

#### **MODULE 4**

**Class title:** Thinking beyond today – part 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> part of a 2 lesson series)

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

**Category:** Personal Development

**Class Format:** Power Point Presentation

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*  
(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*  
(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*  
(*Du'a*) *Rabbishrahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli*(Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Today we will be concluding our earlier discussion on “Thinking beyond today”.

For those of you who were not present last week, let me quickly recap.

We talked about ‘Alice in the wonderland’ that how she did not know where she was so she asked the cat for directions. We concluded that we are all a little like Alice as we do not know what our direction of life is. We don’t know what is our goal in life? We also discussed that you are at the crossroads of your lives where you are required to take important decisions like what subjects to take, what kind of relationship do you want with your family? What kind of friends to hang out with? I know it’s difficult but you have to do that because now you’re growing up and you’re moving into adult hood. This makes you the driver of your life.

Teacher: Is that what we discussed?

Students: yes.

Teacher: You are the driver means you are taking control now. You’re not a kid anymore and so you will not be passive but active. We tend to get distracted by various events or inventions yet we need to understand the value of time because it is running out. You need to draw a road map of your life so that each step you take is in the right direction.

Teacher: What was another important thing that we discussed?

Student: Begin with the end in mind.

Teacher: Yes, begin with the end in mind. For e.g, imagine you are hungry and there is a scrumptious pizza in front of you, will you just gobble it in one go?

Student: chew it

Teacher: chew it? Will you take up the entire 14<sup>th</sup> street 20 inch pizza and start chewing on it?

Student: You have to cut it into slices first.

Teacher: Yes, keep the end in mind that you want your hunger to be sated so you go about it in the best possible way which is to cut the pizza into smaller pieces and then eat one by one.

Similarly, we all want to do big things in life but we can't do it in one jump so think strategically and plan methodically. Take one step at a time towards your smaller goals to bigger ones. Do not get easily distracted and even if you do, do not lose sight of your goal and retrace your steps as soon as possible. This way precious time will not be wasted. However, only those people will follow this smart way of planning their life who wish to reach a destination or a goal. Those who live like animals, eat, reproduce and die and trust me, many of us lead our life like that. The journey of their life ends without a purpose or an ambition.

Students: Miss, Allah (swt) said that He sent everyone with a purpose even if you don't know what you're doing, you are sent for a purpose.

Teacher: yes, but what is that purpose? We need to live in this world so we have to do certain worldly things. We have to go to college, we need to study and we need to have friends. We have to socialize but on the other hand we are concerned about our Here after as well because we believe that this is not the only world, there is a Hereafter as well, a more permanent abode.

We are servants of Allah (swt) and we have been sent with a purpose but do I just do that and not anything else? How do I maintain a balance? What is my end (purpose) in life and how do I achieve it? We have discussed already that the best way to go about things is to begin with the end in mind. If you are already doing that, then great but if you think that it's a tricky situation and you don't know how to get best of both the worlds, then draw a road map of your life. We did this in our previous class, I will recap very quickly. We will be short of time if we go into details.

This is your life! You're a student, you become a professional, and you choose a career. Now this is the main road of your life and time is passing. The clock is ticking; tick tock tick tock. It's not waiting for anybody. Studies, friends etc (smaller roads which take us away from the main road) that we discussed in length are necessary distractions that we all need for a balanced life but if we get too engrossed in them, we may get lost and retracing our steps to that main road ( the purpose of your life) becomes a tedious and time consuming effort.

All of us have to choose a road which would make us a career woman or maybe a wife and later a mother. This is the circle of life. We are all on that journey whether we like it or not. You can't be a student for the rest of your life; you will be crossing that phase to move to the next level. Eventually there has to be this walk where you move towards the next stage of your life. You have to come back to this main road which is leading to the end of your journey.

Now how can we create a balance between this World and that one is the tricky bit because when you can't separate both from each other. You can't become a monk or a nun and you wouldn't want to be an atheist either. Time ends for everyone eventually and we have to face D.O.J.

Teacher: Any guesses?

