

THE VERY BEST OF PRODUCTIVE MUSLIM.COM



2 Years of Productive thoughts, tips, and advice



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Assalamu'alaikum,

ProductiveMuslim.com started as a personal online journal for me where I could record my thoughts on topics that connect Islam to productivity. The more I wrote, the more I realised the gap in knowledge today of what truly makes a person productive and how Islam - when practiced properly - enhances ones productivity.

With the support of a wonderful team, and an engaging audience, the website grew from strength to strength and our content improved and evolved over time. Moreover, people started contributing to our content and writing articles for ProductiveMuslim.com adding variety to the content we provide.

As part of the launch of our new website, I wanted to handpick for you the best articles and best advice from the past 2 years and compress them in this small eBook. What you'll read is - in effect - a summary of the best tips and advice to live a ProductiveMuslim lifestyle.

This eBook could not have been put together without the effort of a few key people whom I wish to thank here: Sr. Lotifa Begum & Sr. Amal Saffour for their amazing editing job in less than a week! Sr. Hafsa Taher for managing the publication of this eBook so professionally and Br.Omar Hamid for designing this eBook in such a beautiful style! Truly their efforts have been amazing. May Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) reward them.

I hope this eBook serves as a starting point to those who are new to our website and a good reminder to some of our old fans of some of our classic articles.

Enjoy reading the eBook and have a very productive life!

Yours sincerely,
ProductiveMuslim

Analyze Your Time: The Key to Productivity

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2008

“By Al-'Asr (the time). Verily! Man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience”.

— (Surah Al-Asr) —

An old friend of mine once said to me: "There's a myth that's going around these days. The myth says: If you can manage your time, you can do anything!" Four years after hearing this advice, I don't believe it's a myth anymore.

We all hear about time management and it's importance, and people often rebuke us for the way we manage our time, but rarely have we come across a concise methodology on how to time manage!

In order to understand how to time manage, we need to grasp what time management is about. Contrary to popular thought, time management is not about managing your time, because technically, you cannot

manage something you have no control over! (Can you stop or start time?!) Put simply, time management is about managing yourself in a way that makes use of the time sphere we're in. So how exactly do we that?

Peter Drucker, author of the famous book "[The Effective Executive](#)", recommends three steps to managing your time, and he actually calls the chapter that deals with this: "Know thy time":

- 1) Analyze your time.
- 2) Cut back unproductive demands.
- 3) Aim to complete tasks in large chunks of time.

So let's get into more detail on how to follow the above three steps (adding the usual ProductiveMuslim twist to it ;)

1) **Analyze your time:**

Record the way you spend your time for at least a week. I'll be honest here, it'll take a strong stomach to realise how much time we waste! But being truthful to oneself is the first step to remedy. There are 2 ways to record your time: 1) Keep a diary in which you record what you do each hour. 2) Ask your friend/flat-mate/spouse to analyze your time, (as we tend to be nice to ourselves when we record our time, and end up 'cheating').

2) **Cut back unproductive demands:**

Hopefully, after recording our time, a sad realisation will dawn upon us, and that is, there's a lot that we can cut down on. For example: Do we really need to spend that hour in the cafe in the morning, or is it just better to make some coffee at home and read e-mails at the same time? Do we really need to spend 2 hours everyday just flicking through TV channels or internet sites or can we cut down from that time? (Note: Please don't cut back time for Allah! For example, in order to 'save' time, some people will not go to the mosque to pray. That's not an unproductive demand to cut down on, that's an essential demand which we better keep, so please don't touch the religious stuff!

We're already guilty of not giving enough time to them and we shouldn't use excuses to make it worse)

3) **Aim to complete tasks in large chunks of time:**

Isn't it annoying when you are working really hard on something, and you really get into it (sometimes called being in 'The Zone'), only to be interrupted by a phone call or an e-mail or text alert?! This third tip basically says that you should try to block off time in large chunks (some people suggest that 90 minutes is the maximum they can concentrate at one time, but that's 90 minutes of uninterrupted time). This technique will help you achieve much more by doing less, simply because you're more focused on one task at a time. Doing one task in an hour, will end up taking you 4 hours if you are interrupted every 10-15 minutes. To help you block your time, please refer to the [Taskinator](#) on our website.

Hope this gives you a better understanding of how to turn the myth of time management into reality.

7 Spiritually Productive Habits to Develop

You should aim to develop the following 7 Spiritually Productive activities into habits so that you can hopefully continue benefitting from them throughout your life. I consider these activities as the spiritual 'bread and butter' of any ProductiveMuslim. To develop them as habits is the essence of embarking on your journey towards the love of Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) and constantly increasing in your iman, inshaAllah:

1) **Pray the Sunnah Prayers before and/or after Prayer:**

I know it's easier to just pray the obligatory prayers and rush out of the mosque! However, when we realise the rewards we're missing from not praying these Sunnah prayers we won't leave them. Over the years I have learnt there's only ONE way of getting yourself to pray these Sunnah prayers constantly: Get into the habit of praying them! They'll soon become part and parcel of your Salah and your Salah will feel incomplete without performing these acts.

2) **Remembrance of Allah after Salah:**

Again, it's easy to rush out after Salah due to our busy lives, though if we are honest, how long does it take to recite the supplications after Salah? (The Answer: 5-7

minutes!). If you're not sure what I'm referring to, you may find the supplications [here](#). Nowadays you'll find pocket notebooks/or phone applications with these supplications. Get into the habit of reciting them daily after each Salah to enrich your Salah experience.

3) **Morning/Evening Remembrance of Allah:**

Step 2 is also included in this habit. There exists a beautiful set of duas/remembrances from the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) which he used to say before sunrise and after sunset. They are true stress relievers and energy boosters which never fail to make my days and evenings feel blessed.

[You can find the duas here](#)

4) **Night Prayer:**

Hamdulillah, during Ramadan we have the wonderful Taraweeh prayers to attend. However, outside of Ramadan there are many opportunities to still obtain the reward of the night prayer. If you're new to night prayer or you don't pray it constantly during the year, make sure you try to attend prayers each and every night in congregation at the mosque (particularly brothers), and give yourself a 'no-excuse' policy. Develop a habit of

praying Tahajjud and continuing to pray them for an entire 30 days; this will set you on better footing to continue with the Night Prayer for the rest of the year inshaAllah.

