

## MODULE 4

**Class title:** Thinking beyond today - part 1 (1<sup>st</sup> part of a 2 lesson series)

**Aim of lesson:** To understand the value of purposeful planning for this world & for the Hereafter.

**Category:** Personal development

**Class Format:** Power Point Presentation & discussion & activity

(Greeting to students) *AssalamalaikumwaRahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanirRajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *BismillahirRahmanirRaheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbishrahlisadriwayassirliamriwahluluqdatumillisaniyafqahuhqawli* (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slides 1 – 5:

Have you heard the story of ‘Alice in wonderland’?

Student: yes

Teacher: You’re not in a kindergarten class today, don’t worry. . What happened to Alice? Any ideas?

Student: She goes down a rabbit hole

Teacher: And?

Student: Then she drinks a potion and becomes small.

Teacher: Yes and she goes to this wonderland. She has no idea what that place is. She finds a cat and she asked; “Could you tell me please which way I ought to walk from here?”

She was lost so she asked cat for directions. Now the cat was a smart one and asked a very good question. It said; “that depends a great deal on where you want to get to”.

That was a logical question because destination determines direction. The cat asked if there was a specific place she wanted to reach. “I don’t much care where” said Alice. Now the cat replies “then it doesn’t matter which way to walk! “with a sly smile on its face.

What sort of a person does Alice strike you as?

Student: a very silly person because she is asking a cat for directions!

Teacher: Somehow I have a feeling that the cat is smarter than Alice! What else?

Student: carefree

Teacher: Yes, she seems carefree because she has no specific direction. She seems silly because she doesn’t even know where she wants to go. I think we are all like Alice in a way... there are thousand and one things that we don’t know in this world so what do we do? We ask the person who knows. That is the smarter thing to do. You are growing up and you are learning but you as well as me and others around us are not and can’t be knowledgeable about each and every thing. In a way we are also in a wonderland where many things are a mystery to us.

In order to learn, you seek, right? You seek knowledge from a person who obviously knows more than you. For eg. You want to learn economics, you go for tuitions to a person who is well acquainted in the subject but what if somebody guides you to go to a teacher who is good at geography, would you go just because she is really cool and a popular choice amongst your peers??

Students: No

Teacher: Why?

Student: because we don't want to learn about that subject. It would waste our time.

Teacher: right, so since you know your goal, you know what you want so you made your choice accordingly in order to utilize your time to maximum benefit. Hmm, that **would** be a wise choice.

Now that you're growing up and you are in your teens; you are learning a lot of things. You are making a lot of important choices at this stage, doing your O levels, choosing your A levels subjects. Aren't you? You are not little kids any more. If you pay attention like most of you are right now, you will be able to learn something *inshaAllah*, which will be vital in your life.

If you don't choose the direction of your life now, when will you choose? When you are 75 years old! with a stick in your hand? Or do you want your grandchildren to tell you - grandma do you want to become a doctor when you grow up ...

Slide 6:

I don't think most of you are old enough to drive a car but if I say you are driving a car already, would you believe me?

Student: Actually we are driving a car already. We drive our life.

Teacher: Smart girl. She gets to the point quick. You are driving your life because you are making big and small decisions which will affect your life in the long run. Any examples?

Student: the subjects you choose

Student: aim of your life that what you want to be.

Teacher: Exactly. Perhaps you want to become a doctor so you will choose science subjects not commerce. If you are a little undecided now so you are careful to choose subjects which can help you branch out to your desired path later right? Not ones which will trap you in a profession you never wanted to step foot in.

You are not only choosing your subjects today which are important, you choose friends too. Other than academics, what is important in your life?

Student: socializing

Teacher: Yes. Now imagine you are the driver of your car. With driving comes the package of responsibility. A driver should know where he wants to go. He must watch his speed to avoid accidents and usually makes an effort to reach his destination as soon as possible. He avoids getting lost because that would end up wasting his time.

If you are about to drive your car and I ask you; "where are you going?" and you say; "I don't know. Anywhere I guess". That shows you are not time bound. A good and efficient driver determines

destination before gearing into action. If your destination is going to a hospital you will not aim for the zoo. Will you? You'll not choose the direction which would lead you to Karachi zoo.

Whether it's the zoo, hospital, school or any other place we try to reach our destination as soon as possible so as not to waste time.

As a driver of my life, I want to be just as efficient and I don't want to waste my time. I want to reach my goal in the most effective manner. If you want to be an artist, you would want to be on the track which would lead you to Indus valley school of Arts or NCA (National College of Arts) or to some school abroad perhaps. If you say that I am going to be a great artist in a few years but I haven't really worked out how?? I just want to chill and party at the moment!! Is that ambitious, far sighted or clever?

