



## I'tikaf

### Definition, purpose and rulings relating to I'tikaf

**Q: What is the ruling on I'tikaf (seclusion for worship in a Masjid)? What is its Shar'y (Islamic legal) definition? Does it include sleeping and eating in the Masjid (mosque)? Is doing so permissible?**

**A:** Undoubtedly, I'tikaf is an act of worship that brings the person closer to Allah (Exalted be He). It is better to perform it in Ramadan than in any other month. Allah (Exalted be He) says: [﴿And do not have sexual relations with them \(your wives\) while you are in I'tikâf \(i.e. confining oneself in a mosque for prayers and invocations leaving the worldly activities\) in the mosques.﴾](#)

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The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to observe I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan. Once he did not observe I'tikaf (during that month) and did it instead in the month of Shawwal. The purpose of I'tikaf is to devote oneself to worshipping and staying in seclusion with Allah (Exalted be He), which is the Shar'y seclusion. Some scholars gave the following definition of I'tikaf: Cutting all ties with creatures to maintain only ties of worship with the Creator. This means giving up all activities that might divert the person from obeying and worshipping Allah (Exalted be He). It is permissible to be observed in Ramadan as well as in other months as we said before. But it is better if it is accompanied by Sawm (Fasting). Anyway, it is unobjectionable to observe I'tikaf without Sawm according to the soundest of two opinions expressed by scholars. In this regard, it is authentically reported in the Two Sahih (authentic) Books of Hadith (i.e. Al-Bukhari and Muslim) on the authority of `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: [﴿'O Messenger of Allah, I vowed during Jahiliyyah \(pre-Islamic time of ignorance\) to observe I'tikaf for one night in Al-Masjid Al-Haram \(the Sacred Mosque in Makkah\). The Prophet \(peace be upon him\) said to him, 'Fulfill your vow.' So he observed I'tikaf for one night﴾](#) It is well-known that night is not the time to observe Sawm; rather it is during the day. Moreover, it is unobjectionable to sleep or eat in a Masjid either for a person observing I'tikaf or otherwise. This is based on many Hadith and Athar (narrations from the Companions) to this effect and others describing the state of Ahl-ul-Suffah (guests of Islam who had no families, money, nor anybody to depend upon, and who used to stay at a corner of the mosque reserved as a shelter for them). However, cleanliness of the Masjid and caution against things that might render it unclean, such as remnants of food, has to be attended to. In this regard, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: [﴿I was shown the rewards of my Ummah \(nation based on one creed\) \[for different deeds\], even a speck of dirt that someone removes from the Masjid.﴾](#) (Related by Abu Dawud

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and Al-Tirmidhy and is ranked as Sahih [authentic] by Ibn Khuzaymah) Likewise, the Hadith on the authority of `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her): [﴿The Messenger of Allah \(peace be upon him\)](#)

commanded to build Masjids in different localities and that they should be maintained clean and perfumed.) (Related by the Five Compilers of Hadith [Imams Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhy, Al-Nasa'y and Ibn Majah] excluding Al-Nasa'y through a good Sanad [chain of narrators]) Different localities here refer to the district of each tribe separately and tribes inhabiting cities. I ask Allah to guide you and us to acquire beneficial knowledge and to act thereupon and to reform our hearts and deeds, for He is All-Hearing and Near. As-salamu 'alaykum warahmatullah wabarakatuh (May Allah's Peace, Mercy, and Blessings be upon you!)

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