

Islamic Practices

Sawm



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What Is Fasting?

Quickly note down an answer to this question.

If you finish quickly, explain why you think a religious person would fast.

I will ask some of you to share your responses in one minute.

Answer:

Fasting is abstaining from food and drink.
A religious person may fast to focus on showing devotion or self-control.



Fasting in Islam: Sawm

Muslims are expected to fast during the month of Ramadan.

This is known as Sawm and is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.



Sawm in the Qur'an

The Qur'an makes it clear Muslims should fast during the month of Ramadan.

It also says that certain people are exempt, such as those who are too ill to fast. This is because Islam is not a religion that makes impossible or unfair demands on people.

This shows
appreciation for
what God has
given you.



What Happens During Ramadan?

Muslims fast from dawn till dusk.

During this time, Muslims cannot eat or drink. This can be very difficult. In 2016, Muslims living in Iceland had to fast for 21 hours! (This is because the days are so long!)

Young children generally do not complete the full fast. However, they may fast for a few hours at a time to feel part of the event. As they get older, they will lengthen their fast and by the time they are teenagers many will complete the full fast.



Why Do Muslims Enjoy Ramadan?

Though Sawm is very challenging, Muslims often speak of it as an enjoyable event.

One reason for this is because it is a chance to focus on their religion. Many Muslims do this by using time they would have spent eating to perform religious activities. It is particularly popular to read the entire Qur'an during Ramadan.



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Another reason is because when Muslims break their fast, they do so surrounded by family and friends. These meals, known as iftar, are key social events.

The Training Programme

Muslims describe Sawm as a training programme because it:

- shows dedication;
- allows you to focus on your religion;
- will help you have self-discipline;
- builds relationships with the rest of community;
- improves self-esteem;
- tests your faith. this is especially true in a non-Muslim environment as other people are eating and drinking all around you.



Ramadan and the Qur'an



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Ramadan is also regarded as important as it is the month in which the Qur'an is revealed. This is known as the "Night of Power".

Though the exact date of the revelation is not known, many sources believe it to be the 27th day of Ramadan.

On this day, many Muslims may spend this whole night in prayer.

Put Yourself in the Place of Someone Performing Sawm and think about these questions....

What would it be like to not be allowed to eat or drink during daylight hours?

How would you stop yourself from eating or drinking when you felt hungry or thirsty?

What would be the positive outcomes for you if you managed to complete the month of fasting? .