5) **Duha Prayer:**

Here's a Productive Muslim's top secret to a productive day: 2 rak'ahs known as the Duha prayer which you may pray at anytime after sunrise till before the sun reaches it's zenith (around 30 minutes before Dhuhr). The reward of this prayer is similar to giving charity on behalf of every bone in your body, and the energy and buzz you feel during the day is amazing.

6) **Supplications before you Sleep:**

You've just had a long day and you're super tired. You climb into bed and you want to hit the sack... but wait! Before you do, can you give yourself just 10 more minutes to recite the **supplications** before sleeping? That's all. Try them and find yourself experiencing the most beautiful sleep ever and waking up for Fajr easily, inshaAllah.

7) **Reciting one hour of Quran each day:**

Notice: I said here recite one hour of **Quran** each day and not one juz' or one Surah. The amount of **Quran** you read is not as important as the quality of your understanding. If you spend one hour reciting one verse but understand it fully, that's more important and beneficial then reciting lots of Quran at break-neck speed yet not understanding a word.

So there you go, 7 spiritually productive habits you can develop throughout the year starting from TODAY!



Commuting ProductiveMuslim style!

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2009

Today's post is about commuting ProductiveMuslim style! ;) How you can make the most of those long hours on the road so that they truly add value to your life (and afterlife) instead of subtracting from it.

Now this all depends on which commuting vehicle you're using (and trust me, I've used them all). Below is a breakdown of what you can do in each type of commuting vehicle. But before we get into that, a few prerequisites:

1. When you leave your house, remember the dua for leaving the house

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Bismillahi tawakkaltu allah lah la hawla wala kuwata ila billa

'In the name of Allaah, I place my trust in Allaah, and there is no might nor power except with Allaah.'

لَلَّهِمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَزِلَّ أَوْ أُزَلَّ أَوْ أَضِلَّ أَوْ أُضِلَّ أَوْ أَظْلِمَ أَوْ أَظْلَمَ أَوْ أَجْهَلَ أَوْ يُجْهَلَ عَلَيَّ

Allahumma innnee a'uoozubika an adhilla auw adhalla auw azilla auw uzalla auw auw uzhlama auw ajhala auw yujhala 'alaiyya

'O Allaah, I take refuge with You lest I should stray or be led astray, or slip or be tripped, or oppress or be oppressed, or behave foolishly or be treated foolishly.'

2. Remember the dua for riding a vehicle:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ، سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقَرَّرِينَ وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ

Bismillah. Alhamdulillah. SubhanAll-ladhi, sakh-khara lana, haatha, wa-ma kunna lahu mukrineen. Wa inna ila Rubbina lamunqalibuun.

'In the name of Allaah and all praise if for Allaah. How perfect He is, the One Who has placed this (Transport) at our service and we ourselves would not have been capable of that, and to our Lord if our final destiny.'

3. **Invest in a good MP3 player**, either an MP3 player with A-B functionality or an iPod Touch/iPhone with a Quran Application installed (here's a guide on how to "[Islamize your iPod Touch/iPhone](#)")

With the above sorted, here are some ProductiveMuslim to-do's whilst commuting in each vehicle:

Bike:

Things you can do while riding your bike:

Memorize the Quran: Using your MP3 player with A-B Functionality you can specify where your MP3 player should start on a track, and where it should end, then loop it. This means you can choose a Quran track and specify from which verse the recitation should begin and which verse it should stop at, then repeat these verses as many times as you want. The result: memorizing a whole set of new verses! Next day move on to the next set of verses and repeat the process as you cycle along. (For this to truly work, I suggest you memorize the verses at home first before you leave your house, ideally after Fajr Salah, and then listen to them on your way to work and back). The iPod Touch/iPhone can be used in a similar way using the excellent iQuran Pro software. Here's a detailed step by step guide to using the [iQuran](#) :)

Contemplate on Allah's creation: The most enjoyable part for me when riding a bike is contemplating on Allah's creation: the heavens, the earth, the mountains, and the scenery that surrounds us truly reminds me of the verse:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

"Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding". (3:190)

To contemplate most effectively, I suggest you use a map and leave early for work so that you can try a different route each day or get a chance to cycle around your favorite park at least once before you go to work. Breathing in the fresh air and entertaining your eyes with Nature is an absolute joy that will set your mood straight for the rest of the day.

Remember Allah: Connected to the above.

Simply saying "SubhanaAllah, Al-Hamdulillah, La ilaha illa Allah, Allahu Akbar" or any other supplication or remembrance is a truly productive and rewarding way of spending your commute. It connects you to the Hereafter, makes you focus on the "bigger" picture beyond this life and reminds you of who you're worshipping. A great way to start or end your day!

Exercise: Riding a bike is a natural exercise, so not only are you commuting but you're also exercising! My only advice here is to make sure your work place has a shower room (and of course don't forget to pack a change of clothes!)

Car:

If you're driving a car (you can do all of the above (except the exercise part) + the following:

AudioBooks/Lectures/Courses/Podcasts: I've recently rediscovered the joy of learning through listening with my iPod Touch connected to my car's radio device. I can listen to any audiobook, lectures, Islamic MP3 courses, or Podcasts I download to my iPod. I completed a 2 hour life coaching course, a marketing course (36 CDs), an Islamic seerah course (32 CDs), and 100s of hours of other talks through doing so.

Now most people do the above one way or another, BUT here are some advanced tips to really make the most of ALL your audio files:

1. Have a structured course planned out - so you know exactly what you're listening to and when, and can build on your knowledge instead of starting on something then changing it to something else... then coming back to where you started!
2. If you truly want to make the most of what you listened to, try taking notes as you wait in busy traffic OR when you get home. That will help reinforce what you learnt, and you will be more likely to use it inshaAllah.

Trains/Bus/Plane/ Personal Chauffeur:

Again, you can do all of the above + the following:

Video Podcasts: Watch Video Podcasts/Courses through your iPod Touch/iPhone or any other MP4

technology that displays video on small screens. Again, you can download these courses (some of which are free) to your laptop then sync with your devices.

Read Books/Study: Spend a weekend in a bookstore and purchase a set of beneficial books to read on your daily commute. Nothing like lifelong learning :). Again, make sure the books are part of a "plan", i.e. let's say you're interested in marketing this week, then all your audio files for the car rides and the books you read should relate to that subject.