Student: No – just wishful thinking

Teacher: That would make you just like Alice. Agreed so far? You are the driver of your life. You are not the passenger. A passenger is passive. He is not in control. It's the driver who decides. Now is the time to take control, to take charge of your life because if you don't do that now you will never be able to do it. So today *InshaAllah*, when you leave this class I hope that you leave with this message, this thought that "I am going to choose a proper direction for myself, which would get me the best of both the worlds".

Slides 7 – 8:

Now for this you need to think beyond now. You need to think that today is not the end, it is the beginning of the future but the dilemma of young generation is that they say "live for today – who has seen tomorrow."

I am not saying that your head should be in clouds all the time thinking and planning nonstop, never having fun or a break. All I am saying is that, think ahead and plan accordingly. For example, if I say 'what are you going to do after you leave this class?' And she answers 'I don't know I just want to think about right now'. Strange answer, don't you think? Most of you would probably have at least a short term plan that we will go home, have tea, do some piled up home work or something. Would you call such thinkers who know what they are going to do as boring, losers? Or just people with common sense.

Similarly there are some who have a higher dose of such common sense and they not only plan their day, they set guidelines for their life so that each step they take, each decision they make, leads them to their desired goal. Difficult as it may sound, I will make it simpler for you today *InshaAllah*.

Ok, tell me, if you want to go to your house in Clifton (a residential/commercial area of Karachi) from here, your direction should be towards where?

Student: Clifton

Teacher: Clifton. There is going to be a main road, and there will be smaller turns later on but firstly you will go towards where?

Student: the main road

Teacher: Exactly, the main road. Then there will be smaller turns later on but you will not go towards Tariq Road (which is an area opposite in direction from Clifton), that is in a totally opposite direction, so the road you take should take you where your destination is.

The purpose of this class will be achieved once you realize that you have to take that vital step towards the main road which will eventually take you towards your desired destination. That destination is different for everybody. Maybe some of you will opt for a profession while others may feel content being a homemaker.

Slides 9 – 10:

Teacher: What do you see here?

Student: children playing

Teacher: Children playing around aimlessly, one is running to the left, other is running to the right

Student; they are happy to be together

Teacher: Sometimes when you see children like that running around in the park or a garden and you ask “sweetie, what are you doing” and they say “nothing just running around” - Sometimes we are also like them aimless, direction less, not time bound. We are just wasting our time, passing it. You often hear people saying “how do I kill time?”.

Student: yeah, it’s like time just doesn’t pass.

Teacher: Maybe this attitude suits the kids but not us, at our age. What do kids get distracted by in their aimless running?

Student: candy floss man or cute kittens, ice cream man etc.

Slides 11- 13:

Teacher: what distracts us from our goals? (if we happen to have any goal that is)

Students: television, friends, video games....

Teacher: Yes, these things can be very distracting. You get a new ipad and you forget about the tests which are coming up because you get too engrossed in it and you forget that there is something more important. Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an;

(Teacher quotes from slide 14)

Allah (swt) is saying that I know you feel that life is just fun, games and party. It is all about chilling and enjoying. I know you feel that way because I have created it as a test for you. Only those who perceive it as a test and understand that this is not a game can prepare for this exam and thus attempt to succeed while those who just play around will suffer the ultimate loss. This is true for any aim, whether worldly or not.

Teacher: Who are those people called - *al Muttaqun*?

Student: the pious

Teacher: Who are the pious? Am I? Are you? Who decides? How can we know? We can know by looking at some people who are smart enough to realize that this is not HOME, it is a temporary abode and that the real home is *Jannah* . They understand that this game is going to finish soon as it has finished already for many around us.

My cousin was 8 years old when she died. Is there a guarantee or a written certificate of life that we have brought with us? No! the thin strand of life may be cut any second. We need to understand and prepare for this reality. Allah (swt) asks us to understand. He is asking ‘will you not then understand?’

Slide 15:

Now that leaves us with the question that how do we get on the right track? When I was your age or in fact later then that even, I used to go to these Qur’an classes, and I was like this is really difficult stuff to do. Along with studies and my friends, I can’t possibly do all these things. They seem just right and easy while I am in the class but outside it, they seem rather impossible.

Do you feel like that too sometimes?

Student: yes

Teacher: You come to *Perceptions*, it’s a different world but when you go to school, you feel that it is an entirely different world and you can’t decide what is the best path to take between both these worlds. Where is the balance? We all want best of both the worlds so how do we get that? Whether it’s a worldly ambition like becoming an architect, astronaut etc or being a *Momin* along with that, you can achieve this by a simple technique of ‘beginning with the end in mind’.

