

# Istikharah Prayer

**Description:** A brief explanation of the *Istikharah* prayer, including why performing it is a recommendable act.

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## Objectives

- To understand both the definition and importance of the *Istikharah* prayer.
- To learn when and how to perform the *Istikharah* prayer.

## Arabic Terms

- *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.
- *Du'a* - supplication, prayer, asking Allah for something.
- *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.
- *Tasleem* " The salutation of peace that ends the prayer.
- *Halal* - permissible.

## What is *Istikharah*?

*Istikharah* is a *du'a* made in conjunction with non-obligatory prayer; it is a voluntary prayer that Prophet Mohammad recommended to anybody wanting to do something but feeling hesitant about doing it. It is seeking guidance in order to make the right decision. It is reported that Prophet Muhammad would teach his companions to make *Istikharah* just as he would teach them verses from the Quran. One should pray two units of non-obligatory (voluntary) prayer and then say the *du'a* of *Istikharah*.



## Du'a of Istikharah

Allahumma innee astakheeru-ka bi-'ilmik wa astaqdiru-ka bi-qudratik wa as-alu-ka min fadlikal-'azeem fa-inna-ka taqdiru wa laa aqdir wa ta'lamu wa laa a'lam wa Anta 'Allamul-ghuyoob. Allahumma in kunta ta'lamu anna hadhal-amr khairul-lee fee deenee wa ma'aashee wa 'aaqibati amree faqdur-hu lee wa yassir-hu lee thumma baarik lee feeh. wa in kunta ta'lamu anna hadhal-amra sharrul-lee fee deenee wa ma'aashee wa 'aaqibati amree fasrifhu 'annee wasrifnee 'anh waqdur liyal-khayra haythu kaan thumma ardhinee bih.

O Allah, I ask You to show me what is best, through Your knowledge, and I ask You to empower me, through Your power, and I beg You to grant me Your tremendous favour, for You have power, while I am without power, and You have knowledge, while I am without knowledge, and You are the One who knows all things unseen.

O Allah, if You know that this matter (mention the thing to be decided) is good for me in my religion and in my life and for my welfare in the life to come, then ordain it for me and make it easy for me, and then bless me in it.

And if You know that this matter is bad for me in my religion and in my life and for my welfare in the life to come, then distance it from me, and distance me from it, and ordain for me what is good wherever it may be, and help me to be content with it."

## When to recite the du'a of Istikharah

It is permitted to recite the *du'a* of *Istikharah* either before or after the *tasleem*. Some scholars recommend before, because Prophet Muhammad himself used to make a lot of *du'a* before the *tasleem*.

## When to pray Istikharah

Islamic scholars agree that *Istikharah* is suggested when a person does not know the right decision to make. If one is unsure about whether or not his possible actions would bring about good in both this world and the hereafter. If a person is hesitating, not knowing if "oeit" is the right thing to do then *Istikharah* is the *du'a* that may set his mind at ease. It is the *du'a* that acknowledges Allah as the only strength and only power in this world. His guidance is necessary to ensure that human beings follow the straight and correct path that leads to a blissful life everlasting. For instance, if a person wants to find out the right time to do something, such as whether or not to do voluntary *Hajj* this year, or to propose marriage to a particular person, then it is acceptable and recommended that he or she prays *Istikharah*. Understand carefully that *Istikharah* is for matters that are considered either recommended or permissible. It is for cases in which there is a conflict. Should I give to this charity or the other? Should I apply for this *halal* job or another? One should prays *Istikharah* concerning the thing he or she thinks is more likely to be better and then go ahead with doing it.

*Istikharah* is not prayed for matters that are considered obligatory acts of worship, or

for staying away from sins and evil actions.

It is recommended, before praying *Istikharah*, to consult someone whom you know is sincere, caring and has experience, and who is trustworthy with regard to his or her religious commitment and knowledge.

## Common Mistakes

- **Believing that there is a set number of times to pray *Istikharah*.**

There is no set time period for praying *Istikharah* and it is permissible to repeat it more than once.

- **Believing in the need for a dream.**

Some people believe that after praying *Istikharah* they should experience a dream or feeling of ease. This is not correct. Even without such a thing, if a person makes a decision it should be hoped, due to the sincere *du'a* of *Istikharah*, that this will be the best decision.

- **Believing that the *du'a* was not answered.**

If a person does not succeed in a decision he takes after praying *Istikharah* this does not mean that the *du'a* did not bring about what was best. Often it is a case of Allah knowing what is best while we human beings do not. If we take particular note of the words of the *du'a* we will notice we are not only asking Allah for what is best but also asking Him to remove from us, things of no benefit to us, either in this life or in the hereafter.

After praying *Istikharah* if Allah makes things easy for you then this is a sign that the thing you decided is good for you and if obstacles come in the way and things become difficult then this is an indication that Allah is pushing you away from a bad decision.

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