

آداب طالب العلم

**The Manners of the  
Knowledge Seeker**

**By Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad Sa'id Raslan**

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Indeed, all praise is due to Allāh. We praise Him, seek refuge with Him, and seek His Forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allāh from the evils of our souls, and the mistakes in our actions. Whoever Allāh Guides, there is none who can misguide him, and whoever Allāh misguides, there is none who can guide him. And I testify that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allāh, and I testify that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is his servant and Messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

{*“O you who believe! Have taqwā of Allāh as He deserves, and do not die except as Muslims.”*}<sup>1</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

{*“O people! Have taqwā of your Lord Who Created you from a single soul, and Created from it its mate, and sprouted from it many men and women. And have taqwā of Allāh, from Whom you demand your mutual rights, and do not cut off the relations of the womb. Verily, Allāh is Ever-Watching over you.”*}<sup>2</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِغِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

{*“O you who believe! Have taqwā of Allāh, and say that which is truthful. He will rectify your actions for you and Forgive you your sins, and whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great success.”*}<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the most truthful of speech is the Speech of Allāh, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (peace be upon him). The worst of affairs are those that are newly introduced, and every newly introduced affair is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance, and every misguidance leads to the Fire.

As for what follows:

Since knowledge is the worship of the heart, the secret of its life, and the source of its power, it is a must for its seeker to come to know the manners related to it, and to strive his

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Imrān*; 102

<sup>2</sup> *an-Nisā'*; 1

<sup>3</sup> *al-Abzāb*; 70-71

utmost to obtain these manners. Otherwise, he will be going in one direction, and knowledge will be going in another, as it is said:

*It went east, and I went west \* What a difference there is between the east and west!*

One should also realize that these manners are not like any other manners, where it is the same whether you obtain them or not, or that they are all of one level. Rather, some of them are obligatory upon everyone everywhere, whether or not they are students of knowledge.

The purpose of attaining knowledge of the *Shari'ah* is to perfect one's clarity of expression, and the purpose of perfecting one's clarity of expression is to single out Allāh and worship Him. Therefore, the purpose of seeking knowledge is to single out Allāh – the Mighty and Majestic – and worship Him, and the message gets across much better when the one who has positioned himself to deal with this knowledge – whether he is a student or teacher – clearly shows these signs of singling out Allāh and worshipping Him by submitting completely to the pure *Shari'ah* and noble Religion.

Based on this, the manners of seeking this knowledge are completely inseparable from the person who deals with it, because this is what the texts show, and because these manners include vast principles of the Religion that are not within anybody's luxury to contradict or look to without taking seriously.

And these manners are at all times a definite obligation upon the seeker of knowledge, and Allāh is the source of help, and upon Him is all reliance.

What follows is a collection of the manners that the seeker of knowledge must abide by:

## Purify Your Intention for Allāh in Seeking Knowledge

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“Know that intention (*niyyah*), will (*irādah*), and goal (*qasd*) are various terms that all mean the same thing, and it is a description of the state of the heart when it is a source for two things: knowledge and action.

Knowledge comes first - as it is the foundation and condition - and action follows it, since it is the fruit that branches from knowledge. This is because every action – that is, every intentional movement and motion – does not occur without three things: knowledge, will, and ability. Nobody does something without knowing of it. So, he must have knowledge. Likewise, nobody does something without having the will to do it. So, one must have the will to do something, and the meaning of will (*irādah*) is that the heart reaches out to what it sees as being in accordance with what it seeks.

The human was created such that he sometimes does that which is in accordance with what his heart seeks, and sometimes does that which conflicts with what his heart seeks. In such a case, he needs to draw near to that which is good for him, and to drive away what will harm him. This requires that he know and understand what will benefit and harm him, such that he can bring this close and avoid that, since whoever does not see or know what food is cannot reach over and pull it towards him, and whoever does not see fire cannot escape from it. So, Allāh has Created guidance and knowledge, and has provided certain means of attaining them, and these are the external and internal senses.

So, intention is essentially the will and the act of reaching out to and leaning towards what one seeks, whether this occurs retrospectively or at the time of seeing what is sought after. Therefore, the first step in one being pushed to do something is that he has a goal which motivates him to act, and goal is the target of one’s intention. One is pushed to go out and do something when he has a goal and intention, and directs his power and ability towards his goal by way of physical movement, and this is known as action.”<sup>4</sup>

Because of this, it is established in the Religion that Allāh – the Mighty and Majestic – does not accept actions except those that are done purely seeking His Face, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) indicated the significance of the intention and the obligation of purifying it from what can corrupt one’s goal and nullify his action.

‘Alqamah bin Waqqās al-Laythī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “I heard ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb (may Allāh be Pleased with him) on the pulpit, saying: “I heard the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) say: **“Indeed, actions are by intentions, and for every person is what he intended. So, whoever migrated to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be**

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Abd as-Salām Hārūn’s *‘Tabdhīb Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn’* (2/253)

upon him), his migration is to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him). And whoever migrated to obtain a portion of the world or to marry a woman, his migration is to what he migrated for.”<sup>5</sup>

an-Nawawī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“The Muslims are unanimous in regards to the significance of this *hadīth*, the numerous benefits contained within it, and its authenticity. ash-Shāfi‘ī and others said: “It constitutes one quarter of Islām.” ‘Abd ar-Rahmān bin Mahdī and others said: “It is a must for whoever writes a book to begin it with this *hadīth* in order to remind the student of knowledge to renew his intention.” And al-Khattābī reported this from the scholars in general, and al-Bukhārī and others applied this. They started with it before anything else, and al-Bukhārī included it in seven places in his book.

And the majority of scholars, linguists, and jurists said that the word ‘indeed’ is indicative of totality – it confirms what is mentioned, and denies everything else – rendering the meaning of the *hadīth* to be that actions are considered based on the intentions behind them, and are not considered at all if there is no intention behind them.

And regarding his (peace be upon him) saying “...and for every person is what he intended...” they said that the point of mentioning it after “Indeed, actions are by intentions...” is that it emphasizes that specifying the intention is a condition for any action. So, if one were to make up a prayer, it would not be enough for him to intend to make up a prayer. Rather, he must specify that he is praying *Dhuhr*, etc. and were it not for this second phrase, one could interpret the first to indicate the permissibility of making a general intention without specifying the action intended.

And regarding his (peace be upon him) saying “...So, whoever migrated to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him), his migration is to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him)...” means that whoever seeks with his migration the Face of Allāh will have his reward with Allāh, and whoever intends the worldly life or a wife, that will be what he gains, and he will have nothing from the Hereafter as the result of this migration. And the linguistic meaning of migration (*hijrah*) is to abandon something, and what is meant here is that one abandons a land. The mention of a woman alongside the worldly matters can be interpreted in two ways, one of them being that a man migrated to marry a woman named Umm Qays, and was thus named ‘the one who migrated for Umm Qays.’<sup>6</sup> The second interpretation is that this was mentioned simply to emphasize the warning by way of

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<sup>5</sup> Reported by al-Bukhārī (1, 54, 2529, 3898, 5070, 6689, and 6953), Muslim (1907), Ahmad (1/25 and 43), Abū Dāwūd (2201), at-Tirmidhī (1647), an-Nasā‘ī (1/58-60 and 6/158), Mālik (983), Ibn Hibbān (388 & 389), Ibn Jārūd (64), at-Tahāwī (3/96), ad-Dāraqutnī (10/50), al-Bayhaqī (1/41), Abū Nu‘aym (8/42), al-Khatīb al-Baghādā‘ī (4/244 and 9/346), and al-Baghawī (1 & 206)

<sup>6</sup> The story was reported by at-Tabarānī in ‘*al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*’ (8540) on the authority of Abū Mu‘āwiyah from al-A‘mash, and al-Haythamī said in ‘*Majma‘ aḥ-Zawā‘id*’ (2/101): “Its men are the men of the ‘*Sabīh*,” and Ibn Hajar said: “And this chain is authentic with the conditions of the *Shaykhayn*.” However, he also said in ‘*Fath al-Barī*’ (1/10): “But, there is no indication that the *hadīth* of intentions was related to this story, and I do not find anything in the various paths of narration that make this evident.”

mentioning a specific example of a general concept to clarify its gravity, and Allāh Knows best.”<sup>7</sup>

“And it is established in the *Shar’* that Allāh doesn’t accept any act of worship that is not done strictly seeking His Noble Face, and the proofs for this from the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* are plenty, such as:

1 – His Saying:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُ الْهَكْمِ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا  
وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

{*“Say: ‘I am only a man like you. It has been inspired to me that your Deity is One. So, whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord.’”*}<sup>8</sup>

Meaning: do not seek with these actions anything besides the Face of Allāh, the Exalted.

2 – His Saying, as well:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

{*“And they were not commanded except to worship Allāh, making the Religion sincerely for Him...”*}<sup>9</sup>

3 – His (peace be upon him) saying:

**“Indeed, actions are by intentions, and for every person is what he intended. So, whoever migrated to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him), his migration is to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him). And whoever migrated to obtain a portion of the world or to marry a woman, his migration is to what he migrated for.”**”

Reported by al-Bukhārī at the beginning of his *‘Sahih,’* as well as Muslim and others, on the authority of ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb.

4 – His (peace be upon him) saying, as well:

**“Give this nation the glad tidings of glory, establishment in the land, victory, and religious authority. And whoever of them performs an action of the Hereafter seeking with it this world, he will have no portion of the Hereafter from it.”**

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<sup>7</sup> *‘Sharh Sahih Muslim’* (13/53)

<sup>8</sup> *al-Kahf*, 110

<sup>9</sup> *al-Bayyinah*, 5

Reported by Ahmad and his son in the additions to the *Musnad*' (5/134), Ibn Hibbān in his *'Sabīh*' (4/311 in the *Mawārid*' of al-Hākim), and he said: "Its chain is authentic," and adh-Dhahabī agreed with him, as did al-Mundhirī (1/31). I (al-Albānī) say that the chain of 'Abdullāh (the son of Ahmad bin Hambal) is authentic according to the conditions of al-Bukhārī.

5 – And from Abū Umāmah (may Allāh be Pleased with him), who said:

"A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: "What if a man fights to seek reward and reputation? What will he have?" So, he replied: **"He has nothing."** The man repeated the question three times, with the Prophet (peace be upon him) replying: **"He has nothing."** He then said: **"Indeed, Allāh does not accept any action except that which is sincere and seeking His Face."**

Reported by an-Nasā'ī (2/59), and its chain is good, as al-Mundhirī said (1/24).

6 – His (peace be upon him) saying:

**"Allāh – the Mighty and Majestic – Said: *"I am the most Self-Sufficient that I do not need partners. So, whoever does an action for Me in which he associates others with Me, I am free from him, and will leave him for the one he associated with Me."***

Narrated by Ibn Mājah in *'aḡ-Zuhd*' from the *hadīth* of Abū Hurayrah, and its chain is authentic upon the conditions of Muslim, and he reported a similar narration in his *'Sabīh*' (8/223)."<sup>10</sup>

So, it is a must to purify one's intention for Allāh in every single action, as Ibn al-Qayyim said: "Just as He is One Deity with none besides Him, it is likewise necessary that worship be for Him and none besides Him. So, just as He is singled out as a Deity, He must be singled out for worship. The righteous action is that which is free of showing off and bound by the *Sunnah*."<sup>11</sup>

Sulaymān bin 'Abdillāh (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: "And these are two pillars of the accepted action: it must be correct and sincerely done. The correct action is that which is in accordance with the *Sunnah*, as indicated by His Saying:

فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا

{ "...let him work righteousness..." }<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> al-Albānī's *'Abkām al-Janā'iz wa Bida'ubā'* (p. 52)

<sup>11</sup> *'al-Jawab al-Kāfi'* (p. 100)

<sup>12</sup> *al-Kahf*; 110

And the sincere action is that which is free from hidden and apparent *shirk*, as is indicated by His Saying:

وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

{“...and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord...”}<sup>13 14</sup>

The seeker of knowledge is to purify his intention when seeking knowledge, “...and the correct intention when seeking knowledge is to intend only the Face of Allāh, acting upon that, bringing life to His *Shari’ah*, lighting up his own heart, beautifying his inner self, getting closer to Allāh on the Day of Resurrection, and making oneself a candidate for what He has prepared for His beloved of great pleasure and virtue. Sufyān ath-Thawrī said: “I never attempted to remedy something as difficult as my intention.”

He should not seek with it any worldly gains, such as obtaining position, status, money, or making himself look great and knowledgeable in front of those closest to him, having a presence in the circles of knowledge, etc. thereby exchanging the good for the bad. Abū Yūsuf (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “O people! Seek Allāh with your knowledge, as I have never sat in a circle in which I sought to humble myself except that I got up from it better than everyone else, and I never sat in a circle in which I sought to be better than everyone else except that I was exposed.”

Knowledge is an act of worship and a means of gaining nearness to Allāh. So, if your intention is pure in this worship, it will be accepted, purified, and blessed. And if you intend with it other than the Pleasure of Allāh, it will be nullified, wasted, and you will lose its value. It might be that one can miss out on these noble goals and not achieve them, thereby wasting his energy and effort.”<sup>15</sup>

All of the above can be summarized in the *hadith* of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) that was reported by Muslim in his *Sahih*, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah: **“The first who will be consumed by the Fire on the Day of Resurrection will be three: a scholar, a *Mujāhid*, and a generous donator.**

As for the scholar, Allāh will bring him and ask him: *‘What did you do in the dunyā?’* So, he will say: *‘I acquired knowledge for Your Sake, and I spread it seeking Your Pleasure.’* So, it will be said to him: *‘You lied. You learned so that you would be referred to as a scholar, and it was done, and you have obtained your reward in the dunyā.’* Then, he will be ordered thrown into Hell.

Then, the donator will be brought, and Allāh will ask him: *‘What did you do in the dunyā?’* He will say: *‘I acquired wealth from permissible means, and I donated it for Your Sake.’* It will be said to him: *‘You lied. You donated your money so that it*

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<sup>13</sup> *al-Kahf*, 110

<sup>14</sup> *Taysir al-‘Aziz al-Hamid* (p. 525)

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Jamā’ah’s *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim* (p. 68)

*would be said that you are generous, and it was done, and you have had your reward in the dunyā.*' Then, he will be ordered thrown into Hell.

Then, the fighter will be brought, and asked: *'What did you do?'* 'I fought in Your Cause until I was killed.' *'You lied. You fought so that you would be referred to as a brave man, and it was done, and you took your reward in the dunyā.'* Then, he will be ordered thrown into Hell."<sup>16</sup>

an-Nawawī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

"His (peace be upon him) statement regarding the fighter, the scholar, and the generous donator, and their punishment for their actions being for other than Allāh's Face, and their entering the Fire – these are all proofs for the emphasized prohibition of showing off and the severe punishment for doing so, as well as for the obligation of having a pure intention in one's actions, as Allāh Said:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

{ *"And they were not commanded except to worship Allāh, making the Religion sincerely for Him..."* }<sup>17</sup>

And it also shows that the general texts regarding the virtues of *Jibād* are referring to the one who seeks only the Pleasure of Allāh, just as with the texts praising the scholars and generous donators – all of these are interpreted to be only in regards to the one who does these things for Allāh, the Exalted."<sup>18</sup>

And the aforementioned *hadīth* leaves no question that the student of knowledge should purify his intention in his studies, such that his seeking of knowledge is not for anyone other than Allāh, seeking His Pleasure, and hoping for His reward - not so that he would use this knowledge to be elevated in the eyes of others, sitting on their necks, and standing on their shoulders, as the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **"Whoever seeks knowledge in order to compete with the scholars, to prove himself superior to the ignorant, or to make the people look up to him, he is in the Fire."**<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Reported, with various wordings by Muslim (1905), Ahmad (2/322), an-Nasā'ī (6/23), at-Tirmidhī (2383), and Ibn Hibbān (408)

<sup>17</sup> *al-Bayyinah*; 5

<sup>18</sup> *'Sharh Sahīh Muslim'* (13/50)

<sup>19</sup> al-Albānī graded it authentic in *'Sahīh Ibn Mājah'* (205), *'Mishkāt al-Masābih'* (225 & 226), and *'at-Ta'liq ar-Raghib'* (1/68)

## Purify Yourself Inwardly and Outwardly From That Which Contradicts the *Shari'ah*

It is upon the student of knowledge to purify himself outwardly by steering clear of innovations, beautifying himself with the *sunan* of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) in all aspects of his life, preserving his *wudu'*, and keeping his body and appearance clean – all within reasonable means, and as much as he is able.

Ibn Abī Hātim reported that ‘Abd al-Malik al-Maymūnī said: “I do not know that I have ever seen anyone who wore cleaner clothes, was more attentive to trimming his moustache and grooming the hair on his head and body, or wore purer and whiter garments than Ahmad bin Hambal.”<sup>20</sup> And this was because every single movement of Ahmad (may Allāh have Mercy on him) was in accordance with the *Sunnah*, as he said: “I never wrote a single *hadīth* except that I acted upon it, to the point that I came across a report that the Prophet (peace be upon him) got cupped and gave Abū Taybah (his cupper) a *dīnār*. So, I got cupped and gave the cupper a *dīnār*.”<sup>21</sup>

One shouldn’t misunderstand the encouragement to have clean clothes and be excessive and obsessive in regards to his clothing. Rather, one should be slightly less than this, considering that it is reported that the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: “***Badhādhab* is from faith.**”<sup>22</sup>

Ibn al-Athīr said: “*Badhādhab* is to have a plain, ascetic appearance...and he (peace be upon him) meant that one should be humble in his clothing, avoiding vanity.”<sup>23</sup>

And al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported that Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Būshinjī said: “As for the *badhādhab* that the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said is from faith, it is the plainness one displays in dress and garment, and this is humility from owning flashy, expensive clothing and garments. This is how the people of *zūhd* dress in this world.”<sup>24</sup>

al-Khatīb (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

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<sup>20</sup> ‘*Sīfat as-Safwāb*’ (1/480)

<sup>21</sup> ‘*Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā*’ (9/457)

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Mājah (4118) and Abū Dāwūd (4161), and al-Albānī declared it authentic in ‘*as-Silsilah as-Sahībah*’ (341)

<sup>23</sup> ‘*an-Nihāyah*’ (1/110)

<sup>24</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Aḥlāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi*’ (1/154)

“The student of knowledge must set aside amusement, useless talk, and low speech when meeting and gathering with others, such as immaturity, laughter, giggling, and excessive joking. It is allowed for him to laugh mildly and rarely in a way that does not exceed the limits of the manner and style of one who is dealing with knowledge. As for constantly doing this, speaking about inappropriate, immature, and childish matters, excessive laughter and joking – this all reduces one’s esteem and manhood.

