

7. Nafil (Voluntary) prayers

What better way of drawing closer to Allah this Ramadan than by doing voluntary prayers:

Allah says in Hadith Qudsi:

...and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nafil (voluntary deeds) until I love him, [Bukhari]

Want the company of Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in Jannah? Then increase in Nafil prayers:

Rabi'ah Ibn Malik al-Aslami reported that the Prophet Sallallahu alaihi Wasallam said: "Ask (anything)." Rabi'ah said: "I ask of you to be your companion in paradise." The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "Or anything else?" Rabi'ah said: "That is it." The Prophet Sallallahu alaihi Wasallam said to him: "Then help me by making many prostrations (i.e., Nafil prayers)." (Muslim)

The reward for fard prayers outside of Ramadan is the greatest a Muslim can gain but in Ramadan we get the same reward for praying a Nafil prayer. Subhaanallah! What other time of the year are Nafil prayers rewarded equal to that of a fard prayer?

Therefore we should strive to pray as many Nafils as we can in order to get closer to Allah, gain the company of Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in Jannah & gain the rewards of a fard prayer! So we should set ourselves daily targets of praying as many Nafils as we can.

The following are Sunnah & Nafil prayers we can pray everyday in Ramadan & throughout our lives:

1. Pray 12 Raka'ahs of Sunnah daily: - 2 Sunnah of Fajr, 4 Sunnah & 2 Sunnah of Dhuhr and 2 Sunnah of Maghrib

Umm Habibah Ramilah bint Abu Sufyan (RA) narrated she heard the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) saying: "A house will be built in Paradise for every Muslim who offers twelve units of Prayers other than the obligatory ones in day and night, to seek pleasure of Allah." (Muslim)

2. Salaatul Duhaa (Can be prayed from 20 mins after sunrise up until 20 minutes before Dhuhr begins)

So we should remain seated after Fajr prayer & recite the Qur'an or do Dhikr up until 20 minutes after Sunrise and pray Salaatul Duhaa. If not then we can pray it anytime before midday.

'Salat al-Duhaa consists of 2 - 12 Rakaats and it is preferable to perform 8 Rakaats.' (Raddul Mukhtaar vol.1 pg.505)

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is reported to have said: Whoever prayed twelve rakaats (before midday), then Allah will, as a reward, prepare a palace of gold for him in Paradise.(Mishkat, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah)

3. 4 Sunnah, 2 Sunnah & 2 Nafil of Dhuhr

Umm Habibah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "Whoever sticks to the habit of offering four rak`ahs before Noon Prayer and four rak`ahs after it, Allah will shield him against the Hell-Fire." (Abu Dawud & At-Tirmidhi)

4. 4 Raka'ahs Sunnah of Asr

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi wa sallam) said: "May Allaah have Mercy on the one who offers four (Raka'ahs) before 'Asr prayer."(Abu Dawud)

5. Two Raka'ahs Sunnah after entering Masjid

Abu Qatadah (RA) narrated the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) as saying: "If any one of you enters a mosque, he should pray two rak`ahs before sitting." (Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

6. Tahiyatul Wudu - 2 Raka'ahs Sunnah after doing Wudu (Ablution)

Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) saying to Bilal (RA): "Tell me about the best of your deeds (i.e. one which you deem the most rewarding) since your embracing Islam because I heard your footsteps in front of me in Paradise." Bilal (RA) replied: "I do not consider any act of mine more rewarding than that whenever I make ablution at any time of night or day, I perform Prayer for as much as was destined for me to do." (Al-Bukhari & Muslim)"

7. The MOST REWARDING Nafil Prayer of all is Tahajjud

Allah Most High said: "Establish worship at the going down of the sun until the dark of the night, and (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn is ever witnessed. And some part of the night awake for its recital, as voluntary worship for you. It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praised estate." (Qur'an, 17: 78-79)

"There is scholarly consensus (ijma`) that among the best of virtuous acts is the night vigil prayer"

The scholars derived the following in regards to Tahajjud from the Qur'an and prophetic Hadiths:

1. The minimal night vigil prayer is 2 Rakaats.
2. Its optimal recommended amount is 8 Rakaats, because this was the general practice of the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)
3. Lengthier recitation of Qur'an is superior to a larger number of Rakaats prayed.

If one has not memorized much of the Qur'an then one should recite whatever they know or recite Surah Ikhlas 3 times after Surah Faathiha in each rakah to gain reward of reciting entire Qur'an.

4. It is recommended to start the night vigil with two short Rakaats, because of the Hadith of Abu Hurayrah (RA) that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "If you get up for night prayer, start with two short Rakaats." [Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawud]

During Ramadan we should aim to pray Tahajjud every night. We can do so by awakening a little earlier for Sehri, making Wudu & praying a minimum of 2 Raka'ahs, but best to pray 8 Raka'ahs.

Abu Hurayrah (RA), related that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)

said: When the last one-third of the night remains, our Lord, the Glorious One descends towards the heaven of the earth and proclaims: **Who is that who supplicates for Me, and I grant his supplication? Who is that who begs Me for anything and I grant it to him? And who is that who seeks My forgiveness, and I forgive him? (Bukhari, Muslim).**

So the last third part of the night is the most blessed & dua's are readily accepted at this time. Therefore by praying Tahajjud it gives us the best opportunity to get closer to Allah & to make sincere dua, repenting for our sins past and present & to crying & asking of Allah for whatever we want.

If we cannot cry due to the hardness of our hearts then we should at least make the face as if we are crying. Just as a mother tends to her baby quicker & more promptly when it is crying in the same way Allah tends to his servants quicker when they are crying.