Student: Day of Judgment. (D.O.J)

Teacher: We wish we could dodge (DOJ) it but we can't. We have to face it so it is better to lead our life in such a way that when the clock stops ticking, we are ready for it. For some the clock stops ticking here (student phase) and for some here (grandparents stage) but we don't know. There are no guarantees so the best thing to do is to think beyond today. If that requires for you to make some changes or adjustments in your lifestyle, then you should do that as soon as possible. Let me quote a few lines which deliver this message;

I am staring at the girl in the mirror,  
I'm asking her to change her ways.  
And no message could have been any clearer,  
If you want to make the world a better place;  
Then take a look at yourself  
And then make a change!'

Teacher: Where does the change begin from?

Students: from yourself.

Teacher: yes, so we will have to develop the courage to initiate a change in ourselves. If not, then ok; be like animals. The clock is ticking for everyone.

Student: Are these the lyrics of a song?

Teacher: I don't know really! I read it in this book called "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens" by Sean Covey. It is worth reading if you can spare some time.

Here is a quote from the Qur'an, can anyone read it out loud and clear?

Slides 37 – 40:

Just as we make a blue print before constructing a house or create an outline before writing an essay and we go through a recipe before cooking. Similarly if we want to live a purposeful life; we need to make a mission statement. Now that sounds tough, a very daunting idea, a mission statement? My God! How do I do that? But it's very important and is going to be very useful for

you. Every successful company has a mission statement. In fact all of us do have a mission of life in our minds. Some want to be a doctor, some engineer and for some being a good muslim and serving humanity is very important. For some it is vague but for others it is quite clear but generally we do not pen it down because we think it's too much trouble. However, if you do not pen them down, they may be termed as wishful thinking or dreams. Writing them makes them more concrete and enable you to turn your dreams into reality.

'I wish I was a really good student', 'I wish I could be a great Muslim', etc. Do you want to be proactive or remain a dreamer? Those of you who don't want to wake up; fine, you can remain in your web and continue with the wishful thinking no problem but those of you who want to make a difference, who are thinking that okay now I'm old enough, I'm not a baby anymore I have to take charge now! I know what I want and I want to sort out the puzzle of life; you need to make a mission statement. It sounds hard but let's try today, shall we?

Slide 41:

Mission statement is like a tree with deep roots. It helps you face the storms of your life. We all have problems in our life but if we have a strong mission, this would help us to remain stable. Just like a tree, a mission statement is alive and continues to grow. You can make changes in it, you can modify it and you can edit it or add to it. Okay? But there has to be a mission that says okay, I want this, this and this from life and this is how I will achieve it and then stay persistent, stay focused despite the problems and distractions.

Slides 42 43:

Everything around us changes. Isn't that true? Change is the only constant, they say. Friends keep changing. One minute she is your best friend, the other minute she is talking behind your back. One moment capris are in, the other moment it is the *churidar* pajama (tight pants). So changes are everywhere but if you have a mission then that allows you to hold your ground otherwise you will be blown away with the wind or swept away with the flow.

We discussed this last time that where does the flow lead to?

Students: downhill.

Teacher: They say 'go with the flow'. Why go with the flow?

If it's not my direction why should I go with it? Going downhill is not my direction! Just because the whole world is going crazy about a particular clothing brand, why should I? If the herd wants to go then fine let them. You should have the sense to make your own choice. Don't let people drive you like you're a donkey, use your brain.

If your mission is that you're not going to be extravagant despite being rich, then you will not buy a six, seven thousand rupee outfit just because your friend got one. People push you, drag

you but you go like sorry I can't, this is not my choice I don't want to be extravagant. Your mission keeps you firm.

Slides 44 and 46:

During an exam, if you are inclined to cheat but if a part of your mission statement is to 'be honest', then you would rather get less marks, have a clear conscience with a resolve to prepare more thoroughly next time.

These are a couple of examples of mission statements by some teenagers which I thought I'd share with you.

“Strive to be a good daughter, be proactive.....”