Mālik (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “It is upon the student of knowledge to manifest calmness, humility, and tranquility, and to follow in the footsteps of those who came before him.”

Muhammad bin al-Husayn reported from Saʿīd bin ʿĀmir that he said: “We were with Hishām ad-Dastawāʿī, and one of us laughed. So, Hishām said to him: “You laugh while you are a student of *Hadīth*?!””

ʿAbd ar-Rahmān bin Mahdī reported that a man laughed in the presence of Hishām ad-Dastawāʿī. So, Hishām said to him: “Young man, you seek knowledge and laugh?!” The man replied: “Doesn’t Allāh make us laugh or weep?”<sup>25</sup> Hishām replied: “Then weep!”<sup>26</sup>

So, external purity by following the *Sunnah*, having the proper appearance, a clean body, and clean clothing is required of every Muslim, and is even more incumbent upon the seeker of knowledge, since he should be guided by his knowledge to noble and good things. And Muslim reported that ʿAbdullāh bin Masʿūd heard the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) say: **“Nobody who has an atom’s weight of *kibr* will enter Paradise.”** So, a man said: “A man likes that his clothing look nice, and that his shoes look nice.” The Messenger (peace be upon him) replied: **“Indeed, Allāh is Beautiful and Loves beauty. *Kibr* is to reject the truth and look down on the people.”**<sup>27</sup>

And the Prophet (peace be upon him) loved good scents, and was particular about them. Abū Mūsā bin Anas bin Mālik reported that his father said: “The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) had *sukkah* that he would use for himself.” al-Albānī said: “Abū Dāwūd reported it with an authentic chain upon the conditions of Muslim, and *sukkah* is the black musk that is mixed and left to emit its scent over time. It is also interpreted to be the container in which this musk is stored, and this is more evident.”<sup>28</sup>

And the Prophet (peace be upon him) hated disgusting smells, and would be turned off by them. For example, Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “We made no transgression when Khaybar was conquered. We, the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh

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<sup>25</sup> He was referring to the verse: وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَى {“**And that it is He Who caused some to laugh and caused some to weep.**”} [an-Najm; 43]

<sup>26</sup> ‘al-Jāmi’ li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa ʿĀdāb as-Sāmi’ (1/156)

<sup>27</sup> ‘Sahīb Muslim’ (91)

<sup>28</sup> ‘Mukhtasar asb-Shamāʿil al-Muhammadiyah’ (p. 117)

(peace be upon him), fell upon this plant – garlic - because the people were hungry. We ate it to our heart's content, and then made our way towards the mosque. The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) sensed its odor, saying: **“He who eats anything of this offensive plant should not approach us in the mosque.”** The people said: “It has become forbidden! It has become forbidden!” This reached the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he said: **“O people, I cannot forbid what Allāh has made lawful, except that it is a plant whose odor I dislike.”**<sup>29</sup>

Jābir (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“He who eats of these plants – garlic, leeks, and onions - should not approach our mosque, as the Angels are offended by the same things as the human being.”**<sup>30</sup>

And the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade that the Muslim leave his moustache and fingernails without trimming them, his pubic hair without cutting it, or his armpit hair without plucking it for more than forty days, as Anas bin Mālik said: “He (peace be upon him) gave us a forty day limit in trimming the moustache and fingernails, plucking the hair under the armpits, and shaving the pubic hair.”<sup>31</sup> an-Nawawī said: “This means that they are not allowed to leave these things for more than forty days, not that they have to leave them for forty days.”<sup>32</sup>

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also encouraged the use of the toothbrush (*siwak*), saying: **“If I did not fear making things too hard for my people, I would have commanded them to use the *siwak* at the time of each prayer,”** as was narrated by Abū Hurayrah.<sup>33</sup>

So, the seeker of knowledge is to be particular about his external cleanliness, and this is done by following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him), holding firmly to it, and biting to it tightly. The people most required to do this are the people of knowledge, as they are the inheritors of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and it is most appropriate that they be the ones who imitate him and follow in his footsteps.

As for inner purity and cleanliness, the student of knowledge should “focus on purifying his soul from undesirable and blameworthy characteristics, since knowledge is the worship of the heart, the secret prayer, and the internal means of nearness to Allāh. Just as the prayer – the worship of the external limbs - is not acceptable without cleanliness from external impurity, filling one’s heart with knowledge – the internal worship - is not acceptable until one cleans himself of impure manners and characteristics.

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<sup>29</sup> ‘*Sabih Muslim*’ (565)

<sup>30</sup> ‘*Sabih Muslim*’ (564)

<sup>31</sup> ‘*Sabih Muslim*’ (258)

<sup>32</sup> ‘*Sharh Sabih Muslim*’ (3/149)

<sup>33</sup> al-Bukhārī (887) and Muslim (252)

Allāh Said:

إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ  
{ “Indeed, the polytheists are impure...” }<sup>34</sup>

This shows that purity and cleanliness are not limited to the external factors that can be felt by the senses, as the disbeliever can wear clean clothes and bathe his body while his essence is filthy and impure. In other words, his inner self is soiled with impurities. Impurity (*najāsah*) is a term used for something that is avoided and turned away from, and inner filth is the most important type of impurity that one should seek to avoid, since even though it is now only an impurity, it will evolve into something that will destroy you.”<sup>35</sup>

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “Once, Jibrīl had promised to visit the Prophet (peace be upon him). But, he delayed, and this became difficult for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to handle. Finally, he came out to find Jibrīl, who complained to him: “We do not enter a home in which there is a picture or a dog.””<sup>36</sup>

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “And the heart is also a home. It is the home of the Angels, where they descend, where they reside. Despicable characteristics, such as anger, desires, belittlement, envy, arrogance, self-amazement, etc. are all barking dogs. So, how can the Angels enter such a place while it is crawling with dogs?”<sup>37</sup>

Ibn Jamā’ah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“The student of knowledge is to clean his heart out from every bit of blemish, deceit, envy, and bad character in order to condition himself to soak up and memorize knowledge and discover its detailed meanings and hidden treasures. Knowledge is – as some have said – the secret prayer, the worship of the heart, and the inner means of gaining nearness to Allāh. And just as prayer – the worship of the external limbs – is not accepted except with external purification from filth and impurity, likewise, knowledge – the worship of the heart – is not facilitated except if you purify yourself from the filth of low and despicable characteristics and manners.

And if you clean your heart out for knowledge, its blessing becomes clear and evident, just like the plot of land that is fertile for agriculture, and in the *hadīth*: **“Indeed, and in the body there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the rest of the body will be sound. If it is corrupt, the rest of the body will be corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.”**<sup>38</sup> And Sahl: “It is

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<sup>34</sup> *at-Tawbah*; 28

<sup>35</sup> *Thyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn’* (1/49)

<sup>36</sup> *‘Sahīh al-Bukhārī’* (5960)

<sup>37</sup> *Thyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn’* (1/49)

<sup>38</sup> Part of a longer *hadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī (52 & 2051), Muslim (1599), and Ibn Hibbān (721)

forbidden for any light to enter the heart while it contains anything that Allāh – the Mighty and Majestic – hates.”<sup>39</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“And sins leave ugly, despicable, and harmful effects to the heart and body in this world and the next that none know except Allāh. From them is that one is prevented from knowledge, as knowledge is a light that Allāh places into the heart, and sins put out this light. When ash-Shāfiʿī sat in front of Mālik to read to him, he was amazed at what he was seeing of ash-Shāfiʿī’s intelligence, wisdom, and complete understanding and comprehension, saying: “I see that Allāh has placed light in your heart. So, don’t put it out with the darkness of sin.” And ash-Shāfiʿī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

*I complained to Waki’ of my bad memory \* So, he advised me to abandon sins;*

*And said: “Know that knowledge is a blessing \* and the blessing of Allāh is not accessible to the sinner.”<sup>40</sup>*

Ibn al-Jawzī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“Abū ‘Abdillāh bin al-Jalā’ said: “I used to look at a young Christian boy who had a beautiful face. So, ‘Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Balkhī passed by me, saying: “What is wrong with you?” I replied: “O uncle, don’t you see this face? How can it be punished in the Fire?” So, he hit me in the chest, saying: “You will eventually feel the consequences of this act of yours.” So, after forty years, I suffered the consequences: I forgot the Qur’ān.”

And Abū al-Adyān said: “I was with my teacher, Abū Bakr ad-Daqqāq. Something inappropriate took place, and I looked at it. He saw me looking at it, and said: “My son, you will suffer the consequences of this look, even if in the future.” Twenty years passed in which I waited, not suffering anything. One night, I went to sleep thinking about this, and awoke to discover that I had forgotten the entire Qur’ān.”<sup>41</sup>

Abū Hāmid (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“If you were to say: ‘But, I see many students of knowledge with bad manners who are quite knowledgeable! What a difference! He is quite far from the true, useful knowledge that will benefit him in the Hereafter and bring him happiness! From the first steps of gaining knowledge is that it become clear to him that sins are a deadly, destructive poison. Have you ever come across someone who reaches for deadly poison, knowing that it is poison? What you see from those who appear as such is merely speech that they concoct with their tongues at times and reject with their hearts times, and this is not knowledge in the least.

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<sup>39</sup> *Tadbkirat as-Sami’ wal-Mutakallim’* (p. 67)

<sup>40</sup> *‘al-Jawab al-Kafi’* (p. 54)

<sup>41</sup> *‘Talbīs Iblīs’* (p. 310)

Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “Knowledge is not constant narration. Rather, it is light that is placed in the heart.” Some said that knowledge is fear, as Allāh Said:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

{“*Verily, those of Allāh’s slaves who fear Him are those who have knowledge.*”}<sup>42</sup>

It is as if He was eluding to the most specific fruits of knowledge, and because of this, some said in regards to the statement: “We learned this knowledge for other than Allāh, and the knowledge did not want except to be for Allāh,” that the knowledge escaped from us and did not expose its reality to us, and we were instead given mere words and phrases.

So, if you say: ‘I see a group of the scholars and jurists who are geniuses in the branches and fundamentals, and are considered to be the most successful of scholars, while they are unable to clear themselves of their despicable manners,’ we say that if you come to know the degrees of knowledge, and came to know the Hereafter, it will then become clear to you that what they are preoccupied with is not very satisfying in the form of mere knowledge. Rather, what is truly satisfying is when that knowledge is transformed into action for Allāh, if it is used to gain nearness to Allāh, the Exalted.’<sup>43</sup>

So, all of this revolves around the purity and cleanliness of the heart and submission of the limbs to the rulings of the *Shari’ah*. Therefore, the seeker of knowledge should be particular about paying close attention to his internal condition and having his external condition conform with the *Sunnah*, so that Allāh opens up for him the lights and treasures of knowledge and wisdom.

This is the bounty of Allāh that He bestows upon whom He Wills, and Allāh is the Owner of great bounty.

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<sup>42</sup> *Fātir*, 28

<sup>43</sup> *Thyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn’* (1/49)

## Completely Free Your Heart for Knowledge and Remove All Obstacles

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“Getting what you want depends on cutting off habits and attachment to anything else.

Habits are when one leans towards what is more relaxing, such as the systems and traditions that people are accustomed to and place at the same level as the *Shari'ah*. In fact, they might even treat these habits with greater reverence than the *Shari'ah*, and reprimand those who do not abide by them - even declaring such a person to be a disbeliever, innovator, or misguided, and boycotting and punishing him for going against these traditions and habits. For the sake of these traditions, they kill off the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and make their own traditions as partners with him (peace be upon him) – declaring alliance and enmity for them. So, the good in their eyes is what goes along with these traditions, and the bad is what contradicts them.

These habits and traditions have taken over various groups of the children of Ādam – the kings, the leaders, the jurists, the *Sūfis*, the impoverished, the authority figures, and the general populace. So, the young are taught them at an early age, and the old are raised upon them, and they are treated like *sunan*. Rather, they are more important in the eyes of those who abide by them than *sunan*. Whoever is restrained by such habits is imprisoned, cut off, afflicted with great misfortune, and end up abandoning the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* for them. Whoever seeks any type of honor with them is a fool with Allāh, and whoever follows them instead of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* will not be accepted by Allāh. These are the greatest barriers and obstacles for the slave on his journey to Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him).

As for these obstacles, they are the many types of outer and inner contradictions to the *Shari'ah* that injure the heart upon its journey to Allāh and render it immobile, and they cut it off on its path. They are three things: *shirk*, innovation, and sin. So, the obstacle of *shirk* is overcome by grasping onto *Tawhid*, and the obstacle of innovation is overcome by implementing the *Sunnah*, and the obstacle of sin is overcome by true repentance. These obstacles do not become evident to the slave until he actually begins his journey to Allāh and the Hereafter. Only then are these obstacles noticed, and he will notice their handicapping effect in accordance with how intensely and attentively he is traversing this path. Otherwise, he will simply remain still, not feeling their hidden effects.

As for the connections to cut off, these are to anything that the heart can be attached and connected to in place of Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him) - of the pleasures and desires of this world, the fame it offers, and relationships with others. There is no way to cut off and push away these three things except with the strength of the connection and attachment to a higher goal. Otherwise, cutting these things off without attaching yourself to something else is impossible. The soul does not abandon the object it loves and desires except to attach itself to what is even more beloved and greater in importance to it than

what it has abandoned. The stronger its connection becomes to what it seeks, the weaker its connection becomes to anything else, and vice versa. The connection to the object that is sought is manifested in the intense desire for it, and this is in accordance with how much is known of this object, how noble that object is, and its virtue over everything else.”<sup>44</sup>

And it is just as Ibn al-Qayyim said, as reaching your desired destination requires that you abandon your false habits, cut off connections to anything else, and overcome the obstacles to doing so. And it is just as he said in that it depends on the strength of your attachment and desire for a higher goal. So, the more your desire for something increases, the easier the sacrifice you put forth seems, and you feel as if you’ve already reached what you’re seeking. The time to get there seems like just a few days, just a few desires to give up – false desires that are like a mirage – just like *al-Imām* Ahmad (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “If one remembers death, everything from this world seems insignificant. It is just one type of food instead of another, one type of dress instead of another, and the remaining days are only few.” So, the student of knowledge is one who should have a great desire for the Hereafter and what is with Allāh, and a strong attachment to the higher goal. Knowledge is enough of a preoccupation from the pleasures and glitter of this life, and the remaining days are only few.

“al-Ash’ath Abū ar-Rabī’ narrated that Shu’bah said to him: “You stuck with your business, and you became wealthy and successful. I stuck with *Hadīth*, and I became poor.”

Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah narrated that Shu’bah said: “Whoever studies *Hadīth* will become poor. I became poor to the point that I sold a pot that belonged to my mother for seven *dīnārs*.”

az-Zubayr bin Abī Bakr said: “My niece said to our family: “My uncle is the best to his family. He didn’t take a second wife or purchase a slave.” So, I said: “My wife says that these books of mine are more distracting for me than three other wives would be.””<sup>45</sup>

at-Tahhān said:

“With his statement, Shu’bah meant to show the reality of what happened to him, and to advise his students – the students of *Hadīth* – whose studies drain all of their time. They are unable to earn the money that will fulfill their needs and the needs of those under their care, causing them to become a burden on people, and this is contrary to what is commanded in the pure *Sunnah*. And it should not be understood from the words of Shu’bah that he regretted the worldly gains he missed out on, as he was a noble and abstinent person, to the point that al-Mahdī gave him 30,000 *dīrbams* as a gift, which he immediately distributed. Whoever wishes to read more about his nobility and *zuhd*, let him refer to Abū Nu’aym’s *Hilyat al-Awliyā’* (7/144-147). Likewise, it should not be understood from his words that he sought to discourage people from studying *Hadīth*. Rather, he wanted to encourage them to study *Hadīth* while simultaneously earning a living.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *‘al-Fawā’id’* (p. 204)

<sup>45</sup> *‘al-Jāmi’ li Akhlāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi’* (1/99)

<sup>46</sup> at-Tahhān’s commentary on al-Khatīb’s *Jāmi’* (1/99)

Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah said: “These ink jars do not enter the home of any man except that they make life hard for his wife and children.”

at-Tahhān said: “The ink jars referred to here are the ones used by the people of *Hadīth* that they’d take with them wherever they went in order to write down the narrations they heard. And what Sufyān meant was that most of the people of *Hadīth* were preoccupied with writing and studying from earning a living for their families. As a result, their wives and children would be left in need, and would be left in a situation of hardship because of these ink jars that were the cause of preoccupation from earning a living.”

Ibn Jamā’ah said:

“The student of knowledge should utilize his youth and free time in his life to gain as much as he can, and he should not be deceived by the temptation to put things off for another day. Every hour that passes of his life is crucial and will not be replaced. He should cut off what he can of the distracting relationships and preventative obstacles that are in the way of the knowledge he seeks, and should instead exert his energy and power in gaining as much as he can, since these obstacles are like roadblocks in his way.

