

MODULE 3

Class title: What is prayer? (part 1 of Salah series)

Aim of lesson: To understand the concept of prayer in different religions

Category: Worship

Class Format: Power Point Presentation

(Greeting to students) *AssalamalaikumwaRahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanirRajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *BismillahirRahmanirRaheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbishrahlisadriwayassirliamriwahluluqdatummillisaniyafqahuqawli*(Surah At Ta-Ha

20: Verse 25-28

Slide 1:

Insha'Allah in the coming weeks we are going to discuss *salah* which we usually know by the name *namaz*. Today we'll look into what is prayer. What do you understand by prayer? What does prayer mean to you? Let's try to understand that. Yes,

- It's a mode of worship.
- A pillar of Islam.
- A connection with Allah (swt).
- *Namaz*.
- A ritual.
- One of the basic *fardh* on us.

Slides 2-3:

Alhumdulilah, alright. Let's try to understand what prayer means to different people around the world. It means different things to different people around the world. Now the dictionary meaning of prayer is 'entreated' which means that you are really requesting earnestly or very emotionally for something. That's 'entreat'. Appeal, plea, request, hope, desire, wish, these are all the dictionary meanings of prayer.

Slide 4:

'Madonna' was very popular when we were your age, I have no idea if you've ever heard of her but she had a song by the name of 'like a prayer'. That was her version of praying. Let's look at different people around the world and their methods of praying.

You know this person is praying by looking up at the sky, which is generally what people do. We have this belief that there is somebody up there who's looking after everything and generally we look up when we are praying or when we are making *dua* and that is common in almost all the religions.

Slides 5- 7:

This one seems as if she is praying in front of a laptop I don't know what she's doing. Maybe she's learning how to pray from the laptop, may be from 'Google'! I don't know. Some people just swirl in their prayers and that is their form of connecting with Allah (swt). Hindus consider the water as holy. You can see that this woman is praying in water. They consider a lot of other things as holy, like cows and monkeys and elephants, to name a few. I even heard, I think a couple of years ago, it came in the newspaper that Hindus were praying in front of computers because they thought computers were very smart and that they had kept it at a place where people were worshipping it and thinking that it is very smart and it can do a lot of things and they were taking it as a god! I know it is ridiculous for us but you know they thought that was fine.

Slide 8:

Jews stand in front of their 'Western Wall' or the 'Wailing wall' in Jerusalem. They consider it holy because it was once part of their temple. Why is it called the 'Wailing wall'? Any idea? They cry for the loss. They cry for the loss of the temple that was once theirs and when the temple was destroyed their tribes were scattered all over. And that is why they call it the 'Wailing wall' because they cry over there. They move like a pendulum while they are praying. And that is why since we, as Muslims, have to be different from the Jews and Christians or from any other religion, therefore we should not move while we are saying our prayers. While we are doing our *salah* we should stand still, not keep on moving because that resembles the Jews.

Slide 9:

Some people do different acts of balancing in their prayers like you can see he is standing on one foot, and this guy is swirling again dancing to the beat. He's got a drum in his hand, a small drum, dressed in a weird way.

Slides 10- 12:

Buddhists have their own ways, they generally believe in a lot of meditation, standing still and this is their way of praying. Some Christians, they usually pray in front of their cross with Jesus Christ on it. Usually in churches, even outside, but generally in churches. When you lose your way or when you do not follow a certain way which has been prescribed by Allah (swt), you find people inventing their own ways. This one, it looks like they are probably conducting a *jama'at* because they are all together but it just seems that they are waving their hands and looking up. I don't know what religion they are following, but this is their form of praying.

Slides 13- 15:

You see lot of such things in the 'Far East' side, such as statues and people praying in front of them. Some people torture themselves in the name of prayers. He's got his feet tied, his hands are also tied and I don't know what he's trying to do. They give themselves pain in the name of

prayer! They feel that if they torture their body then they are going to be rewarded for it by Allah (swt).

Hindus again consider snakes as holy you know. They have these *dulha dulhan* (bridegroom & bride) snakes because they have got red *dupatta* (scarf) around them. A couple and a family are seriously praying in front of them. Now we may think it's odd, right! She's asking wouldn't the snakes bite? Usually the poison has been taken out from the snakes and definitely they have a 'care taker'. It's not like as if they are in your house. But you know they have probably seen this thing throughout their lives.