Reply to your e-mails offline: If you carry your laptop with you, you may find it very useful (especially on trains/planes) to catch up on e-mails and prepare draft replies to them. For those of you who check your e-mails online, I highly suggest you set up your laptop so that it downloads ALL your e-mails from your different accounts to one e-mail client, e.g. Microsoft Outlook, Apple Mail, Mozilla Thunderbird and so on. That way, you don't need internet connection to check your e-mail, the e-mails are downloaded when you're connected to the internet, and you can read them/ and prepare draft replies at your convenience.

Set Agendas: I learnt this from David Allen's Productivity System "**Getting Things Done**": Prepare an agenda for every person you're going to meet. Isn't it annoying when you meet somebody that you had so much to tell or ask of, but can only remember 2 things from that list?!

Writing down 'an agenda' for everyone you're going to meet or need to see is a helpful and productive tip to make the most of that meeting. So if you're sitting in your train or on the plane... write out those agendas! If you're traveling for a meeting and no agenda has been set, use the time you have to write an agenda. It doesn't have to be elaborate, a 'short list' will do.

Phone Calls/SMS: Yup, I'm that annoying person who never stops talking on the phone from the moment the train/bus starts moving till the end. OK, I'm not. I actually hate those people. But a train ride/bus ride is prime time for a quick catch up call/SMS. Those who know me, know that I cannot sit down and speak over the phone and I just love walking and talking... so I normally use the time going to and fro from train stations, or up and down the terminal to really get most of the phones calls out of the way. (p.s. By the way, that's a life coaching tip there: NEVER sit down when talking over the phone, especially if you need to convince the person on the other end of the line of something or you'll be asked difficult questions. I guess that's where 'thinking on your feet' comes from).

Think & contemplate: brainstorm ideas/Journal: Whilst contemplating on Allah's creation (see above) thoughts and ideas enter (& leave) my mind! I need to capture them. Hence, with my trusted [Moleskine Folio Journal](#), I write down ALL the ideas in the form of mindmaps, journal entries, pictures, charts etc... Most of my favourite posts on ProductiveMuslim were born in those precious

me-time moments on the train/bus/plane with dear old Moleskine ;) They provide a very useful platform for developing ideas that just got captured during my journey.

You can now see why I love commuting! No matter which vehicle you put me in, with the proper planning and right tools, my daily commute becomes a true asset to my daily life instead of a time-waster in traffic :)

What's Your Morning Routine?

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

I hate routine. Except when it comes to morning routines :) That's something I try and stick to! ;)

There's something about starting your day on a number of pre-planned actions that really set your day straight. Below I describe the 'ideal' ProductiveMuslim morning routine. (Note: I assume that Fajr Athan is at 5.00am and that work starts at 8am, feel free to 'adjust' the routine below to suit your timetable inshaAllah)

4.00AM - 5.00AM: 5 Essential Actions:

1. Wake up!

Perhaps the first and most important step to having a great morning routine is waking up early! And it is in that moment of indecisiveness -whether you should wake up immediately or enjoy your nice comfy bed for '5 more minutes'- wherein lies the secret to either a great day or a crazy one. Here's a tip that always works with me for waking up: You know how shaytaan whispers in your ears "just sleep for 5 more minutes"... I simply whisper back to myself "just wake up for 5 minutes" ;) Yup, you can imagine the rest. As soon as you're awake and begin reciting the Adkhar and making wudhu, you can imagine what happens to sleep - (Gone! Left the building!).

2. Make the Dua(s) for waking up and recite last 10

verses of Surah Al-Imran:

Alhamdulillah, we have a beautiful set of "waking up" supplications which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us. A collection of Wake Up Supplications can be found on MakeDua.com. My favorite is the recitation of the last 10 verses of [Al-Imran](#) (Chapter 3 of the Quran). You can almost feel your heart coming to life and being 'juiced' when the first thing you do as soon as you wake up is remember Allah & recite His Glorious Words from the Quran.

3. Make Wudhu

We can all agree, there's something about wudhu that really focuses your positive energy and cleanses you inwardly as well as outwardly. I had a friend who used to call this feeling "WuBuzz!" short for the "Buzz" you feel after wudhu ;) Don't forget to say Bismillah before starting wudhu and the [dua after finishing wudhu](#)! The 8 gates of Heaven will be opened for you, (not a bad way to start your day ;) and you'll feel refreshed and ready for the day ahead.

4. Tahajjud & Witr

Tahajjud or Qiyaam has been described as the "honour of the believer", because who else would go through what you just did (wake up, wudhu..etc) just to stand up

and pray? The beauty of Tahajjud is hard to describe; from the feeling of tranquility in your heart and understanding the Quran better at this time, to feeling closer to Allah at a time of isolation from others and wishing that you would never get up from that prostration, to self-reflection moments that we rarely get a chance to exercise in our busy world... all of them and more come from Tahajjud! Finally, praying Witr after Tahajjud and **making sincere dua** to Allah is a true booster to your day!

5. Istighfar moments

Don't forget to use the last 5-10 minutes before Fajr to ask Allah for forgiveness and making lots of istighfar so that you are among those Allah mentioned in the Quran: "And in the hour of early dawn, they (were found) praying for Forgiveness" (Quran, Chapter 51, Verse 18).

5.00AM - 5.05 AM: Fajr Athan

Say as the muaddhin (The person who calls to Prayer) says and don't forget the Dua after athan. **Supplications Related to Athaan** can also be found at MakeDua.com

5.05AM - 5.30AM: Between Athan & Iqama

1. Pray the 2 rak'ahs Sunnah of Fajr

Don't miss this! Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The two rakahs before the dawn (Fajr) prayer are better than this world and all that it contains. (Riyad-us-Saliheen (Hadith # 1102). Just think about this hadeeth for a moment; 5 minutes of your time to pray 2 short rak'ahs are better than this whole wide world with all its' lands, people, treasures, nature and beyond! SubhanaAllah!