This is why the *Salaf* preferred to move far from their families and homelands, because if one’s concerns become spread out, he will miss out on discovering details and realities that he would’ve otherwise come across, and Allāh did not give a man two hearts in his chest. al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī mentioned in his *Jāmi’* that some of them said: “This knowledge is not granted except to he who shuts down his factory, destroys his garden, abandons his friends, and whose closest relatives have died, such that he does not have to attend a funeral.” While this may contain some degree of exaggeration, the point is that one must gather his thoughts and concentration for this knowledge.”<sup>47</sup>

It should be mentioned that by cutting himself off, one is not supposed to neglect those under his care or sit back from working to make a living, living at the mercy of those who would give or withhold from him. ash-Shāfi’ī said: “Do not consult one who does not have flour in his home, as he is devoid of sound logic.” Rather, what is meant by cutting yourself off from distractions is those things you are not in need of, while being balanced in seeking a living and freeing your heart and energy for seeking knowledge. It is as Abū Yūsuf *al-Qadi* said: “Knowledge is something that will not give you even a fraction of itself until you give it all of yourself.”

And the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said, as Thawbān narrated: “**The best *dinār* is one that a person spends on his family, and the *dinār* which he spends on his animal for the Sake of Allāh, and the *dinār* he spends on his companions for the Sake of Allāh.**” Abū Qilābah (one of the narrators) said: “He started with family. Who has greater reward than the one who spends on his children to preserve them, and through whom Allāh brings profit for them and makes them rich?”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sami’ wal-Mutakallim’* (p. 70)

<sup>48</sup> *Sahīh Muslim’* (994)

And Abū Hurayrah (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) as saying: **“Of the *dinār* you spend as a contribution for Allāh's Sake, to set free a slave, as a charity given to a needy, or to support your family, the one with the greatest reward is that which you spend on your family.”**<sup>49</sup>

Khaythamah said: “While we were sitting in the company of 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar, his *qabramān* entered. Ibn 'Umar asked him: “Have you given the slaves their provision?” He replied: “No.” Upon this, he said: “Go and give it to them, as the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“It is enough of a sin for a man that he withholds provision from those under his authority.”**”<sup>50</sup> an-Nawawī said: “And a *qabramān* is a treasurer that is responsible for the affairs of the people, much like a delegate or representative, and this is a Persian word.”<sup>51</sup>

And Sufyān ath-Thawrī, if a man came to seek knowledge with him, would ask: “Do you have some way of sustaining yourself financially?” If he had enough to support himself, he would allow him to study. If he didn't, he would have him go earn a living first.<sup>52</sup>

If this is so, we should then interpret the texts of the *Salaf* withstanding poverty to seek knowledge to mean that they had just what they needed to sustain themselves and their families, and that what they tried to avoid was spending hours drowning in the pursuit of the *dunyā* and its glitter. In fact, the *Salaf* loved knowledge so much that this affected the worldly aspect of their lives, as al-Bukhārī reported that Abū Hurayrah said: “You say that Abū Hurayrah narrates too much from the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him), and you ask why the *Mujābirīn* and *Ansār* do not narrate from the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) as much as Abū Hurayrah does? My brothers from the *Mubājirīn* were busy with their business in the marketplace, and I would stick with the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him), content with what filled my stomach, and I was there when they were not, and I would memorize if they would forget. My brothers from the *Ansār* were busy with their wealth, and I was a poor man of the people of *as-Suffah*, remembering the narrations that they used to forget. And the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“Nobody spreads his garment until I have finished this speech and then gathers it to him except that he will remember whatever I say.”** So, I spread my colored garment which I was wearing until Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) had finished his statement, and then I gathered it to my chest. So, I did not forget any of these narrations.”<sup>53</sup>

He also said: “I used to accompany the Prophet (peace be upon him) to fill my stomach, and that was when I did not eat baked bread or wear decorated clothes. No man or woman

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<sup>49</sup> ‘*Sabīh Muslim*’ (995)

<sup>50</sup> ‘*Sabīh Muslim*’ (996)

<sup>51</sup> ‘*Sharh Sabīh Muslim*’ (7/82)

<sup>52</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Akhlāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādab as-Sāmi*’ (1/98)

<sup>53</sup> al-Bukhārī (2047, 2350, and 7354) and Muslim (2492)

would serve me, and I used to bind stones over my belly and ask somebody to recite a verse from the Qur’ān for me, even though I knew it.”<sup>54</sup>

And al-Bukhārī titled a chapter in the section on knowledge in his ‘*Sahīb*’ ‘*Chapter: the Memorization of Knowledge*,’ and he included in it the story of Abū Hurayrah: “The people say that Abū Hurayrah narrates too much. Were it not for two verses in the Book of Allāh, I wouldn’t have narrated a single *hadīth*:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ \* إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ  
{“*Verily, those who conceal the clear proofs, evidences, and guidance which We have sent down after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, they are the ones cursed by Allāh and cursed by the cursers, except those who repent and do righteous deeds, and openly declare the truth which they concealed. These, I will accept their repentance, and I am the One Who accepts repentance, the Merciful.*”<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, our brothers from the *Muhājirin* were busy with the marketplace, and our brothers from the *Ansār* were busy with their wealth, and Abū Hurayrah stuck with the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him), content with what was in his stomach, attending what they did not attend, and memorizing what they did not memorize.”<sup>56</sup>

*al-Hāfidh* Ibn Hajar (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“He did not include in this chapter anything regarding anyone but Abū Hurayrah, and this is because he was the Companion who memorized the most *hadīth*. ash-Shāfi’ī said: “Abū Hurayrah memorized the most out of all the narrators of his time.” And Ibn ‘Umar stood at his funeral, invoking Allāh’s Mercy for him, saying: “He would memorize the statements of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for the Muslims.”<sup>57</sup>

an-Nawawī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“His saying “...content with what was in his stomach...” means that he stuck with the Prophet (peace be upon him), satisfied with what he needed to sustain himself, and was not concerned with gathering money to save up.”<sup>58</sup>

Ibn Kathīr repored from Sa’īd bin Hind that Abū Hurayrah said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: “**Will you not ask me about this war booty that your**

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<sup>54</sup> ‘*Sahīb al-Bukhārī*’ (5432)

<sup>55</sup> *al-Baqarah*; 159-160

<sup>56</sup> ‘*Sahīb al-Bukhārī*’ (118)

<sup>57</sup> *Fath al-Bari*’ (1/258)

<sup>58</sup> ‘*Sharh Sahīb Muslim*’ (16/53)

**companions have asked me about?”** So, Abū Hurayrah said: “I ask you to teach me from what Allāh has taught you.”<sup>59</sup>

Abū Hurayrah (may Allāh be Pleased with him) memorized the most *hadith* of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) despite the short time in which he accompanied him (peace be upon him), as what is commonly accepted is that he accepted Islām in the 7<sup>th</sup> year after the *Hijrah*, sometime between the incidents of al-Hudaybiyah and Khaybar. He was around 30 years of age at the time, and he was always with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) until he died. So, he memorized and narrated the most, despite the fact that he only accompanied the Prophet (peace be upon him) for not more than three years. This was all because he was sincere with this knowledge, threw off the shackles of this world, and freed his heart from all other distractions and concerns.

“So, the student of knowledge should cut off all distractions, because if one’s concentration is spread here and there, he will miss out on discovering many things. The *Salaf* would put preference to knowledge over and above everything else. For example, it was narrated that *al-Imām* Ahmad (may Allāh have Mercy on him) did not get married until after he was 40!

And a slave girl was given as a gift to Abū Bakr al-Ambārī. When she entered upon him one time, he was in the middle of trying to come to a conclusion on an issue, and had trouble doing so. So, he said: “Take her back to the trader.” She asked: “Why? What did I do?” He replied: “Nothing, except that my heart was distracted by you, and you are not worth me being prevented from my knowledge.”<sup>60</sup>

ash-Shāfi’ī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “Nobody who seeks this knowledge while he is wealthy and high in status will succeed. Rather, those who seek it while they are humble, having a low standard of living, and are serving the scholars will succeed.”

And Ibn Wahb narrated that Mālik bin Anas (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “Nobody will get what he wants from this knowledge until he experiences poverty that causes him to prefer it over anything.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *‘al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah’* (8/111)

<sup>60</sup> *‘Mukhtasar Minhāj al-Qāsidin’* (p. 14)

<sup>61</sup> *‘al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqqih’* (2/93)

## Eat Little, Be Cautious, and Constantly Remember Allāh

Ibn Jamā'ah said:

“From the best ways to help yourself understand the knowledge you are dealing with and to prevent boredom from it is to eat very little, and from what is *halāl*.

ash-Shāfi'ī said: “For the past sixteen years, I never ate my fill.” The reason for this is that eating excessively leads to excessive drinking and sleeping, dulling of the senses, and laziness of the body. This is all in addition to the fact that doing so is disliked in the *Shari'ah*, and exposes the body to all types of dangerous disease, as it was said:

*Indeed, most of the diseases you see \* Are from eating and drinking...*

And none of the famous scholars or *awliya'* were ever described as having eaten much, or was ever praised for doing so. Rather, excessive eating is a trait of mindless animals. A person's intellect is the source of his deeds, and it is too noble to be hampered and wasted by such a despicable thing as excess food. If there were no downside to eating too much other than that it forces one to use the bathroom, this would've been enough for the intelligent one to steer clear of such a practice.

And whoever attempts to be successful in seeking knowledge while insisting upon excessive eating, drinking, and sleeping is attempting the impossible.”<sup>62</sup>

Ibn Qudāmah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“The desire of the stomach is the most destructive of them all, and it is what caused Ādam (peace be upon him) to exit Paradise, and from the desire of the stomach comes the desire for sex and wealth. These leads to many problems, all the result of satisfying one's appetite.

‘Uqbah ar-Rāsibī said: “I entered upon al-Hasan while he was eating, and he said: “Come eat with me.” I said: “I have already eaten until I can eat no more.” He said: “*Subhān Allāh!* Does the Muslim eat until he can eat no more?!””

Eating in moderation consists of raising one's hands from the table while he is still a bit hungry. This strengthens the body and wards off disease, and this is because such a person does not reach for food unless he is hungry for it, and raises his hands back while he is still hungry for it. However, eating too little can also weaken you, and some people were so deficient in what they ate that this caused them to be lax in their obligations. Out of their ignorance, they thought this to be something good while this was not the case, since those

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<sup>62</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim'* (p. 74)

who praised and encouraged hunger were referring to moderate hunger that we have described above.”<sup>63</sup>

All of this revolves around being cautious in all affairs, and cautiousness (*wara'*) is from the stations of the journey to Allāh, the Exalted, as Ibn al-Qayyim said: “And the Prophet (peace be upon him) combined everything related to cautiousness in one phrase: **“From the perfection of a man’s Islām is that he leaves that which does not concern him.”**”<sup>64</sup> So, this includes not talking about, looking at, listening to, touching, walking towards, or thinking about that which doesn’t concern him, as well as involving any other outer or inner movements that are of no concern to one. So, this statement is more than enough to illustrate how to be cautious, and Ibrāhīm bin Adham said: “Cautiousness is to abandon anything doubtful, and to leave what does not concern you is to leave anything you don’t need.””<sup>65</sup>

And the essence of cautiousness is to leave what is doubtful, and the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) encouraged this in the narration of an-Nu’man bin Bashīr: **“The permissible is clear and the forbidden is clear, and between them are doubtful matters. So, whoever leaves what he suspects is sin will be farther from what actually is sin, and whoever is bold enough to fall into what he suspects is sin will fall into what actually is sin. Sins are the boundary that Allāh has placed, and whoever hovers around a boundary will cross it.”**<sup>66</sup>

al-Baghawī said:

“This *hadīth* is an essential one when it comes to cautiousness. It says that if someone is confused as to the permissibility or prohibition of a matter and has nothing to refer to, the cautious one is he who abandons it, because if he doesn’t abandon it, proceeds with it, and makes it a habit, it will drag him into what is prohibited.

Most doubtful matters can be divided into two types. The first type is that which has no reference for which one reach a ruling of *halāl* or *harām*, and such a case warrants that the person leave off that action. As for the second type, this is where there is a reference and clear basis for declaring that matter either *halāl* or *harām*. In this case, one should stick to what is established, and should not digress from the basic ruling except with certain knowledge. For example, if a man purifies himself for the prayer and then has doubt as to whether or not he nullified his ablution, he is to pray so long as he isn’t certain that he nullified his ablution. Also, if one finds some water in the desert that he is not sure is pure,

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<sup>63</sup> *Mukhtasar Minhāj al-Qāsidīn*’ (p. 163)

<sup>64</sup> Reported by at-Tirmidhī (2317), Ibn Mājah (3976), Ibn Hibbān (229), Ahmad (1/201), and Mālik (2/470). In *‘Sharh as-Sunnah*’ (14/321), al-Baghawī said: “Its chain is authentic, but it is *mursal*,” and al-Albānī declared it authentic in his checking of *‘Mishkāt al-Masābih*’ (3/1361).

<sup>65</sup> *Madarij as-Salikin*’ (2/21)

<sup>66</sup> Part of a longer *hadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī (52 & 2051), Muslim (1599), and Ibn Hibbān (721)

he should stick to the basic principle of water being pure, hold firm to this, and not fall for the devilish whisperings.”<sup>67</sup>

Ibn Hajar (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“**‘The permissible is clear, and the forbidden is clear’** shows that the rulings are divided into three categories, because each matter either has a clear text showing its virtue and a warning from abandoning it, a clear text showing its harm and a warning from falling into it, or no clear text indicating either of the two. So, the first is what is clearly *halāl*, and the second is what is clearly *harām*. When he (peace be upon him) said that **‘the permissible is clear,’** he meant that it does not need any additional clarification, and that it is something known to all. As for the third, it is what is ambiguous and unclear to the one who fears it, such that he doesn’t know if it is *halāl* or *harām*. In this case, the person should avoid this action, because if it actually is *harām*, he has taken the safe route, and it is actually *halāl*, he is rewarded for abandoning it with this intention.”<sup>68</sup>

“So, the seeker of knowledge should be cautious in all aspects of his life, and should be particular about his food, drink, clothing, and housing being permissible in all aspects. He should apply this concept to everything that he and his family need in life, so that he can fill his heart with light and condition himself for soaking up the light of knowledge and benefiting from it.

He should not automatically lean towards something being permissible so long as he can exercise caution and does not need that thing. He should also not indulge in the permissible things. Rather, he should always seek to be at a higher level and follow in the footsteps of the righteous scholars of the past, who used to exercise great caution even in those things they judged to be permissible. The one he should most strive to imitate and follow is our Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him), who would not even eat a date that he found on the road out of fear that it was from charity, even though it was quite improbable that it was. The people of knowledge should be followed and imitated, and if they don’t exercise caution, who will?”<sup>69</sup>

Anas (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) came across a date that had fallen from a tree, and said: **“Were it not for the fact that it could be charity, I would’ve eaten it,”**<sup>70</sup> and Abū Hurayrah (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“Verily, I turn to my family and find a date fallen on my bed. I raise it to my mouth to eat it, and then fear that it might be charity. So, I put it down.”**<sup>71</sup> Ibn Hajar said: “Here, the Prophet (peace

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<sup>67</sup> *‘Sharh as-Sunnab’* (8/15)

<sup>68</sup> *Fath al-Bārī’* (4/341)

<sup>69</sup> *Tadbkīrat as-Samī’ wal-Mutakallim’* (p. 75)

<sup>70</sup> al-Bukhārī (2055) and Muslim (1071)

<sup>71</sup> al-Bukhārī (2432) and Muslim (1070)

be upon him) specifically mentioned that he found it on his bed. With this, he refused to eat it out of caution,<sup>72</sup> and an-Nawawī said: “This *hadīth* contains an example of caution, as this date was not forbidden by mere suspicion that it was from the charity. Rather, it was left out of caution.”<sup>73</sup>

- Remembrance of Allāh -

And the most important thing that the student of knowledge should be particular about is to remember Allāh in all situations, as remembrance of Him is the greatest door and best path to what one seeks. Whoever turns from it has indeed been prevented from all good, and has deviated from the correct path. Whoever is guided to it has been truly been guided, and has been led by the best leader and guide.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“Rushing towards Allāh and depending on Him, being pleased with Him, filling the heart with love of Him, constantly remembering Him, feeling happiness and joy with knowing Him – all of these are instantaneous rewards, a paradise of this world, and a life that the lives of kings cannot even compare to. I heard *Shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) say: “Indeed, there is a paradise in this world. Whoever doesn’t enter it will not enter the Paradise of the Hereafter.” And he once said to me: “What can my enemies do to me? My paradise and garden are in my chest, and they are with me wherever I go. My imprisonment is my privacy with Allāh, my killing is martyrdom, and my expulsion from my homeland is tourism.”

And Allāh Knows that I never saw anyone with a purer life than him despite what he was experiencing of hardship and lack of relaxation and rest, and despite his imprisonment and fear of being killed. With all of this, he lived the purest life, had the strongest and most open heart, was happiest in spirit, and had a face that emanated the brightness of delight.

When we were frightened, had desperate thoughts, and felt as if the world was choking us, we would rush to him. Simply by seeing him and hearing his words, this would all turn into relaxation, certainty, and assurance. So, glory to the One who allowed His slaves to witness His Paradise before meeting Him and opened for them its doors in this life, giving them from its taste and sweet breeze that they have been dedicating their strength to seeking and competing for.

And some of the people of knowledge would say: “If the kings and their sons knew what we were experiencing, they would have fought us with swords over it.” Another said: “The people of this world are deprived. They left this world without tasting the sweetest thing in it!” It was asked of him: “And what is that?” He said: “Love of Allāh, knowing Him, and remembering Him.” So, love, knowledge, and constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah,

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<sup>72</sup> *Fath al-Bari* (4/344)

<sup>73</sup> *Sharh Sahih Muslim* (7/177)

leaning to Him, feeling tranquil with Him, singling Him out for love, fear, hope, dependence, and attention – such that He alone is the main concern and preoccupation of the slave and his goals – is the paradise and delight of this world that no other delight can compare to, and it is the coolness of the eyes of those who love Allāh, and true life for those who know Him.”<sup>74</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim continued:

“And I was with *Shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah once when he prayed *Fajr*. He sat afterwards remembering Allāh until midday, and turned to me, saying: “This is my nourishment. If I do not receive this nourishment, I will have no energy,” or something to this effect. And he said to me once: “I never leave off making *dhikr* except with the intention of saving up my energy to rest myself in order to prepare for more *dhikr*,” or something close to this in meaning.”<sup>75</sup>

“And there is no doubt that the heart becomes rusted just like copper, silver, etc. do, and it is polished with *dhikr*, as *dhikr* will clean it until it is left as shiny as a mirror. If it is left, it once again becomes rusty, and if you remember Allāh, it is once again polished.