Have you ever made a jigsaw puzzle? Before starting to make it, you would like to have a look at what the picture is? Is it a dog, a house or what? This gives you an idea where to start because now you have the end in mind. That is exactly what you want to be doing with puzzle of your life. Think what you want to be in the end. If you want your dreams to be turned into reality then stop sleeping, wake up! Otherwise your dreams will remain dreams. You will not be able to convert them into reality. You have to think beyond today. Beyond NOW into THEN.

Slide 16:

Beginning with the end in mind stops you from blowing in the wind. This presentation today is for those who want to change their perception of life. It is for those who want to shift their paradigms. For whom? For yourself!

There was this exercise in a book I was reading that if you really want to bring about a change in your life, then go to a quiet corner of your house and imagine yourself at least a year from now if not ten years. Close your eyes and imagine that a person is coming towards you and as she draws nearer you realize that ‘oh, it’s me!’ What changes would you like to see in yourself? Would you want to look different? How would you want to feel?

Would you like to think O’ I’m an art student now Great! O’ I’ve lost ten pounds, lovely! O’ my specs are gone, good! However, if you want to lose ten pounds, naturally you want to be on that diet which would help you to lose ten pounds. Stop eating chocolate cake!

If you want to be an arts graduate then you need to work on refining your art skills to get into that school in the first place. You’ll never be in grad school if you don’t stop making school’s cafeteria your hideout. So first imagining yourself at the end of one year, two years, three years, etc and then make a list of what you need to stop doing and what you need to START doing to get where you want to get. Standing and waiting will get you nowhere.

Slide 17:

This technique of beginning with the end in mind is necessary for every big and small task. An architect draws a blue print **before** building a house. He doesn't go to the site and say "Ok righty ho, let's build a house today."

Student: He makes it on a paper

Teacher: he makes it on a paper. He plans each and every detail.

Student: we should start first on small things then on bigger.

Slides 18 – 19:

Teacher: We are doing it on smaller things consciously or unconsciously any way. Don't we create an outline before writing an essay (at least I hope you do). We read a recipe before baking a cake. I won't just go into the kitchen and say 'kids, let's make brownies today'. My kids will say 'but mom, do you have a recipe'. If I tell them, no dear I don't but let's start anyway. Then my kids will probably figure out that there aren't going to be any brownies for tea, just some burnt flour with cocoa.

Slide 20:

Now question is why must we begin with the end in mind?

Student: so we know which path to take

Student: we don't know when we are going to die

Teacher: more the reason to begin now! You see we get our act sorted – choose our path and get going on it – and even if Allah (swt) chooses to take us back say a few days after that – *Alhamdulillah*, we began our effort, our time ended, but we were on the right track.

I am not necessarily talking about end of life. It could be the end of week or a year etc. Maybe if you keep end of week in mind, you would strive for some due assignments to be finished. If you keep end of year in mind, then perhaps your goal maybe to achieve better grades in at least two subjects. If you keep end of life in mind, then you would be conscious of Allah (swt) in everything you do. Thus you work accordingly.

Slide 21:

We need to begin with the end in mind because we find ourselves at critical crossroads. At your age when you are so young and raging with hormones, you are required to make essential choices. You have to start driving your life because if you don't, someone else will. It may be your parents, friends or the media. Parents are usually your well-wishers but we don't always want to become what they want us to.

Student: They want me to be a doctor but I want to be a business woman

Teacher: Sometimes the media drives us. It's the soap operas and talk shows that you watch which may want one to become a celebrity. The media portrays that the life of a celebrity is flawless and that they are the happiest people on the planet.

Slides 22 – 23:

So sometimes it is the media which will influence your choices and at other times it is the friends that you choose today which can have a positive or negative influence on your tomorrow. At times it is better to have no friends for a while than to have the wrong friends. So if you have wrong kind of friends then they lead you into things which are really distracting. For e.g. If your friends are into drugs they might encourage you to become an addict yourself.

Slides 24 – 26:

We all want to be accepted by our peers so we desperately want to do the 'in' thing. We do not want to be alienated so we swim with the tide and do whatever our peers are doing. By doing this we end up wasting a lot of our time, we lose focus of our goal and retracing your steps is a hard and tiring journey so choose friends wisely. You may be without friends of your age for a while but know in your heart that it is for the best.

Student: Even if we end up being friends with a much younger age group

Teacher: your friends don't have to be your age all the time. Sometimes people find their best friend in their grandfather, in their younger sibling or an older cousin.

I read a story of this guy who had a really close friend who went abroad for studies. When he returned, he started hanging out with a chap who was a drug addict. Now his best friend was in a fix for a while. He did not want to lose his only buddy but he did not want to end up drugged on a roadside so he made the difficult but sensible choice of parting ways. Life moves on for everybody. The choices you make will affect who you become in the future.

