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## WHAT DOES ONE SAY IF HE/SHE IS UNABLE TO RECITE AL-FATIHAH IN SALAT?

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**Question:** Since the prayer is invalid without (recitation of) Al-Fatihah, how does the person who does not know how to recite Al-Fatihah pray?

**Answer:** It is obligatory upon every Muslim male and female to learn Al-Fatihah in order that one can recite it within his prayer; due to the statement of the Prophet ﷺ

لا صلاة لمن لم يقرأ بفاتحة الكتاب

*“There is no prayer for the one who does not recite the opening chapter of the Book.”<sup>1</sup>*

And his ﷺ statement:

من صلى صلاة لم يقرأ فيها بفاتحة الكتاب، فهي خداج فهي خداج، غير تمام

*“Whoever performs a prayer in which he does not recite the opening (chapter of) the book, his prayer is defective, defective, incomplete.”<sup>2</sup>*

Likewise, his statement to the Bedouin who prayed badly:

إذا قمت إلى الصلاة فأسبغ الوضوء، ثم استقبل القبلة وكبر، ثم اقرأ بأمر القرآن

*“When you stand for prayer complete your Wudu, then face the Qiblah and pronounce the Takbir, then recite the Mother of the Qur’an.”<sup>3</sup>*

As well as his ﷺ statement:

لعلكم تقرءون خلف إمامكم؟ قلنا: نعم. قال: لا تفعلوا إلا بفاتحة الكتاب فإنه لا صلاة لمن لم يقرأ بها

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Al-Bukhari in the Book of Al-Adhan, Chapter: The Obligation of Reciting for the Imam and the Follower within the Prayers (no. 756) and Muslim in the Book of Prayer, Chapter: The Obligation of Reciting Al-Fatihah in Every Rak’ah (no. 394)

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Muslim in the Book of Prayer, Chapter: The Obligation of Reciting Al-Fatihah in Every Rak’ah (no. 365)

<sup>3</sup> Reported by Ahmad at the Beginning of the Musnad of the People of Kufah, from the Hadith of Rifa’ah ibn Rafi’ Az-Zarqi, may Allah be pleased with him (no. 18515)

*“Perhaps you recite behind your Imam?” We said: “Yes.” He said: “Do not do so except with the opening (chapter of) the Book. For there is no prayer for he who does not recite it.”<sup>4</sup>*

What he intends by this Hadith is the audible prayer. As for the silent prayers, such as Dhuhr and ‘Asr. It is legislated for the follower to recite what is easy after Al-Fatihah within the first and second Rak’ah, due to the Imam reciting silently in this prayer.

If the Muslim is unable to learn Al-Fatihah and the time of prayer enters before he can learn it, then what takes its place is:

سبحان الله، والحمد لله، ولا إله إلا الله، والله أكبر، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم

**Sub’han-Allah** (Glorified be Allah), **Al-Hamdulillah** (the praise and thanks are for Allah), **La Ilaha Illa-Allah** (None has the right to be worshiped except Allah), **Allahu Akbar** (Allah is the Greatest), **La Hawla wa La Quwwata Illa-Billah Al-‘Ali Al-‘Adhim** (There is no movement nor power except with Allah, the Most High, the Magnificent)

This is due to what is affirmed from him ﷺ that a man said to him: “O Messenger of Allah, I am not able to recite anything from the Qur’an. So, teach me what will suffice me in its place.” He said:

قل : سبحان الله، والحمد لله، ولا إله إلا الله، والله أكبر، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم

*“Say: Sub’han-Allah (Glorified be Allah), Al-Hamdulillah (the praise and thanks are for Allah), La Ilaha Illa-Allah (None has the right to be worshiped except Allah), Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest), La Hawla wa La Quwwata Illa-Billah Al-‘Ali Al-‘Adhim (There is no movement nor power except with Allah, the Most High, the Magnificent).”<sup>5</sup>*

And Allah is the Granter of Success.

Source: <https://goo.gl/dARaFQ>

Translated by Raha Batts

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<sup>4</sup> Reported by Ahmad in the Musnad of the Ansar, from the Hadith of ‘Ubadah ibn As-Samit, may Allah be pleased with him (no. 22186)

<sup>5</sup> Reported by Abu Dawud in the Book of Prayer, Chapter: What suffices the Unlettered and Non-Arab who is Unable to Recite (no. 708)