And the heart becomes rusted because of two things: heedlessness and sin, and it becomes polished with two things: repentance and *dhikr*. So, whoever is heedless more often will have more rust on his heart, and the amount of rust will be in accordance with how heedless he is. If the heart becomes rusted, its owner will not be able to see things for what they are. So, he will see falsehood as truth and truth as falsehood, because when the rust builds up, it causes a fog that prevents him from seeing things as they are. So, if the rust builds up and blackens the heart, his understanding and comprehension become ruined, he will not accept the truth as truth, and will not reject falsehood as falsehood. This is the greatest form of punishment that can afflict the heart.

This all stems from heedlessness and the following of one’s desires, as they put out the light of the heart and blind it:

وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

{ “...and do not obey he whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his own lusts, and whose affair has been lost.” }<sup>76</sup>

So, if the servant of Allāh wants to imitate someone, let him see: is he from those who remember Allāh, or is he from the heedless? Is he led by his desires, or by the Revelation? So, if he is led by his desires and is from the heedless, his affair is lost. The word فُرُطًا has been explained to mean lost, in that what he should be doing, and what will lead to his guidance and success, is lost. It has also been explained to mean wasted, in that he has wasted what he has. It has also been explained to mean destruction, and has been explained to mean

<sup>74</sup> *al-Wābil as-Sayyib* (p. 44)

<sup>75</sup> *al-Wābil as-Sayyib* (p. 39)

<sup>76</sup> *al-Kahf*; 28

opposition to the truth. All of these are similar in meaning, and the point is that Allāh forbade us from obeying those who have these traits. So, a man should look to his teacher and example and leader - if he finds these traits in him, he should avoid him. If he finds one who is usually remembering Allāh, following the *Sunnah*, and his affair is not lost – rather, he is doing his job – he should hold tightly to that person. The only difference between the living and the dead is in regards to the remembrance of Allāh, because the difference between the one who remembers his Lord and the one who doesn't is like the difference between the living and the dead.”<sup>77</sup>

And *Shaykh al-Islam* Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“Sometimes, I would come across a hundred different explanations for a single verse, and I would ask Allāh to allow me to understand them. I would say: ‘O Teacher of Ādam and Ibrāhīm, teach me!’ I would go to an abandoned mosque, rub my face in the dirt, and ask Allāh, saying: ‘O Teacher of Ibrāhīm, teach me.’”<sup>78</sup>

Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“The likeness of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who doesn't is like that of the living and the dead,”**<sup>79</sup> and this is al-Bukhārī's version. Muslim's wording is: **“The likeness of the house in which Allāh is remembered and that in which He is not remembered is like that of the living and the dead.”**<sup>80</sup>

ash-Shawkānī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“And this parable shows the lofty beauty and noble virtue of the one who remembers Allāh, and it shows the life that is granted to him and his soul as the result of the light he is surrounded with and the reward that he is granted. Likewise, it shows that the one who abandons the remembrance of Allāh – even if he is literally alive – is not considered to be alive. Rather, he is likened to the dead, who do not contain any of what the living who are busy obeying Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic, contain. And what is in this *hadīth* is also in the verse:

أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ

{“Is he who was dead, and We gave him life...”}<sup>81</sup>

This means that the disbeliever is likened to the dead, and guidance to Islām is likened to life.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> ‘*al-Wābil as-Sayyib*’ (p. 37)

<sup>78</sup> ‘*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Iklās*’ (p. 6)

<sup>79</sup> ‘*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*’ (6407)

<sup>80</sup> ‘*Sahīh Muslim*’ (779)

<sup>81</sup> *al-An'am*, 122

And al-Bukhārī titled one of his chapters '*Chapter: the Virtue of Remembering Allāh.*' In it, he included the aforementioned *hadīth* of Abū Mūsā, as well as this *hadīth* of Abū Hurayrah, in which the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said:

**“Allāh has Angels who roam the roads, seeking out those who remember Him. So, if they find those who remember Allāh, they call out: ‘Come see what you’re looking for!’ and the Angels encircle them with their wings up to the sky.**

**Then, their Lord asks them - though He Knows better than them – ‘What do My slaves say?’**

**The Angels reply: ‘They say: *subhān Allah, Allāhu Akbar, and al-hamdu lil-Lāh.*’**

**Allāh then Says: ‘*Did they see Me?*’**

**The Angels reply: ‘No! By Allāh, they didn't see You.’**

**Allāh Says: ‘*How it would have been if they saw Me?*’**

**The Angels reply: ‘If they saw You, they would worship You more devoutly and praise You more, and declare Your freedom from any resemblance to anything more often.’**

**Allāh will Say: ‘*What do they ask Me for?*’**

**The Angels reply: ‘They ask You for Paradise.’**

**Allāh Says: ‘*Did they see it?*’**

**The Angels say: ‘No! By Allāh, O Lord! They did not see it.’**

**Allāh Says: ‘*How it would have been if they saw it?*’**

**The Angels say: ‘If they saw it, they would have greater desire for it, and would seek it with greater zeal.’**

**Allāh Says: ‘*From what do they seek refuge?*’**

**The Angels reply: ‘They seek refuge from the Fire.’**

**Allāh Says: ‘*Did they see it?*’**

**The Angels say: ‘No, by Allāh, O Lord! They did not see it.’**

**Allāh Says: ‘*How it would have been if they saw it?*’**

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<sup>82</sup> '*Tuhfat adh-Dhākirīn*' (p. 15)

The Angels say: ‘If they saw it, they would flee from it swiftly, and would have extreme fear of it.’

Then, Allāh says: ‘I make you witnesses that I have Forgiven them.’

One of the Angels would then say: ‘There was such and such a person amongst them, and he was not one of them. Rather, he had just come for some need of his.’

Allāh would then Say: ‘These are people whose companions will not be saddened.’<sup>83</sup>

*al-Hāfidh* Ibn Hajar (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“What is meant by remembrance here is that one pronounces the words that are encouraged to be said, and does this constantly, such as saying *subhān* Allāh (glory be to Allāh), *al-hamdu lil-Lāh* (praise be to Allāh), *lā ilāh illa Allāh* (there is none worthy of worship except Allāh), *Allāhu Akbar* (Allāh is the Greatest), *lā hawla wa lā quwwata illā bil-Lāh* (there is no might nor power except with Allāh), *bismil-Lāh* (in the Name of Allāh), *hasbunā Allāh wa ni’m al-Wakīl* (Allāh is sufficient for us, and He is the best Disposer of our affairs), as well as seeking Allāh’s Forgiveness, and supplicating for the good of this world and the next.

The remembrance of Allāh also includes doing that which Allāh has obligated or encouraged, such as recitation of the Qur’ān, reading *Hadīth*, studying knowledge, praying optional prayers, etc. And *dhikr* sometimes occurs with the tongue, and the person gets rewarded for it without even having to know the meaning of what he is saying. Rather, he must not mean other than what it means, and if he adds to this pronouncement the presence of his heart, this is better. If he then adds to this the understanding of what this *dhikr* means - what it contains of the glorification of Allāh and denying any shortcomings in Him - this is even better. If he does this during any righteous action – whether it is prayer, *Jihād*, etc. – it only increases in virtue. If he turns completely towards Allāh and is sincere to Him in doing this, this is best and most complete.”<sup>84</sup>

In regards to the *hadīth* reported by Muslim: **“The likeness of the house in which Allāh is remembered and that in which He is not remembered is like that of the living and the dead,”** Ibn Hajar said: “What is described as being truly alive or dead is the inhabitant, not the house, and what is intended by describing the house as alive or dead is that its inhabitant is alive or dead. So, he (peace be upon him) likened the person who remembers Allāh – who is outwardly beautified with the light of life, and inwardly beautified with the light of knowledge – with one who is alive, and he likened the one who doesn’t remember Allāh with the house that is outwardly and inwardly ruined. It was also said that the likeness to the living and dead was because of how the living person can help his allies and harm his enemies, while the dead cannot.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (6408)

<sup>84</sup> *Fath al-Bārī* (11/212)

<sup>85</sup> *Fath al-Bārī* (11/214)

So, those who should hold firmest to the handhold of *dhikr* are the people of knowledge and those who seek it. They are the ones who traverse swiftly and are rightly guided by it to the destination they seek, and with anything else, their feet would become sluggish, their hearts would become rusted, and they would become lost, as it was said:

*If we become sick, we treat ourselves with Your remembrance \* And when we leave this remembrance for a bit, we become depressed...*

## Eat, Sleep, and Speak as Seldom as Possible

We previously touched upon the fact that the student of knowledge should eat little and from what is *halāl*, “and the way to train oneself to overcome the desire of the stomach is to get used to being satisfied with little. So, one should slowly and gradually reduce his food intake so that he arrives at a moderate level, and the best of affairs are the moderate ones. He cut himself down to just enough that he is not prevented from worship, and is able to preserve his strength. He should feel neither hungry nor full. Only then will his body become healthy, his aspirations high, and his conscience clear. If he eats any more than this, he will be driven to sleep more, and will have lower intellect.”<sup>86</sup>

As for your food being *halāl*, this is required of every Muslim, and is even more required of the student of knowledge, as the student of knowledge is the bastion of knowledge of what is *halāl* and *harām*, and we’ve already touched upon the issue of caution when it comes to food and drink, and how the Prophet (peace be upon him) held back from eating a date that he found on his bed out of fear that it was from the charity, since charity was not permissible for him (peace be upon him).

So, the student of knowledge is too busy to think of food and drink, and the one who sees through the glitter of this life will not be fat. Rather, his passion makes him forget to eat a lot. Here is *Shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah, who “was never heard asking for food - dinner or supper – no matter how long he remained busy with some matter related to knowledge and action. Rather, he would sometimes be given food that he would leave for a long time before even turning to it, and if he ate from it, would only eat small bits. He would never mention the delights of this world, and would never speak or ask about it. Rather, all of his concern and conversation was in seeking the Hereafter and what could bring him closer to Allāh, the Exalted.”<sup>87</sup>

an-Nu’mān bin Bashīr narrated that ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb (may Allāh be pleased with them both) was mentioning the poverty that the people had become stricken with, saying: “I saw the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) spend the whole day upset because of hunger, as he could not get even low quality dates with which to fill his stomach.”<sup>88</sup>

Abū Hurayrah passed by a group of people who were eating a roasted sheep, and they invited him to sit and eat with them. He refused, saying: “The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) left this world without even satisfying his hunger with barley bread.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qāsidin*’ (p. 163)

<sup>87</sup> *Ghāyat al-Amāni*’ (2/173)

<sup>88</sup> *Sahih Muslim*’ (2978)

<sup>89</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*’ (5414)

And Anas bin Mālik (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “The Prophet (peace be upon him) never ate his meals at a dining table or in an individual plate, and he never ate thin, well-baked bread until he died.”<sup>90</sup>

- *Sleeping* -

As for sleeping: “The student of knowledge should reduce it as much as he can without hurting his body and mind, and he should not sleep more than eight hours a night – one third of his time – and if he is able to sleep less than this, he should.”<sup>91</sup>

az-Zarnūjī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“al-Hasan bin Ziyād began studying at the age of 80, and for forty years, he did not sleep an entire night on his bed, and Muhammad bin al-Hasan ash-Shaybānī would not sleep at night. He would place his books in front of him, and if he became bored of one book, he’d move on to another. He would also place in front of him a container of water that he’d use to keep himself awake, saying: “Sleep comes from heat, and one must repel it with cold water.”<sup>92</sup>

And Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **“When any one of you goes to sleep, Satan ties three knots at the back of his neck, sealing each knot by saying: ‘You have a long night. So, sleep.’ So, if one wakes up and mentions Allāh, a knot is loosened. If he performs ablution, two knots are loosened. And if he prays, all the knots will be loosened, and in the morning he will be active and in a good mood. Otherwise, he will be in a bad mood and sluggish in the morning.”**<sup>93</sup>

And ‘Abdullāh bin Mas’ūd (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that mention was made of a man who slept the whole night till morning. So, the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: **“That is a man in whose ears Satan has urinated.”**<sup>94</sup>

And Allāh praised the righteous people, referring to them as good-doers because they would sleep very little at night:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ \* آخِذِينَ مَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ \* كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ  
الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ \* وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ \* وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

{ *“Verily, the righteous will be in the midst of gardens and springs, taking joy in the things which their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were good-doers. They used to*

<sup>90</sup> ‘*Sahīb al-Bukhārī*’ (5415)

<sup>91</sup> ‘*Tadbkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim*’ (p. 77)

<sup>92</sup> ‘*Ta’līm al-Muta’allim wa Turūq at-Ta’allum*’ (p. 23)

<sup>93</sup> al-Bukhārī (1142) and Muslim (776)

<sup>94</sup> al-Bukhārī (3270) and Muslim (774)

*sleep little at night, and in the hours before dawn, they were found asking for Forgiveness, and in their wealth was a right for the beggar and the poor.”*<sup>95</sup>

Ibn Kathīr (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“His Saying {“... joy in the things which their Lord has given them...”} means that the righteous, since they are in gardens and delight, are enjoying what their Lord has given them of happiness, delight, and bliss. His Saying {“...Indeed, they were...”} is in regards to the worldly life, and {“...good-doers...”} is like His Saying:

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ

{“Eat and drink in relaxation because of what you did before in days past!”}<sup>96</sup>

Then, He shows us what good they used to do, Saying: {“...They used to sleep little at night...”} Ibn Jarīr at-Tabarī said: “Their rest and sleep took up a very small portion of the night.” al-Hasan al-Basrī said: “They would spend the night in prayer, and would not sleep except for a short time. Then, when they had some energy, they would make *istighfār* until dawn.” Qatādah said that al-Ahnaf bin Qays would say: “They would sleep for only a little while,” and then say: “I am not from those described in this verse.” Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be Pleased with him) and Ibrāhīm an-Nakhaṭī said: “They would sleep very little.”<sup>97</sup>

as-Sa’dī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“They were good-doers, and they would only rest and sleep for a short amount of time. As for the majority of the night, they would spend it concentrating on their Lord, whether that was in prayer, recitation of the Qur’ān, *dhikr*, supplication, humbling themselves before Him, etc. Before the dawn, they would ask Allāh’s Forgiveness. So, they would extend their prayers until dawn, and would then sit and seal off their night prayer with *istighfār* – the *istighfār* of the sinner for his sins.”<sup>98</sup>

In conclusion, excessive sleep is not from the character of the seeker of knowledge, and they should be as far from this characteristic as possible. Rather, they should be serious and committed, and the believer will never satisfied with whatever good he has done until he makes it to Paradise.

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<sup>95</sup> *adb-Dhāriyāt*, 15-19

<sup>96</sup> *al-Haqqab*, 24

<sup>97</sup> *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Adhīm* (4/233)

<sup>98</sup> *Taysīr al-Karīm ar-Rahmān* (8/23)

As for reducing your level of speech, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **“Whoever believes in Allāh and the Hereafter, let him say what is good or remain silent.”**<sup>99</sup>

an-Nawawī said:

“This means that if one wants to say something, he should to whether what he wants to say is definitely good and praiseworthy, obligatory or encouraged. If so, he should say it. If he doesn’t see that it is good and praiseworthy, he should not say it, whether it is forbidden, disliked, or permissible – they are all the same. In this case, speech which is normally allowed should be avoided out of fear that it can lead to forbidden or disliked speech, and this happens a lot. Based on this *hadīth*, *al-Imām* ash-Shāfi’ī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said that if you wish to say something, let him think. If you conclude that there is no harm, speak. If you conclude that your words will bring about harm, do not speak.”<sup>100</sup>

Ibn Hajar (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“And this is from his (peace be upon him) ability to combine many meanings on few words, as every statement is good, bad, or leaning to one of the two. Included under good speech is everything obligatory or encouraged, and he allowed this speech despite its various types, as well as anything that could lead to it. As for speech that is bad or could lead to what is bad, he commanded us to be quiet if we ever wanted to indulge in it.”<sup>101</sup>

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“From the tests that the scholar is put through is that he likes to talk more than he likes to listen. Yazīd bin Abī Habīb said: “Listening is safe and increases one’s knowledge, and the listener is the partner of the speaker. Talking consists of confusion and deception, excess and deficiency. The one who talks awaits *fitnah*, and the one who listens awaits mercy.”

And Abū adh-Dhiyāl said: “Learn to be quiet just as you learn to talk, because if talking guides you, being quiet protects you. By being quiet, you attain two characteristics: you are able to take knowledge from those more knowledgeable than you, and you are able to repel the ignorance of those more ignorant than you.”

Speaking about good things is a prize and is better than silence, because the best thing that silence has to offer is safety, and by speaking what is good, you actually gain something extra. It was said: “Whoever speaks what is good wins, and whoever remains silent is saved,” and speaking about knowledge-related matters is from the best of actions, and it is of the

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<sup>99</sup> Reported by Ahmad (2/267, 433, and 463), al-Bukhārī (6018, 6136, and 6475), Muslim (47), Abū Dāwūd (5154), at-Tirmidhī (2500), and Ibn Hibbān (506 & 516)

<sup>100</sup> ‘*Sharh Sahih Muslim*’ (2/18)

<sup>101</sup> ‘*Fath al-Bārī*’ (1/461)

same level as *dhiker*, and recitation of the Qur’ān if it is done to repel ignorance, attain the Pleasure of Allāh, and discover the reality of its meanings.”<sup>102</sup>

Abū Hātim said: “Two men went to seek knowledge. When they became learned, one of them became known as a speaker, and the other came to be known as quiet. So, the speaker wrote to the quiet one:

*I never sought to gain anything in life \* With something better than my tongue...*

So, the quiet one wrote back:

*And I never sought to gain anything in life \* With something that deserved to be imprisoned more than the tongue...*<sup>103</sup>

And a man came to Salmān (may Allāh be Pleased with him), saying: “O Abā ‘Abdillāh! Advise me!”

