



It is an enormous favour of Allāh ﷻ that He has invited us to His house so that we can fulfil the important sunnah of i'tikāf. The following points will, inshā'allāh, help us value this great blessing.

1. Correct Intention

The acceptance of any deed is dependent on the intention with which it is carried out. A deed can also be carried out with multiple intentions, which in turn bring multiple rewards. The primary intention we should make for i'tikāf is that we are following an important sunnah of our beloved Nabī ﷺ. Other intentions that can and should be made include:

- to spend time in the company of the pious;
- iṣlāḥ (rectification of the self);
- to acquire the recognition and love of Allāh ﷻ and form a strong connection with Him;
- to acquire knowledge;
- to attain Laylat-ul-Qadr;
- to obtain the spiritual benefits of time in seclusion.

2. Contemplate the Virtues of I'tikāf

To help us appreciate a blessing, we should ponder over its virtues. I'tikāf has many benefits and virtues. Sayyidunā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ narrates that Nabī ﷺ has said regarding the person performing i'tikāf, "He refrains from sins and is rewarded for all the good deeds (that he cannot do due to being in i'tikāf e.g. visiting the sick

or participating in a janāzah) that a person is rewarded for who carries out good deeds." (Ibn Mājah)

3. Be Grateful

At all times we must remember that it is only through the faḍl of Allāh ﷻ that we have been granted the opportunity to carry out this great sunnah and spend time in His house. We are neither here as a result of our efforts, nor because we deserve to be here. There are so many people who could have been here, yet Allāh ﷻ chose us and favoured us over them. Therefore, we must continuously thank Allāh ﷻ and be grateful to Him. Being constantly mindful of the fact that Allāh ﷻ granted us this favour without our being worthy of it will help us value i'tikāf and protect us from falling prey to pride and self-conceit.

4. Adab (Respect)

In order for one to progress in Dīn, adab is necessary. Whilst in i'tikāf we should show great care in regard to the following:

- Masjid – whilst in the masjid we should not do anything that violates the sanctity of the masjid, e.g. make noise or disturb others that are engaged in 'ibādah.
- Qur'ān – whilst reciting the Qur'ān we should hold the Qur'ān with great care and respect, preferably place it on a raḥl (Qur'ān stand) and sit in a respectful manner. We should avoid leaning against anything or stretching our legs out.
- Dīnī Gatherings – whilst a Dīnī gathering is taking place we should join the gathering, sit respectfully and listen attentively.

The more adab a person exercises, the stronger his Dīn becomes, and the less adab a person exercises, the weaker his Dīn becomes.

5. Seclusion

Spending time on one's own to remember Allāh ﷻ, away from worldly distractions, is very important in order to progress spiritually and establish a strong bond with Allāh ﷻ. During our stay, the less we interact with others the greater the degree of seclusion we will achieve. So we must try our best to avoid mixing and socialising with others. We have come here to isolate ourselves from friends, family and everything to do with the dunyā. We have come with a great objective, and that is to connect with our Creator instead of with the creation. When two people start a conversation Shayṭān joins them and leads them to sins such as backbiting, slander, belittling others, etc. Any benefit they had acquired through i'tikāf will thus be obliterated. Therefore, we must avoid mixing at all costs, whether with the people around us or, via mobile devices, with family and friends.

6. Time Management

During our stay in i'tikāf we must really value our time and try hard not to waste a single moment. We should engage in 'ibādah, tilāwah, dhikr, du'ā, learning, muḥāsabah, tawbah, etc. In order to achieve this it is very important to strictly follow the timetable that has been given to us.

7. Muḥāsabah (Self-Assessment)

Regularly taking stock of our religious condition is known as muḥāsabah. As well as be-

ing a necessary practice, muḥāsabah is also very productive. I'tikāf is an excellent opportunity to really reflect on our lives. We should fix a time, preferably before sleeping, to assess the good and bad we see in our lives, and the good and bad we have done during the past 24 hours. We should express gratitude over the good things and repent from the bad things and make a firm intention to give them up. By carrying out muḥāsabah we will concentrate on the flaws and errors in our own lives and stop being preoccupied with the faults of others. Without muḥāsabah we remain deceived by Shayṭān into only noticing the good we do while remaining oblivious to the wrong. He who constantly assesses his own life will have his real self revealed to him and will be able to correct the wrongs in his life.

