

Our Qur'an vs. Our Cellphones

By Muaz Billoo

The Muslims are not heedless of the world around them. In fact, the Muslim constantly reflects and ponders over the signs of Allah ﷻ around him, as mentioned in Surah Ali 'Imran,

“Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day are signs for the people of intellect: those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and on their sides, whilst also pondering over the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying) ‘Our Lord! You have not created this in vain, so save us from the punishment of the Fire!’”

Among the signs mentioned in the aforementioned ayah is the alternation between the night and day, which results in what we experience as time. Time is among the greatest blessings of Allah ﷻ, for as long as we still have time left in this world, we still have an opportunity in engaging in that which pleases Allah ﷻ. Therefore, the prerogative is to take advantage of our time and utilize it wisely.

However, one obstruction that coerces us into wasting our time is the excessive usage of the cellphone. This device is very detrimental to our spiritual growth throughout our lives, as it consumes our time with things that are of no benefit to us, and often, it tempts us into engaging in behaviors which Allah ﷻ has forbidden. The time that we are supposed to be spending in the remembrance of Allah, the recitation of Qur'an, the acquisition of knowledge, and even with our families is instead drained into Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and other forms of social media. This demonstrates an unfortunate disregard for the value of our time.

How can we value the time that Allah ﷻ has given us? Firstly, we must not fall into the category of people that The Prophet ﷺ has warned us about, **“Numerous people fall into deception regarding two blessings: health and free time.”**¹

Ibn Battal رضى الله عنه explains, “A person cannot truly have free time until he has a healthy body. Whoever acquires this should ensure that he does not fall into deception by neglecting to be grateful to Allah for what He has favored him with. To be grateful to him is to fulfill His commands and abstain from his prohibitions. Whoever neglects this, then he has been deceived. The statement, “numerous people,” indicates that there only a few that can truly fulfill the purport of the Hadith.”²

Hafiz ibn al-Jawzi رضى الله عنه writes, “Sometimes a person is healthy, but he does not have free time due to his occupations in seeking a livelihood. At times he is financially independent, but

¹ *Musnad Ahmad* (2340), *Sahih al-Bukhari* (6412), *Jami' al-Tirmidhi* (2304), *Sunan al-Darimi* (2736), *Sunan ibn Majah* (4170).

² *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* 20/7

he is not healthy. So when he has both (free time and health), then he is overpowered by laziness from engaging in the obedience of Allah ﷻ. Such a person is in deception...this world serves as a farmland for the hereafter. In it is such a business whose profits will only become apparent in the hereafter. Whoever utilizes his free time and health for the obedience of Allah ﷻ, then he is truly fortunate. Whoever utilizes it for the disobedience of Allah ﷻ, then he has fallen into deception.”³

Should we not use as many moments as we can to our advantage? Should we not dedicate hours to the recitation of The Qu’ran instead of hours on our cellphones? We often hear of the historical reports about Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150) ﷺ completing the Qur’an 62 times in Ramadan⁴, and Imam al-Shafi (d. 204) ﷺ completing the Qur’an 60 times in Ramadan⁵ and we brush it off as being impossible for us. According to some reports, Imam Abu Hanifah ﷺ would complete the Qur’an every single night outside of Ramadan.⁶ Indeed, the people of those generations were closer to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, and thus had greater barakah in their time. However, it is not logically impossible for someone to do this in our era.

Let’s think about how long it would take someone from our time to complete such a task. A typical Hafiz of the Qur’an can recite an entire juz of the Qur’an in approximately 20 minutes. That would mean he can complete three juz per hour. That would mean it would take him 10 hours to recite the entire Qur’an from start to finish. He still has another 14 hours to take care of the rest of his responsibilities. Thus, it is still logically possible for someone to recite the entire Qur’an in one day.

Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Zakariyya Kandelwi ﷺ, who passed away in Madinah Munawwarah in 1982 (just 40 years ago) writes, “**My grandmother (may Allah enlighten her resting place) was also a Hafizah and she knew the Qur’an very well. Her daily habit was to recite one manzil⁷ together with her other household duties. During Ramadan she recited forty paras (juz) daily.**”⁸ He also narrates from his father, Maulana Yahya Kandelwi (d. 1917 CE) ﷺ, who was the elder brother of Maulana Ilyas Kandelwi ﷺ, while he was a young boy, “**On having performed the fajr salah, I used to sit on the roof and start the recitation of the Qur’an. From there I could see the roof of my grandfather. By Zuhr time I had completed the full Khatam (i.e. one full recitation of the Qur’an).**”⁹

Reciting the entire Qur’an in one day is not feasible for the vast majority of us. Most of our pious predecessors had a habit of reciting the entire Qur’an on a weekly basis. Imam al-

³ *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* 20/8

⁴ *Uqud al-Juman* of al-Salihi pg. 319 with reference to *Akhbar Abi Hanifah* of al-Saimari pg. 44

⁵ *Adab al-Shafi wa Manaqibuhu* of ibn Abi Hatim (97).

⁶ *Fadail Abi Hanifah wa Akhbaru* by Ibn Abi al-‘Awam (43).

⁷ Manzil refers to a method used to divide the Qur’an into seven portions so that one can organize his life to be able to recite the entire Qur’an on a weekly basis.