So, he said: “Do not speak.”

The man replied: “It’s impossible for one who lives amongst the people not to speak.”

He said: “Then if you speak, say what is correct, or be quiet.”

The man said: “Tell me more.”

Salmān said: “Do not become angry.”

The man said: “You tell me not to become angry, and I am sometimes overcome and unable to control myself.”

He said: “Then if you become angry, at least control your tongue and hands.”

The man said: “Tell me more.”

Salmān said: “Do not mix with the people.”

The man said: “One who lives with the people must mix with them!”

He said: “Then if you mix with them, speak the truth and fulfill your promises.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Jāmi’ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Fadlīb’* (1/182)

<sup>103</sup> *‘Lubāb al-‘Ādāb’* (p. 274)

<sup>104</sup> *‘Kitāb as-Samt wa ‘Ādāb al-Lisān’* (p. 558)

And Abū Hayān at-Taymī said: “It was said that the man should pay more attention to his tongue than to where he places his feet,”<sup>105</sup> and this is because of the danger the tongue and excess talking pose to the believer’s heart. The traps of the tongue are many and deadly, and just one of these traps is enough to make one spend their entire life trying to avoid. However, Allāh tests His Creation in order to make clear the righteous from the evil.

- *The Sins of the Tongue* -

Ibn Qudāmah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“The sins of the tongue are many. They have a certain taste in the heart, and they spring forth from a person’s nature. There is no way to be saved from their danger except to remain silent. Abū ad-Dardā’ (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “Use your ears more than your mouth, as you were given two ears and one mouth so that you’d listen more than you talk,” and Makhlad bin al-Husayn said: “For fifty years, I haven’t spoken a single word that I regret.”

As for the sins of the tongue, they are:

- **Speaking about what does not concern you:**

Know that he who values his time will not waste it in what doesn’t benefit him, and this is a realization that mandates the imprisonment of the tongue from what is of no concern to him. This is because the one who leaves off the remembrance of Allāh and instead busies himself with what doesn’t concern him is like the one who is able to buy a gem, and instead buys some mud, and this is the loss of a lifetime.

It was said to Luqmān (peace be upon him): “How did you become so wise?” He replied: “I do not ask for what I don’t need, and I don’t speak about what doesn’t concern me.”

And it was narrated that Luqmān (peace be upon him) entered upon Dāwūd (peace be upon him) while he was putting together his armor. He was amazed at what he was seeing, and wanted to ask what he was doing. However, his wisdom prevented him from doing so. When Dāwūd (peace be upon him) was finished welding his armor, he got up, put it on, and said: “How excellent is this armor for warfare!” Luqmān (peace be upon him) said: “Silence is from wisdom, and those who practice it are few.”

- **Talking about falsehood:**

This is when a conversation revolves around talk of sins, such as talking about bars and places where the sinners gather.

The types of falsehood are many, and Abū Hurayrah (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **“Indeed, the slave can speak a single**

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<sup>105</sup> *Kitāb as-Samt wa Ādāb al-Lisān*’ (p. 206)

**word that will cause him to be thrown into the Fire as far as the distance between the East and the West.”<sup>106</sup>** Similar to this is when one argues and debates insistently with a person in order to expose his shortcomings, and this is all done out of the desire to be noticed.

So, the person should forbid what is evil with his tongue and clarify what is right. If this is not accepted from him, he should avoid arguing. This is if the issue has to do with religion. If it is a worldly matter, there is no reason to argue over it. The way to succeed in this is to swallow your pride, which is what drives you to make yourself look good. And what is worse than arguing is fighting and disputing, and we mean here disputing without knowledge. However, whoever has the right to argue should avoid doing so, as it agitates the heart, inflames anger, creates envy, and results in people attacking each other’s honor.

- **Talking with excessive eloquence:**

This is when one speaks in too much rhetoric. This does not include the eloquence of a *khatib*, or that one gives a reminder without being too detailed or hard-to-understand in his speech, because the whole point of such speeches is to move and motivate the hearts with the simplest words possible.

- **Indecent, inappropriate talk:**

Know that indecent talk is when one describes something inappropriate in a clear, direct manner, and this occurs often in songs.

- **Joking:**

There is no harm in joking here and there, and it is not forbidden if it is in truth, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to joke and not say except what was true. His joking always abided by the following conditions: it was in what was true, it was with women, children, and weak men who needed to be cultured, and it was done rarely.

- **Belittling and mocking:**

This is when you point out the faults and shortcomings in a person in order to laugh at him. This can occur either directly with a word or action, or indirectly by pointing, and both are forbidden in the *Shari’ah*.

- **Revealing secrets, breaking promises, and lying in word and oath:**

All of this is forbidden, except the lying that is allowed to one’s wife and during warfare.

- **Backbiting:**

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<sup>106</sup> al-Bukhārī (6477) and Muslim (2988)

This is when you mention something about your brother in his absence that he wouldn't want you to mention.

For example, it is when you speak about a physical shortcoming, such as his being bleary-eyed, one-eyed, cross-eyed, bald, too tall, too short, etc.

It is also when you speak about a shortcoming in his lineage, such as saying that one's father is a bedouin, an Indian, a sinner, low-class, etc.

It is also when you speak about his character, such as by saying that he has bad manners, is stingy, arrogant, etc.

It is also when you speak about his clothing, such as by saying that his coat is too long, his sleeves are too wide, he wears dirty clothes, etc.

The proof for all of this is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about backbiting, and he said: **“It is when you mention something about your brother that he doesn't like.”** They asked: “What if he actually is as we say?” He (peace be upon him) replied: **“If he is as you say, you have backbitten him. If he is not as you say, you have slandered him.”**<sup>107</sup>

And know that anything that can even be understood to be belittlement counts as backbiting, whether this is in the form of a word, a wink, a point of the finger, or a written word, as the pen is one of your two tongues.

And the most disgusting form of backbiting is the backbiting of the fake religious people, such as when someone is mentioned, and they say ‘thank God for saving us from entering upon the ruler,’ or that they say ‘we seek refuge with Allāh from having no *hayā*,’ or ‘may Allāh spare us,’ as they combine between belittling this person and praising themselves. One of them might even say ‘This poor person has been tested with many sins. May Allāh Forgive him and us,’ thereby hiding his true intent by making this supplication.

And know that the one who listens to backbiting is an accomplice to it, and he doesn't disassociate himself from this crime until he speaks against it. If he fears for himself from speaking against it, he must at least hate it in his heart, and he should get up or change the subject if he can.

- **Tale-carrying:**

In the agreed upon *hadīth* of Hudhayfah (may Allāh be Pleased with him), the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“No tale-carrier will enter Paradise.”**<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Reported by Muslim (2589), Abū Dāwūd (4874), and at-Tirmidhī (1934)

<sup>108</sup> ‘*as-Silsilah as-Sahībah*’ (1034) and ‘*Sahīh al-Jāmi*’ (7672)

Know that tale-carrying normally involves one person and another, such as when you tell someone ‘This person said that about you.’ However, it is not limited to this. Rather, it includes exposing anything that should not be exposed, whether this involves words or actions. Even if you see someone burying his own money and mention it to others, this counts as tale-carrying. Everyone to whom such a tale is relayed – such as by one saying to him ‘This person said that about you, or did this against you,’ etc. – should do six things:

First, he should not believe what the person is saying, because the tale-carrier is a sinner, and his testimony is rejected. Second, he should advise him and forbid him from this act. Third, he should hate him for Allāh’s Sake, as he is hated with Allāh. Fourth, he should not assume the worst about his absent brother. Fifth, he should not be driven to spy or pry into the matter because of what was said, as Allāh Said:

وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا  
 { “...and do not spy...” }<sup>109</sup>

Sixth, he should not go and do what he forbade the tale-carrier from doing by telling others about his tale-carrying.

- **Having two tongues:**

This is when one speaks with two tongues between two enemies, transmitting the words of one to the other, tells one side what he wants to hear or promises to help him, or praises one in his face and belittles him in the presence of another.

In the agreed upon *hadith* of Abū Hurayrah (may Allāh be Pleased with him), the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: **“The worst of people is the two-faced one who comes to this person with one face and that person with another.”**<sup>110</sup>

- **Praising people:**

There are problems with this related to both the praiser and the praised.

As for the sin of the one doing the praising, he might say that which is not true and cannot be confirmed, such as saying that a person is cautious and abstinent from the worldly pleasures. Also, he might go overboard in praising the person to the point of lying. He might also praise one that in fact deserves to be censured.

As for the one being praised, he might become arrogant or impressed with himself, and these are both deadly traits to acquire.

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<sup>109</sup> *al-Hujurat*, 12

<sup>110</sup> Reported by al-Bukhārī (3493, 6058, and 7179), Muslim (2526), Abū Dāwūd (4872), at-Tirmidhī (2025), Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in ‘*at-Tamhīd*’ (18/261), and Ibn ‘Asākir in ‘*Mu’jam asb-Shuyūkh*’ (2/1008)

- **The Religion:**

This is when one makes severe mistakes when speaking about the concepts that are related to the Religion, especially that which concerns Allāh, the Exalted.”<sup>111</sup>

So, the student of knowledge should save his tongue, preserve his time, busy himself with the truth, and not waste his time in petty matters, letting his life pass by without having accomplished anything.

And the guided one is he whom Allāh has Guided.

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<sup>111</sup> *Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qasidin'* (p. 166-179)

## Reduce Socialization and Choose the Right Friends

People have always been greatly divided over the issue of mixing and seclusion. So, some went with the opinion that one should always mix with the people, and some went with the opinion that one should always seclude himself from the people, and everyone is satisfied with his point of view.

And *Shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) touched upon this issue and clarified the dispute, saying:

“This issue - even though the people have differed over it, either partially or completely - the reality of it is that mixing with the people is sometimes obligatory or recommended. The same individual can sometimes be obligated to mix with others, and can at other times be obligated to separate from them.

The way to properly reconcile between these two stands is to realize that mixing, if it involves cooperation upon good and piety, is obligatory, and if it involves cooperation upon sin and transgression, is forbidden. Mixing with the Muslims for the purpose of congregational acts of worship, such as the five prayers, the Friday prayer, the *'Id* prayer, the eclipse prayer, the prayer for rain (*istisqā'*), etc., is from what Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him) commanded. Such is also the case when mixing with the people during the *Hajj*, to fight the disbelievers, *Khawārij*, and rebels, even if the leaders of and participants in such activities are corrupt. This is also the case with a gathering in which the worshipper can increase his faith - either because of it benefiting him, or he benefiting it.

And a person must have time alone to engage in supplication, remembrance, prayer, reflection, take himself to account, and rectify his heart. These are issues that nobody else can participate with him in, and these are affairs that need to be seen to on an individual basis, whether at home or otherwise, as Tāwūs said: “How excellent of a refuge is the home! In it, one can restrain his gaze and his tongue.” So, it is incorrect to mix with people unrestrictedly, and it is incorrect to seclude yourself from people unrestrictedly. As for exactly how much every person needs of each, and what is best for him at all times, this is something that requires further investigation.

What is best is that one sometimes pick from the various types of worship based on their inherent virtue (prayer is in itself better than recitation of the Qur'ān, and recitation is better than *dhikr*, and *dhikr* is better than supplication), and sometimes based on what time of day he is in (recitation, *dhikr*, and supplication after *Fajr* and *'Asr* are preferred over prayer), and sometimes based on the physical position he is in (*dhikr* and supplication in bowing and prostration are legislated instead of recitation of the Qur'ān, and *dhikr* and supplication during *tawāf* is legislated by consensus, while recitation of the Qur'ān during *tawāf* is differed over), and sometimes based on his location (what is legislated at 'Arafah, Muzdalifah, at the *Jamār*, and at Safā and Marwah is *dhikr* and supplication instead of prayer, etc. and *tawāf* of the Sacred House for the visitor is better than prayer, and prayer is better for the inhabitants of Makkah), and sometimes based on the appropriateness of the worship for the person

(*Jibād* for men is better than *Hajj*, while the *jibād* of women is *Hajj*, and obedience to the husband is better than obedience to the father for the married woman, as opposed to the single woman who is commanded to obey her father), and sometimes based on the capability of the servant, as the worship he is capable of is better for him than the worship he is incapable of, even if what he is incapable of is inherently better. This is a point where many people go to extremes and follow their desires: some people who see a certain action as being better for them due to their own circumstances, or due to it being more beneficial to their heart and a better way to obey their Lord, wish to then make this the best action for everyone around them, and proceeds to command them to do the same.

And Allāh sent Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the Book and Wisdom, and made him to be a mercy and guide for the servants, commanding each person with what is best for them. So, the Muslim should be a well-wisher to every person, wanting what is best for them.”<sup>112</sup>

And the scholars – may Allāh be Pleased with them – would mix with the people and teach them while simultaneously being the most careful of people of wasting their time, and Ahmad (may Allāh be Pleased with him) was the most patient of people upon being alone, despite the fact that he was the *imām* of the world during his time. His son, ‘Abdullāh, said: “My father went out to Tarsūs on foot, performed *Hajj* two or three times on foot, and he was the most patient of people upon being alone. Bishr, despite his status, was unable to remain by himself, and would always go out to see this person and that.”<sup>113</sup>

So, mixing and socialization should not be with one who has a dead heart, as he is like a highway robber. Rather, it should be with one who will increase you in faith and action.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“The one with a dead heart will make you feel lonely. So, take advantage of his absence as much as possible, because you will not feel lonely except when he is with you. If you are put to trial with him, give him your outer attention, wander from him with your heart, separate your inner self from him, and do not let him distract you from what is more deserving of your attention.

Know that the greatest of losses is for you to be preoccupied with one who will bring you nothing but a loss in your time with Allāh - the Mighty and Majestic - and being cut off from Him, wasting of your time on him, weakening of your energy, and dispersing of your attention. So, if you are tested with this - and you must be tested with this - deal with him according to how Allāh would wish, and be patient with him as much as possible. Get closer to Allāh and His Pleasure by way of this person, and make your getting together with him something to benefit from, not something to incur a loss from. Be with him as if you are a man who is on a road who was stopped by another man, who then asks you to take him on your journey. Make sure that you are the one who gives him a ride, and that he is not the one

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<sup>112</sup> *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā’* (10/425)

<sup>113</sup> *Tarjamat al-Imām Ahmad* (p. 18)

giving you the ride. If he refuses, and there is nothing to gain from traveling with him, do not stop for him, bid him farewell, and do not even turn back to look at him, as he is a highway robber regardless of who he really is.

So, save your heart, be wary of how you spend your days and nights, and do not let the Sun set before you arrive at your destination.”<sup>114</sup>

“So, the student of knowledge should abandon socialization, as this is from the most crucial things that he can do, especially in regards to members of the opposite gender, and especially with those who spend most of their time in amusement and little of their time in thought, as the nature of others can rob you of your own. The harms of socialization include the passing of your life without any benefit, as well as the decline of your wealth and religious commitment if this socialization were to occur with the wrong people.

The student of knowledge should not mix except with those who he can benefit or can benefit from. If he is offered the friendship of one who will waste his time with him, will not benefit him, will not benefit from him, and will not assist him in reaching his objective, he should politely end the relationship from the start before it progresses to something deeper, as when something becomes established, it becomes more difficult to change it. There is a phrase that is constantly on the tongues of the scholars: ‘Repelling something is easier than removing it.’

If he requires someone to befriend, let that person be righteous, religious, pious, wary, intelligent, full of benefit, having little evil, good at complying and rarely conflicting, reminding him if he forgets, cooperating with him when he is reminded, helpful if he is in need, and comforting if he is in distress.”<sup>115</sup>

Ibn Qudāmah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“Know that not everyone is suitable to be your friend. You must verify that this potential friend has the necessary characteristics that make friendship with him something to be desired. The one you seek to befriend must have five characteristics:

- He must be intelligent. There is no good in befriending an idiot, as he will only harm you when he wants to benefit you. By intelligent, we mean one he understands things as they are on his own or if they are explained to him.
- He must have good manners, and this is a must. One who is simply intelligent might be overcome by anger or desire, and obey his desire. Thus, there would be no benefit in befriending him.
- He must not be a *fāsiq*. Such a person would not fear Allāh, and whoever does not fear Allāh cannot be trusted.

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<sup>114</sup> ‘*al-Wābil as-Sayyib*’ (p. 45)

<sup>115</sup> ‘*Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim*’ (p. 83)

- He must not be an innovator, as there is a fear of being overtaken by his innovation.
- He should not be eager for the *dunya*.

‘Umar bin al-Khattāb (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “Stick with your true brothers. You can live in comfort with them, as they are a delight in times of ease, and you can lean on them in times of hardship. Assume the best about your brother until he comes with something that should alarm you from him. Avoid your enemy, and beware of befriending anyone but the trustworthy, and there is no trust for the one who doesn’t fear Allāh. Do not befriend the corrupt, as he will teach you his corruption, and do not reveal your secrets to him, and only consult those who fear Allāh, the Exalted.”

Yahyā bin Mu’adh said: “A friend is the one who you don’t have to remind to remember you in his supplication, and that you don’t have to flatter and impress, and that you don’t have to apologize to.”

And Abū Ja’far said to his companions: “Can any of you put his hand in the pocket of his brother and take what he wants?” They replied: “No.” He said: “Then you are not brothers as you claim.”

- *The Rights of Brotherhood* -

And each of you has certain rights upon his brother.

You should fulfill his needs, and this is of levels. The least is that you gladly fulfill his needs when you are able and he asks you. Better than this is that you fulfill them before he even asks you, and better than all of this is that you put his needs before your own.

You should remain silent regarding him at times, and speak at times. As for your silence, you should be quiet about his faults, both in his presence and absence. You should not argue or dispute with him, and shouldn’t ask him about personal things that he wouldn’t want to reveal. If you happen to see him somewhere, don’t ask where he is going, as it might be that he doesn’t want anyone to know. Don’t reveal his secrets, even if you fall into a feud afterwards. Also, don’t insult his friends and family, and don’t inform him if others happen to insult him.

