138389 - How Knowledge Seekers Organise Their Time

the question

Can you advise me as to how a seeker of knowledge can make a schedule to organise his time?

Summary of answer

How knowledge seekers organise their time:
• Have fixed times for regular things every day.
• Put a stop to time wasters.
• Procrastination is a severe disease that deprives one of many good things in this world and in the Hereafter.
• Keep yourself busy at all times with that which is best for you and most beneficial for you in the Hereafter.
• Invest your time as much as you can and do not waste a single moment in anything that is not an act of obedience or worship.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Status of seeking knowledge in Islam

The status of seeking Islamic knowledge is great in Islam. Allah, may He be blessed and Exalted, has praised knowledge and those who seek it, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say: Are those who know equal to those who know not?’ It is only men of understanding who will remember (i.e. get a lesson from Allah's Signs and Verses.)” [Az-Zumar 39:9]

“It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.” [Fatir 35:28]

Humayd ibn `Abd Ar-Rahman (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I heard Mu`awiyah say, when he was delivering a khutbah: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “When Allah wills good for a person, He deepens his knowledge of Islam. (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 71; and Muslim, 1037)

`Abu Ad-Darda’ (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. The angels lower their wings in approval of the seeker of knowledge , and everyone in the heavens and on earth prays for forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea. The superiority of the scholar over the worshipper is like the superiority of the moon over all other heavenly bodies. The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, for the Prophets did not leave behind Dinars or Dirhams, rather they left behind knowledge, so whoever takes it has taken a great share.” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, 2682, Abu Dawud, 3541 and Ibn Majah, 223; classed as sound by Al-Albaani in Saheeh At-Targheeb, 1/17)

Islamic knowledge brings a person the good of this world and of the Hereafter; it takes precedence over all other branches of knowledge, especially if one’s intention is pure.

How to start your journey of seeking knowledge in Islam

The best thing you can spend your time on when beginning to seek knowledge is memorising the Book of Allah , may He be Glorified and Exalted. This is the best thing in which people may compete and strive, and it is the best thing on which the seeker of knowledge may focus his efforts.

How to make seeking knowledge an easy task

One of the things that will make things easier for the seeker of knowledge is to have many shaykhs and scholars from whom he can learn . The quickest way to seek knowledge and the best way to attain the goal is if Allah makes it easy for him to find one shaykh or scholar among the scholars of the Sunnah, from whom he may acquire knowledge directly.

How knowledge seekers organise their time

With regard to organising your time, it may be as follows.

- Have fixed times for regular things every day, such as a time for sleeping, a time for meals, a time for visits, a time for gatherings, a time for revision.
- One of the things that will help you make the most of your time and save time is to put a stop to time wasters such as sleeping, eating and drinking too much, or meeting people except for Islamically beneficial purposes. You should also avoid time wasters such as means of entertainment like TV shows, soap operas, newspapers, magazines, games, sports matches and competitions.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih Al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The seeker of knowledge must make the most of his time and avoid wasting time. Wasting time may take the following forms:

1. Failing to review and revise what he reads
2. Sitting with his friends and engaging in idle talk in which there is no benefit
3. The most harmful time waster for the seeker of knowledge is when he has no interest except finding out about people, what they are saying and what they are doing, with regard to a matter that does not concern him. This undoubtedly stems from a weakness of commitment to Islam, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Part of a person’s being a good Muslim is leaving alone that which does not concern him.” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, 2318; classed as authentic by Al-Albani)

Focusing on who said what and asking a lot of questions is a waste of time. In fact it is a kind of sickness which if it affects a person – we ask Allah to keep us safe and sound – will become his main focus and concern and he may end up showing a hostile attitude towards one who does not deserve enmity, or he may be friendly towards one who does not deserve friendship, because of his interest in these matters that are distracting him from seeking knowledge, on the grounds that

this is part of supporting the truth. But that is not the case; rather this comes under the heading of being distracted by that which does not concern one. But if news comes to you without you seeking it or looking for it, everyone receives news but you should not be preoccupied with it or focus on it, because this causes distraction for the seeker of knowledge and may confuse him, and it opens the door to partisanship and division amongst the ummah." (Kitab Al-`Ilm, pp. 143-144)