Being proactive means that you're not blaming others for things and are independent in your choices. E.g. you won't say that I would have reached my class early if only the roads were not so bad and the traffic not so crazy. Being proactive makes you plan ahead so that you leave a little early and not blame others for your own faults.

Another mission statement is:

“Sleep with clear conscience, have high self esteem, always remain faithful to Allah and strive for *Jannah*.”

Always remain faithful to Allah (swt) is I think, a beautiful part of the mission statement because you know sometimes it happens when one is hanging out in a group and it is time for *salah*, you might feel if I get up they will be like think I have become too religious.

So in that case we decide not be faithful to Allah (swt) just this once and you promise to yourself that this won't happen again but if your mission statement is that you'll be faithful to Allah (swt) then no matter what your friends say, you will muster up enough courage to get up and offer your *salah*.

Another striking part of this mission statement is 'Strive for Jannah'. This is also something we discussed earlier that how to create that perfect balance? How do I strive for Jannah? If I'm in my home; cooking and my mission is to strive for Jannah, how do I do that? I have to cook and I have to teach my kids, where is Jannah in that? But if I'm giving time to my kids in such a way that I have their *tarbiyah* in mind, I'm taking care of their spiritual appetite as well as their physical appetite then that's how I will be striving for Jannah.

If I'm cooking but I give some share of it to the servant as well you know and not give them leftovers only, then I'm trying to strive for Jannah in my own way. As a student you can go have fun and be with your friends but don't go overboard. Don't think you have to compromise being faithful to Allah (swt), only then will you have fun.

Being a career oriented women, don't think that now I have a career so I don't have to do *hijab* because my company doesn't really appreciate that or I can just be money focused and not moral focused. If you're money focused, showing off and you are being provocative then that means you're losing your way.

Are you following what I'm saying? Are you?

A mission statement can be in any form. It could be a poem, a quote or even a picture. A mission statement constitutes of things that you focus on in order to achieve what you want in life.

Student: Can a PMS be a word only?

Teacher: it could be a word too.

Slides 47- 48:

Allah (swt) has blessed you with talents. Some of you may be good speakers or writers, others may have listening skills etc. So your mission statement should be based on what you're really good at but maybe some of you maybe late bloomers which means that perhaps you haven't yet discovered your talents. For some it takes a little longer but it is okay because talents are detected not invented.

Student: They are often hidden

Teacher: yes, they are hidden and need to be detected. If someone is not very vocal, he can't go and speak publicly or if someone is not good at drawing cannot become an artist so whatever your skill or area of expertise is, utilize that for your benefit and for others. Use that as a tool for creating your mission statement. A person with good listening skills may choose to become a counselor and help others in that way.

Student: but you can develop skills?

Teacher: yes you can develop skills but if you do not have any talent of writing whatsoever then maybe after continuous effort, you may develop some level of skill but will never be as good as a person who has a natural flair for writing. We are all blessed with one talent or maybe multiple talents so why not focus on exploiting them instead of mimicking others.

So your mission statement shall not be a copy of the person sitting next to you because your talents and potentials are different from her. Each one of you is unique and please keep in mind that when I give you a piece of paper now to write a mission statement, it doesn't have to be a picture perfect statement. Remember, we discussed that a mission statement is like what?

Student: A tree, ever growing and changing

Teacher: Yes and does a tree blossom in a day? No, it starts from a small plant so do not try to make it perfect, just focus on making it come straight from your heart.

Slide 49:

Your mission statement is based upon what inspires you, what you enjoy doing, whom you admire, where you want to take your life. Usually what happens is that people who are artistic have role models who are artists. For those who are into religion they have living role models such as some scholar perhaps. Our Prophet (pbuh) is the best role model.

Slides 50- 54:

Just as there are many recipes to bake a cake, many ways to write a story, many ways to please your parents, there are many ways of achieving what you want in life so your PMS (Personal mission statement) should be based on what you're good at.

There is no **right way** of doing it so don't go about reading books that I want a perfect mission statement - because there is none.

