

i'tikaf — retreat in the masjid

Keeping to the masjid for Allah alone: what it is, who may do it, and what may take you out of it.



What it is

To stay in the masjid for a set time intending worship — prayer, Qur'an, dhikr, du'a' — and to let the world wait outside the door.

Qur'an 2:187 · Sahih al-Bukhari 2025

Named in the Qur'an

وَلَا تَبْشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ

"And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques." Intimacy stops while the retreat lasts.

Qur'an 2:187

The last ten nights

"The Prophet ﷺ used to practise i'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan" — he kept to it until he died, and his wives kept to it after him.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2025, 2026

The year he died

He would stay ten days every Ramadan; in the year of his death he stayed twenty.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2044 · 4998

Women too

'A'ishah asked his permission and pitched a tent in the masjid; Hafsa and Zaynab did the same. Ask your masjid what it can arrange.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2041, 2045

Leaving the masjid

"When in i'tikaf he used not to enter the house except for a need." Washing, the toilet, food — a need, not an errand.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2029

A visitor may come

Safiyyah came to him in the masjid during the last ten nights, spoke with him a while, and he walked her home afterwards.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2035 · 6219

Missed, then made up

One Ramadan he did not perform it and kept ten days in Shawwal instead. The retreat is best in Ramadan but not locked to it.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2034

If you vow it, keep it

'Umar had vowed a night of i'tikaf in the Sacred Mosque before Islam. The Prophet ﷺ told him: fulfil your vow. So he did.

Sahih al-Bukhari 2042, 2043