary prayers known as *nafl* will be taught in this lesson.

Objectives

- To appreciate the difference between *nafl* and *fard* worship.
- To appreciate the benefits of *nafl* worship.
- To learn about the commonly prayed voluntary prayers.

Arabic Terms

- Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha* – the names of five daily prayers in Islam.
- Fard* – an obligatory duty.
- Nafl* – a voluntary act of worship.
- As-Sunan ar-Rawatib* – the extra prayers done by the Prophet before and after the daily obligatory prayers.
- Rakah* - unit of prayer.
- Tasleem* – the salutation of peace that ends the prayer.
- Duha* – name of an optional prayer done during the daytime.

The first thing to understand is the difference between what is known as *fard* and what is known as *nafl*. *Fard* is obligatory, it is what Allah requires us to do, and leaving it is a sin and we will be held accountable for it. An example is two *rakah* of *Fajr* prayer. *Nafl* literally means 'extra'. *Nafl* worship is not required from a Muslim, rather it is up to the individual to offer it. It is optional and voluntary. The Muslim is not sinful for neglecting *nafl*, but is rewarded for doing it. Therefore, *nafl* worship is recommended. Examples of *nafl* prayers will be covered in this lesson.



A word of advice about the voluntary prayers. Add them slowly to your daily, obligatory prayers. You must first focus on the five daily, required prayers and make sure you are praying them regularly and on time. Add them step by step, do not burn yourself out, and at the same time do not neglect the voluntary prayers.

Benefit of *Nafl* Prayers

The Prophet said: "The first thing that the people will be called to account for on the Day of Resurrection will be the prayers. Our Lord will say to the angels although He knows better: 'Look into the prayer (formal obligatory prayer) of my servant to see if he observed it perfectly or has been negligent in it.' So if he observed it perfectly it will be recorded to his credit, but if he had been negligent in it in any way, Allah would say: 'See if My servant has any extra prayers.' Then if he has any extra prayers, Allah would say: 'Make up the deficiency in My servant's obligatory prayer with his supererogatory prayers.' Thereafter all his actions will be examined in like manner" (Abu Dawud).

Two Types Of *Nafl* Prayers

- a) General *nafl* prayers: One can pray them whenever one likes and there does not have to be any reason or cause for it, neither are they restricted to any given number. However it should be noted that the general *nafl* prayers should not be offered at the time when performing non obligatory prayers is prohibited or disliked.
- b) Specific *nafl* prayers: These prayers are associated with a specific reason or cause.

Examples of Commonly Prayed Specific *Nafl* Prayers

***As-Sunan ar-Rawatib* (often simply referred to as '*Sunnah* prayers')**

They are voluntary prayers that are associated with the obligatory prayers and have a specific order and number. The ones often prayed are listed below:

Name of Prayer	Rakah of Fard Prayer	Rakah of 'Sunnah Prayer' Before Fard	Rakah of 'Sunnah Prayer' After Fard
<i>Fajr</i>	2	2	
<i>Dhuhr</i>	4	4 (2+2)	2
<i>Asr</i>	4		
<i>Magrib</i>	3		2
<i>Isha</i>	4		2

The Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever prays twelve rakah during the day and night will have a house built for him in Paradise: four rakah before Dhuhr and two after it, two rakah after Maghrib, two rakah after Isha, and two rakah before Fajr.” (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet said about the two rakah before the obligatory Fajr prayer, “They are dearer to me than the whole world.” (Saheeh Muslim)

“The Prophet never left praying four rakah before Dhuhr and two rakah before Fajr under any circumstances.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Witr Prayer

The Prophet prayed and encouraged others to pray the *Witr* prayer. It is a *nafl* and highly emphasized optional prayer, and according to some scholars it is a required prayer.

It is offered after *Isha* prayer and can be prayed before the time for *Fajr* prayer starts.

It is permissible to perform the *Witr* by:

1. Praying two *rakah* like any other two *rakah* prayer, concluding them with *tasleem* and then praying one more *rakah* and ending the prayer with *tasleem*.
2. Praying three *rakah* continually (without sitting after the second *rakah* as in *Magrib*) and then concluding the prayer with *tasleem*.
3. One *rakah* and ending the prayer with *tasleem*.

Tahiyya-tul-Masjid (Prayer for Entering the Mosque)

It is a prayer in which two *nafl rakah* are performed at the time of entering the mosque. The Messenger said, **“If anyone of you enters a mosque, he should pray two *rakah* before sitting.”** (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Salat at-Tawba (Prayer of Repentance)

Allah’s Messenger said, “There is no man who, upon committing a sin, purifies himself and performs two rakah, then asks for forgiveness from Allah, but Allah forgives him”
(*Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah*)

Duha Prayer

Abu Dhar reports that the Prophet said: “Charity is required from every part of your body daily. Every saying of ‘Subhanallah - Far removed is Allah from every imperfection’ is charity. Every saying of ‘Alhamdulillah - Praise be to Allah’ is charity. Every saying of ‘La ilaha illa Allah - There is no (true) deity but Allah’ is charity. Every saying of ‘Allah Akbar - Allah is the Greatest’ is charity. Ordering the good is charity. Eradicating the evil is charity. And what suffices for that (as a charity) are the two rakah of Duha.” (*Saheeh Muslim*)

The time for *Duha* begins when the sun is about a spear’s length above the horizon and it continues until the sun reaches its meridian. It is preferred to delay it until the sun has risen high and the day has become hot.

The minimum number of *rakah* to be prayed is two. One can pray more if he likes.

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