Don’t say anything that could annoy him except if this involves something that must be said, such as commanding the good or forbidding the evil, as this would actually be a way of being good to him.

And know that you will never find a friend who is completely free of faults. Instead, look for someone whose good qualities outweigh his bad. Once you are stricter in judging people than you are in judging yourself, you fall into Allāh’s Saying:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا اِكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ \* وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَّزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ

*{“Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, demand full measure, and when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than their due.”}*<sup>116</sup>

And know that one of the greatest means by which hatred and envy come between two brothers is useless argumentation. This leads to nothing but each side trying to show itself as being better and smarter than the other, belittling the other, etc. And he who picks arguments with his brother has essentially made him out to be stupid, low, heedless, and incompetent, and all of this is considered belittlement. This inflames the heart and makes one person hate the other, and this is all contradictory to what brotherhood is all about.

The rights of brotherhood also entail that you say certain things. Just as you have to remain silent from saying what you shouldn't say, you should also say what should be said. In fact, this is from the most particular rights of brotherhood, because the one who wants to befriend the mute can go to the graveyard. The point of brotherhood is that you benefit from your brother, not that you are relieved of him. So, you should strengthen your ties of brotherhood with words by asking about him, asking how things are going, let him know that you are concerned about him, and be happy with what makes him happy.

You should refer to him in the best light and praise him to others for the good that you know of him. You should also speak well of his family, children, actions – even his character, intellect, appearance, personality – and everything that can make him happy without going into extremes or saying what is untrue. Likewise, you should inform him if someone says something good about him while showing him that you are happy about this, as to hide such joy is tantamount to envy.

You should thank him for anything he does for you, and defend him in his absence if he is mentioned in a bad light, as the right between brothers is that they rush to defend and assist one another.

You should teach and advise him, as your brother's need for knowledge is not any less than his need for money. So, if you have been blessed with a wealth of knowledge, distribute it and guide him.

And you should advise him in secret, and the difference between advising and condemning is whether you do it in public or private. Likewise, the difference between ignoring the fault of your brother and compromising with him is all in the purpose of doing so. So, if you ignore his fault for the sake of a religious benefit, or you see that this will lead to his long-term benefit, you are not compromising. If you put aside his fault for your own personal benefit, you are compromising.

You should supplicate for your brother during his life and after his death for everything you want for yourself. Abū ad-Dardā' (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **“The supplication of a Muslim man for his brother in his absence is accepted, and there is an Angel appointed for each supplication of a man for his brother with good who says: ‘Allāh, accept it, and give him the same that he**

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<sup>116</sup> *al-Mutaffi'in*, 2-3

**asks for his friend,”**<sup>117</sup> and Abū ad-Dardā’ used to supplicate for many of his brothers, mentioning them by name in his supplications. Likewise, Ahmad bin Hambal used to supplicate at dawn for six specific individuals.

You should make a pact to love your brother until death, and to love his family and friends after his death. You should also not stop being humble with him even if you end up exceeding him in wealth and status. From the implications of this pact is also that you do not listen to criticism of your friend from others, and that you do not befriend his enemies.

You should also not task him with what he cannot bear. Rather, you should try to relieve him of his own concerns and pressures, and should not use his friendship to get to his wealth or resources, and should not pressure him to go out of his way to help you. Rather, your love of him should only be for Allāh’s Pleasure and to deal with him in an easygoing and reserved manner, so that he would not hesitate to ask of you what you would ask of him.

Ja’far bin Muhammad said: “The most difficult friends are those who are a burden on me and I try to avoid, and the easiest of friends are those whose presence is just as burdensome as their absence (i.e. they are not at all burdensome).”<sup>118</sup>

So, the student of knowledge should be sure to avoid those who should not be befriended in order to preserve his time and protect his heart. He should choose the friend who will help him in the matters of his religion and the Hereafter, and al-Khawārizmī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

*Do not befriend one who is lazy \* How many righteous people have been corrupted by the corrupt?*

*The steadfast are quickly infected by the lazy \* And burning coals simmer down when thrown into ashes.*

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<sup>117</sup> ‘*Sabih al-Adab al-Mufrad*’ (487) and ‘*Sabih Ibn Majah*’ (2358)

<sup>118</sup> ‘*Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qasidin*’ (p. 126-132)

## Choose What to Start With and Who to Teach You

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“The nobility of knowledge is in accordance with the nobility of what is learned from it, how strong and firm its proofs are, how necessary such knowledge is, and how beneficial it is. And there is no doubt that the loftiest and greatest subject of knowledge is Allāh - besides Whom none deserves to be worshipped, the Lord of the worlds, the Sustainer of the heavens and the Earth, the King, the Clear Truth, the One described with complete perfection, the One free of all fault and deficiency, and free of all resemblance in His perfection – and there is no doubt that knowledge of Allāh, His Names, Attributes, and actions is the noblest and loftiest of knowledge, just as He is the Noblest of all in comparison to anything else that can be known and studied. Just as knowledge of Him is the noblest of all knowledge, He is the basis of all knowledge. Just as everything in existence depends on the King and Clear Truth for its own survival and existence, every type of knowledge depends on Him in a similar fashion. So, knowledge of Him is the basis of all knowledge since He is the Lord, Owner, and Sustainer of everything.

There is no doubt that complete knowledge of something created requires knowledge of the one who created it, just as knowledge of something that was brought about requires knowledge of what brought that thing about. Everything that exists besides Allāh depends for its existence on Him - just like a product depends on its producer, and an action depends on the one carrying out the action. So, knowing Allāh, His Attributes, and actions means that one will automatically come to know what exists besides Allāh. This is because He is the Lord and Owner of everything, and knowledge of Him is the basis and source of all other knowledge. So, the one who knows Allāh will know other than Allāh, and whoever is ignorant of Allāh will be ignorant of anything besides Him, as Allāh Said:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ

{ *“And do not be like those who forgot Allāh, and He then caused them to forget themselves...”* }<sup>119</sup>

Reflect upon this verse and you will find that it contains a great and noble meaning, and this is that whoever forgets his Lord will end up forgetting himself, and will not know the reality of himself or his interests. He will be made to forget what leads to his health and success in life, and will end up becoming incapacitated and lost, just like a wild animal. In fact, the animals might even be more aware of what is in their interests than him due to the fact that they remain firm upon the bit of guidance that was provided to them by their Creator. He, on the other hand, rebelled against the *fitrah* that he was formed on and forgot his Lord, and

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<sup>119</sup> *al-Hasbr*, 19

was thus made to forget himself, his soul, its characteristics, what completes it, what purifies it, and what satisfies it during its life, and Allāh Said:

وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

{ “...and do not obey he whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his own lusts, and whose affair has been lost.”<sup>120</sup> }

He forgot his Lord, and therefore lost his affair and his heart. So, he is unable to grasp what is in his best interests, or what completes and purifies his heart and soul. Instead, his heart is divided, and he is confused, lost, and misguided.

The point is that knowledge of Allāh is the foundation of all knowledge, and it is the foundation for the slave knowing what will make him happy, complete, and fulfilled in this life and the next. Ignorance of Him leads to one being ignorant of himself, his interests, what completes and purifies him, and what leads him to success. So, knowledge of Him is happiness for him, and ignorance of Him is pain and anguish.

And there is nothing for the slave that is better, sweeter, or more relaxing or delightful to his heart and livelihood than loving his Creator, constantly remembering Him, and striving to Please Him. This is the completeness that the slave cannot achieve otherwise, and this is why the Creation was Created, the Revelation was revealed, the Messengers were sent, the heavens and Earth were established, Paradise and Hell were put forth, laws were legislated, the Sacred House was built and made a place of pilgrimage – which is a manifestation of loving and being pleased and pleasing to Him – and this is why *Jihād* was commanded, the necks were struck of those who rejected and preferred others to Him, and an abode of eternal punishment and torture was prepared for them. And this great matter is why the Creed was established, the *Qiblah* was ordained, and it is what all the affairs of the Creation revolve around.

There is no way to enter all of this except through the door of knowledge, as love of something is an extension of knowledge of it, and those who love Allāh most are those who know Him best. So, whoever knows Allāh will love Him, and whoever knows this *dunyā* and its people will lose interest in them. So, knowledge is what opens this great door, which is the secret of the Creation and Ordainment.”<sup>121</sup>

So, the student of knowledge should start with what he is and always will be most in need of – knowledge of Allāh, His Names, Attributes, and actions. So, if he receives his share of knowledge of Allāh, he is then to move on to knowledge of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* upon the methodology of the first generation of this *Ummah* (may Allāh be Pleased with them), so that he would be able to properly relay from the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him).

Ibn al-Qayyim also said:

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<sup>120</sup> *al-Kahf*; 28

<sup>121</sup> *Miftāh Dār as-Sa’ādah* (1/86)

“Relaying on behalf of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) is of two types: through a mediator, and without a mediator. The Companions - those who were foremost – took their knowledge without a mediator, and they withstood the test of time. So, nobody from the *Ummah* can ever hope to catch up to them. However, the successful one is he who follows the same straight path they were on, traverses their firm methodology, and stays away from anything that can drag him off of this path left or right, as this will cause him to wander in loss in a desert of deadly traps. So, what possible good thing can such people not be the first to rush to?”

By Allāh, they drank the best, sweetest, and purest water from the fountain of life, and they supported the foundations of Islām. They did not leave anything unexplained for those who came after them. They opened people’s hearts with the justice of the Qur’ān and faith, and they conquered regions with the swords and spears of *Jihād*, and they transmitted to the *Tabi’in* that which they received in pure form from the light of Prophethood. Their *isnād* in this was from the Prophet (peace be upon him), from Jibrīl, from the Lord of the worlds, and it was the highest *isnād* in quality and authenticity. They said ‘this is the trust of our Prophet left with us, and we have given you this trust, and this is what our Lord has entrusted and obligated upon our Prophet and us, and we will entrust it and obligate it upon you.

So, those *Tabi’in* followed them in good upon their firm methodology, and they followed in their footsteps upon the straight path. Then, their followers traversed the same path of guidance, and were guided to the best words and praiseworthy traits. In comparison to those who came before them, they were as the Most Truthful Said:

ثُلَّةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ \* وَقَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ

{ “A multitude of those will be from the first generations, and a few of those will be from the later times.” }<sup>122</sup>

Then came the leading scholars from the fourth blessed century, according to one of the two narrations authentically related from Abū Sa’īd, Ibn Mas’ūd, Abū Hurayrah, ‘Ā’ishah, and ‘Imrān bin Husayn. So, they followed in their footsteps in everything, inherited from their shining light, and the religion of Allāh was too valuable in their hearts and souls for them to put over it a logical opinion, blind following, or analogy. So, they became known the world over in the best light, and Allāh gave them a truthful tongue amongst all other people.

Then, their first generation of followers proceeded in their footsteps and rose up upon their firm and rightly guided methodology. They showed no interest in partisanship to individuals, were satisfied with proofs and evidences, traveling on the boat of truth wherever it sailed, and sticking with the correct opinion wherever it roamed. If a clear proof worked its wonders on them, they flew to it as individuals and groups. If the Messenger called them to something, they paid full attention and did not ask for further clarification, and his words

<sup>122</sup> *al-Wāqi’ah*; 12-13

were so dear to their hearts that they would never put in front of it the word of a single person, or contradict it with an opinion or comparison.”<sup>123</sup>

So, as a seeker of knowledge, you should turn all of your attention to the sciences of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*, as knowledge of them is the real knowledge, and to be ignorant of anything else will not really harm you.

Here is the advice of a concerned friend, who sends it to you clothed and shaded in his desire to see good for you, and in the most eloquent and magical of words. Ibn al-Qayyim says:

*O you who seeks to save himself \* Listen to the words of a loving advisor;*  
*In all of your affairs, hold tightly to Revelation \* And not to desirable hallucinations;*  
*And give victory to the Book of Allāh and the traditions \* That came from the one sent with the Criterion;*  
*And strike every denier with the sword of Revelation \* Just like the Mujāhid would strike over the fingertips;*  
*And carry on with truthful zeal \* The way of the sincere and brave who are dedicated to Allāh;*  
*And remain firm with patience under the banner of guidance \* And if you are harmed in the process, it is for*  
*the Pleasure of the Merciful;*  
*And make the Book of Allāh and authentic traditions your weapons \* And strengthen your soul;*  
*Who will fight and present himself \* Or compete on the battlefields?*  
*Openly preach what the Messenger came with \* And do not fear the lack of helpers;*  
*And avoid two garments whose wearers \* Will be censured and destroyed;*  
*The garment of ignorance that comes with \* The garment of partisanship – what terrible clothes!*  
*And decorate yourself with fairness and justice \* The best garment to beautify the chest and shoulders;*  
*And make your motto the fear of Allāh and advice of the Messenger \* And champion these two matters;*  
*And hold firmly to His rope and Revelation \* And depend on Him as He deserves...*

And may Allāh have Mercy on ash-Shāfi‘ī, as he said:

*Every knowledge other than the Qur’ān is a distraction \* Except for Hadīth and Fiqh;*  
*Knowledge is whatever begins with ‘It was narrated to us...’ \* And everything else is the whispering of*  
*Satan...*

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<sup>123</sup> *T’lām al-Muwaqqi’in* (1/5)

And Ibn al-Qayyim said:

*Knowledge is what Allāh, His Messenger \* And the Companions said, as they are the most knowledgeable;*

*And knowledge is not foolish oppositions \* To the Messenger with the opinion of a person...*

So, whoever seeks true knowledge away from what is in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, he is seeking the impossible. Whoever seeks satisfaction by taking from anything else, he has strayed from the path. They are the way to free and cure yourself from ignorance, and may Allāh have Mercy on the 'Allāmah Ibn al-Qayyim, as he said:

*Ignorance is a deadly disease \* And its cure is in two complimentary things;*

*A text from the Qur'an or Sunnah \* And a nurturing scholar to sweeten them;*

*And knowledge is of three types, with no fourth \* And the truth is what clarifies;*

*Knowledge of the Attributes and actions of the Deity \* And the Names of the Merciful;*

*And the commands and prohibitions that are His religion \* And the reward He gives at the Meeting Day;*

*And this is all in the Qur'an and Sunnah \* That came from the one sent with the Criterion;*

*And by Allāh, nobody speaks with other than them \* Except that he is hallucinating...*

And how great is the saying:

*O you who wakes up to seek knowledge! \* All knowledge is a slave to the knowledge of the Messenger;*

*You seek the branch to correct a principle \* How can you be heedless of the greatest of principles?*

So, the crux of all knowledge is the Book of Allāh and what came in the second Revelation, and that is the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him). So, stick as firmly as you can to them both, as they are the path to safety, sweetness and relaxation, the shade on a hot day, and the best prize and reward.

#### *- Choosing a Teacher -*

The student of knowledge should make an effort to choose a *shaykh*.

“He should choose the one most knowledgeable, cautious, and wise, just as Abū Hanīfah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) chose Hammād bin Sulaymān. After thinking and pondering, he said: “I found him to be a sharp, soft-hearted, and patient *shaykh*.” And he said: “I stayed with Hammād bin Sulaymān, and I became advanced in my knowledge.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* (p. 12)

And in the introduction to his '*Sahīh*,' Muslim reported that Muhammad bin Sirīn said: "This knowledge is religion. So, look to who you take your knowledge from."<sup>125</sup>

Ibn Jamā'ah said:

"The student should look forth and consult Allāh in regards to who to learn from, and he should seek to gain good manners and character from whoever he chooses. If he can, he should find one who is completely qualified to teach, concerned with his students, displays manhood, is known to be pure, has a good reputation, has a good teaching style, and is easily understood. The seeker of knowledge should not just seek out the one who is most knowledgeable, and who might lack caution, piety, and good manners. Some of the *Salaf* said: "This knowledge is religion. So, look who you take your religion from."

You should also beware of restricting yourself to those who are famous, as al-Ghazzālī and others counted this as arrogance towards knowledge, and considered it to be from the lowest of traits. This is because knowledge is the prize of the believer, and he should take it from wherever he finds it, and should take the blessing from whoever wants to give it to him. He runs from ignorance just as he runs from a lion, and the one running from a lion will accept help from whoever offers him a way to escape.

So, if one is not well-known and you can still expect good from him, he will be more beneficial and helpful. If you read about the lives of the *Salaf*, you will find that none of their students would benefit from a *shaykh* unless he had a fair share of *taqwā*, and his concern and advice to his students was a clear proof of him having this. Likewise, if you look through the various books, you'll find that you gain more benefit from the author who has more *taqwā* and *ʿubd*, and will spend more time reading and gaining from his books.

Make sure that your *shaykh* is fully aware of all of the *Shar'i* sciences, and is known to have studied at length with the trustworthy scholars of his time, and did not merely study from the depths of the pages of a book. ash-Shāfi'ī said: "The rulings will slip away from whoever gains knowledge from the depths of books." And some of them said: "From the greatest of tests is that one gains knowledge just from books."<sup>126</sup>

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

"Mughīrah bin Ibrāhīm said: "If they came to a man to study with him, they would look to his appearance, his prayer, and his overall condition. Then, they would study with him."

Sufyān ath-Thawrī said: "Whoever studies with an innovator, Allāh will not allow him to benefit from what he learned, and whoever shakes his hand has removed the bonds of Islām, one by one."

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<sup>125</sup> '*Sharh Sahīh Muslim*' (1/84)

<sup>126</sup> '*Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim*' (p. 85)

And Mālik bin Anas said: “Knowledge is not to be taken from four types of people, and is to be taken from anyone else: the fool who is known for his foolishness, even if he narrates more than anyone; the liar who lies on the people, even if he doesn’t lie upon the Prophet (peace be upon him); an innovator who calls people to his innovation; a *shaykh* who is known for his virtue and worship if he doesn’t understand what he talks about.”<sup>127</sup>

All of this shows that it is essential to start with the most important field of knowledge and to choose the right teacher, as he is your example, source, and shining star. So, be very careful of the innovators.