Slides 55 -56:

A mission statement can be a poem, quote or anything that inspires you. It should be something which motivates and inspires you every time you read it. Nobody is going to judge it; nobody is going to check it. It is only for you.

Slides 57 – 58:

An exercise to discover your talents is that you imagine if 20 years down the road your parents, siblings or friends are interviewed on T.V about you, what would you want them to say? Try these activities at home and see how you surprise yourself. We do not have enough time here otherwise I would have loved to do these with you.

Slide 63:

Once you've made a mission statement keep it or place it somewhere you can read it frequently so that it becomes a constant reminder. Why should it become a constant reminder?

Student: so that you can read it again and again and see whether you are leading your life accordingly

Teacher: Anyone else?

Student: like you said so it reminds us that there is going to be a Day of Judgment.

Teacher: yes, exactly. For example you're too much into your career or as a mother you're like kids kids and kids all the time so when you happen to glance at your mission statement which is

on your dressing table, you realize that I need some time out. You know, I need to focus on my mission as well. I don't just have to be interested in children's feeding and clothing and dressing and sleeping and this and that I've to think am I on the right path? Am I feeding them spiritually as well because if I do that, then it means I'm on the right path and I'm not wasting my time.

Having a mission statement does not imply that you leave the whole world - this is not what we are saying here. If you are a career oriented woman you should know what I want in life and how do I get there? Do I get there by hook or by crook? Or do I remain conscious of Allah (swt) in everything I do. If you remain conscious of Allah (swt) in everything you do you're on the right path whether you are a career woman, a wife a mother, a grandmother a student or whatever.

Slides 64 – 67:

Now if your mission statement is to help humanity, then you focus on your talents to do so. Mother Teresa's mission was to clothe the naked and feed the hungry and she did that. We all remember her as a social worker. Martin Luther King's mission was to ensure civil rights to people. Jinnah's mission was to liberate Muslims. What do you want your mission to be?

Student: I have no idea.

Teacher: Now is the time to grow up and develop ideas... We will devote five minutes to this activity. You can complete it later on at home because this activity is designed to be done in thirty minutes while our class is of 45 minutes! However, we will get started and develop a rough idea as to what you want to do with the precious package of life.

(Teacher hands out "My mission statement part 1" for a free flow of ideas for a PMS)

Student: I don't know.

Teacher: Anything at all that comes to mind. Be honest with yourself, loosen up.

Student: I have nothing in my mind.

Teacher: what do you want to do in life honey? You want to be a doctor?

Student: I have nothing in my mind right now. I have no mission, no clue.

Teacher: think of one.

Student: I don't have one.

Teacher: no mission? Then are we like animals then? No mission, just living eating, drinking and sleeping? Well a good way of doing this activity is to find a place and time you like and then let the ideas flow. Okay think!

Student: miss can it be more than one?

Teacher: Yes. Don't worry about what's going to come out don't edit what you're writing. Do not stop writing.

Student: I'm done.

Teacher: you're done writing? Good. I have given you examples of mission statements which should give you some idea as to what you want in life but then these are somebody else's mission. You don't want to copy that.

(After conclusion of five minutes)

Sorry I know I have not given you enough time so those of you who have not finished, please stop. Like I said I'm not going to read your statements, nobody is going to judge you; nobody will grade you on what you've written. It is solely for you.

However, for those who have not written anything, who were at a loss about what they want to do with their lives, this should ring the alarm bell for you. Yes please it's about time that you think *what do I want in life? why have I come to this world?* You are fourteen fifteen years old and enough time has been spent aimlessly, this activity should be a wakeup call.

(Teacher proceeds to second part of activity where students edit and fine tune their PMS for which "My mission statement part 2" handout is distributed)

Now turn to the next page where we are on the next step of our mission statement. In this part you will make sense of your brain dump. You're going to edit it, add it, improve it and rephrase it in such a way that it inspires you. Okay?