Also, if this is the importance and merit of the Sunnah of Fajr, what about the obligatory Fajr prayer itself? (There

is a heartwarming video reminder to those who neglect Fajr Salah called: '**Are you neglecting the Fajr Prayer?**')

2. Dua

Did you know that the time between the Athan & Iqama is a prime time to make dua? Make the most of it! Narrated Anas ibn Malik: "The supplication made between the athan and the iqamah is not rejected." (Sunan Abu Dawood, Book #2, Hadith #0521)

3. Lie on your right side

Narrated 'Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her): "Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to pray two light rakahs before the morning (compulsory) prayer after the day dawned and the Mu'addhin had finished his adhan. He then would lie on his right side till the Mu'addhin came to pronounce the Iqama." (Sahih Bukhari, Book #11, Hadith #599)

4. Brainstorm session

I sometimes use this time to either plan my day, or brainstorm ideas for ProductiveMuslim/articles or just reading and writing. You'll be surprised how active your brain is at this time! You're awake, alert and kicking ;)

5. Quran memorization

Speaking of your mind being active, memorizing Quran at this time is incredible as well. I have tried memorizing Quran after Asr/Maghreb when I'm tired and back from work Vs. after Fajr. The difference is overwhelming, SubhanaAllah! After Fajr, your brain is truly like a sponge and it is the best time to memorize verses from the Quran :).

5.30AM - 6.00am: Fajr Salat & Dhikr

If you are a brother, and can get to a mosque no matter how far - go for it! The beauty of praying Fajr in the masjid is hard to describe. I prefer walking to the Masjid Vs. driving (cycling is good as well ;) since you get a chance to breath in the fresh morning air; Allah says in the Quran: "And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness" (Chapter 81, Verse 18)

After Fajr Salah, sit back, relax and enjoy performing the [post Salah Dhikr](#) and [morning supplications](#).

6.00 - 6.30am: Recite, Read or Exercise

1. **Quran Memorization/Recitation:** Recite and/or Memorize Quran as mentioned previously, or if you have a good tafsir book, then reading the meaning of at least one page of the Quran is a great bonus!

2. **Reading:** Spend this time reading Islamic material. I stress that the reading must be Islamic, because as I mentioned previously, your mind is like a sponge at this time and is highly active. You want whatever you're reading to be truly embedded into your mind & soul inshaAllah.

Suggested books to read: Hadeeth books, Stories of the Prophets, Seerah, etc...

3. **Exercise:** Another option is a quick 30 minute exercise. This could be jogging around the block, cycling, using a treadmill, some aerobics/cardiovascular exercises and anything that builds your stamina.

6.30AM - 6.45: Plan Your Day

This is where I plan the rest of my day, of course, using the [Taskinator](#) ;). Sometimes I check and send e-mails

around this time as well to help me plan my day or set out tasks for myself and team members.

6.45AM - 7.00: Get Ready For Work

Shower, get dressed, and gather your paper work, (although organizing your items the night before makes this 15 minute process of getting ready a lot smoother!) Put things where you can find them so that you don't waste time searching for them.

7.00AM - 7.10: Duha Prayers.

Nothing sets your day straight like Duha prayer, as mentioned in the "Top 7 Spiritual Productivity Habits" to adopt. Nu`aym ibn Hammar (Allah be pleased with him) relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) say: **"Allah Most High says: O child of Adam, don't fail to perform four rakahs in the beginning of your day, and I shall be your sufficiency at its end."** (Abu Dawud (1289) and Tirmidhi (475)).

7.15AM - 7.30AM: Breakfast.

Reward yourself for a ProductiveMorning with a big FAT hearty (healthy) breakfast! Try to avoid caffeine and have a fibre filled bowl of goodness to set you in good stead.

7.30AM - 8.00AM: Commute to Work.

Don't forget my tips about [commuting ProductiveMuslim style!](#) ;)

Imagine if all your mornings were like the above... how much will you gain spiritually? How much knowledge will you acquire? What will your mood be like for the rest of the day? Try the above, just for one day, and let me know how it goes inshaAllah.

18

Sources of Barakah!

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009

If we were to look for an Islamic definition of Productivity, it can probably be summarised in the word "barakah" or Blessing. Being able to achieve more with few resources, doing much in little time, and generating a lot with little effort is surely a blessing from Allah (Subahanahu Wa Ta'ala). Yet Barakah has somehow become a lost treasure these days; everyone's looking for it, but no one seems to find it! You always hear people complaining that there's no barakah in their time, no barakah in their sleep, no barakah in their money and the rest of it. In this article, we'll solve this mystery inshaAllah: we'll find out what Barakah is and where you can find it!

What is Barakah?

A Well-known daee explains it as follows:

والبركة هي ثبوت الخير الإلهي في الشيء؛ فإنها إذا حلت في قليل كثرته، وإذا حلت في كثير نفع، ومن أعظم ثمار البركة في الأمور كلها إستعمالها في طاعة الله عز وجل

"Barakah is the attachment of Divine goodness to a thing, so if it occurs in something little, it increases it. And if it

occurs in something much it benefits. And the greatest fruits of Barakah in all things is to use that barakah in the obedience of Allah (Subahanahu Wa Ta'ala)"

Sources of Barakah

I'm a firm believer that Barakah is not a lost treasure, rather, it's right in front of our eyes! This treasure is only available and ready to be handed over to the one who works for it. Below, I list some of the sources of Barakah. It's not an exhaustive list, therefore, I do hope you can contribute to it with your comments inshaAllah so we can all share and extend our understanding of this great treasure at ProductiveMuslim.com!

1. Good Intentions

If you want something to have barakah attached to it, have good intentions for it. More specifically, make sure that deed is intended for the sake of Allah (Subahanahu Wa Ta'ala). Looking again at the definition of Barakah, you may guess that without us intending what we have or do for the Sake of Allah, the "Divine goodness" won't be found in our deeds.

2. Piety and Belief in Allah

Allah says in the Quran: "If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (All kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth..."(Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 96). And He says in the Quran: "And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out. And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine" (Surah Al-Talaq, Verses 2-3).

3. Putting your trust in Allah

Allay says in the Quran: "And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish his purpose. Verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion" (Surah Al-Talaq, verses 3) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "If only you relied on Allah a true reliance, He would provide sustenance for you just as He does the birds: They fly out in the morning empty and return in the afternoon with full stomachs. (Ahmad, An-Nasa'I, Ibn Majah, Al-Hakim and At-Tirmidhi)

4. Reading Quran

This is the fountain of Barakah! But subhanaAllah, we rarely drink from it! Allah says in the Quran: "And this is a Book which We have sent down, bringing blessings, and confirming (the revelations) which came before it..." (Surah Al-An'am, Verse 92). So read the Quran, and observe the blessings and barakah of Allah enter your life. The further we are from this Book of Guidance, the less barakah we will have in our lives.

