

38881 - Is it obligatory to pray jamaa'ah in a mosque that is far from the house?

the question

I have a husband who is religiously-committed and he knows that it is obligatory to pray in the mosque when one can hear the adhaan. In our neighbourhood there is a mosque that is about ten minutes away on foot, but we can never hear the adhaan because our house is on a main street. Moreover, Muslims in this country are afraid of making the adhaan very loud lest that provoke the Christians. My husband does not go and pray in the mosque except when it is on his way when he goes out for some other purpose. And the imam prays in a way that is slightly different and he does not like it. This upsets me a great deal, I hope that you can tell me the ruling on his actions because I am afraid he may be committing a sin.

Detailed answer

Praying in jamaa'ah (congregation) in the mosque is one of the most important rituals of Islam, and it is obligatory for every man past the age of adolescence who is able to hear the call to prayer, because of a great deal of evidence, including the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "Whoever hears the call to prayer and does not respond, his prayer is not valid, except the one who has an excuse."

Narrated by Ibn Maajah, 793; also narrated by al-Daraqutni and al-Haakim, who classed it as saheeh. It was also classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Saheeh Ibn Maajah.

Muslim narrated (653) that Abu Hurayrah said: A blind man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I do not have anyone to lead me to the mosque," and he asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to grant him a concession allowing him to pray in his house. He granted him that concession, then when he turned to leave he called him back and said, "Can you hear the call to prayer?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Then answer it."

And there is other evidence too.

What is meant by hearing the call to prayer is hearing it with the voice that is ordinarily used, without amplification, when other noises are still and there is nothing to prevent hearing the adhaan. It should also be noted that the muezzins at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to give the call to prayer from high places, such as the roof of the mosque and the like, and the way the houses were built was conducive to the sound reaching far and wide.

Based on this, a distance of ten minutes on foot is regarded as a distance which the sound of the adhaan would ordinarily reach under the conditions described above; indeed it would reach further than that.

So your husband has to observe this ritual in the mosque so long as it is free from anything that is regarded in sharee'ah as an impediment. See question no. [20655](#).

The fact that a man is not obliged to pray in jamaa'ah because of distance etc does not mean that he should not pay attention to that and seek to raise himself in status by striving to attend the prayers. How much goodness there is to be attained by praying in congregation in the mosque, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Prayer offered in a group is twenty-five times better than prayer offered at home or in the marketplace. If any one of you does wudoo' and does it well, then comes to the mosque for no other purpose than to pray, then he does not take a single step but Allah raises him in status one degree thereby and removes one sin from him, until he enters the mosque. Then he is in a state of prayer so long as he is waiting for the prayer, and the angels send blessings upon him so long as he remains in the spot where he prayed, saying 'O Allah, forgive him, O Allah, have mercy on him,' so long as he does not pass wind."

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 465; Muslim, 649.

Who among us does not want his status to be raised and his sins erased, and to have the angels of the Most Merciful pray for forgiveness for him??

So your husband should strive to pray in congregation in the mosque and to be with the Muslims and show strength of numbers. He should understand that when the Muslims are steadfast in adhering to their religion and keeping its rituals and symbols alive, these are some of the most important factors in making them stand firm and prevail over their enemies; indeed this steadfastness is a kind of da'wah that has an effect on the hearts of others.

The father should also set a good example to his wife and children. How can his sons get used to frequenting the mosque when they see him never going to the mosque except when he has to go out for some worldly need? Allah praises those who frequent the mosques, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The mosques of Allah shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day; perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah), and give Zakaah and fear none but Allah. It is they who are on true guidance”

[al-Tawbah 9:18]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that the virtue of prayer offered in congregation is for the one who goes out to attend the prayer and does not go out for any other purpose, as he said: “... then comes to the mosque for no other purpose than to pray”, as in the hadeeth quoted above.

We should understand an important point, which is that a group of the fuqaha' did not think that prayer in congregation is obligatory, as is the well-known view of the Hanafi fuqaha', but that did not prevent thousands, nay millions, of Muslims who followed this madhhab, from praying in congregation and persisting in doing so even in the most difficult of circumstances, in the Balkans, Turkey, eastern Europe and elsewhere. It is not the matter of whether it is obligatory or not, rather it is the matter of strong faith that motivates a person to emulate his Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his noble Companions, and wanting nothing less than the highest degrees of Paradise.

A Sahaabi would come leaning on two other men because of sickness, so that he could stand in the row of worshippers, even though he would be excused if he did not come and pray in

congregation. What was it that motivated him? His faith.

The one who is keen does not ask whether it is obligatory or not, rather he is keen to follow the Sunnah and the way of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Whoever would like to meet Allah tomorrow as a Muslim, let him offer these prayers regularly when the call to prayer is given, for what Allah has prescribed for your Prophet is guidance and this is part of that guidance. If you were to pray in your houses as this man who stayed home did, you would have given up one of the Sunnahs of your Prophet, and if you give up a Sunnah of your Prophet you will go astray. There is no man who does wudoo' and does it well, then goes to one of these mosques, but for every step he takes Allah will record one hasanah (good deed) for him, and erase one bad deed. There was a time when no one stayed away from the prayer but a hypocrite whose hypocrisy was well known, and a man would come supported by two others so that he could stand in the row." Narrated by Muslim, 654.

What we have mentioned about hearing the call to prayer is what was stated in a fatwa by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him), when he was asked about a man who lives in a house far away from the mosque and has to use a car to go to the prayers because if he goes on foot he sometimes misses the prayer, but he can hear the adhaan over the loudspeakers. Is there any sin on him if he prays at home with three or four neighbours in the home of one of them?

The Shaykh replied:

You have to pray with your Muslim brothers in the mosque, if you can hear the adhaan in your home at a normal volume without the aid of loudspeakers, when other sounds are silent and there is nothing to prevent you from hearing it.

If you are far away and cannot hear the adhaan without the loudspeakers, it is permissible for you to pray in your house or with some of your neighbours, because it was proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to the blind man when he asked him for

permission to pray in his house: “Can you hear the call to prayer?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “Then answer it.” Narrated by Imam Muslim in his Saheeh.

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever hears the call to prayer and does not come, there is no prayer for him [i.e., his prayer is not valid], except for the one who has an excuse.” Narrated by Ibn Maajah, al-Daaraqutni, Ibn Hibbaan and al-Haakim with a saheeh isnad. If you answer the call of the muezzin even though you live far away and you take the trouble to come on foot or by car, then that is better for you, and Allah will reward your footsteps to and from the mosque, so long as you are sincere and have the right intention, because it was narrated that there was a man who lived far from the Prophet’s Mosque but he never missed a prayer with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said to him, “Why do you not buy a donkey that you can ride when it is hot and when it is very dark at night?” He said, “I would not like my house to be close to the mosque, for I want my walking to the mosque and back to my family to be recorded.” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him, “Allah will grant you all of that.” Narrated by Imam Muslim in his Saheeh.

End quote. From Majmoo’ Fatawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baz, 12/36

And Allah knows best.