

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS
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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ. وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.
أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.
أَمَّا بَعْدُ،
فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأُوصِيكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، فَقَدْ فَازَ الْمُتَّقُونَ.

Let us all increase our devotion towards Allah the Almighty by performing all that He has decreed and abstaining from all that He has prohibited. Hopefully, we will be blessed in this world and in the Hereafter.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we will discuss the *khutbah* (sermon) titled “CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS”.

Allah the Almighty says in the Quran in Chapter 2 (*Surah Al-Baqarah*) Verse (ayat) 43:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

Which means: “Keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, and bow your heads [in worship] with those who bow theirs.”

Congregational prayers are prayers performed by more than one person or in groups led by an *imam* (leader). Congregational prayer is a form of worship

that is highly encouraged in Islam. The ruling on congregational prayer can be found in the Quran in Chapter 4 (*Surah An-Nisa*) verse (*ayat*) 102:

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ

Which means: “When you [Prophet] are with the believers, leading them in prayer, let a group of them stand up in prayer with you...”

Congregational prayers can be done at home, in a hall, office or in any clean place, but the most *afdal* (the best) and highly encouraged place to perform congregational prayers is in the house of Allah the Almighty, which is a mosque or specially designated prayer room (*musolla*). Congregational prayer, according to the Shafie school, is *fard kifayah* (societal obligation) for every village to symbolize Islam. This obligation is imposed on free adult men of an area who have no *sharia* excuse. It is recommended in the *sharia* that women pray at home although they are allowed to pray in congregation at the mosque.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In general, the number of people who attend the five daily congregational prayers at the mosque is not many when compared to the number of people who come for Friday prayers, *taraweeh*, or the Eid *Al-Fitr* and Eid *Al-Adha* prayers. It is a great loss for those who live close to the mosque when they do not attend the five daily congregational prayers. Indeed, Allah the Almighty promises rewards for those who perform congregational prayers, especially at the mosque.

It is explained in a *hadith* of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him [PBUH]), narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari:

Which means: “If the people knew the reward for pronouncing the Adhan and for standing in the first row (in congregational prayers) and found no other way to get that except by drawing lots they would draw lots, and if they knew the reward of the Zuhr prayer (in the early moments of its stated time) they would race for it (go early) and if they knew the reward of Isha and Fajr (morning) prayers in congregation, they would come to offer them even if they had to crawl.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Praying in congregation has various advantages and virtues, including:

First: Reviving the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Throughout his life, he always prayed in congregation except when he was ill at the end of his life.

Second: Multiplying rewards as in the *hadith* narrated by Imam Muslim that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

صَلَاةُ الْجَمَاعَةِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ صَلَاةِ الْفَدِّ بِسَبْعٍ وَعِشْرِينَ دَرَجَةً

Which means: “The prayer offered in congregation is twenty-seven degrees more rewardable than a prayer offered by a single person.”

Third: Praying in congregation can erase minor sins and elevate a person in the eyes of Allah. As stated in a *hadith* narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari:

Which means: “...when any of you performs ablution and does it perfectly, and goes out to the mosque having no intention except praying, and nothing moves him except prayer, then at every step which he takes his rank is

elevated by one degree on account of this (walking), and one sin is remitted from him for this (walking), till he enters the mosque... ”

Fourth: Cultivating brotherhood and relations between fellow Muslims creating the opportunity to socialize with other Muslims. This can strengthen the relationship between members of the congregation and the local community.

Fifth: Praying in congregation trains one to become a more disciplined Muslim through consistent, punctual practices and always managing time wisely in life.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Attending congregational prayer should be instilled in children from a young age. Therefore, parents should educate their children to become true believers. According to a *hadith* narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari:

Which means: *“Every child is born with thea true faith of Islam (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone) and his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism.”*

Based on this *hadith*, parents play a role in educating their children with the knowledge of *fard ain* (individual obligation). They also have the role of training their children to pray in congregation and to always go to the mosque from a young age, as well as instilling in them a love for the house of Allah the Almighty. Allah the Almighty says in the Quran in Chapter 20 (*Surah Taha*) Verse (*ayat*) 132:

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا

Which means: “Order your people to pray, and pray steadfastly yourself...”

Remember the firmness of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) towards men attending congregational prayers in the mosque as in the *hadith* narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari which means: “... I would order someone to lead the people in prayer and then I would go from behind and burn the houses of men who did not present themselves for the (compulsory congregational) prayer.”

This *hadith* does not give the right to burn the houses of people who do not perform congregational prayers, but rather is a stern reminder from the Prophet (PBUH) for men to pray in congregation in the mosque.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In conclusion, congregational prayer is a *fard kifayah* (societal obligation) that must be carried out by Muslims. Grab the opportunity to gain the great rewards that have been promised by Allah the Almighty. Educate your children and family members to pray in congregation at the mosque to uphold the principles of Islam.

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَحْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَن يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ١٨

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلَ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ. أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.