

The Call of Islam

Summary: The shahadah is comprised of two fundamental faith statements in Islam that “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” This spiritual calling is expressed through auditory calls to prayers or adhan five times a day.

Five times each day, the *muezzin* stands and calls out the *adhan*, the call to prayer, addressed to all Muslims within hearing distance:

(translation)

God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest!
God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest!
I bear witness that there is no god but God.
I bear witness that there is no god but God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
Come to prayer. Come to prayer.
Come to success. Come to success.
God is most Great! God is most Great!
There is no god but God.

(transliteration)

Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!
Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!
Ashhadu alla ilaha illa Allah.
Ashhadu alla ilaha illa Allah.
Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasulu Allah.
Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasulu Allah.
Hayya ‘alas-salah. Hayya ‘alas-salah.
Hayya ‘alal-falah. Hayya ‘alal-falah.
Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!
La ilaha illa Allah.

Contained in this call is the *shahadah*, the “witness” to the two fundamental convictions upon which Muslims stand: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” In this brief statement, Muslims assert the strictly monotheistic nature of Islam and declare the central significance of Muhammad, God’s final messenger to humanity. The *shahadah*, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, defines the foundations of Muslim life all over the world. The *shahadah* is not just a statement of beliefs; it is a call to action and an integral part of the practice of Islam. The *shahadah* serves as a formal statement of one’s intention to follow the straight path, laid out by God. First recited when one embraces Islam as a new Muslim, it is the initial step on a path that unites faith and practice.

The call of Islam begins and ends with prayer, shaped by the conviction that God is one and has sent messengers to guide humanity on an authentic and purposeful journey. At the time of the morning call to prayer, the *muezzin* adds the exhortation, “Prayer is better than sleep!” Shi’i Muslims include the phrase, “Prayer is the best work!”