5. Saying Bismillah

When you say "Bismillah" before anything you do, you're invoking the Name of Allah on that activity; not only will that activity be blessed but shaytaan cannot take part in it! So always say "Bismillah" before anything you do! SubhanaAllah, it's easy for us to forget to say "Bismillah". Sometimes we're so used to saying it that we cannot remember whether we said it or not! Try to be conscious of saying "Bismillah" and understand what you're saying before your action is performed.

6. Eating with People

Anyone who has had the experience of inviting guests to his/her house will know this one. No matter how little you think the food you're presenting to your guest is, it's always more than enough! (Note: this is not an excuse to be miserly when you invite guests over; in fact we should follow the Sunnah of our Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) whom when visited by the angels prepared a large meal for them). What I'm referring to here is the blessing that occurs when eating together, confirmed in the hadeeth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who said: "Eat together, for blessing is in Jamma'a (congregation or being together)..." and in another hadeeth: "Whoever has food enough for two persons, should take a third one, and whoever has food enough for four persons, should take a fifth or a sixth (or said something similar)." (Bukhari, Volume 4. Book 56. Number 781)

7. **Honesty in Trade**

This is for all of the business people out there (include ebayers!). We shouldn't assume lying and deceiving people will make our trade profitable. On the contrary, it will remove the blessing from your trade. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The buyer and the seller have the option of canceling or confirming the bargain unless they separate, and if they spoke the truth and made clear the defects of the goods, then they would be blessed in their bargain, and if they told lies and hid some facts, their bargain would be deprived of Allah's blessings".(Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 34, Number 293)

Yes, it's difficult to be honest when you're trying to sell something, but trust me it's worth it.

8. **Dua**

Ask Allah for barakah! If you take note of some of the Duas of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) you'll notice that the Prophet used to make dua for barakah. We always say: "May Allah bless you!" Well, guess what? That's a source of barakah! Also, when you're invited to someone's house, Prophet Muhammad advised us to make the following dua for the host:"O Allah, bless for them, that which You have provided them, forgive them and have mercy upon them."

9. **Halal Income/money**

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "O people, Allah is good and He therefore, accepts only that which is good" (Scholars say this refers to Halal income and the importance of it).

A scholar also said of the one who eats Haram, that his

limbs will disobey Allah whether he likes it or not, and that the one who eats Halal and seeks Halal income, his limbs will also do good and will be given the permission to seek goodness.

This concept of your limbs being 'blessed' and enabled to do good is truly a blessing and a barakah we should all seek. It reminds me of a story of an old man who jumped a large distance that the young men were unable to jump. When the young men asked the old man how he did it, he replied: "These are our limbs: we protected them from committing sins when we were young, so Allah preserved them for us when we got old".

10. **Following the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad in everything**

I've said it once and I'll say it again, the most Productive Man in the history of humanity is our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, by simply following his lifestyle and the acts of Sunnah we so often hear about, we obtain a great source of Barakah!

Some of these Sunnahs include: eating Suhoor, eating with the right hand from the side of the plate, going out for Eid Salah, licking your fingers after finishing your meal, sleeping on your right hand side, using the siwaak, and many more. Look out for these Sunnahs and follow them, for imitating the life of the most blessed man on earth is surely a source of blessing!

11. **Praying Istikhara**

Praying istikhara in all matters and then leaving the outcome to Allah as well as accepting His Decree is a great source of barakah. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us this beautiful dua which

helps us make decisions and not regret the choices we make in the following hadeeth:

On the authority of Jaabir Ibn 'Abdullah he said: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) would instruct us to pray for guidance in all of our concerns, just as he would teach us a chapter from the Qur'an. He (peace be upon him) would say: 'If any of you intends to undertake a matter then let him pray two supererogatory units (two rak'ah optional nafil) of prayer and after which he should supplicate:

'O Allah, I seek Your counsel by Your knowledge and by Your power I seek strength and I ask You from Your immense favour, for verily You are able while I am not and verily You know while I do not and You are the Knower of the unseen. O Allaah, if You know this affair -and here he mentions his need- to be good for me in relation to my religion, my life, and end, then decree and facilitate it for me, and bless me with it, and if You know this affair to be ill for me towards my religion, my life, and end, then remove it from me and remove me from it, and decree for me what is good wherever it be and make me satisfied with such."

One who seeks guidance from his Creator and consults his fellow believers and then remains firm in his resolve does not regret for Allah has said:

'...and consult them in the affair. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah..." [Quran 3: 159]

12. Giving thanks to Allah in abundance

Allah says in the Quran: "If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you". A scholar once told me that if one looks into this verse, the Arabic word that is used to confirm that Allah Wills favours unto the person who thanks Him is actually in the form of an Oath - "La

azidannakum". So Allah is promising the person who thanks Him an increase in goodness and blessings, and Allah never breaks His promises.

13. Charity

In a Hadeeth Qudsi, Allah says: "O son of Adam, spend (in charity), and I'll spend on you!"

Whenever you are broke, or you feel barakah is zapped out of your life and urgently need it to return, the quickest way of gaining barakah in your life can be through giving charity. For example, let's say barakah was removed from your life due to a sin you committed; charity cleanses your sins, adds good deeds and is a source of barakah.

I cannot describe the instantaneous gratification of giving charity and the barakah that follows it. Try it NOW!

14. Tying your ties of kinship

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Allah created His creation, and when He had finished it, the womb, got up and caught hold of Allah whereupon Allah said, "What is the matter?" On that, it said, "I seek refuge with you from those who sever the ties of Kith and kin." On that Allah said, "Will you be satisfied if I bestow My favours on him who keeps your ties, and withhold My favours from him who severs your ties?" On that it said, "Yes, O my Lord!" Then Allah said, "That is for you." Abu Huraira added: "If you wish, you can recite: 'Would you then if you were given the authority do mischief in the land and sever your ties of kinship?'. (Bukhari, Volume 6. Book 60. Number 354)"

15. **Waking up early**

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Allah made the early hours blessed for my Ummah." (Ahmed) This hadeeth was what spurred me to create ProductiveMuslim.com! Such gems of productivity are the sources of blessings which we should seek to make our life productive. Waking up early is such an important step to being blessed and feeling good throughout your day.

Try to wake up for Tahajjud, and then work during the hours before Fajr Salah. If you cannot, then at least wake up for Fajr and stay up till sunrise before you return to sleep. Those hours are filled with Barakah. If you're able to go to work in those hours, do so, you'll get much more work done than the whole day put together!

16. **Marriage**

Allah says in the Quran: "Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and He Knoweth all things." (Quran 24:32)

Speaking of marriage, I highly recommend the following training course to anyone seriously thinking of getting married: www.Practimate.com.