⁸ *Aap Beeti* (English) pg. 75

⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 70

Nawawi رحمته الله writes, “It is befitting for one to maintain the recitation of the Qur’an day and night, while travelling or in residence. The pious predecessors, may Allah be pleased with them, had varying habits in relation to their capacity of completing the Qur’an. Some of them would complete a full recitation every two months, while others every month, some every ten nights, some every eight nights, and **yet others would complete it every seven nights, and this (completing it every seven nights) was the practice of the majority of our predecessors...** Ibn Abu Dawud narrations with his authentic chain that [Imam] Mujahid رحمته الله used to complete the Qur’an in Ramadan between Maghrib and ‘Isha. As for those who used to complete the Qur’an in one rak’ah, then this cannot be counted due to the abundance of those who have done it. Among them was ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan رحمته الله, Tamim al-Dari رحمته الله, and Sa’id ibn Jubair رحمته الله.¹⁰ The preferred position is that (the duration for completing the Qur’an) varies with each person.”¹¹

Thus, we should set healthy goals and organize our time wisely to ensure that we are progressing in our completion of the Qur’an. If a person wanted to complete the entire Qur’an on a weekly basis, how long would it take him? Hereunder the divisions of the Qur’an have been reproduced and approximate duration of how long it would take using a 15-line mushaf, assuming it would take a person 25 mins to recite a juz

1. **Manzil #1:** From Surah al-Fatihah up to and including Surah al-Nisa.
 - a. This spans 106 pages and it would take approximately 2 hours and 12 minutes.
2. **Manzil #2:** From Surah al-Maidah up to and including Surah al-Tawbah.
 - a. This spans 101 pages and would take approximately 2 hours and 6 minutes.
3. **Manzil #3:** From Surah al-Yunus up to and including Surah al-Nahl.
 - a. This spans 73 pages and would take approximately 1 hour and 31 minutes.
4. **Manzil #4:** From Surah al-Isra up to and including Surah al-Furqan.
 - a. This spans 88 pages and would take approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes.
5. **Manzil #5:** From Surah al-Shu’ara up to and including Surah Yasin.
 - a. This spans 78 pages and would take approximately 1 hour and 38 minutes.
6. **Manzil #6:** From Surah al-Saffat up to and including Surah al-Hujurat.
 - a. This spans 71 pages and would take approximately 1 hour and 29 minutes.
7. **Manzil #7:** From Surah Qaf up to and including Surah al-Nas.
 - a. This spans 86 pages and would take approximately 1 hour and 47 minutes.

¹⁰ Imam Abu Hanifah has also been reported to do this. See: *Fada'il Abi Hanifah wa Akhbaruahu* of ibn Abi al-'Awam (41).

¹¹ *al-Adhkar* pg. 170

A person who follows the above schedule will be able to complete the Qur'an on a weekly basis. Assuming 25 minutes to complete a juz, the most a person will spend on a manzil on the Qur'an would be approximately 2 hours and 12 minutes. A report published by ABC news states, **Teens spend an average of seven hours and 22 minutes on their phones a day, and tweens -- ages 8 to 12 -- are not far behind, at four hours and 44 minutes daily, according to a new report by Common Sense Media, a nonprofit that promotes safe technology and media for children.**¹² Unfortunately, most adults are not free of this pandemic either. If we can spend 5+ hours on our phones on a daily basis, and if the majority of that time is not productive, then surely we are capable of replacing that wasted time with the Qur'an. It comes down to whether we can value our time or not.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (d. 33) ﷺ said, **"I have not regretted anything as much I have regretted a single day in which my time (in this life) decreased, and my good deeds did not increase."**¹³

Imam al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110) ﷺ said, **"Oh son of Adam! You are only a number of days! So when a day passes, a part of you passes."**¹⁴

Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 463) ﷺ narrates that Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 161) ﷺ once came to Basrah to hear a hadith from Hammad ibn Salamah ﷺ. When they met, Sufyan immediately requested Hammad to narrate the hadith before greeting him with salaam. When Hammad finished narrating the hadith, he asked Sufyan why he did not start with the greeting of salaam. Sufyan replied: **I feared that I might die before hearing the hadith from you.**¹⁵

Abu Dawud al-Hafari¹⁶ (d. 203) ﷺ said, **"If it were said to Abu Hanifah, 'you are guaranteed to die within five days,' he would not be able to increase anything from his deeds.**¹⁷

Imam Abdur Rahman ibn Mahdi (d. 198) ﷺ said, **"If it was said to Hammad ibn Salamah (d. 167), 'you are guaranteed to die tomorrow,' then he would not be able to increase anything in his good deeds [because he used to live every day like it was his last in striving to acquire the Pleasure of Allah]."**¹⁸

What then, is our situation when we waste hours on our phones in Ramadan? We should set goals for our recitation of Qur'an this Ramadan, and for reducing all things which will waste our time, especially our cellphones. May Allah allow us to use our time wisely.

¹² <https://abcnews.go.com/US/teens-spend-hours-screens-entertainment-day-report/story?id=66607555>

¹³ *Qeemah al-Zaman 'Indal 'Ulama* by Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah pg. 47

¹⁴ *Hilyah al-Awliya* of Abu Nu'aym 2/148

¹⁵ *Al Jami' Li Akhlaq al-Rawi wa Adab al-Sami'* 2/182

¹⁶ Al-Hafar is a location in Kufah, 'Iraq. See: *al-Ansab* of al-Sam'ani 4/192-193.

¹⁷ *Fadail Abi Hanifah wa Akhbaruhu* of ibn Abi al-'Awam (49)

¹⁸ *Tadhkirah al-Huffadh* of al-Zahabi 1/203