And Allāh is the One who Guides, and there is none worthy of worship except Him, and there is no Lord except him.

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<sup>127</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi*’ (1/139)

## Have the Best Manners with Your Teacher

Allāh clarified in His Book – and He is the Lord of the hearts, and the Knower of the Unseen – that a reminder does not awaken everyone, and it does not benefit all who hear it. Rather, there are conditions and restrictions to this:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

{*“Verily, therein is indeed a reminder for he who has a heart or gives ear while he is heedful.”*}<sup>128</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“If you want to benefit from the Qur’ān, gather your heart when it is recited, focus your hearing, and act like you are being directly addressed by Allāh, as it is an address from Him to you upon the tongue of this Messenger (peace be upon him), as the Exalted Said:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

{*“Verily, therein is indeed a reminder for he who has a heart or gives ear while he is heedful.”*}

And this is because gaining the most benefit and effect from something depends on the object causing the effect, the accompanying target that will feel that effect, the conditions necessary for that effect to be felt, and the removal of what that effect is meant to remove. All of this is found in the above verse in the most clear and concise manner possible: {*“Verily, therein is indeed a reminder...”*} referring to everything from the beginning of the *sūrah* to this point.

And His Saying {*“...for he who has a heart...”*} is referring to the target of the affect, meaning the heart that is alive and knows Allāh, as Allāh Said in another verse:

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْءَانٌ مُّبِينٌ \* لِيُنذِرَ مَنْ كَانَ حَيًّا

{*“Indeed, it is a reminder and a clear Qur’ān to warn he who is alive...”*}<sup>129</sup>

Meaning, has a heart that is alive.

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<sup>128</sup> Qaf, 37

<sup>129</sup> Yā Sīn, 69-70

His Saying {“...*or gives ear...*”} means that he directs his listening and focuses his senses to what is being said to him, and this is from the conditions of being affected by words that are spoken.

His Saying {“...*while he is heedful...*”} means that he has a heart that is present and not absent. Ibn Qutaybah said: “He listens to the Book of Allāh while his heart and comprehension are there, and he is not distracted.” This is an indication of what is meant to be removed by the effect of the Qur’ān, which is the distraction and absence of the heart, its inability to understand what is being relayed to it, and its lack of insight and reflection upon it.

So, if the source of the effect is there (the Qur’ān), and the target of the effect is there (the heart that is alive), and the conditions of feeling the effect are there (to focus and pay attention), and the removal of the obstacle is there (the distraction of the heart and inability to understand the meaning of what is being said) – with all of these factors are present, the result is achieved (the effect and benefit of the Qur’ān and reminder is felt).

So, knowledge is only attained by humbly lending one’s attention and focus. ash-Sha’bī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “Zayd bin Thābit prayed a funeral prayer. A mule was then brought for him to ride away on, and Ibn ‘Abbās came and took hold of its reins to lead him away. So, Zayd said to him: “Let go of it, O cousin of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him).” Ibn ‘Abbās said: “This is how we were commanded to treat the scholars!”<sup>130</sup>

And the *Salaf* used to look with the utmost reverence and respect to those they learned from, and this is evident when looking at their manners in attending circles of knowledge, specifically how they would honor their teachers. al-Khatīb reported many such narrations:

“al-Mughīrah said: “We would honor Ibrāhīm an-Nakha’ī just as one would honor the ruler.”

Ayyūb said: “A man would sit with al-Hasan for three years and not ask him anything out of awe and respect for him.”

Ishāq ash-Shahīdī said: “I would see Yahyā al-Qattān praying *‘Asr*. He would then lean on the base of the mosque’s minaret, and standing in front of him would be ‘Alī bin al-Madīnī, ash-Shādhakūnī, ‘Amr bin ‘Alī, Ahmad bin Hambal, Yahyā bin Ma’īn, etc. – all asking him about *Hadīth* while they were standing up. This would go on until the *Maghrib* prayer, and he would not offer any of them to sit, and none of them would sit out of awe and respect of him.”

al-Ghulābī said: “Ibn al-Khayyāt praised Mālik bin Anas, saying:

*He gives his answer without reducing his awe \* While those asking him have their chins raised;*

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<sup>130</sup> ‘*al-Fawā’id*’ (p. 5)

*The light of tranquility and the honor of righteous authority \* This is how they respect him without him being an authority...*

And ‘Abd ar-Rahmān bin Harmalah al-Aslamī said: “Nobody dared to ask Sa’īd bin al-Musayyab about anything until he would seek his permission, just as the ruler’s permission is sought for something.”<sup>131</sup>

“And it is said that ash-Shāfi’ī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) was criticized for his humility to the scholars, and he said:

*I humble myself to them, and they honor me \* And you will not be honored unless you humble yourself...*

And Ahmad bin Hambal (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said to Khalaf al-Ahmar (may Allāh have Mercy on him): “I will not sit except between your hands. We were commanded to be humble to those we learn from.”<sup>132</sup>

“The seeker of knowledge should submit to his teacher in his affairs, and he should not seek to contradict and oppose him in his opinions and decisions. Rather, he should be with him like the sick is with his doctor – consulting him in what he wants, intending his pleasure, protecting his honor, and gaining nearness to Allāh by serving him. He should realize that humility to his *shaykh* is an honor, and lowering yourself for him raises you.

The student of knowledge should look to his teacher with the eye of awe and respect, as this will help him to benefit from him. Some of the *Salaf* would give some charity before going to visit their *shaykh*, saying: “O Allāh! Hide the faults of my *shaykh* from me, and do not prevent me from the blessing of his knowledge.”<sup>133</sup>

“And ash-Shāfi’ī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “I would turn the pages of my books in front of Mālik (may Allāh have Mercy on him) in a very soft, quiet way so that he wouldn’t be bothered by its noise, out of respect for him.”

And Hamdān al-Asfahānī said: “I was with Sharīk (may Allāh have Mercy on him), and some of the children of the *Khalīfah* al-Mahdī came to him. So, he leaned against the wall, and did not turn to them when they asked him about a *hadīth*. They then came back and forth, asking the same question until they said: “Do you belittle the children of the rulers?” So, Sharīk said: “No. However, knowledge is more valuable with Allāh than that I give it in such a manner.” So, the men sat down, putting their knees on par with his knees, and he said: “This is how knowledge is to be sought.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Akhlāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādab as-Sāmi*’ (1/184)

<sup>132</sup> ‘*Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim*’ (p. 87)

<sup>133</sup> ‘*Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim*’ (p. 88)

<sup>134</sup> ‘*al-Majmū*’ (1/36)

“And he should not address his *shaykh* in an informal way, and should not call him from a distance.

And al-Khatīb said: “He should not say ‘O teacher!’ or ‘O scholar, what do you think about this? What is your take on this?’ etc. Also, he shouldn’t refer to him by his first name in his absence except by attaching to it a title of respect, such as ‘*Shaykh*,’ ‘*Ustādh*,’ or ‘*Shaykhunā*.’

And he should know the rights of his *shaykh* upon him, and should not forget his virtue over him, and should put great importance on protecting his honor and repelling any backbiting of him. He should become enraged for his sake, and if he is unable to do this, he should get up and leave any gathering where this is taking place. He should supplicate for his *shaykh* during his life, and he should tend to his family, children, and friends after his death. He should visit his grave and ask Allāh’s Forgiveness for him and give charity on his behalf. He should imitate him in being calm, quiet, and guided, and should imitate his habits in knowledge of the Religion. He should imitate his movements in his regular habits and worship, and adopt his manners. Essentially, he should take him as an example.”<sup>135</sup>

- *Dealing With a Harsh Teacher* -

And the student of knowledge should be patient with the harshness of his teacher, and should be soft with him. al-Khatīb reported that ash-Shāfi’ī said: “Two men used to visit al-A’mash. One of them was interested in *Hadīth*, and the other was not. So, one day al-A’mash got mad at the one who was interested in *Hadīth*. The other man said: “If he got mad at me the way he did at you, I wouldn’t come back to him.” So, al-A’mash said: “Therefore, he is an idiot like you. He leaves what will benefit him due to my bad manners.””<sup>136</sup>

And ash-Shāfi’ī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) narrated a similar incident from Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah, where it was said to Sufyān: “These people come to you from all corners of the world, and you get mad at them?! They can all get up and leave you!” He said: “If they did this, they would be idiots, as they leave what will benefit them due to my bad manners.””<sup>137</sup>

Ibn Jamā’ah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“The seeker of knowledge should withstand his teacher’s harshness and bad treatment, and this should not turn him away from him. He should give him the benefit of the doubt when it comes to any bad actions on his part, and should respond to any harshness from his *shaykh* by apologizing himself, repenting to Allāh, seeking His Forgiveness, and placing the blame on himself. This will preserve his love for this *shaykh*, will protect his heart, and is more beneficial for the student in this life and the next.

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<sup>135</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim’* (p. 89)

<sup>136</sup> *‘al-Jāmi’ li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi’* (1/222)

<sup>137</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim’* (p. 90) and *‘al-Jāmi’ li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi’* (1/223)

Some of the *Salaf* said: “Whoever is not patient upon the humiliation of learning will spend the rest of his life in the blindness of the ignorant, and whoever is patient upon it will spend this life and the next in a state of honor.”

Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be Pleased with him): “I humbled myself as a student. So, I became honorable as a teacher.”

Mu’āfi bin ‘Imrān said: “The one who gets mad at a scholar is like the one who gets mad at the university teacher.””<sup>138</sup>

ash-Shāfi’ī said:

*Be patient upon the sourness and dryness of knowledge \* Because failure in knowledge is in turning away from it;*

*And he who doesn’t taste the sourness of knowledge for an hour \* Will swallow the humiliation of ignorance for his whole life;*

*And he who allows knowledge to pass him by in his youth \* Will awake to the funeral prayer being prayed for him...*

And Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported that Ibn Jurayj said: “I did not gain what I gained from ‘Atā’ except with my softness with him,” and Ibn Tāwūs from his father said: “From the *Sunnah* is that the scholar be honored.””<sup>139</sup>

As a seeker of knowledge, beware of arguing with your teacher, as this is evil in its purest form, and is even more evil when done with his teacher and example, and it is the reason for being prevented from much good.

“Maymūn bin Mahrān said: “Do not argue with one who is more knowledgeable than you, because if you do, he will keep his knowledge from you, and you will not harm him in the least,” and az-Zuhrī said: “Salamah used to argue with Ibn ‘Abbās, and was prevented from much knowledge because of this.””<sup>140</sup>

As a student, you should thank your *shaykh* for complimenting you for some good, pointing out a shortcoming or laziness, or anything else that consists of guidance and advice to improvement. This is from the blessings of Allāh on you, and such is better for the heart of your *shaykh*, and is best for fulfilling your own interests.

And if your *shaykh* points out to you some aspect of good manners that you can improve on and you happen to already know of this, do not show him that you knew about it and just forgot it at that time. Rather, thank the *shaykh* for benefiting you. If there is, however, some

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<sup>138</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim*’ (p. 91)

<sup>139</sup> *Jāmi’ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Fadlīb*’ (1/171)

<sup>140</sup> *Jāmi’ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Fadlīb*’ (1/171)

benefit in letting the *shaykh* know this, or some harm will occur if you don't tell him, there is no harm in doing so.

- *The Manners of Visiting Your Shaykh* -

If you find your *shaykh* sleeping, do not ask to see him. Rather, sit and wait until he wakes up, or leave if you wish.

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported:

“Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “When the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) died, I said to one of the *Ansār*: “Come. Let us go ask the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him), as they are plenty in number today.” He said: “I am amazed at you, Ibn ‘Abbās! Do you think they will pay attention to you when the most important of the Companions are amongst them?” So, I left him, and I began to ask the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) about *Hadīth*. If I heard that a man had a *hadīth* with him, I would go to his door, and if I found him sleeping, I would spread a blanket on the ground in front of his home and wait for him. The wind would blow dirt on me, and he would eventually come out saying: ‘O cousin of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him)! What brings you here? Why didn’t you send for me? I would’ve come to you.’ I would say: “It is more incumbent upon me to come to you,” and I’d ask him about the *ahādīth* of the Prophet (peace be upon him). That *Ansārī* man lived until he saw the people gathering around me and asking me, and he would say: “That young boy was smarter than me!””

And Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “I found most of the knowledge of the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) in this neighborhood of the *Ansār*. I would wait at the door of one of them, and if I wanted permission to enter, I would’ve gotten it. However, I wanted him to be pleasant when meeting me.”

And Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah narrated that Abū al-Husayn said: “Ibn ‘Abbās used to go to one of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), seeking to ask him about *Hadīth*. It would be said to him: ‘He is asleep.’ So, he would lay down in front of his door waiting for him, and it would be said to him: ‘Do you want me to wake him up?’ He would say: “No.”

And Ma’mar narrated that az-Zuhrī said: “If I came to ‘Urwah’s door, I could’ve entered if I wanted to. However, I would sit outside and wait out of respect for him.”<sup>141</sup>

Ibn Jamā’ah said:

“As a student of knowledge, one shouldn’t enter upon his *shaykh* without his permission if not in a public circle of knowledge, whether the *shaykh* is alone or with someone else. If he is granted permission and the *shaykh* knows who he is, he can enter. If not, he should leave, and he shouldn’t repeat his request for permission to enter. If he doubts whether or not the

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<sup>141</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Akhbāq ar-Rāwī wa Adāb as-Sāmi*’ (1/222)

*shaykh* knows it was him, he should not request permission to enter more than three times through by either knocking on the door or ringing a bell. If he knocks on the door, let it be in a light, polite manner. He should tap with his fingers the first and second time, then with his knuckles the third time. If he is far from the door, there is no problem in him knocking a bit harder with his knuckles as much as would allow his *shaykh* to hear, and not any louder. If he grants permission and they are a group who are coming to see him, the best and oldest of them should enter first and greet him. Then, the next best should enter and greet him, and on and on.”<sup>142</sup>

And al-Khatīb (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported that Anas bin Mālik (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “We used to knock on the door of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with our fingernails.” al-Bukhārī reported it in ‘*al-Adab al-Mufrad*’<sup>143</sup> on the authority of Anas (may Allāh be Pleased with him). And it is disliked that if the student is asked ‘Who is there?’ that he reply with ‘Me’ without identifying himself. If the door is open, he should not face the inside of the house. Rather, he should stand to the right or left of the door, then greet its inhabitants.

al-Bukhārī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) listed ‘*Chapter: Saying ‘Me’ if One is Asked ‘Who is There?’*’ under his section on asking permission in his ‘*Sahih*,’ and Jābir (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: “I came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding a debt that my father had. I knocked the door, and he (peace be upon him) said: **“Who is there?”** I said: “Me.” He said: **“Me! Me!”** as if he disliked it.”<sup>144</sup>

And he also included under the chapter ‘*Asking Permission Instead of Looking*’ that Sahl bin Sa’d (may Allāh be Pleased with him) narrated that a man peeked into the home of the Prophet (peace be upon him) while he was combing his hair with an iron comb. So, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw him, he said: **“If I knew that you were looking, I would have stabbed you in the eye with this comb. Asking for permission was enjoined so that you would not look into people’s houses unlawfully.”**<sup>145</sup>

Ibn Jamā’ah (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said:

“He should enter upon his *shaykh* in the best appearance. He should have a clean body and clothing, trimmed nails and hair, and be perfumed – especially if he plans on attending a circle of knowledge, as it is a gathering of *dhiker* and worship.

When he enters upon his *shaykh* in private and finds that he has stopped a conversation the *shaykh* was in the middle of with someone, or he finds the *shaykh* engaged in prayer, *dhiker*, writing, or studying that he has stopped because of his entrance, he should greet him and leave swiftly unless the *shaykh* insists that he stay. Even if he stays, he should not stay long unless the *shaykh* asks him to.

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<sup>142</sup> ‘*Tadbkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim*’ (p. 93)

<sup>143</sup> al-Albānī declared it authentic in ‘*Sahih al-Adab al-Mufrad*’ (828)

<sup>144</sup> al-Bukhārī (6250) and Abū Dāwūd (5187)

<sup>145</sup> al-Bukhārī (6241 & 6901) and Muslim (2156)

And he should enter upon his *shaykh* or sit with him while his heart and mind are pure and free of distractions. He should not be sleepy, angry, hungry, thirsty, etc. so that he would be able to pay full attention to what he tells him.

If he goes to see the *shaykh* teach and doesn't find him, he should wait in order not to miss a single lesson, as each lesson that he misses cannot be replaced. If the *shaykh* happens to be sleeping, he should wait until he wakes up or leave and come back later, and patience is best for him. It was narrated that Ibn 'Abbās would sit at the door of Zayd bin Thābit until he woke up to gain knowledge from him, and it would be said to him: 'Should we wake him up for you?' to which he would refuse. It might even be that he was waiting all this time in the Sun, and this is how the *Salaf* were.

He should not request from this *shaykh* to teach him at an inconvenient or unusual time, and he should not request a specific, special time to study with him even if he was someone of great importance. This is because this constitutes a form of self-elevation, as well as belittlement of the *shaykh* and the other students of knowledge. The *shaykh* might be too shy to refuse, and would then end up leaving off that is more important at the time. However, if there is a pressing excuse for him to meet the *shaykh* privately instead of with the regularly scheduled class, there is no problem in this.<sup>146</sup>

When you get to the class of the *shaykh*, you should sit some distance from the *shaykh*. al-Khatīb (may Allāh have Mercy on him) that Sufyān bin 'Uyaynah said: "Ka'b was with 'Umar bin al-Khattab, and he sat far from the circle. 'Umar reprimanded him for this, and Ka'b said: "O Commander of the Believers! From the wisdoms of Luqmān and his advices to his son are: "O son! If you sit next to the ruler, allow enough space for one man between you and him, as someone might come along who is more important to him than you, and would then have to get up and move, and this would be a form of degradation for you."<sup>147</sup>

"And the student should sit in front of his teacher with humility and calmness, facing him completely, paying complete attention to his words, and he should not turn from him without the need to do so. He should also not look right, left, up, or down without a reason, especially when he is studying or talking with him.

