

THE JAWZIYYAH CORNER



Structuring your Time & Litanies

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The Proof of Islam [al-Ghazālī], may Allah have mercy upon him, says in *al-Bidāyatū'l-Hidāyah*, under the section, 'Ettiquettes of Preparing for all the Prayers':

“You must not waste your time nor use it haphazardly. Instead you should take stock of yourself, structure your litanies (*awrād*) and other acts of devotion (*wazā'if*) during each day and night, and assign to each period of time a specific function which is kept to and not left for something else. In this way your time will be filled with spiritual blessings (*barakab*). If, though, you leave yourself to drift, aimlessly wandering as cattle do, not knowing how to occupy yourself at each moment, you will squander your time. Your time is your life, and your life is your capital and the basis for your transaction with Allah by which you reach perpetual bliss in the proximity of Allah; Exalted is He. Each breath you take is a priceless jewel which can never be replaced; for once gone, can never be retrieved. Do not be like the deluded fools who are joyful because, each day their wealth increases, even though their lifespans decrease. What good is there in an increase in wealth when life grows ever shorter. Hence, take no delight save in an increase in knowledge or in doing good works, for they shall be your companions that will accompany you into your grave when all else: wealth, children, family and friends remain behind.”

He, may Allah have mercy upon him, then says about these ettiquettes: “Know that a day and a night comprises of twenty-four hours. So sleep not more than eight hours in a day and night, for this should suffice you. If, supposing, you were to live for sixty years, then twenty of them would be wasted; which is a third [of your actual life]. ... Thus, if you do this [remember death, prepare for it, and persevere in divine obedience], you will have unendless joy at the time of death. But if you procrastinate or become smug, death will catch you unaware and you will have ceaseless regrets. “At dawn people are grateful for the traveling they did by night.” So with death, certainty comes to you: “*And you shall know the truth of it in a while.*”¹”



FOOTNOTES

* *Fuṣūl al-ʿIlmiyyah wa'l-Uṣūl al-Ḥikamiyyah* (Dār al-Ḥāwī, 1998), 133-4; trans. Surkheel Sharif. A complete English translation of the book has been published, entitled: *Knowledge and Wisdom* (Chicago: The Starlatch Press, 2001; trans. Mostafa al-Badawi).

1. Qur'an 38:88.