



Assalamu Alaykum

Dear Students,

I hope this letter reaches you with the best of health and Iman. Just sending a reflection.

We have been exploring sacred spaces in the recent letters. We looked at the Heart and the Mosque. Today, let us look at the Moment.

Time is your most valuable of all assets, far above Money. One person might be given exorbitant material wealth, and another, very little. Another person might be given 20,000 days of life, while another is given thirty thousand. The person given the most time (rather than money) has been given the most.


In the case of Money, you will have highs and lows. Money comes and goes. In the case of Time, however, it is a losing venture. You are given your full account at birth, distributed every 24 hours, until it is fully depleted. As Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, has told us, you are a fixed quantity of days. Each day, you lose a day, and you can never get it back. Thus, it is not advisable to be a miser with your money any more than it is to be a spendthrift. But, you should be a miser with your time. Meaning, keep tight control over it, being careful who you share it with.

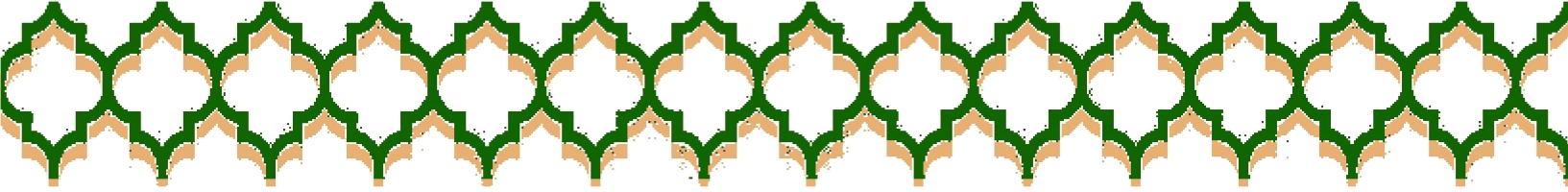
As we get older, we get more conscious of the fleeting nature of time. Statistically, two-thirds of my life are done, but for all I know it might be 90%, or only 30%. But, statistically speaking, I'm in the final third of my life. We get a small taste of this feeling each Ramadan. It begins feeling so long, but in the final days, final hours, final minutes, there is that dash to get in some final good works. I suppose that is something akin to what I'm doing now, with life.

When we are younger, we may not think about time as much, except in the way it pertains to looming deadlines. When we do not think about time, we live as though we are immortal. Meaning, we live as though we need not be concerned with time. Imagine the person with so much wealth that he/she throws dollar bills into the wind. That is what we are doing with our time when we waste it: we are throwing it to the wind. Further, there is that sense that if we need to fix something about ourselves, we can get to it, later. We can get to it eventually, but not at this moment. These are the frequent plights of the young person with his/her time. The problem, is that they persist until we start seriously considering our mortality. Usually that does not happen until 80% of our lives have passed (or, we have been reminded severely about our mortality early on).

It follows, then, that one of the people granted the special shade of the Divine in the afterlife, is the young person who devoted him/herself to the worship of God. If you are young and you are using the Moments you have been given to serve the Divine, you earn that special experience with the Divine.

For those young and old, however, there is another concern: looking at the reality of the moment itself rather than living in our imaginations. One place is in prayer. It is so easy to spend your entire prayer thinking about everything other than God. One of the benefits of the different postures and recitations of the prayer is to bring you back into it. We will talk more about this in the future, Insha Allah.





Further, it is easy to live in fear or grief. Both are variants of daydreaming, where we leave the ground in front of us to reside in some other place, but an unhappy place. Fear takes the form of “I hope this horrible thing does not happen.” In the process, we do not live in the moment we are in. Rather, we live in dread, living in our imagination, of what might happen. Grief takes the form of “This horrible thing has happened” and we live in a world of questions asking “What if I did this or that differently” or some forms of self-flagellation. Again, you are not looking at the ground in front of you, because your mind is elsewhere.

There are, of course, times when fear is natural, and might be beneficial. There are times where grief is necessary. I’m cautioning us against falling into a constant state of fear or grief. Too much fear can translate into anxiety. Too much grief can translate into despair. Both also have the tendency to fuel anger, which will destroy.

There is some thing else that prevents us from living in the moment: impatience. As it is, human nature is easily prone to impatience. Through impatience we do not live in the current moment. We live in the next moment. Just as that moment is arriving, we live in the next moment after that, but never in the current moment. Often, it is impatience that prevents us from praying with concentration, because we think about things we want to get done. So, when you pray, decide that you will ignore the rest of the world for these few minutes of prayer. And, let yourself go and dive into the prayer to God.

Then, there is the dilemma of the cellphone, which yields multiple struggles. Our contemporary instant gratification culture exacerbates this impatience. Rather, the impulse toward impatience dissolves away the firm discipline of perseverance. Taken further, each moment you are looking at a screen is a moment you are not living in the reality in front of you. The reality is not your phone screen.

Thus, putting all of this together - you are handed a certain amount of moments, and you respond with choices. You will be held to account for those choices. Take control of your phone use. Let the world go when you pray. But, whatever you do, know that the clock keeps ticking.

And God knows best.

May Allah bless you.

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