Remember much of your future hangs on who you hang out with.

Slides 27 – 29:

You might feel that you like to go with the flow because it is easier and you get everyone's approval that way but where does the flow go? Usually downhill. Remember that the road to anywhere is really a life to nowhere. Do what you like with your life but choose a direction. If your friends are leading you towards a path which you don't wish to take or is distracting you from your goal, be strong enough to take control. Make smart decisions even if they seem difficult at that time.

Slide 30:

Never assume that the herd **must** know the way they are going, because usually they don't. Nowadays we see every Tom, Dick and Harry wearing designer stuff – everyone wants a so & so brand this and so & so brand that – designer or death! It seems. If someone chooses not to be a part of this rat race of

designer wear, then it takes strength of character on that person's part because she will be going against the flow. We make our own choices and must not be influenced by the herd.

I just remembered this incident when I was in the car with a family member and he lost his way. After a while he started going in the direction where most of the cars were turning. When I asked him if he had found the way finally, he said no but "all the cars are going that way!"

Slides 32 – 33:

We have concluded that:

- a) it is wise to choose a direction for your life
- b) and for short and long term plans, begin with the end in mind whether they are worldly plans or related to the Hereafter.

As we all face the dilemma of how to get the best of both worlds, let's figure out this simple plan which works for me so I want to share it with you today. We will draw a road map of our life and focus on the various directions that the road branches out at different stages of our life

**(Note:** Teacher uses a white board and marker to draw a mind map – mind map attached as separate document in this folder)

This is the path of our life. I'm starting from here with you being a student.

Teacher: What is your focal point?

Student: studies, friends

Student: enjoy life

Teacher: yes you want to enjoy life

Student: party

Teacher: right. Of course life starts before you are a student, you are an infant, toddler and so on but I am starting from where you are right now. Now you move on from being a student and become a professional. The clock is ticking for all of us, tick tock, tick tock, right? Now you have become a professional; whatever you wanted to be; teacher, artist, doctor whatever.

Now what is your centre/aim? You want to earn and you want to be great at what you do. You may wish to climb the social ladder by hanging out with people who are more accomplished in this world etc. Your focus in life changed from what it was when you were a student and thus your goals changed too.

Some of you may not choose the path of any career after the student stage; they might jump to the third stage and guess what that is? You get married!!

Student: But I don't want to get married..



Teacher: Your choice honey. I jumped straight from student to being a wife. Never opted for a serious career and it works for me but maybe not for others. However I will not discuss in length these personal choices. I only want you to understand that no matter which stage of life you are at, you are constantly moving on the path of life because the clock of our life is ticking constantly!

Teacher: What does a wife's life revolves around?

Student: Her husband

Teacher: Yes and dressing up, decorating her house and showing off her jewelry... Generally a person, after marriage, steps into parenthood and in that stage what is the focus?

Student: Nooo, no kids!

Teacher: If your parents had decided that, you wouldn't be here. ok , no kids for you but normally people prefer to have a brat pack around them so in that case what is a parent's focus?

Student: best school, good life

Teacher: Yes, the children's needs become the parent's priority and eventually that parent becomes a grandparent and reaches a time when the clock stops ticking. There comes death in all its guises and sooner or later we have to face the Day of Judgment.

We are all on that road which leads to the end but the side roads (which are the focal point at each stage) should not distract us so much that we forget the reality of facing Allah (swt). If we wander too far into those side roads (distractions), then retracing our steps will be a hard and tiring journey so to stay on course; do not lose sight of your goal.

Teacher: What is a *momin's* goal?

Student: *Jannah*

Teacher: yes, eternal bliss/ *Jannah*.

All of us need to be involved in all the things we discussed above. Studies, fun, kids etc but if we keep the end in mind - the bigger picture in front of us - we will not stray from the main road too far *inshaAllah*.

How? Well, as students, you need to study. Just make sure you don't resort to unfair means of succeeding and you don't go overboard while having fun.

As a professional, you will earn but do not compromise morality for material benefits.

As a spouse, you would dress up and decorate but try not to be ostentatious and observe hijab.

As parents, you will be devoted to your kids needs but make sure their spiritual needs are also catered to.

In short, BE CONSCIOUS OF ALLAH (swt)'s PRESENCE IN EVERYTHING YOU DO and you will be on the right track whether it is something small or big, worldly or not. After all no one can dodge the D.O.J (Day of Judgment).

Clock is ticking for all of us and we **will** eventually come to the end of the beginning; death. Tick tock, tick tock!!

(Slide 34 quoted to conclude Part 1)

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbulzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun  
'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

**(Note to teacher:** Slide 31 in the power point presentation is hidden, as it was not used for this session. It has not been deleted as you may want to use it for your class.)