

## Reflection Paper on Islam

The spiritual aid that I chose to use for the religion of Islam was keeping of the Salat, which is the practice of Muslims to pray five times a day in the direction of Mecca. Salat is the second Pillar of Islam and is a required practice for all Muslims. When thinking of how I could accomplish this I had some questions. Do Muslims have to pray at certain times or is it just the number of times that is important? What kind of prayers do they pray? Do they follow strict guidelines about which prayers should be said when?

So I started this journey by doing some research online. First I found out that they do pray at certain times of the day. The first prayer session is called *al-fajr* which is to be prayed at dawn, before sunrise, the second prayer session is called *al-zuhr* and is prayed at midday, after the sun passes its highest point, the third prayer session is called *al-'asr* and is prayed the late part of the afternoon, the fourth prayer session is called *al-maghrib* and is prayed just after sunset and the final fifth prayer session is called *al-'isha* and it is prayed between sunset and midnight. After finding out that they are supposed to be held at certain times of the day I did more research and found a website called: [www.prayertimes.info](http://www.prayertimes.info) This site actually gives you the time for your current location that each of these prayers are supposed to be prayed. So I thought I would find a week-long calendar of sorts that would give me the times for A- for a week so I could truly see what it felt like to take the specific time to pray at exact time listed.

Next I needed to find out about what kind of prayers they pray. Are they specialized? and what are they? and what does each one signify in their religion? I found out that, yes they have specific prayers that even have gestures they have to complete at each of the five prayer sessions in a day. At the beginning of a prayer session they have to raise their hands and say "Allahu Akbar" which means "God is great". Then they stand with their right hand over their left, folded at their waist and begin reciting their prayers. Then they bow at the waist and recite the "Glory be to God , the Most Great" three times while they are in the bowing position. Then they stand back up and recite more prayers always ended and beginning with "God is Great". Then they get down on their knees and prostrate themselves putting their heads on the floor with their hands palms down on each side of their head, only their palms, knees, toes, foreheads and nose are allowed to touch the ground at this time. The next step is a brief period of sitting with their legs folded under them and then they move back in to the prostrate position. Each of the five prayer session requires a different number of these prostrate position periods. After the required amount of prostration periods are over for that particular prayer session they return to sitting on their legs and recite more prayers. After that they conclude with looking to the right and left sides of them giving peace to the angels that believe are there to record their prayer.

After reading up on all of the customs and what was required of a Muslim I had to see how I was going to fit these rituals into my daily life for a day or two. And decide what I would keep and what was too invasive. Being a practicing Roman Catholic I did not feel comfortable with saying the actual Muslim prayers that they do since that goes against my own beliefs. So I had to decide what prayers I wanted to say from my own religion. I decided to breakdown a decade of the rosary and pray one of those at each of the times I was going to pray. They also use a particular rug to pray on so I had to decide if I was going to do that as well. Since I am at work all day I decided to bring an exercise mat with me and use that. I am assuming that if a Muslim lives in an urban area where there is not any mosques close to his work area he would have to carry the special rug with him, so I thought it would be good for me to have the same experience. So I had everything I needed to get started, so the next morning, which was Monday, I woke up at 4:45am to prepare for my 5:02 am prayer time. I got down on my knees and prayed my decade. My next prayer time was at 12:11 when I was at work. I got my exercise mat that I had brought with me and went into the book room and said my prayers. I have to admit it felt weird going into a room at my job to pray but after I was finished I felt really good. Taking the time in the middle of the day to connect with God gave me a good feeling inside. My third prayer time was at 3:30pm, so again I went into the bookroom and said my prayers. I have to admit I felt that it was a bit of an interruption in my day to have to go and set up my mat and center myself to pray in the middle of busy email and spreadsheets. The fourth prayer session was at 6:05pm. I get off work at 5:30, so no sooner did I get home and get changed and it was time to pray again. Again I felt it hard to connect with the right frame of mind because by this time I was tired after being at work all day, and I just wanted to relax and not think. My fifth and final prayer session was at 7:20. So to me it felt as if I had just finished praying and here I was again. I did this ritual for 2 more days, so a total of three days. I have to say that I did not enjoy this exercise and I really am ashamed of myself for feeling that way, and having to admit it out loud to someone else is even worse. I have always seen myself as close to God and someone who likes to pray. But this was tough! And I didn't even have to do all the other things Muslims do. They have to go through a ritual to cleanse themselves before each of the five prayer sessions, including washing each hand three times and washing their face and feet in a particular way as well. As well as dressing appropriately. I feel a lazy Catholic after seeing everything they are required to do on a daily basis. All I am required to do is go to Mass on Sunday. But I still love my faith and wouldn't change it. But this exercise did make me see have a new respect for Muslims and their faith.

#### Webpage References

[www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/salat.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/salat.shtml)

[umcc.ais.org/salat](http://umcc.ais.org/salat) (for my weekly calendar which I am attaching)

[www.prayertimes.info](http://www.prayertimes.info) for exact times to the minute of Albuquerque prayer