Slides 16- 17:

Singing is also included in praying a lot! You see a lot of singing among Christians, they sing in churches and at the weddings and at their Sunday mass there is a lot of singing. Have you ever been to Thailand? Like I said in the Far East side you see such things that they have garlands and fruits and you know all sorts of food that they put it in front of their *Buddha*'s.

Once I even saw a half drunk soft drink bottle and a half drunk juice with a straw in it and I was just wondering that, did somebody drink half of it and keep it there and with the straw in it in case the statues needed to drink it?

Slides 18- 20:

Some people worship rocks you know, you can see a big rock and they are praying in front of it and they tie certain cloth or a ribbon - it is normally for a *mannat*, they make their *du'a* & tie the ribbon/cloth, very like some sects of Christians who light candles – it is symbolism.

Again dancing is considered as praying. People wear different masks, they dress up in different strange clothes, act in strange ways and then they dance in the name of praying. You can see this girl, she has got a snake around her, she is a Hindu and she looks fine she's quite comfortable and she's got this *trishol*, can you see this fork? This is again something holy in Hinduism.

Slide 21:

Concentration...this is another form of praying. Do you know how some families thank God before starting their meals, for the food He has given them? That is a good thing. It might become a problem if this is the only form of praying that they are doing. Otherwise to thank Allah (swt) for the food He has given is you know something very good. So they hold hands and close their eyes and they concentrate and they thank Allah (swt) or their gods for the food that they have.

Slides 22- 27:

For Muslims, this is what prayer has meant through the ages and across the borders, *Alhamdulillah*. When you see a person in this position, you know he is a Muslim and he's saying

his prayers. This is a big blessing. Look anywhere around the world and you will find that Muslims always pray like this, *Alhamdulillah*. You see army people, regular people, in the desert... anywhere! *Alhamdulillah!* This is an army man. This is Bosnia refugee camp, if you are in your house or in your refugee camp, your way of praying does not change. These are Indonesian school girls, probably the *salah* time has come during the school hours and they are all praying together. *Alhamdulillah*, the way we do conducting a *jama'at*.

Slides 28- 29:

The six flags amusement park... have you been there? If you are on a roller coaster, that does not mean that you don't have to say your prayers if the time has come. This is New Jersey, USA. *Alhamdulillah*, enjoy as much as you want over there but when the time for prayer comes, you have to say your *salah* wherever you are! This is Jerusalem. You know you can see all the guards over there but *Alhamdulillah* the prayers are still going on the way they should.

Slides 30- 34:

Whether you are a dictator or the president of a country, or the king of one of the richest countries of the world, or you hold any important post, you're a bureaucrat, or you know you're an important business man, or you're just an ordinary fisherman... just an ordinary person; we all pray in the same manner! And we are all equal in the eyes of Allah (swt)! And that is why it is the beauty of our *salah* that when you form a *jama'at*, everybody stands together. It's not as if the rich people will stand in the front and the poor people will stand at the back, *Alhamdulillah* everybody stands shoulder to shoulder and they are all equal in the eyes of Allah (swt). He judges us by our deeds not by the wealth or the position that we have.

Slides 35- 39:

This is London, it's probably a cafeteria. This is a University *Alhamdulillah*. You can see the prayer room, obviously the Muslim students must have asked for it. We pray when it is time to pray no matter where we are. You can see that this person is in the middle of a park or forest, and these girls are in their room, you pray when the time comes. This is Mumbai, India. They are praying on narrow streets, alley near a garbage dump. These people, they are praying in the middle of a *bazaar*. This is Faisal mosque, Islamabad. It's a huge mosque and it is probably the *Eid* day or something that is why it is so full, otherwise it's quite empty.

Slides 40- 49:

Tunisia, they are praying in their courtyard in the similar way like we do. Kashmir, we know what the situation in Kashmir is but the way of praying would not change! This is from the USSR. Nigeria, people have no food over there, right? But the praying of *salah* would continue! Kuwait, San Francisco, USA, you can again see a big place and they are praying *Alhamdulillah* just the way we all do. Iraq, Gaza strip, again we know the situation in Palestine and what is

happening over there to these people, but they are praying the way we should. Spain, Somalia, you know the Somali people? There is a famine over there; they don't have food to even open there fast, but *Alhamdulillah* this person is praying.