17. **Salah**

Allah says in the Quran: "Enjoin prayer on thy people, and be constant therein. We ask thee not to provide sustenance: We provide it for thee. But the (fruit of) the Hereafter is for righteousness"

To illustrate the point of Salah further, just imagine your

life without this great act of ibadah. Where would Barakah come from? For those of you who are still wavering in your Salah, please get back on track; this is your lifeline for the final destination in the hereafter, and the daily food for your soul.

18. **Asking Allah for forgiveness**

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "If anyone continually asks forgiveness from Allah, Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress, and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide for him from where he did not reckon."

I hope this covers most of the sources of Barakah, but as I said before, this is not an exhaustive list. Please add your sources and recommend more tips for us to share!

De-Clutter your Mind

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2009

A key part of being productive, is about focusing your mind on what's beneficial and de-cluttering it from unproductive thoughts.

If we can record our inner thoughts and replay them to ourselves each day, we'll be shocked at how much junk there is and how much brain power we waste on futile things that neither benefit or harm us. These thoughts can be in the form of replaying old "movies" in our heads of things that happened to us in our past or (going to some extreme) future dreams that are never attainable nor part of reality, or keeping thoughts which we're not happy to reveal to anyone, even having doubts back-biting about people which we needn't have... all these thoughts need to be purged if we want to relieve ourselves and de-clutter our minds.

How do you know if you have so much clutter? Notice your actions and speech. If you recognise them to be very focused, very productive, very thoughtful, and

containing less gossip, then your mind is probably more de-cluttered than others! If not, and you see yourself all over the place and your tongue out of control, then your mind surely needs a cleanup exercise.

Unfortunately, we pay little attention to our thoughts and what goes on inside our mind, even though it's crucial to our well-being, productivity and ultimately how we behave as Muslims. Ibn Al-Qayyim has a profoundly powerful statement in his book *Al-Fawa'id*, referring to negative and sinful thoughts, he said:

"You should repulse a thought. If you do not do so, it will develop into a desire. You should therefore wage war against it. If you do not do so, it will become a resolution and firm intention. If you do not repulse this, it will develop into a deed. If you do not make up for it by doing the opposite thereof [the opposite of that evil deed], it will become a habit. It will then be very difficult for you to give it up"

"You should know that the initial stage of every knowledge that is within your choice is your thoughts and notions. These thoughts and notions lead you into fantasies. These fantasies lead towards the will and desire to carry out [those fantasies]. These wills and desires demand the act should be committed. Repeatedly committing these acts cause them to become a habit. So the goodness of these stages lies in the goodness of thoughts and notions, and the wickedness of these thoughts lies in the wickedness of thoughts and notions." [Al Fawaid, Ibn Qayyim]

May Allah be pleased with him! A deep insight into something so subtle. We should all memorize these words and use it whenever we feel unable to control the tsunami of negative thoughts that overtake our minds.

There's a verse in the Quran that should send shudders through any Muslim's spine, in which Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) speaks of taking into account our inner thoughts, He says:

"To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah Calleth you to account for it. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth, for Allah hath power over all things."

(Surat Al-Baqarah, verse no. 284).

In an age, where people are fighting for privacy, some people might find the above verse "intrusive"! But who are we to judge what Allah does?! We're His slaves and He's our Master! He can do what He wills. The reason I'm saying this, is because believe it or not, the Companions of the Prophet, also found the above verse difficult to grasp (but in their case, they understood the implication,

though we unfortunately, rebel due to arrogance). So they went to the Prophet with a heavy heart regarding this verse, but the Prophet told them "Say, we Listen and we Obey". As soon as they said that, Allah revealed 2 of the greatest verses in the Quran:

"The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His apostles. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."

On no soul doth Allah Place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray:) **"Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden Like that which Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector; Help us against those who stand against faith."**


(Surah Al-Baqarah, verses no. 285-286)

So, listen and obey and work out how to control your thoughts and Allah will not overburden you.

Here are some simple steps you can follow to de-clutter your mind and control thoughts, but they need to be constantly followed in order to develop a disciplined mind:

- 1 Dua - First and foremost, ask Allah for help and guidance on this issue. Remember "You Alone we Worship, and You alone we seek help from".
- 2 Practice focusing your mind - especially during Salat - so that you at least de-clutter your mind, even temporarily.
- 3 Listen "into" your thoughts and don't let them just wave by unnoticed. A strong Muslim is the one who can control his inner self as well as his limbs.
- 4 When a bad thought comes, fight it! And when a good thought comes, act upon it or at least write it down!
- 5 Be constantly watchful of your mind, like a predator, always ready to pounce on any unwanted thoughts and cutting evil from its roots.

May Allah (Subahanahu Wa Ta'ala) help us de-clutter our minds and make our thoughts, actions and words sincerely for Him. Ameen.



'Repeatedly committing these acts cause them to become a habit. So the goodness of these stages lies in the goodness of thoughts and notions, and the wickedness of these thoughts lies in the wickedness of thoughts and notions.'

[Al Fawaid, Ibn Qayyim]

Techniques to Develop a Habit of Reading

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2009

As Muslims, we cannot underestimate the importance of reading, especially when the first word revealed to our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was "Read!" Yet, whenever the topic of reading comes up, although we recognize its importance we always excuse ourselves with reminders of how busy we are, or assume that reading is a waste of time compared to the other chores we need to perform during the day.

I was recently reminded about the importance of reading in a self-development book which encourages its readers to read extensively into many topics in order to widen their horizons. You can evidently see the difference between someone who reads and someone who doesn't read, at least in the vocabulary they use, never mind the ideas and creative thinking that book lovers tend to have.

As Productive Muslims, we should exercise two types of reading:

- 1) Islamic reading (Quran, Hadeeth, Islamic books)
- 2) General reading.

If I were to ask any Muslim today, which category is more important, they would say that Islamic reading is more important than general reading. I would agree and it would be hard for anyone to argue otherwise. But I would also argue that general reading is important depending on the intention you make. If I were to read a book on marketing skills, and my intention is to improve my business, make more profits, and be able to give more Zakah and support my family better, won't that be considered beneficial? Plus, wouldn't I be rewarded for such reading? If I were to read the latest industry journal so that I am acutely aware of what's happening in the industry and attempt to stay "on top of it all", and my intention is to better the Ummah by being a leader in this industry instead of a follower, isn't that something great?

