

Essay 4

Being an Iraq war veteran with two tours in Fallujah, I know firsthand about the five daily prayers that Muslims incorporate into their lifestyle. Every day the five prayers rang throughout the city through the local mosques' loud speakers. I also had the privilege to witness prayers in public settings as well. Although I am not Muslim, it always did cross my mind on how praying five times a day can be quite difficult on one's busy schedule. For the most part I did notice that Muslims always had a sort of sanctuary in their household or place of business. This small sanctuary in their household was their place of prayer, and at times I couldn't help but stare in curiosity as to how the process occurred. It is this curiosity that led me to choose the prayer option when it came to picking my spiritual aid for my fourth assignment.

In all honesty, the most praying I have done in a while has been with the aid of this class. That's my own personal dilemmas that I had to overcome since I am not much of the praying type, let alone praying five times a day. This personal conflict was at times hard to overcome, but once I have decided on a prayer it becomes easier with each experience.

Mecca is located 21.4167 N degrees latitude, and 39.8167 E degrees longitude. This puts praying to Mecca at a slight south eastern angle. According to *Islamicfinder.org* the daily prayer times in our part of the world are at 5:34 am, 6:43 am, 12:58 pm, 4:31 pm, 7:13 pm, and 8:23 pm.

My weekdays begin at 5:30 am, so the first prayer was normally the first thing I would do. After showering and having a quick breakfast it was time for my second prayer. The next prayer would fall around my lunch break. Although I couldn't perform a prayer like I wanted, I took the advice given on the Notes on Reflection page and escaped to the bathroom for a quick prayer. It was pretty odd praying in a bathroom stall, but I figured I had to work with what I could. By the time it came to go home I would have enough time to fall within range of the ordered prayer times. I know that this assignment's rules were to pick assigned times that would best fit a schedule, but I tried to fit my prayers around the same times Muslims would perform theirs.

As the days of prayers progressed it was still a strange feeling. I can understand how many rules and regulations have to be made in order for Muslims to work in western states. Prayers conducted at the workplace can be quite difficult to get done. If a prayer interferes with, let's say, an important deadline, I can see how management can be quite upset with a person's need to conduct a prayer. Now if the majority of employees were of Muslim backgrounds I can imagine how that could become a difficult situation for a company trying to respect and adapt to a faith that is not quite as popular in western states. As a spiritual aid for the sole purpose of this assignment, my prayers ranged around the 4 to 6 minute mark. But from my experience overseas I remember some prayers lasting longer than that. There is also the help of the vocal prayer that is sung allowed through a mosque's loud speaker. All these things came to mind and how difficult prayers can be when placing myself in a Muslim's shoes while living at the tail end of this country's so called "bible belt."

On my final day of prayer I had mixed feelings about the entire process. While not being a Muslim, or religious for that matter, I wouldn't say that I am biased against a certain religion, but I would say that being in a western society it would take time and a lot of effort to get comfortable with the ideal of a five set prayer rule. I also kept in mind how many people in this part of the world do not strongly approve the Islamic faith, and how odd it would look for Muslim people to perform public daily prayer. I would assume there too would be mixed feelings, sadly I feel there would be more negative ones than positive. These types of topics I feel should be asked by a lot more citizens in today's society. My prayers were in private places, or in the privacy in my home, but I still can't help to wonder if I would have been given the stink eye if my neighbors knew that I was praying towards Mecca in their neighborhood. Would they have been accepting if I told them it was just for an assignment, or would they have blacklisted me if I had told them that I had been converted? This experience for me was a real eye opener. Not just due to the fact that I had to adjust my schedule to pray and willingly accept it, but also to step into the shoes of a Muslim in a time when western society seems to be more narrow-minded than what their true values actually uphold.