

The following is taken from an article titled, "Time and Health: The Blessings That We Deny," by Maria Zain, a freelance editor and writer living in Malaysia. While her evenings and nights are spent supporting different Muslim communities through her work, she shares her life with her husband and three busy little children below the age of five, whom she homeschools during the day.

So it's the end of the evening, the end of a long busy day. But honestly, how did your day go?

Was it really as productive as expected? Were your past waking hours really fulfilling?

Did you manage to get your things done? Did you meet all your deadlines way ahead of time?

What did you say on Facebook, while spending your time "socializing"?

Are You Thankful?

On top of that, were you consciously grateful for the computer you have, the car you drive, the little pocket money you earn?

Did you say alhamdulillah for the water you drank, for the time you took to shower? Did you praise God for the rain, the birds in the sky?

How about your health? Walking down the block to your next destination: did you thank God for your strength and stamina, the ability to walk and the ability to see?

"It's the end of a tiring day, and you're asking me these questions? Well, the evenings are normally quieter and I have time to reflect."

In an important hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) narrates:

"There are two blessings in which most people are most deluded by: good health and free time." (Al-Bukhari)

Are you thankful for both of them?

It's hard to believe something so simple bypasses our busy lives. But the social problems relating to time and health are of abundance and stories relating to them grace the monthly tabloids and daily newspapers.

Children are wasting time watching too much television. Families are spending a lot of time and, in turn, spending plenty of money on entertainment. Too many children are being riddled with health problems due to 'X' 'Y' 'Z' reasons. Obesity in children is on a sudden rise, too much time is being spent being complacent rather than fighting the problem. Obesity in adults is also on the rise, modern parents resolve their problems by eating instead of getting fit. Cancer statistics are also on the rise – what is causing all these?



Then there are other articles that grace the media: Teenagers hang out busted behind abandoned buildings; students are spending their time smoking and drinking instead of keeping up with their studies. Kids are socializing with friends in less amiable locations, instead of convening at public libraries or mosques.

Many people don't realize how much time is wasted doing nothing for their religion, when indeed, on the Day of Judgment, God will ask how one's time has been spent.

From the time we are born, we are indirectly taught that there is time for sleep and there is time to wake. The sun rises and it's time to play and the sun goes back down, and it's time to call out: "Good Night, Moon!" and go to bed. Surely, it does not always go as smoothly, as every parent knows, but God created the sun and the moon and created the day and the night, and there are reasons for this, and we would realize them if we reflect upon them.

The abundance of time is only appreciated when deadlines are creeping in, when work piles up and when tomorrow comes too soon. Prophet Muhammad mentioned to take charge of free time before you become occupied, and these are also words of wisdom that ring true. How many times do we recall the afternoon in front of the television instead of tidying up the house. How many times do we recall losing ourselves in a novel (of no good value), instead of reading the tafsir (the interpretation of the Quran)? How many times do we mull over the get-togethers (for no good reason) when we could have participated in the charity run? How many times do we recall the hours spent on Facebook when we could have completed an assignment? Each moment passes by and as they pass by, it falls through our fingers... unable to be ever reclaimed as no one can turn back time.

Prophet Muhammad also reminds in another hadith to take advantage of youth before old age:

"Take advantage of five matters before five other matters: your youth, before you become old; and your health, before you fall sick; and your richness, before you become poor; and your free time before you become busy; and your life, before your death." (Ahmad)

And we've probably all heard that time is wasted on the young, those with energy and enthusiasm; the same people who spend a lot of their God-given time in other endeavors that do not necessarily benefit their religion.

Time is such an important issue that God dedicates an entire chapter in the Quran to address its significance. God says:

{By (the Token of) Time (through the ages), Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy.} (Al-'Asr 103: 1-3)

Wasting time engaging in activities that are not beneficial for us will only lead us to further loss. And everything that is done without the remembrance of God (except for a handful of activities) is considered a distraction.

Prevention is Better Than Cure

As for good health, taking advantage of it, before illness, is also part of the important Prophetic hadith. The value of health is only realized when we are ill and riddled with medical bills.

On hindsight, everything in the Quran and Sunnah, though, is pro-active of keeping good health and preventive of illnesses, leading us to remember that God has our best interests when relaying the complete way of life. Amidst the controversies surrounding "modern medicine," reactive drugs and the substances in vaccines, one wonders how much easier life would be if we are able to avoid them by living closely to the Sunnah.

In the Quran it relays: {Eat of the good things, which we have provided for you,} (Al-Baqarah 2: 172) and: {Eat of what is lawful and wholesome on the earth,} (Al-Baqarah 2: 168)

Prevention is certainly better than cure, and with that, God prescribes balance, observing what is halal (lawful) and not falling short of nutrition, without consuming more than is actually needed:

{O Children of Adam! Don your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but do not be excessive; He truly does not love those who are excessive.} (Al-A'raf 7: 31)

For more on wastage, read this important reminder of Prophet Muhammad:

"No human being has ever filled a container worse than his own stomach. The son of Adam needs no more than a few morsels of food to keep up his strength, doing so he should consider that a third of his stomach is for food, a third for drink and a third for breathing." (At-Tirmidhi)

There is no wonder how reality television like "The Biggest Loser," have become so popular in the recent decade. And through its commentary, it's the excessiveness that leads to obesity, consuming more than one needs to hide behind personal problems; wasting time to cover up for matters that really matter. Yet, as we thrive on such reality shows, it serves as a reminder that we also need to take a hard look at how we spend our time and how it is linked to our health, because in many cases the time and health continuum is quite seamless and that is why it is mentioned in one single sentence of the above hadith.

Prophet Muhammad mounted the pulpit, then wept and said:

"Ask Allah (SWT) for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health." (At-Tirmidhi)

How we spend our time and how we appreciate our health will be deciding factors of our final destination on Judgment Day, and it's a good thing we have reminders now, while we are still alive. Do we really spend time pleasing God? Do we really make full use of our health and channel our energy to fruitful endeavors?

The little things add up and constant gratitude can take us a long way. We just need to be a bit more conscientious of our blessings and make a notable effort to revel in gratitude.