One may argue, that after reading the Quran, the Prophetic ahadeeth, and other Islamic books there is no need to read any further. And I would agree with that; this is the Sacred Knowledge that one should know and continue to explore and if we truly and sincerely attempt to understand the Quran, we will find wisdom within it which suffices all the books in the world! Although it's

important to note that there is a case for reading extensively into numerous topics that interest you, ranging from reading widely into materials relating to your University degree or reading your industry's journal, to biographies of men and women who achieved great missions regardless of their circumstances and self-help books that cultivate self-development or any other habits/traits in us that need to be developed. We should read, read, read and constantly read in order to apply good knowledge to our lives.

My advice is to be selective in reading. Whilst Islamic reading should be a priority over any type of reading, don't forget to read extensively and be open minded about other topics. You will surely notice yourself develop!

Now, the question begs itself: how should we read? Or more specifically, how should we develop a reading habit so that we constantly read, both Islamic reading and general reading?

Below are some tips to help you along the way:

1) If you haven't yet developed a daily habit of reading Quran and Islamic knowledge, begin by developing this habit first. I advise you to set yourself 10 minutes after Fajr in your first week into this exercise and read 5 minutes of Quran plus 5 minutes of Islamic knowledge or Hadeeth. Do this daily! The key is to do it after Fajr Salah, as it will truly set your day straight.

After one week, add 10 minutes to your time. So now you're reading 10 minutes of Quran and 10 minutes of Islamic knowledge plus hadeeth.

In the third week, do this for half an hour and read 20 minutes of Quran and 10 minutes of Islamic knowledge plus hadeeth...and now just stick to that! 30 minutes, no more! You might say, I can do more. I'd say go ahead, but for our purposes, it's important you develop a 'habit' that's consistent rather than attempting more than you can chew and then forgetting about the whole exercise. Consistency will develop through deriving more beneficial lessons from the books you read.

2) Similarly, we should develop a reading habit for general knowledge. Again, begin with 10 minutes per day on any beneficial book you want to read. It is highly advised that you read before you sleep as it relaxes and stimulates your mind at the same time. Do this for a week and stick to it! No matter how tired you are, just read for 10 minutes. In the following week, extend your 'bed-time' reading to 20 minutes, then follow that by 30 minutes, and that's it. Stick to that programme and be consistent.

After working on the above exercise for a month, you can take a step further. For Islamic knowledge, try to develop a habit of constantly reading something of Islamic knowledge after every prayer. Or between 2 Salah times, for example between Maghreb and Isha. This is where you can dig deeper into the reading and perhaps memorize or use your time to 'study' Islam. Similarly, for general reading, after a month of the above exercise include some reading time at work during lunch break. What you read can be related to your work (such as: FT, industry magazines, competitor work etc...) and leave your 'bed-time' reading to self-development books, biographies, and books which inspire and motivate.

I hope that sets us all up to continually pursue reading in our lives so that it becomes an integral part of our development. When ProductiveMuslim.com first launched, we had a books page in which I posted a recommended book to read on a weekly basis. I've had to remove it for various reasons, but inshaAllah we'll post book reviews regularly, so do check the website often, and hopefully the ProductiveMuslim reading reviews will give you some guidance on beneficial books to read inshaAllah.

If you have ideas, tips, books you want to share, or anything to add, get in touch with us!



"Abi, When Will We Ever Relax?"

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2009

I wanted to share a moving story that I once heard and will always remember and cherish for its meanings. It's the story of one of the great Imams of this Ummah, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal.

His son, Abdullah, asked his father one day: "Abi when will we ever relax?" His father, one of the greatest revivers of the Sunnah and a role model for all Muslims, looked him in the eye and said: "With the first step we take into Jannah."

Ya Allah, what a beautiful response!

There are days that come to you and you're tired, you just want to sleep and relax and "shut off" as they say. Those are the days in which you need to ask yourself a critical question: 'Where am I going with life?' If it's towards Allah and for Allah, then regain your strength and continue your work, for Jannah is precious and must be sought. But if you look into your life and realise that it's not towards Allah but towards Dunya, then your tiredness becomes a blessing, for it is a reminder that you need to change direction and renew your purpose in life.

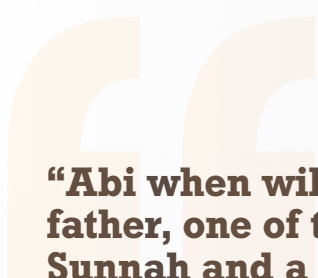
I love this story on many levels. For one, it shows you that when someone's focus is Jannah, their priorities change and their outlook on life is different. What we perceive as difficulty, they perceive as ease. What we perceive as calamity, they perceive as reward. What we perceive as obstacles, they perceive as opportunities for sincere dua. Moreover, when your focus is Jannah, this Dunya and its constant demand becomes small and the least of our concerns.

Also, I love the way the son began his question: "Abi" - a sweet way of addressing his father, and asked: "When will we ever relax?" If you notice, he didn't say, "when will I relax Dad?" Even though he wanted to relax, he wasn't selfish and also cared for his father's condition. This also shows you that the father and son were working hard together. Again, when your focus is Jannah it reflects in your family, children, and those around you and everyone gears up towards that goal.

Our problem today is not that we're tired, our problem today is that we relax too much. We do everything so that we relax. We cheat, break promises, do not fulfill our

vows, lie, take and give bribery, and so on. Why? So we can relax. We don't stay up for Tahajjud or wake up for Fajr, we don't fast, or go for Hajj and Umrah... all so we can relax. We don't walk towards the Masjid or open the Book of Allah so we can understand it, all in the name of "I need to relax!"

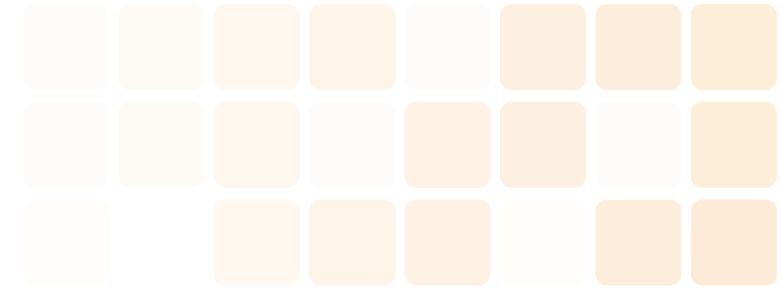
Dear brothers and sisters, there's plenty of relaxation where we're going, but this is not the time for it. Let's all work for Jannah and be productive in the path of Allah, and work so hard that one day our children will approach us and ask: "Abi" or "Ummi": "When will we ever relax?" and you can smile and look them in the eyes and say, "When we enter Jannah inshaAllah".



