

Qibla: The right direction for prayer

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The local mosque committee was in an angry discussion with the building contractor. A supervisor made a mistake in his calculations and the direction of the *Mehrab*, the niche of the mosque, was not exactly in the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah. Some members were afraid that all their congregational prayers over the past two months had no value.

It is very important for Muslims that whenever they perform prayer, known as Salah, they should face the Ka'bah. In mosques a *Mehrab* is built where an Imam may stand at the front facing the direction of the Ka'bah with the people in rows behind following him in prayer.

The Jews established the practice of praying while facing Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:29, 30, 44; 2 Chronicles 6:21; Daniel 6:10). This seems to have continued in Muhammad's time. When Islam first began, Muslims also prayed in the direction of Jerusalem. However, in 2 AH Muhammad issued the instruction to face the Ka'bah in Makkah in response to a revelation he received: "Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque:

Wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction." (Qur'an, Surah 2:144).

Some friends wonder why Christians do not face in a particular direction during their prayers. Jesus left no instructions about praying in a particular direction. Christians believe that God is everywhere and that everything belongs to him, East and West, North and South.

One day a Samaritan woman posed a question to Jesus by pointing to the hill known as Gerizim, "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." (John 4:20). Jesus replied, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor on Jerusalem." He added, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23-24).

So the important thing is not the direction of the body but the attitude of mind and heart towards God. Jesus has taught many other things about true prayer and worship, which are found in the New Testament section of the Bible. If you would like a copy in the English language, please write to the address below. Note: As we have a limited number of copies please place your request early to avoid disappointment.

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