Slides 53- 66:

You can see he's praying on the road side maybe the *salah* time has come and he is nowhere close to his destination but *Alhamdulillah* he has got his prayer mat and he is praying over there. China, Chechnya, you can see it's so cold and he is praying with all his warm clothes on, but he's praying! Hungary, Jordan, France, Australia, you can see there is no space and they are praying on footsteps, they're praying on steps! Uzbekistan, Burma again New York City, this is the park. Algeria, they're again praying in a narrow alley. You look at Australia; you look at America, Europe, and Asia, wherever you look *Alhamdulillah!* Muslims pray in the same way. And what is this? Yes, she is making *dua*, he is making *dua*. Or this, you see this during *U'mrah* and *Hajj* that people are desperately looking up and praying to Allah (swt), making *dua*. This is not *salah*, this is only making *dua*. They touch the *ka'abah* wall and make *dua*; they look up and make *dua* on the day of *Arafat*.

As I said initially, we generally have a tendency of looking up when we pray. Look, she is looking up and praying but some people just close their eyes and concentrate and pray to Allah (swt).

Slides 67- 73:

So for a Muslim prayer means *dua* and *salah*, it comprises of two things. Why? Why do we say that?? Why are we saying that it is made up of *dua* and *salah*? Because we say, '*La ilahail Allah*' 'There is no god but Allah (swt)'. We find what Allah (swt) wants from us through the holy *Qur'an*. So we get to know from (*Surah At Ta'ha*: verse 14):

Allah (swt) says:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

'I am Allah (swt) and none has the right to be worshipped but I, so worship Me and establish *salah* for My remembrance'.

Again He says in (*Surah Al-Baqarah*: verse 110):

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

'And establish *As-salah* and give *zakat* and whatever good you send before for yourselves you will find it with Allah (swt), Allah (swt) is certainly the Seer of what you do'.

Again in (*Surah Al- Momin: Verse 60*) Allah (swt) says,

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

‘And your Lord said call Me and I will respond to your invocation’.

Slide 74- 76:

So the first two verses tell us to establish *salah* which we said was one part of praying and the other part is here, where Allah (swt) says, ‘Call Me’ that means to make *dua*, so this is the second part. *Dua* means to call upon Allah (swt); we plead to Allah (swt) for everything and anything that we want. We make *dua* to Allah (swt) so that we get good grades or that it rains, or I get a new phone, or whatever! Anything we want, we ask Allah (swt). *Salah* is the prayer in which we stand, bow and prostrate. Prostrate is doing *sajdah*. Now again how do we know this?

Slides 77- 80:

What do you think is the meaning of *salah*? The dictionary meaning of *salah* is whisper, supplication which is again making *dua*, feeling the nearness of Allah (swt), to receive warmth, lighting a fire and strengthening the *emaan*. Don’t be confused, this is the dictionary meaning. But do we light a fire when we hear the *azaan*? Do we do this? No! None of us run to turn on the stove to warm ourselves. Why do we do the particular actions, say particular words that we do. You know we don’t say that it’s *Zuhr*’s *azaan* so let’s go and light a bonfire! Or let’s go and heat something on the stove to get warmth. We don’t do that, we do particular actions we say certain words and why do we do that? Because we say, ‘*La ilahai lallah Muhammad dur rasulAllah*. That there is no god but Allah (swt) and Muhammad (pbuh) is the prophet of Allah (swt).

And we know from (*Surah Muhammad: Verse 33*)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ

‘O’ you who believe obey Allah (swt) and obey the messenger Muhammad (pbuh) and render not vain your deeds.’

Slide 81:

We get to know from the *Qur’an* the importance of *RasulAllah* (pbuh). If you do not follow *RasulAllah* (pbuh) your deeds are being wasted, your good deeds, your *naiki* will not be counted. Again, *RasulAllah* (pbuh) said:

“Perform *salah* like you see me performing it” [Sahih bukhari]

So if we were not following *RasulAllah* (pbuh) we would have done *salah* in different ways. Some of us would have lit up a bonfire, some would have opened the stove, and some would have just made *dua*. So we have to follow what has been prescribed and we do not know how to do our *salah* from the *Qur'an*, we get to know that from the *hadith*, from the way *RasulAllah* (pbuh) did it in his life and that is what we follow *Alhamdulillah*.

Slide 82:

Now what is the difference between *dua* and *salah*? Any idea? Yes. Yes *salah* is five times, *dua* is any time. You can do it wherever you like. Now *dua* can be informal as well as formal. Informal? How is it informal? When we make *dua* like right now, I say, 'Allah (swt) please I really hope it rains' or, 'I hope that this class goes well or the electricity doesn't go, anything'. But it will become formal when I say a certain *dua* which has been taught by *RasulAllah* (pbuh), which are *masnoon duas*. Or it has come in the *Qur'an* and we say them at the end of our *salah* just before doing *salaam*.

