

I'tikaaf – reviving a sacred Sunnah

Alhamdulillah that Allahﷻ gave us the opportunity to revive the sacred Sunnah of Rasoolullahﷺ of making Itikaaf in the masjid in the last ten days and nights of Ramadan. Rasoolullahﷺ did it every year and it is one of his most beloved, sacred, and important practices. Therefore, it is essential to do with the right intention, objectives and according to its rules, so that we can get the maximum benefit from it and not render it null and void. Let me enumerate the rules and please use this like a checklist to help you.

- 1. Purpose:** The purpose of Itikaaf is to gain closeness to Allahﷻ. For Ta'alluq Ma'Allahﷻ. For this reason, we seclude ourselves in a house of Allahﷻ (Masjid) and dedicate and devote ourselves to the worship of Allahﷻ exclusively, ignoring everything else. Thank Allahﷻ for giving us the opportunity to do Itikaaf in His House where everything good we do, including sleep, will be Ibaadah (worship). The way to get close to Allahﷻ is through reading the Qur'an, making Dhikr, praying Nawaafil and reflecting in silence. So set your goals for your Ibadaath during I'tikaaf. How much Qur'an do you intend to read? Make Tahajjud a permanent feature in your life? What do you intend to learn with respect to your own Tarbiyya? Making Tawba and Shukr. Pay special attention to Dhikr which seems to have lost its importance in our lives. Especially to sending Salat wa Salaam (Durood) on Rasoolullahﷺ. There is great benefit in this Dhikr and so engage in it profusely. Also ensure that you pray all Sunnah Salawaat and do all the Masnoon Adhkaar after Fardh.

The second Purpose: Of Itikaaf is to get Laylatul Qadr which is one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan. When we make Itikaaf, In-sha-Allahﷻ we can hope to surely get this blessed night, worship during which is better than worshipping continuously for 1000 months. Let us be conscious of this and ensure that we spend the nights purely in Ibaadah.

2. **Niyyah (Intention):** To fulfill the purpose above only to please Allahﷻ. Purify the heart from every other desire and the mind from every other thought. Some people go for Itikaaf to be with friends, some to make business contacts because they heard that so-and-so does Itikaaf in that masjid. Itikaaf is not socializing or hanging out. It is not networking. It is not business development. It is to be with Allahﷻ. Don't allow Shaytaan to destroy our Niyyah and nullify the value of our effort. Make the Niyyah for Itikaaf until the moon of Shawwal is sighted. Don't say 10 days, because then you will have to return the day after Eid and complete 10 days in case Ramadan is only 29 days that year. Niyyah is in the heart, and it is not necessary to state it aloud.
3. **Goals for Itikaaf:** Write your goals for the Itikaaf. How much Qur'an do you plan to read? Which habit will you give up? Which new habit will you acquire? How much Dhikr will you do? How much charity will you give? How many relationships will you heal and repair? Make your list.
4. **Ameer:** Elect an Ameer for Itikaaf and obey him. Volunteer to help him.
5. **Boundary:** Stay within the boundary of the masjid. If you leave the boundary without a Shari valid reason like going to an outdoor toilet or

going to pick up your food or in an emergency, your Itikaaf will become invalid. You will then need to return to the same masjid make up the days of Itikaaf that remained in a state of fasting. Otherwise, you would be sinful. Easier to stay within the boundary.

6. Respect the Masjid: The Masjid is the House of Allahﷻ. Follow the rules of the masjid. Some important Do's and Don'ts to remember:

- a. Keep the Masjid clean. Volunteer to clean it, including toilets, and consider yourself very lucky if you get toilet duty. Think of it as washing away our sins. Remember that Khidmat (service) is the most valuable form of worship to get close to Allahﷻ.
- b. Use only as much light as necessary. Don't switch on all the lights and if someone does, advise them not to. You don't do that in your house. So, why do it in the masjid? The House of Allahﷻ deserves even more respect than your own house.
- c. Use water sparingly. The taps are not connected to the clouds. Even if they are it is Sunnah to use water sparingly, and wasting water is Haraam.
- d. Roll up your bedding and put it in the designated place as soon as you wake up.
- e. Don't tamper with the AC/Heating settings. If you feel hot or cold, move away from the blowers. Settings are kept for maximum comfort for everyone. Individual capsule climate control is

- available only on the Day of Judgment and let us pray that we don't need it there, because we beg Allahﷻ for the shade of His Throne.
- f. Don't interfere with the administration of the masjid. There are people whose job that is and if they want your advice, they will ask.
 - g. Don't read Qur'an aloud. Or listen to it without headphones.
 - h. Don't talk loudly and be very conscious of where you are and of your companions' comfort.
 - i. Don't take anyone's possessions without asking permission. If you didn't bring it, it doesn't belong to you. Don't ask to use people's personal belongings, even if they are your best friend. They may be embarrassed to refuse but they won't like to allow you, so don't put them in that situation.
 - j. The food you are provided in the Masjid is Allahﷻ's hospitality towards you, so don't complain. Remember that you are Allahﷻ's guest and feel the honor of that.
 - k. Practice being minimalist: Eat less, sleep less, speak even less, and detox from phones. Shut the phone off and switch it on only for an hour at the end of the day to check for any messages. Switch off all notifications and get out of all social media. Get off permanently, not only during Itikaaf. Believe me, life will not only go on but will be far better. Let's leverage our Itikaaf to reboot our lives.
 - l. Take whatever you need essentially for the period you will be in Itikaaf. This will include your bedding, charger for your device, a

Mushaf if you still read from one instead of your device, essential medication, depending on the country – insect repellent, your own prayer mat, toiletries, towel, soap. Don't take snacks and eatables. Don't bring all that you possess just in case you need it. You are coming to the masjid for a few days. You are not shifting residence. I'tikaaf is also training in how to do without – so be minimalist in terms of creature comforts and maximize your Ibadaath.

m. Finally, in conclusion, the most important advice: Make dua. You are a guest of Allahﷻ. He always honors His guests. Ask Him for whatever you want with the total certainty that He has the power to give if He wants to. Your job is to make Him want to. Give up disobedience. Make sincere Istighfaar and Tawba. Give charity. And beg Him for what you need. Most importantly beg for the Ummah of Rasoolullahﷺ. Muslims are in a terrible state wherever they are and desperately need the help of Allahﷻ. Remember when you are making dua for the Ummah, that you are fulfilling the most beloved Sunnah of Rasoolullahﷺ.

n. Aisha (RA) reported: When I saw Rasoolullahﷺ with a cheerful face, I said, "Ya Rasoolullahﷺ please do dua to Allahﷻ for me." Rasoolullahﷺ said, "O Allah, forgive Aisha for her past and future sins, in secret and in public." Aisha (was so happy) laughed so much that her head fell from his lap. Rasoolullahﷺ said to her, "Does my dua make you happy?" Aisha said, "Why would your

dua not make me happy?” Rasoolullah ﷺ said, “By Allah ﷻ it is my dua for my Ummah in every prayer.” [Sahih Ibn Hibban]