

Funeral Rites (part 1 of 2)

Description: How to behave when death approaches us or someone we know and what to do immediately after.

By Aisha Stacey (© 2017 IslamReligion.com)

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Objectives

- To learn about the authentic *Sunnah* related to death, the dying person and funeral rites.

Arabic Terms

- *Alhamdulillah* " All praise and thanks is for Allah. By saying this we are thankful and we acknowledge that everything is from Allah.
- *Du'a* - supplication, prayer, asking Allah for something.
- *Qiblah* - The direction one faces during the formal prayers.
- *Kabah* - The cube-shaped structure located in the city of Mecca. It serves as a focal point towards which all Muslims face when praying.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Hajj* - A pilgrimage to Mecca where the pilgrim performs a set of rituals. The *Hajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam, which every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their life if they can afford it and are physically able.
- *Ihram* - A state in which one is prohibited to practice certain deeds that are lawful at other times. It is necessary when performing the rites of *Umrah* and *Hajj*.
- *Umrah* " A pilgrimage to the Holy House of Allah in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Often referred to as the *lesser pilgrimage*. It can be performed at any time of the year.

The inevitability of death

Allah tells us in the Quran that everyone shall taste death. (Quran 3:185) Death will come to each and every one of us, it is unavoidable. It is perhaps one of the only things in life for which we can be certain.

Death is frightening and horrifying and it is faced by every living thing.

It comes for the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the strong and the weak. You cannot run and you cannot hide. God says that the death oefrom which you flee" will

meet you (Quran 62:8) and Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, exhorted us to remember the oedestroyer of pleasures, death"[\[1\]](#).



Yes, death is inevitable but there are certain things that a believer can do to prepare. Islam has given us a complete set of instructions for the person who is dying, for those who have the privilege to be present at the time of death of a loved one, and for those responsible for the burial. These instructions ensure that the rights of those who are dying and those who have passed away are respected and treated with care.

When death approaches us

Death can come suddenly and without any warning or it can come more slowly giving a person and his or her loved ones time to prepare themselves. There are five important things the one facing death should try to do.

1. Remain patient.

The time of death is something that we have no control over. In the face of any suffering the believer must be certain that Allah only decrees for him something good. However, that good maybe among the pleasures of this world or it might be in the Hereafter.

2. Refrain from whining and complaining.

However, crying and complaining privately to God is something that is permissible. Islam tells us that it is acceptable to cry directly to Allah and lay before Him all our fears, pains, suffering, and troubles. Prophet Jacob set this standard when he cried out to Allah at the loss of two of his believed sons. He said that oel only complain of my grief and sorrow to Allah." (Quran 12:86)

3. Try to remain between the states of fear and hope.

Be fearful of punishment for your sins but he hopeful of Allah's forgiveness and mercy. Prophet Muhammad said, that these two things, fear and hope, never gather in the heart of

a person without God giving him what he hopes for and sheltering him from what he fears.
[\[2\]](#)

4. Settle affairs.

The believer must assure that his affairs are in order. He must write a will, and he must settle or make arrangements for any debts that he has.

5. Prepare for the funeral.

Ask relatives and friends to be careful to follow the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad when conducting the funeral.

When death approaches a loved one

There are several important things for the family and friends of the dying person to do.

1. Visit the patient.
2. Make sure they are getting appropriate medical treatment.
3. Talk quietly to the patient, consoling and counselling them in this time of suffering and fear.
4. Pray with and for the patient. Say good kind words and make *du'a*. Refrain from saying anything negative because Prophet Muhammad told us that the angels are present at the sick bed and say *Ameen* to whatever is uttered there.[\[3\]](#)
5. Try to fulfil any desires the patient might have that do not go against his doctor's instructions. Perhaps there is a special food or drink that he desires or comforts that he would like around him. He might need friends or family to be contacted or brought to visit him.

If a believer is visiting a non-Muslim patient he should seek help from Allah and invite the person to accept Islam.

When death is near

A dying person can see things that we are unable to see. He might mumble to himself or to the angels that gather around him. He might become very weak, seeming to drift in and out of sleep or consciousness. Those at his bedside should be gentle and quiet remembering to speak positively and make *du'a*. If it will not cause discomfort, a dying person should lie facing the *qiblah* either on his right side or his back. He should be assisted and prompted lightly to say the words, *La ilaha illa Allah* (there is no god but God), with the hope that these will be the last words that pass his lips. It might ease the dying person's suffering if his lips are kept wet or a few drops of water are dripped into his mouth. Finally, the dying person should never be left alone.

What to do immediately after death

1. Close the eyes of the deceased and make *du'a*
2. Straighten the arms and legs from time to time to prevent them from becoming stiff.
3. Remove the clothing and cover the entire body with a clean sheet. If the person was in the state of *ihram* for *Hajj* or *Umrah* his face and head should be left uncovered.
4. Make arrangements to pay any debts from the deceased's own money or from any relative or friend.
5. Remember that it is permissible to kiss the deceased.
6. Hasten to prepare the body for washing, shrouding and burial.

When seeing or learning of the death of a loved one, the believer should try to remain calm and be patient. Remembering Allah and saying *Alhamdulillah* will help ease the pain and grief. Being sad and overwhelmed is normal and weeping is certainly allowed.

However, screaming, beating the chest, pulling out the hair or tearing one's clothes are not permissible.

Endnotes:

[1] An-Nasaa'i, At-Tirmithi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad. Authenticated by Sheikh Al-Albani.

[2] Ibn Majah & At-Tirmidhi

[3] *Saheeh Muslim*

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