Those of you who believe they are worth something, who think they have been born with a reason a purpose; will make an effort today, tomorrow, over the weekend or as soon as you get time but if you think you're born without a purpose then you will probably not give yourself a chance to raise yourself to your full capacity. Now that would be a real tragedy so do yourself a favor and make your life worthwhile; make a mission statement! Read it and follow it with perseverance.

Student: are you going to take our papers?

Teacher: no no, you're going to be keep them.

Slides 68 -70:

Prophet (pbuh)'s mission was to spread Islam. His mission has been passed to us after his death. One of you just said that we are all born with a mission. The mission to spread Islam is ours whether we like it or not. We have to do it, there is no running from it.

Student: what if we are scared to do this?

Teacher: No it is not that scary. You come to Perceptions, you learn so many things like today you learnt that we need to make our lives more purposeful so that we benefit not only in this life but in the Hereafter as well. Tell this to your friends and you will be spreading Islam. What is so scary or difficult about it??

To tell your friend about this that being a student if you want to be on the right track you don't have to cheat, don't go overboard in the name of fun and stay conscious of Allah (swt), is that too difficult? That is spreading Islam.

Being a student if you're conscious of Allah (swt) in everything you do whether it is being with friends, studying or whatever then you're on the right track but of course there will be a cost. But when every tiny little thing costs so much whether it is a bar of chocolate or a pack of pencils, why do we expect Jannah to be free??

Should a place with limitless and never ending bounties be worth nothing? Even if you have to suffer a little, then be prepared to pay that price. At the most what can others do to you? They might say stuff that will hurt you. Our Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions suffered worse, much worse but no one is making you suffer that much. Your friend might tell you that please don't get preachy with me and this might hurt you a bit but is that too much a price? Imagine the cost and imagine what you'd be getting in return.. Jannah!!

Your mission is not to change the world, but to make a difference. Look Allah (swt) isn't going to ask you that how many people did you convert into the folds of Islam. He is going to ask that did you try to change yourself first and others later? Have you started the change if not then that should ring the alarm.

Slide 71:

What if your mission is to qualify for Jannah then what should be your goal? Firstly there are five pillars of Islam which are not options. They are obligations that you have to fulfill no matter what, so we can't say that I cannot get up for *fajr* because Allah (swt) has blessed me with deep sleep.

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an that everyone has a *shakila* or a talent.

It is mentioned in Surah Bani Israel ayat 84;

“ Each one works according to his own pattern...” For example somebody has this talent that he can recite the Qur'an beautifully. Now if that person utilizes this talent and teaches others to recite Qur'an in that way and he makes it a part of his life's mission, this is an optional *naiki* (righteous deed). He has made use of his talents in a productive way.

Student: miss if you're talented to speak a lot.

Teacher: Then speak good, not gossip. Use your social circle as a tool to spread good. Everyone has a *shakila* you have to detect it nobody can invent it.

Michael Angelo once made this beautiful sculpture and when people praised him, he said, this sculpture was already in the stone itself, I only brushed off the edges and brought it out.

Similarly, you have talents, you need to detect them and bring them to light. Do this by experimenting with different things, something will click eventually.

Slides 72 -75:

Life is a mission not a career.

A career asks what is in it for me in this world. A mission asks how I can make a difference. Do you want to make a difference? We may not do great things in life but we can do small things in a great manner that is how we can make a difference. Our lives are ordinary at the moment since we don't know what our mission is but if you want to make this life extraordinary think beyond today. It may be difficult but it is worth the effort.

Slide 76:

Let me conclude with these lines;

‘The tree that never had to fight; for sun and sky and air or light

But stood out in the open rain; and always had its share of rain.

Never became a forest king but lived and died a scrubby thing.

Good timber does not grow with ease; the stronger wind; the stronger trees.’

Do you understand?? The small trees can't take the pressure of strong winds and rain so they grow underneath the protection of bigger trees but trees which are stronger, their roots are deeper. They remain firm and face storms and rain. Similarly, we can face storms of life with a deep rooted mission so live with an aim and make a difference.

Let me just distribute this. This is the second part of your mission statement. Just pass it on. All right. Jazakillah.

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

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*