

## Preparations for Prayer

### Friday Prayer Focus

Today, even perhaps at this moment, Muslims worldwide will be preparing themselves for Friday prayer. Indeed, all week long practicing Muslims do ritual washing in order to be pure for prayer. Right intentions and a focused attitude toward God are specifically encouraged concerning prayer in Islam. However, it is certain that ritual cleansing, as well as the specific times, order and outward forms of prayer, definitely occupy most of the literature and instruction concerning Islamic prayer. This is a very significant difference with Christian teaching about prayer.

In Christian circles, specific times, order and obligatory wording are much less important aspects of prayer instruction and experience. Many believers in the Messiah actually dislike fixed forms of prayer. Attitudes and intentions play a central role in Christian prayer. Ritual cleansing with water, as is found in Islam, is unheard of for normal, everyday Christian prayer. Catholics and Anglicans do dip their fingers in the holy water and make the sign of the cross when entering a church building, but it is intended only as a reminder of their baptism not as an actual purifying act.

In Islam it is impossible to pray correctly without the ritual cleansing by water, or, in the absence of water, with sand. Islamic instruction about prayer is filled with long passages on exactly how to accomplish the cleansing process. None of the steps can be sidestepped or done in an improper way, otherwise Islamic prayer loses its merit and validity.

Here is a typical Muslim text about doing Wudu (the ritual cleansing):

1. A Muslim begins every action with intention. To yourself, make the intention to cleanse yourself for prayer, for the sake of Allah.
2. To yourself, say "Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim" (In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful).
3. Wash your hands three times, making sure the water reaches between the fingers and all over the hands.
4. Bring a handful of water to your mouth and rinse it thoroughly three times.
5. Sniff water into your nose three times to clean it. Use your right hand to bring up the water, and your left hand to expel it.
6. Wash your entire face three times.
7. Wash your arms, up to the elbows, three times. Start with the right.
8. Use your wet hands to wipe over your head once, from front to back and front again.
9. Use your wet fingers to wipe the inside and outside of your ears, once.
10. Wash your feet up to the ankles three times. Start with the right.
11. Dry off.



### ▶ Prayer REQUESTS

While some aspects of the ritual washing may be helpful as a reminder about how sinful we are as human beings, ultimately the ritual cleansing does not lead Muslims to true righteousness or holiness.

▶ Pray for Muslims to discover the depths of sin and God's holiness so that they may forever be freed of the idea that water can ever make them fit to meet God. Pray this for people you may know, pray for Muslims in your city and elsewhere (Heb. 8:9-12).

▶ Pray for the Muslims who will be praying at the Jama Masjid in Delhi, India (above). There are possibly 1.5 million Muslims in the Delhi/New Delhi urban area (11%). Followers of the Messiah are less than one percent. Pray for believers to seize opportunities to proclaim the Gospel.