296830 - The saying “An hour for the Lord and an hour for yourself”

the question

What is the ruling on calling a Facebook group “An hour for the Lord and an hour for yourself”? Is there any reason to be uncomfortable about this phrase?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If what is meant by the one who says this is that people need time for relaxation and joy in some permissible ways, in order to rest and have a break from striving for worldly aims and from striving for the hereafter, so that people will not become exhausted from constant striving and will be re-energized to resume their efforts and striving for what will benefit them in this world and the hereafter – if this is what is meant by the one who says this, that is a sound meaning and there does not seem to be anything wrong with this phrase.

It is similar in meaning to what is mentioned in the famous sahih hadith:

It was narrated that Hanzalah said: We were with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he exhorted us and reminded us of the Fire. Then I came home and laughed with my children and played with my wife. Then I went out and met Abu Bakr, and I mentioned that to him. He said: I have done the same as you mentioned. We met the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and I said: O Messenger of Allah, Hanzalah has become a hypocrite.

He said: “Don’t speak like that.”

So I told him what we had said, and Abu Bakr said: I have done the same as he has.

He said: “O Hanzalah, there is a time for this and a time for that. If your hearts were always as

they are when you are remembering Allah (dhikr), the angels would shake hands with you in the streets and greet you.” Narrated by Muslim (2750).

This hadith highlights the virtue of persisting in dhikr (remembering Allah) and doing righteous deeds, and that it is permissible to stop doing that sometimes in order to do things that bring joy, so as to avoid exhaustion.

Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words “there is a time for this and a time for that” mean that there is a time for being alert and focused (on dhikr and righteous deeds) and a time for doing permissible things (by way of relaxation), even if that could lead to lack of focus on dhikr and worship. That is because if someone keeps striving without pause, he will not last. So the one who is focused on dhikr and worship has no choice but to deal with things that will distract him from that, in order to maintain a good balance. How could a person be able to eat, drink and have marital relations if he thinks about matters of the hereafter as if he is seeing them with his own eyes? In being distracted from that there is a great benefit, but if it increases, it will cause trouble. Rather it should be of appropriate proportions."(*Kashshaf al-Mushkil* 4/229-230).

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“O Hanzalah, there is a time for this and a time for that” means a time for the Lord, may He be glorified and exalted, and a time for one’s family and children, and a time for oneself that will give you space to breathe and relax, and give those who have rights their rights.

This is an example of the justice and perfection of Islam. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has rights, so He should be given his rights. A person’s own self has rights and must be given its rights. A man’s family have rights and they must be given their rights. Visitors and guests have rights and must be given their rights. In this way the individual will be able to fulfil all the duties he owes with ease, and he will be able to worship Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, with ease, because if he overburdens himself and is too strict with himself, he will grow tired and weary, and will neglect many of his duties."(*Sharh Riyad as-Salihin* 2/236).

This is the correct understanding of this phrase: time spent worshipping Allah, may He be exalted, and reflecting on matters of the hereafter, and time spent in permissible things and fulfilling one's duties towards oneself and others, so that the Muslim will be able to do all the duties that are required of him, and will be energized to do his duties by this time spent in doing permissible things.

Al-Bukhari (1968) narrated from 'Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah, from his father, who said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) established the bond of brotherhood between Salman and Abu'd-Darda'. Salman visited Abud-Darda' and saw Umm'd-Darda' looking unkempt. He said to her: What is the matter with you? She said: Your brother Abu'd-Darda' has no need of worldly matters. Abu'd-Darda' came and made some food for him. Salman said: Eat (with me). Abu'd-Darda' said: I am fasting. Salman said: I will not eat until you eat – so Abu'd-Darda' ate. When night came, Abu'd-Darda' went to get up (to pray) and Salman said: Sleep, so he slept. Then he went to get up again and Salman said: Sleep. Then towards the end of the night, Salman said: Now get up – and they prayed.

Salman said to him: Your Lord has a right over you, your own self has a right over you, and your wife has a right over you, so give each one who has a right their due rights.

Then he came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and told him about that, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Salman has spoken the truth."

If this is what is meant by calling the group by this name, there does not seem to be anything wrong with it, and what is meant is that a person will spend some time with his friends, talking to them and exchanging ideas with them, and chatting about permissible things for the purpose of relaxation, so that he will then be able to focus on his worship after that with energy.

One of the conditions stipulated regarding that is that the time spent with this group should be short and should fulfil the purpose of warding off boredom, and no more than that. If it is done more than that, it will become harmful and will be a waste of time, and it will be detrimental to the individual and will be of no benefit to him.

But if the one who says that is someone who spends most of his time in idle pursuits, playing and messing about, and he regards the time spent on each as being the same and – not only that – he also does what idle people do, who spend most of their time in playing and messing around, this is detrimental to both religious and worldly interests; it is foolishness and bad judgement.

However, it should be noted that some people say these words and what they mean is a time for worship and a time for doing whatever they want of playing and messing about – even if it is in prohibited matters. This is not permissible at all, for the Muslim is enjoined to avoid what Allah has prohibited at all times. All that is acceptable is having some time to have a break, in which he can ward off boredom and fatigue by doing some permissible things, not what is prohibited.

And Allah knows best.