Do you read anything after reading *durood shareef*? You do? What? *Rabbi ja'alni*?

Yes, that's making a *dua*. So that's the formal *dua* because I'm reading certain words which have been prescribed and I'm making it at certain time which again has been told to us by *RasulAllah* (pbuh) where as *salah* is only formal.

It has to be done five times a day or you can make *nafl salah* whenever you want but it has to be done in a proper way. *Dua* is not structured so you can say it whichever way you want to, but *salah* is definitely structured. You can't start your *salah* by *attahiyyaat* and do your *salaam* and then do your *sajdah* and then you get up and start doing your *Alhamdulillah*, you can't do that. In *dua* you can use any word, any words, any language, you can say it in English, Urdu, Siraiki, Punjabi, French, Arabic whatever you want but for *salah* you have to use certain words and it has to be done in Arabic. You cannot read the translation of *Surah Al-Fatihah* in your *namaz* and say I've read my *Surah Al-Fatihah*. You can't do that.

Again *dua* can be done anytime whereas *salah* has to be done at specific times, the *farz salah*. *Dua* is optional but the ones who don't do it they are the losers and *salah* is obligatory. It is considered the identification for the Muslims.

Slides 83- 84:

Now what is the word *salah* made up of? The root word *saad laam waaow*. The meaning of *salah*, literal meaning of *salah* is to make a connection with Allah (swt). We saw the dictionary meanings, but the literal meaning of *salah* is to make a connection with Allah (swt).

Slides 85- 87:

The meaning of *namaz* which is the word which we use for *salah* is not an Arabic word. It is a Persian word and it was used for the old method of worship which was popular among the Persians. *Namaz* is just the physical actions of *salah*. It is not equivalent to *salah*. We have to understand the meaning of something in order to appreciate its purpose, right? If you do not fully understand the meaning of something you cannot appreciate it, or you cannot use it to obtain full benefit out of it. Like this kid is probably too small to understand the purpose of a refrigerator and he is probably taking it as a place to sit or hide which is not the purpose of a refrigerator, you know... he is treating it as a cupboard!

Slides 88- 89:

So we think *salah* is equal to *namaz*. But Allah (swt) says in (Surah Al Ankaboot: Verse 45)

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

'Recite what has been revealed to you of the book and establish *salah*. *Salah* stops from indecency and wrong doing.'

Slides 90- 91:

And we are like, 'What? Huh! How does that happen? That doesn't make sense?' How does *namaz* stop you from indecency and wrong doing? How does the physical movement of *namaz* stop you from doing anything wrong? Now that is where we have to understand that *salah* and *namaz* are not equal. *Namaz* is just the physical movement we do *Assalamualaikum wa rehmatullah Assalamualaikum wa rehmatullah* and we go back to our lives and we forget that this *salah* has to stop us from wrong actions. *Salah* is **the system of worship**, you have to understand the meaning and you have to prepare yourselves for it. First of all you have to prepare yourself for it, then you have to know its purpose, how to perform it, you have to practice it and you have to know its meaning.

Slide 92:

So it is not just something that we do five times a day. It is a **system of worship** which has to run our lives twenty-four /seven with no break in it. We should be aware of Allah (swt) and we should know that when we are saying *AllahuAkbar* we are saying Allah (swt) is the Greatest! He is the Greatest in whatever I do in my life, not just when I'm saying my *salah*. So the key word is 'connection', the most important thing is connecting with Allah (swt).

Slides 93- 99:

This is the age of communication. We are totally wired up to get connected. We have developed the best forms of communication; laptops, bridges, trains and how can we forget our best friend 'cell phone'? We can't live without it, it's our oxygen! Tick tick tick tick... 'sms' is going on all the time. Even if we are sitting with people we are just 'smsing' or sending or calling or playing games. In salah, our heart connects with Allah (swt) our heart becomes online with Allah (swt) right? and why? Because when we understand the meaning of what we are doing and we understand how important Allah (swt) is and we understand his Greatness then we are in awe and our heart connects to Allah (swt) and it reaches out to Allah (swt), so don't miss up on this opportunity. The user name is 'Muslim' and the password is '*salah*'. Get connected with Allah (swt) right now, don't miss this opportunity. We get this opportunity five times a day. Let's not miss this opportunity.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbulIzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun 'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*