He shouldn't look except to him, and shouldn't turn to look at or hear something happening on the side. He shouldn't dust his clothing, and should not move his hands and legs out of boredom, and should not place his hand over his beard or mouth, or place his finger in his nose to remove anything from it, and should not leave his mouth open or pick his teeth, and should not draw lines in the carpet with his fingers, and should not clasp his fingers together or fiddle with his clothing.

He should not lean against a wall or pillow in the presence of his *shaykh*, or place his hands on them. He should not give his *shaykh* his side or back, and should not lean on his hand to the back or side, and should not speak too much unnecessarily, and should not say something laughable or stupid or ill-mannered. He should not laugh unnecessarily, and

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<sup>146</sup> 'Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim' (p. 95)

<sup>147</sup> 'Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim' (p. 95)

should not laugh unless his *shaykh* laughs. If he is tempted to smile, he should do so without making a noise.

He should not clear his throat too much in his presence, nor should he spit or blow his nose as much as he is able. If he has to blow his nose, he shouldn't spit the mucus out in an open manner. Rather, he should use a tissue or the edge of his clothing to dispose of it. He should cover his feet, let his clothes hang loose, and keep his hands still while studying or reading. If he sneezes, he should stifle the sound and cover his face with a tissue, and he should cover his mouth if he yawns.

'Alī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) said: "From the rights of the scholar are that you greet the gathering and then greet the *shaykh* specifically; you should sit in front of him; you should not point here and there, wink, etc. in front of him; do not come out and tell him that *fulān* differs with him in a given matter; do not backbite anybody in his presence; and do not ask him intricate and complicated questions. If he makes a mistake, make an excuse for him, and it is upon you to honor him for the Sake of Allāh, the Exalted. If he needs something, you should be the first to tend to his need; do not attract attention in his circle; do not grab his clothing; do not insist on something if he is too tired; do not think that you can have enough of his friendship, as he is like the palm tree from which you wait for something to fall on you," and what 'Alī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) gathered in this advice is more than enough."<sup>148</sup>

So, calmness and tranquility are two traits that must always be with the student in the circle of knowledge, and proper manifestation of good manners is essential. The *Salaf* would greatly respect and honor the circles of knowledge, and they would sit in them as if there were birds sitting on their heads.

Abū Bakr bin al-Ambārī said: "There are two explanations as to the term 'sitting as if there were birds on their heads': the first is that they sat extremely still, and would lower their gaze, and birds do not land except on what is still. It is said to the man who is soft and gentle that the birds could land on his head from his calmness. As for the second meaning, it is in regards to how Sulaymān bin Dāwūd (peace be upon them) would say to the wind: "Carry us," and would say to the birds: "Shade us." So, the wind would carry him and his companions, and the birds would shade them. His companions would lower their gaze out of respect and awe of him, and would remain completely still, and would not say a word unless he asked them a question. So, it is said to people if they are still that they are scholars who sit as if they have birds on their heads, likening them to the companions of Sulaymān (peace be upon him)."<sup>149</sup>

al-Khatīb (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported that Ahmad bin Sinān al-Qattān said:

"Nobody in the class of Abd ar-Rahmān bin Mahdī would even speak, sharpen a pen, or smile. If he saw that someone spoke or sharpened a pen, he would get up, put on his shoes, and go home.

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<sup>148</sup> 'Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim' (p. 97)

<sup>149</sup> 'al-Jāmi' li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi' (1/192)

Also, Wakī' and his students were as if they were in prayer during their classes, and if something happened in the class that annoyed him, he would put on his shoes and go home.

And Ibn Numayr would get angry and leave, and his face would change color if he saw someone sharpening a pen.”

And ‘Abd ar-Rahmān bin ‘Umar said that a man laughed in the class of ‘Abd ar-Rahmān bin Mahdī, and he asked: “Who laughed?” Everyone pointed to the man, and he scolded him: “You seek knowledge and laugh? I will not teach any of you for a month!”

“As a student of knowledge, one should speak in the best manner possible with his *shaykh*, and he shouldn't say to him ‘Why not?’ or ‘Who said this?’ or ‘Where did you find this?’ etc.

If he reminds the *shaykh* of something he said, he shouldn't say ‘You said this,’ or ‘It occurred to me,’ or ‘I heard,’ or ‘Some person said,’ unless he knows the *shaykh*'s position in regards to what he is reminding him of, and this is in order to preserve proper etiquette with him regarding what others may say about his words. Also, he shouldn't speak to him using terms like ‘What's up?’ or ‘Do you understand?’ or ‘Do you know?’ etc.

Also, he should not describe to the *shaykh* conversations that take place between others that the *shaykh* doesn't know about, such as saying to him ‘*Fulān* said to *fulān* that he is not a good person,’ etc. Rather, he should use indirect speech, such as to say ‘*Fulān* said to *fulān* that the one lacking any good is far removed from any mercy,’ etc.

If he hears the *shaykh* mentioning the ruling on an issue, noting a point of benefit, telling a story, or reciting some poetry that he happens to already know, he should act happy and attentive to it, as if he had just heard it for the first time from the *shaykh*.

He should not precede the *shaykh* in explaining an issue, answering a question, or showing his knowledge of a matter before his *shaykh*. He should not cut him off in speech and then talk, and he shouldn't speak with someone else while the *shaykh* is speaking to him or the class.

If he hands his *shaykh* a book, he should hand it to him such that he can easily open it to and read the page he wants. If he knows the place in the book his *shaykh* is looking for, he should hand it to him opened to that page, and then point to the specific point in the page he wants, and he shouldn't just throw the book to him.

If he is walking with his *shaykh* at night, he should walk in front of him, and if they are walking by day, he should be behind him, unless the circumstances do not allow due to crowding, etc. If they are walking in a foreign or dangerous place, he should walk slightly ahead of him. He should be keen to prevent any dirt from getting onto the *shaykh*'s clothing, and if they are in a crowded place, he should shield him with his hands from either the front or back.

If he is walking in front of him, he should turn to look back every once in awhile. If they are walking alone and the *shaykh* is speaking to him, he should stand to his right - and some say to stand on the left - and slightly turned to him. Also, he should introduce the *shaykh* to any

individuals they meet along the way, naming them by name. He shouldn't walk right beside the *shaykh* unless there is a reason to do so, and he should be keen not to be too close to him and bumping into him with his shoulders or knees, or to get dirt or stains on his clothes.

He should sit him in the shade in the summer, and should sit him in the Sun in the winter such that the Sun doesn't hurt his face.

He shouldn't walk between the *shaykh* and someone he is talking to, and should remain slightly behind or in front of them when they are speaking to each other. He shouldn't come close to them, listen to them, or turn to them. If they decide to include him in their conversation, he is to join from either the left or right, and not come in between them.

If he happens to meet his *shaykh* on the road, he should initiate greetings to him by seeing him, walking towards him, then greeting him. He shouldn't point to him from afar in order to consult him, and he should use good manners in regards to his consultation by taking his advice. If the *shaykh* says something wrong in his advice, he shouldn't say to the *shaykh* 'This is wrong,' or 'This isn't a strong opinion,' etc. Rather, he should answer him in a good way, saying 'It seems that what is best is this,' and he should not say 'I think this is best,' etc."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim'* (p. 101-112)

## Treat Your Books Well

Books are the instruments of knowledge, and the *Salaf* would have the best and most complete manners when dealing with their books, and they would exert all the effort they could in collecting them.

“As a student of knowledge, one should strive to collect and gather the books that he needs, whether by purchasing, renting, or borrowing them. They are the instruments by which he learns, and he shouldn’t limit his share of knowledge and understanding to merely collecting and gathering them, as is the case with many of those who ascribe themselves to *Fiqh* and *Hadith*. And how excellent is the one who said:

*If you are not a sharp memorizer \* Then your collection of books is of no benefit...*

It is encouraged to lend your books out to those who will not damage them. Although a group of the scholars discouraged this, one should still do it since it is a form of assisting each other in gaining knowledge, and considering the virtue and reward of lending out books.

The borrower should thank the lender and reward him with good, and he shouldn’t keep the book with him for too long without a need for it. Rather, he should return it to him if he has obtained what he needs from it, and should not keep it stored with him if the owner requests it. He is not allowed to add footnotes to the book without the permission of the owner, nor is he allowed to write anything near the introduction or conclusion unless the owner approves. He should not lend it out to anyone else, and should not leave it with anyone else unless there is a need to do so.

If he wants to copy a portion or all of it, he shouldn’t write while the paper is on or in the book. He shouldn’t leave an open pen on it, and he shouldn’t run a pen over the pages of the book.”<sup>151</sup>

And al-Khatīb (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported that Wakī’ said: “The first blessing of *Hadith* is that you lend out your books.”

Sufyān ath-Thawrī said: “Whoever is stingy with his knowledge will be tested with one of three things: he will forget and be unable to memorize, or he will not benefit from it, or he will find himself losing his books.”

And it is disliked for the borrower to keep books from their owners, and he must return them to their owners as quickly as possible...

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<sup>151</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi’ wal-Mutakallim’* (p. 164-169)

Yūnus narrated that Yazīd said to him that az-Zuhrī said: “O Yūnus, beware of the treachery of books.” So, Yūnus asked: “And what is the treachery of books?” He said: “That you keep them from their owners.”

al-Fudayl bin ‘Iyād (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “It is not from the actions of the cautious or the scholar that you take a man’s hearing and books and keep them with you. Whoever does this has wronged himself.”

And a number of them refrained from lending out their books because of this phenomenon of keeping books from their owners, as Sufyān (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “Do not lend anyone any of your books,” and ar-Rabī bin Sulaymān said: “al-Būṭī wrote to me: “Memorize your books, because if you lose one of them, you’ll never be able to replace it.””<sup>152</sup>

“And if one is writing something from the book or pulls it out, he shouldn’t spread it on the floor in an open fashion. Rather, he should put it between two other books or objects, or the well-known folding chair used for books in order not to damage the binding of the book. If he places it in an elevated location, it should be on a chair, a bookshelf, etc. It is best that the book not be placed directly on the ground in order to avoid getting it dirty or wet. If he places it on a piece of wood, he should place some cloth between it and the book to prevent the cover from becoming altered or decomposed.

One should pay special attention to how he organizes his books, and should do so in accordance with the virtue, importance, and significance of each book. So, he should place the noblest book above all the others, and then work his way down gradually. If his library contains the Noble Qur’ān, it should be placed above all the other books, and what is best is that it be placed in a sack and nailed to a clean, pure part of the wall that is within reach. Then come the books of *Hadīth*, such as ‘*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*’ and ‘*Saḥīḥ Muslim*.’ Then come the explanations of the Qur’ān, then the explanations of *Hadīth*, then the books regarding the principles (*uṣūl*) of the Religion, then the principles of *Fiqh*, then *Fiqh*, then grammar and language, then Arabic poetry, then general poetry.

If two books in the same field are equal in virtue, he should place the one with more Qur’ān or *Hadīth* content higher than the other. If they are equal in this regard as well, he should place the one with the more virtuous author higher than the other. If they are equal in this as well, he should place the older and more widely accepted of the two higher in his library. If they are equal in this regard as well, he should place the one that is more authentic and trustworthy.

If one borrows a book, he should immediately give it back if the owner requests it. If he purchases a book, he should flip through its beginning, middle, end, and table of contents. He should flip through its pages and evaluate its apparent authenticity and benefit if he doesn’t have enough time to read it in detail.

If one copies something from the book in his handwriting, he should begin with ‘*Bismil-Lāh ar-Rahmān ar-Rahīm*’ (In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful). If the book begins

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<sup>152</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi*’ (1/242)

with an introduction that contains the praise of Allāh or peace and blessings upon His Messenger, he should write this out after the *basmalah*. He should then write what he wants from the book.

Whenever one writes the Name of Allāh, the Exalted, he should follow it up with a description of exaltation, such as *Ta'ālā* (the Exalted), *Subhānah* (Glorified is He), *'Azza wa Jall* (the Mighty and Majestic), *Taqaddas* (free from imperfection), etc.

Whenever he writes the name of the Prophet (peace be upon him), he should write after it *'as-Salātu was-Salāmu 'alayh* (prayers and peace be upon him), and he should also say this with his tongue. The habit of the *Salaf* and those who came after them was to write this out fully and unabbreviated - even if it was repeated many times on the same line – as opposed to what the backwards authors of our times do, writing 'SAW,' 'PBUH,' or 'SAWS,' and all of this detracts from the rights he has upon us (peace be upon him).

If one comes across mention of a Companion – let alone the major ones – he should write *'Radī Allahu 'anhu* (may Allāh be Pleased with him), and he is not to invoke peace and blessings except for the Prophets or Angels, except in following them.

If he comes across mention of one of the *Salaf*, he should write *'Rahimahu Allāh* (may Allāh have Mercy on him), especially when referring to the major, well-known, leading scholars of Islām (may Allāh have Mercy on them all).

And there's no problem in writing footnotes, points of benefit, and important notes in the borders of the books he owns, and one shouldn't write except the important points related to that particular book, such as a point of confusion, a parable, an example, a mistake, etc. But, he shouldn't crowd the book with strange and detailed secondary matters, and shouldn't add so many footnotes that it darkens the pages or wastes too much space in the book.

One should not write between the lines. Although some did this by writing in red between the lines, it is better to leave this totally.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim* (p. 170)

## How to Act During a Lesson

“As a student and seeker of knowledge, one should start early in the day when studying, and the *Salaf* were very constant and particular in this practice.

‘Abdullāh bin Ahmad bin Hambal narrated that he heard his father say: “Sometimes, I would want to go out early to hear *Hadith*. So, my mother would grab my clothes, saying: “At least wait for the prayer to be called and the people to wake up.” I would go out early to the classes of Abū Bakr bin ‘Ayyāsh and others.”<sup>154</sup>

“And he should enter his class with full attention, freeing his heart of all distractions. He should greet his fellow students in a clear voice, and he should then greet his *shaykh* with extra honor and attention. Then, he is to sit down at the outside edge of the circle, and he should not squeeze between his classmates unless the *shaykh* or classmates call him to move closer, as al-Bukhārī (may Allāh have Mercy on him) reported from Abū Wāqid al-Laythī (may Allāh be Pleased with him) that while the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sitting in the mosque with some people, three men came. Two of them came in front of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the third one went away. The two people kept on standing before him for a while, and then one of them found a place in the circle and sat there, while the other sat behind the gathering, and the third one went away. When the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) finished his speech, he said: **“Shall I tell you about these three people? One of them took himself to Allāh, so Allāh took him nto Himself. The second felt shy from Allah, and Allāh was Shy to punish him. The third turned his face from Allāh and went away. So, Allāh likewise turned His Face from him.”**<sup>155</sup>

And he shouldn’t make anyone get up from his spot, and if anyone takes his spot, he shouldn’t take it back unless there is some benefit in doing so.

He shouldn’t sit in the middle of the circle unless there is a need for this, and he shouldn’t sit between two companions except with their permission, and he should be as close to the *shaykh* as he can without annoying anybody in order to best hear and understand his words.

He should use the best manners with his classmates and friends, as this is a manifestation of respect to his *shaykh* and his class, and the class and lesson is holy, sacred space that is not allowed to be violated.

He should sit with humility and character in the manner of a student, not a teacher. He shouldn’t raise his voice often without a reason. Rather, he should sit in front of his teacher fully attentive and listening, and shouldn’t precede him in explaining or answering a question.

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<sup>154</sup> ‘*al-Jāmi’ li Akblāq ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi*’ (1/151)

<sup>155</sup> ‘*Sabīh al-Bukhārī*’ (66)

He should begin the lesson by saying ‘In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to Allāh, and peace and prayers be on His Messenger, his Household, and Companions.’ Then, he should supplicate for the scholars, his teachers, his parents, and the rest of the Muslims.

He should be focused on his *shaykh*, and he shouldn’t read or study while his heart is busy with something else, or if he is bored or tired. He shouldn’t be insistent in asking questions, and should instead be soft, gentle, and calm when doing so. He shouldn’t ask about questions except in their appropriate time and place, but should not be shy from asking the proper questions at the proper time.

If the *shaykh* asks him ‘Do you understand?’ he should not say ‘Yes’ unless he really does understand, and he shouldn’t be shy from saying ‘I don’t know,’ or ‘I don’t understand.’ Mujāhid (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “Nobody who is either too shy or too arrogant will learn this knowledge,” and ‘Ā’ishah (may Allāh be Pleased with her) said: “How excellent are the women of the *Ansār*! They did not let their shyness prevent them from learning the Religion,”<sup>156</sup> and al-Khalīl bin Ahmad (may Allāh have Mercy on him) said: “The station of ignorance is between shyness and arrogance.”<sup>157</sup>

- Conclusion -

This is what Allāh has made possible to clarify in regards to the manners of the knowledge seeker. So, it is essential for its seeker that he make this the first subject of study he sets his sights upon, and that he beautifies himself with these manners internally and externally, and that he rush to obtaining and collecting these traits and characteristics within himself. I ask Allāh as a poor, humiliated servant who is filled with sins, full of shortcomings, always falling into traps – I ask Him to make these manners the prize obtained by every student and seeker of knowledge who has made his intention and concern purely for Allāh, and I ask Him by His Glory and the Light of His Face – the request of one who is poor, fearful, and weak – that He Guide the Muslims to taking from the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* of His Prophet (peace be upon him) in a manner that leaves no place for innovation or *shirk*, for He is indeed Capable of everything.

Glory be to You and by Your praise, O Allāh, and I bear witness that none is worthy of worship except You. I ask Your Forgiveness, and I repent unto You.

Praise be to Allāh firstly and lastly, inwardly and outwardly, and may plenty and complete peace and prayers be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his Household, and his Companions, and our final call is that praise is for Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.

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<sup>156</sup> *Fath al-Bārī* (1/276)

<sup>157</sup> *‘Ādāb al-‘Ālim wal-Muta’allim* (p. 59)