“Abi when will we ever relax?” His father, one of the greatest revivers of the Sunnah and a role model for all Muslims, looked him in the eye and said: “With the first step we take into Jannah.”

The ProductiveMuslim Sleep Routine

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2010



If you've started waking up early and working in those early hours of the day as we recommend at ProductiveMuslim.com, you'll find that it's pretty hard to be consistent each and every day with this routine. And when you search for the reasons for this inconsistency, you'll realise that it's mainly because it's hard to regulate your sleep; one day you sleep well, so you wake up early and can work hard. Other days, you don't sleep so well and those early hours are pretty difficult to maintain. Sleep, as any other activity we do as humans, can be optimized by planning well in advance and following a particular routine each night. You might think: "Dude, I just crash and sleep". Well, that's one way of doing it, but here's another routine. Try it out and tell me if sleep doesn't become a rewarding, spiritual and fulfilling experience for you after this.

The following sleep routine requires you to prepare for it at least 90 minutes BEFORE you actually sleep. And it's basically dividing those 90 minutes into 3 parts:

- **One third** for your Lord
- **One third** for your self
- **One third** for sleep itself

One third for Your Lord: This starts with you making wudhu, brushing your teeth, putting on nice clothes and perfume and praying Tahajjud and Witr for Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) (Note: If you prefer to wake up before Fajr to pray these night prayers then definitely go with that. However, if you can't trust yourself to wake up that early, it's better that you pray Tahajjud and Witr Salah BEFORE you sleep). This is my favourite part of the sleep routine and favourite part of the day! It's such a calming experience after going through a long hard day, to stand in front of your Lord, recite His verses, supplicate to Him and ask Him of whatever you desire in this world and the Next. Do this for a couple of nights and you wouldn't want to give up doing it! In fact, throughout your day, you'll be anticipating this moment and looking forward to it!

One third for Your Self: This is where you prepare yourself for sleep by putting on your pyjamas, getting into bed and reading a good book for at least 30 minutes. If you're like me, ideas and thoughts will keep popping into your head as you read, and you will want to save them for later. For these, I have a plain notebook and pen/pencil next to me to scribble anything (and I mean

anything) that pops in my head! You'll be surprised how many great ideas originate from these 30 minutes. Alternatively, instead of reading, you may spend these 30 minutes brainstorming on a plain notebook any ideas, plans, and projects you have in mind. You don't have to come up with the 'perfect' idea/solution, but simply brainstorm as much as you can then literally "sleep on it" (as the saying goes). In the morning, you'll be surprised at what your sub-conscious mind brings forth for you.

One third for Your Sleep: I've said that this is a third for your sleep, but truly this is a third for your Lord to bless your sleep, and basically this involves going through the duas and verses that one should recite before sleeping as per the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These include reciting Surah Al-Mulk and Surah Al-Sajdah and other supplications recommended before sleeping. For me, this last part of the routine is like the cherry on top of the cake! Nothing fills you with more tranquility than to sleep having uttered the words of Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala).

So there you have it, the ProductiveMuslim routine for Sleep. You may think it's lengthy, but there has been no day that I've followed it, except that I've slept peacefully and woken up peacefully. Hope it works well for you and that you have a productive sleep-Sweet dreams!



Description of Truly Productive Muslims in the Quran

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2010

Today I want us to ponder on the following verse. Allah says in the Quran:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

"Muhammad is the apostle of Allah and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurat; and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight.

As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward."
(Surah Al-Fath, Chapter #48, Verse #29)

Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) gives 2 descriptions of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The first description is found in the Taurat (The Torah - the Jewish Scriptures) which describes the adherence of the Companions of the Prophet to their prayers: "Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurat"

The second description is found in the Injeel (The Gospel - the Christian Scriptures) where it describes them as seeds that grow into strong plants that are able to stand on their own: "And their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight".

The first question we ask is why Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) described the companions differently in the different Books. The scholars who delved into this verse say that because the Jewish people didn't adhere to the Law that was set for them and did not follow it properly (they had the knowledge but didn't follow it), Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) wanted to show them the example of a future nation who would abide by the Law and worship Allah, hence the beautiful description of the Companions and their Salah.

On the other hand, the Christians were extremely religiously committed; doing things they weren't even asked to do, such as becoming monks and nuns, and shunning the life of this world. Thus, Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) wanted to give them the example of a future nation that would be religious whilst also productive and active. Similar to a plant which stands on its own, the sahaba did not rely on others to give them sustenance, and brought delight and wonders to those around them.

These two descriptions combined give the exact formula for what a Productive Muslim should be: somebody who is extremely religiously committed, performs his/her duties on time, and if you see them you'd think he/she is a monk. BUT at the same time, this individual goes out in life, seeks the bounties of his Lord, is productive and active, hence spreads his goodness and the benefit of his work to those around him like a strong beautiful plant.

Let me put it bluntly; today we have some Muslims who are (MashaAllah) extremely religiously committed. They are in the Mosque all day long, they pray at night, fast during the night and so on. However, their benefit is to

themselves and they are not able to go beyond this and be productive and active to those around them. What they are doing is not bad or without merit, however one should balance their lives and become active in their communities, active at work, seeking Allah's blessings and committing to a balanced lifestyle.

At the same time, we have Muslims who unfortunately do not observe their Islamic duties, but are extremely productive in the outside world. They have high-flying careers, are extremely hardworking individuals, are involved in many great community projects, produce lots of amazing work... but when you dig deeper into their lives, you notice missed prayers, no hijab, missed fasting and so forth.

You might be asking, why can't we have both? Why can't we have truly productive muslims who are religiously committed AND extremely successful and productive in the outside world? Why can't we show the world this unique example of Muslims, these 'productive monks' in the same way Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) described the Companions in His Book?

The above verse specifically describes the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as they were true examples for generations before them and generations to come. In following them in our lives today, we can become productive muslims inshaAllah. As the inheritors of this great religion from the Prophet and his Companions, we should aim to embody the above meanings in our lives as well so that we're neither swayed one side nor the other.

And Allah Knows Best.

