

# FRIDAY MESSAGE

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## **Finding Sanctuary: The Heart's Itikaf in World of Distractions**

In the quiet embrace of the mosque, amidst the bustling rhythm of Ramadan's final ten nights, lies an opportunity for profound spiritual renewal: Itikaf. Yet, this sacred seclusion is not merely a physical act; it is a journey into the depths of the heart, a quest for intimacy with the Divine. In a world saturated with distractions, the true essence of Itikaf calls us to a deeper, more meaningful engagement with our faith.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the epitome of spiritual devotion, sought solitude in the cave of Hira, a testament to the transformative power of being alone with Allah. It was in this sacred space, away from the clamour of worldly affairs, that revelation descended upon him. This profound experience underscores the importance of carving out moments of quiet contemplation, where the heart can truly connect with its Creator.

The essence of Itikaf, therefore, extends beyond the physical confines of the mosque. It demands a detachment from the allure of worldly pursuits, a conscious effort to silence the incessant chatter of the mind. It is a time to sever the ties that bind us to materialism, to release the grip of fleeting desires, and to focus solely on the Divine.

In our modern age, the distractions are manifold. Our smartphones, with their endless stream of notifications and information, become insidious intruders,

diverting our attention from the very purpose of Itikaf. Social media, news cycles, and even well-intentioned conversations can become obstacles to true spiritual immersion. Itikaf reminds us that even beneficial religious discussions can be a distraction, as the time is to be spent in solitude with God.

The heart, like the body, must find its sanctuary. Itikaf is an invitation to cultivate a deep connection with Allah, to replace the fleeting pleasures of the world with the enduring peace of His presence. It is a time for introspection, for reflection on our shortcomings, and for seeking His forgiveness.

The act of Itikaf is not about passive waiting; it is about active engagement with the Divine. It is a time for prayer, for recitation of the Quran, for contemplation on its verses, and for heartfelt supplications. It is a time to reflect on the names and attributes of Allah, to marvel at His creation, and to deepen our understanding of His infinite mercy.

Itikaf caution us against the pitfalls of physical presence without spiritual engagement. It is not enough to occupy a space in the mosque; the heart must also be present, free from the entanglements of worldly concerns. The true Itikaf is a state of being, a complete surrender to Allah's will.

To truly benefit from Itikaf, we must cultivate a sense of detachment from the material world. We must minimize our interactions with others, even for seemingly noble

purposes, and focus on our inner journey. We must also be mindful of our physical needs, avoiding excessive food and sleep, which can dull our senses and hinder our spiritual progress.

The final ten nights of Ramadan, with their promise of Laylat al-Qadr, offer an unparalleled opportunity for spiritual growth. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would intensify his efforts during this time, spending his nights in prayer and remembrance. We are called to emulate his example, to seize this precious time and strive for closeness to Allah.

The words of Ibn Al-Qayyim and Ibn Rajab illuminate the profound purpose of Itikaf. It is a time for the heart to find its true home, to seek solace in the Divine, and to prepare for the solitude of the grave. It is a time to replace the fleeting companionship of the world with the enduring presence of Allah.

In essence, Itikaf is a journey of the heart, a pilgrimage to the inner sanctuary where we can find true peace and contentment. It is a time to break free from the chains of worldly distractions and to immerse ourselves in the ocean of Divine love. It is a time to find sanctuary in the presence of Allah, to reconnect with our spiritual essence, and to emerge from this sacred seclusion with a renewed sense of purpose and a heart filled with His light. As the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, those who seek Laylat Al-Qadr with faith and hope will have their past sins forgiven. Let us strive to make our Itikaf a true reflection of our devotion, a testament to our longing for closeness to Allah.

*Ibn 'Umar (Allah be pleased with both of them) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to observe i'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan. (Muslim)*

*'A'isha (Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) used to observe i'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan till Allah called him back (to his heavenly home). Then his wives observed i'tikaf after him. (Muslim)*

*'A'isha (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to exert himself in devotion during the last ten nights to a greater extent than at any other time. (Muslim)*

*Az-Zuhri said: 'It is astonishing that Muslims neglect I'tikaf, considering that the Prophet, peace be upon him, never abandoned it from the time he arrived in Medina until God Almighty took him.'*

*Imam Ibn Battal said: 'The Prophet's, peace be upon him, consistency in observing I'tikaf indicates that it is a highly emphasized Sunnah (recommended practice).'*

*I'tikaf, became established in the last ten nights of Ramadan in the hope of it coinciding with Laylatul Qadr.*

*The scholar Ibn al-Qayyim said: "The purpose and essence of I'tikaf is the devotion of the heart to God Almighty, its concentration on Him, seclusion with Him, and detachment from being occupied with creation, engaging solely with Him, the Glorified, such that His remembrance, love, and turning to Him take the place of the heart's concerns and thoughts, overcoming them... and his intimacy with God replaces his intimacy with creation, preparing him by that for intimacy with Him on the Day of Loneliness in the graves, when he has no companion nor anything to rejoice in but Him."*