47398 - How should a person fill his spare time?

the question

I am suffering from the problem of too much spare time, because of which I have begun to feel very strange. My worship has become noticeably less, not because of anything that is distracting me but because I have become depressed. I am learning to memorize Qur'aan with a teacher but I am still in Juz' 'Amma (the 30th juz'). I memorize what is required of me, but I still have too much spare time. In an attempt to rid myself of depression I turn on the TV, but I hate it and I do not really want to watch it, but I sit in front of it for ten hours. Can you believe it – ten hours? And I used to watch it only a little. I don't know. Please advise me as to how I may kill this spare time.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The blessing of time is one of the greatest blessings that Allaah can bestow upon His slaves. Allaah even swears by time in some cases, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"By Al-'Asr (the time)"

[al-'Asr 103:1]

- because of the importance and blessing of time.

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Make the most of five things before five others: life before death, health before sickness, free time before becoming busy, youth before old age, and wealth before poverty." See Saheeh al-Jaami', no. 1077.

But most people are unaware of the importance of this blessing and are neglectful of their duties towards it, namely to fill it with acts of gratitude and obedience towards Allaah. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "There are two blessings which many people do

not make the most of and thus lose out: good health and free time.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 6412.

Al-Teebi said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) likened the Muslim (who is accountable for his deeds) to a merchant who has capital and seeks to make a profit whilst also preserving his capital. The way to do that is to look for the right people to deal with and he himself will be honest and will try to be smart lest he be cheated. Good health and free time are our capital, and we should deal with Allaah with faith, striving against the evil inclinations of our nafs and the enemy of religion i.e., the Shaytaan, so that we may attain the best in this world and in the Hereafter. This is similar to what is mentioned in the passage where Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a painful torment?”

[al-Saff 61:10]

We should avoid following the dictates of the nafs and keep away from the Shaytaan lest we lose both our capital and our profit.

Fath al-Baari by Ibn Hajar.

If time is so important, then the Muslim should not have any free time, for he should be going from one act of worship and obedience to another. If he cannot spend all his time going from one act of obedience and worship to another then, he may spend some of his time in permissible pursuits, in which he should ensure that his intention is correct, so that he may earn reward thereby, as Mu’aadh (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: “I get up and I sleep, and I hope for the same when I sleep as I hope for when I get up.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 6923; Muslim, 1854.

The problem that the sister is suffering from is caused by several things:

Firstly: she does not understand the value of time. This is true of many people, as stated above. Even worse than that, by neglecting this great blessing, her spare time has become something destructive, and she regards it as an enemy that she wants to kill, but she does not realize that

she is killing herself.

Secondly: she feels depressed. There is no doubt that wasting one's time and one's life causes deep depression in man, because he feels that he is like an animal that eats so it can sleep, and sleeps so it can eat. Hence we see many disbelievers ended their life by suicide, after being afflicted by depression and other incurable diseases – may Allaah keep us safe and sound from that with which He has tested them. One of the primary causes of depression is disobedience towards Allaah. Undoubtedly wasting time watching TV leads a person to commit sin, such as watching and listening to haraam things, wasting time, and other things caused by this evil machine. The benefits that the sister gains by joining a halaqah for memorizing Qur'aan are largely cancelled out, if not erased entirely, by sitting in front of the TV. Just as good deeds erase bad deeds, bad deeds cause good deeds to be lost.

[You can refer to the Books section of this website; in Dealing with Worries and Stress you will find more details about the causes of worry and how to overcome them. In Dangers Facing the Home you will find mention of some of the harmful effects of TV.]

Thirdly:

She has given up with regard to time, and she has no determination to fill her time with beneficial things.

In order to solve this problem, the sister must strive to achieve the following:

1-Doing acts of worship such as reciting dhikr and wird, praying, reading Qur'aan, fasting and thinking about the signs and blessings of Allaah.

2-She should pay special attention to the Qur'aan, since she says that she memorizes what is required of her, then she has spare time that she kills by watching TV. Why doesn't she use that time to remember Allaah and read Qur'aan, and memorize more so that she can memorize the whole Qur'aan, before she becomes burdened with the responsibilities of life. For (reading) each letter is a hasanah, and each hasanah brings a tenfold reward. And each verse raises one in status

and increases one’s reward, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Read and rise (in status), for as you used to recite in this world, your position (in the Hereafter) will be determined by the last verse you read.” Narrated by Abu Dawood, 1464; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Saheehah, 2240.

3-Adopt a cause affecting Muslim women in the country where you live, such as helping to teach Muslim girls, undertaking charitable projects, and so on.

4-Find good and righteous friends with whom you can meet and get together.

5-Read Islamic books in particular and useful stories in general.

6-Get involved in da’wah, women’s activities and children’s sports in Islamic centres.

7-Listen to tapes and lectures, and write summaries which you can distribute to those who will benefit from them.

8-Learn some useful areas of worldly knowledge such as cooking, sewing, etc.

9-Learn about computers and useful programs, for this is a vast area which will take up a lot of time and can be used to do a lot of good and useful things. This will take you away from sitting in front of the TV which does not help you in any way, and does more harm than good.

10-You should read some books which speak of the importance of time and how to manage it; listen to some useful lectures on this topic too.

May Allaah help you and us to do all that is good.

For more information please see also questions no. 3619, 26869, 36546.