Before any major decision, pray Salat-ul-Istikhara

### What is Salat ul Istikhara?

Often, we have to make major life-changing decisions: whether to undertake a major project or not, whether to apply for a promotion or not, whether to change career or not, whether to invest in a certain company or not, whether to get married or not, whom to get married to, etc.

Istikhara (Arabic) means to ask Allah to guide one to the right thing concerning any affair in one’s life, especially when one has to choose between two permissiblealternatives, e.g. a career choice, getting married, etc.  Similarly, a traveller should consult good righteous persons before setting out on a journey, because Allah says, “And consult them (O Prophet) in affairs (of moment),” (Qur’an, 3: 159) and one of the characteristics of the believers is that “they (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation” (Qur’an, 42: 38). Qatadah said, “Every people who seek the pleasure of Allah and consult with one another are guided to the best course in their affairs.” The traveller should also make istikharah and seek guidance from Allah.

Sa’ d ibn Waqas reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “Istikharah (seeking guidance from Allah) is one of the distinct favors (of Allah) upon man, and a good fortune for the son of Adam is to be pleased with the judgment of Allah. And a misfortune of the son of Adam is his failure to make istikharah (seeking Allah’s guidance), and a misfortune for the son of Adam is his displeasure with the judgment of Allah.” Ibn Taimiyyah said, “He who seeks guidance from the Creator and consults the creatures will never regret it.”

**How to pray Salat-ul-Istikhara step-by step:**

* Perform Wudu (the ablution) if you do not have it already.
* Pray 2 raka’at either with the intention of praying Istikhara separately by itself or jointly with  two non-obligatory rak’at (e.g. the regular sunnah prayers or the prayer for entering the mosque, or tahajjud.) *Please make sure that you are not praying during the three times when it is undesirable to pray* [The Prophet (s) said:   “There is no prayer after the Fajr until the sun (sufficiently) rises; and there is no prayer after the ‘Asr until the sun completely sets.” [Muslim, 1041, agreed upon].  Again, in another hadith reported in Muslim 1040, it is narrated: “ Three were the times at while Allah’s Messenger ( ) forbade us from praying or burying our dead (ie. funeral prayer): when the sun begins to rise until it is fully up; when the sun is at its height until it passes the meridian; and when the sun begins to set until it is completely set. [Muslim, 1040]”  *Please note if istikhaarah is done for something that is immediate and cannot be delayed, then this prayer may be performed at a time when prayer is not allowed, such as if a person wants to travel after âAsr prayer. But if the matter is not immediate and the prayer can be delayed until after the time (see fatwah below)*
* Immediately after you have completed the 2 rakats, recite the following Istikhara Dua and mention the matter for which you are seeking Allah’s Guidance you have at the appropriate point in the du’a.
* Follow An Nawawi’s advice on how to interpret Allah’s guidance (please see section below).
* There is no limit on the number of times you can pray Salat-ul-Istikhara [though the fuqaha mention that it is recommend to repeat it, up to 7 times if necessary (usually done on separate occasions)](http://theislamicworkplace.com/2006/12/25/before-any-major-decision-pray-salat-ul-istikhara/Radd%20al-Muhtar%5D).

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ

 فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ وَتَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا **الْأَمْرَ** خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَاقْدُرْهُ لِي وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي ثُمَّ بَارِكْ لِي فِيهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا **الْأَمْر**َ شَرٌّ فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ وَاقْدُرْ لِيَ الْخَيْرَ حَيْثُ كَانَ ثُمَّ ارْضِنِي بِهِ

‘Allahumma inni astakhiruka bi’ilmika, Wa astaqdiruka bi-qudratika, Wa as’alaka min fadlika al-’azlm Fa-innaka taqdiru Wala aqdiru, Wa ta’lamu Wala a’lamu, Wa anta ‘allamu l-ghuyub. Allahumma, in kunta ta’lam anna hadha-l-amra\_\_\_\_**Insert Matter**\_\_\_\_\_\_ Khairun li fi dini wa ma’ashi wa’aqibati amri (or ‘ajili amri wa’ajilihi) Faqdirhu wa yas-sirhu li thumma barik li Fihi, Wa in kunta ta’lamu anna hadha-lamra \_\_\_\_**Insert Matter**\_\_\_\_\_\_ shar-run li fi dini wa ma’ashi wa’aqibati amri (or fi’ajili amri wa ajilihi) Fasrifhu anni was-rifni anhu. Waqdir li al-khaira haithu kana Thumma ardini bihi.’

(O Allah! I ask guidance from Your knowledge, And Power from Your Might and I ask for Your great blessings. You are capable and I am not. You know and I do not and You know the unseen. O Allah! If You know that \_\_\_\_**Insert Matter**\_\_\_\_\_\_ is good for my religion and my subsistence and in my Hereafter or If it is better for my present and later needs–Then You ordain it for me and make it easy for me to get, And then bless me in it, and if You know that \_\_\_\_**Insert Matter**\_\_\_\_\_\_ is harmful to me In my religion and subsistence and in the Hereafter–or If it is worse for my present and later needs–Then keep it away from me and let me be away from it. And ordain for me whatever is good for me, And make me satisfied with it).

 **What happens after one prays Salat ul Istikhara?**

An-Nawawi holds that“after performing the istikharah, a person must do what he is ***wholeheartedly inclined to do and feels good about doing***and should not insist on doing what he had desired to do before making the istikharah. And***if his feelings change***, he should leave what he had intended to do, otherwise he is not completely leaving the choice to Allah, and would not be honest in seeking aid from Allah’s power and knowledge. Sincerity in seeking Allah’s choice, means that one should completely leave what he himself had desired or determined.”

It is not necessary that you get a dream or even a "feeling." Rather, the istikhara is a prayer that Allah guide you towards that which is best (khayr) for you. If you do the prayer of guidance (istikhara) with the proper manners, the most important of which is to truly consign the matter to Allah and suspend your own inclinations, then Allah will make events unfold in the direction that is the best for your worldly and next-worldly affairs.

Please remember that the core of being a Muslim is to put your absolute trust in Allah.  Accordingly, once you perform the prayer of Istikharak, you need to follow the guidance of Allah whether it means pursuing or abandoning the intended undertaking. Allah also says:

"And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is ((Allah)) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish his purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion." (Qur'an 65:3)