8. Tawbah (Seeking Forgiveness from Allāh ﷻ)

Whilst in i'tikāf we must mend our connection with Allāh ﷻ by imploring His forgiveness and making a firm intention that from now on we will live a life free from sin. We should ask from Allāh ﷻ abundantly, not according to our own limited expectations, but according to the abilities of the Giver. By word and deed we should beseech, "O our Gracious Rabb, we will not leave this house until we are forgiven for all our sins and granted Your friendship."

9. Remaining Steadfast on Tawbah

Those who are invited by Allāh ﷻ to His house for the last ten days of Ramaḍān will surely repent sincerely and made a firm resolution to

not disobey Him ever again. When returning to normal life after i'tikāf we need to practically adhere to our resolutions and remain steadfast upon them. If we slip then we should not lose hope in the mercy of Allāh ﷻ; rather, we should use the blessing of tawbah again and get back on the right track. That person who lives his life in accordance to the resolutions he made during i'tikāf will have truly benefitted from his i'tikāf.

10. Iṣlāḥ (Rectification of the Self)

Iṣlāḥ is to purify ourselves of all evil traits and adorn ourselves with praiseworthy traits. I'tikāf will only truly be beneficial if we make a firm commitment to iṣlāḥ, and leave from here with a firm intention to rectify our lives. We have entered an 'iṣlāḥ hospital' so our goal should be to ensure we become cured of all spiritual illnesses. Until we are cured we should continue attending the programmes of our spiritual doctor (shaykh) and continue working hard towards our goal. Inshā'allāh, with the assistance of Allāh ﷻ and with mujāhadah (effort) we will succeed.

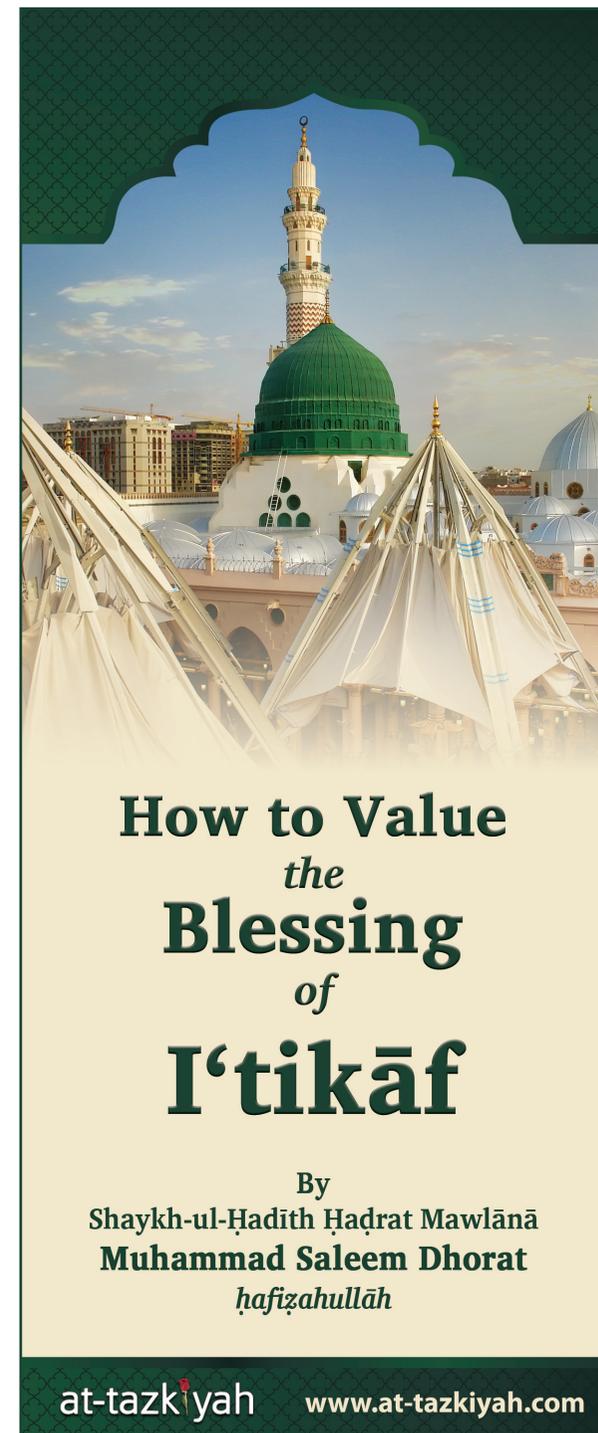
Through the blessings of these ten days, may Allāh ﷻ grant us His recognition and love, and keep us on the path of His pleasure and include us among those who are His special friends.

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How to Value the Blessing of I'tikāf

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