- Another matter that is detrimental to the issue of organising one's time and making the most of it is procrastination. Procrastination is a severe disease that deprives one of many good things in this world and in the Hereafter.
- One of the best ways of succeeding in this world is to keep yourself busy at all times with that which is best for you and most beneficial for you in the Hereafter, as Ibn Al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The best act of worship is to strive to please the Lord at all times by doing that which is most appropriate and is expected at any particular time." (Madarij As-Salikin, 1/88)
- Investing one's time as much as one can and not wasting a single moment in anything that is not an act of obedience or worship. Our early generations (may Allah have mercy on them) set an amazing example of making the most of their time. All seekers of Quranic knowledge were keen to study under Abu Na`im Al-Asfahani (may Allah have mercy on him; d. 430) and every day one of them would have his turn and he would study whatever he wanted with the Shaykh until just before Dhuhr. Then when he got up to go home, another student might recite a Juz' to him on the way (for him to listen and correct), and he never showed any impatience.

Salim Ar-Razi (may Allah have mercy on him) was a Shafi`i. One day he went home and came back, and he said: I recited a juz' on my way. Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his biography of Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi: Al-Khatib used to walk with a Juz' in his hand, which he would study.

For forty years, Ibn `Asakir (may Allah have mercy on him) – as his son said – did not focus on anything except matters of knowledge, even during his free time or when he was alone. He always

had with him books of knowledge and the Quran, which he would read and memorise. They were always keen to make the most of their time by doing more than one thing at the same time. If the pen became blunt and he needed to sharpen it, one of them would move his lips with remembrance of Allah whilst fixing his pen, or he would review things that he had memorised lest any time pass without him doing something useful.

Abu Al-Wafa' `Ali ibn `Aqil (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I do not allow myself to waste even one hour of my life; even when I am not reading anything or reciting anything, I would think whilst I am resting of some issues of knowledge and I will not get up until I have come up with something I can write down.

Ibn Al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I know someone who fell sick with a headache and fever, and his book was beside his head. When he was awake he would read, and when he fell asleep he would put it down.

Suggested schedule for knowledge seekers in Islam

With regard to making a schedule and organising one's time, that may be done as follows:

1. The program of the seeker of knowledge begins at dawn, which is the time for memorisation of Quran and Hadith. The best time for memorising – especially memorising Quran – is the time just before dawn and after Fajr prayer, when the mind is clear and it is easier to memorise. So the seeker of knowledge prays in the mosque and remains there until sunrise or afterwards, memorising and reviewing what he has memorised. When he has finished that, he begins to memorise texts of knowledge – the texts of Hadith, Fiqh, Usool [principles of Fiqh] and Arabic language.
2. If he has a job or is in school, he goes to it. Otherwise he spends the rest of the morning memorising and revising until Dhuhr, then he takes a siesta and rests a little.
3. As for the afternoon, it is for studying and reading, or studying with others, or discussion and reviewing issues of knowledge with others.
4. After Maghrib, he attends study circles and after `Isha' he reviews what he has learnt or he

may read a new book.

It should be noted that what we have mentioned here comes under the heading of organising time in general terms. Each student should organise his time according to his circumstances, whether he is working or not, whether he is married or single, whether he devotes all his time to Islamic knowledge or he has some other preoccupations, and so on. What matters with regard to organising time is that there should be some hours of the day and night in which he makes himself memorise and read. People tend to want to rest and like to be somewhat lazy, so he should train himself to work hard and be active, and he should make himself get used to being organised and adhere to doing acts of worship and obedience. Otherwise he will have wasted his day and then he will have wasted his life.

And Allah knows best.