125509 - The mother of a seeker of Islamic knowledge is asking him to focus on his university studies; how can he combine both goals?

the question

I want to seek Islamic knowledge and – praise be to Allah – I am focusing on seeking knowledge, but my mother says to me: You have to focus on your studies and university duties. How can I combine these two goals?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

One of the things that saddens us deeply is that we see some young people who love Islamic knowledge and strive to attain it, but they fall short in their duties at home, and they fall short in their regular studies. This undoubtedly has a negative impact on the family, and is part of what leads them to prevent their children from attending study circles and from listening to beneficial tapes or reading Islamic books. What makes them do that is what they see of their children falling short in the things we mentioned. If they saw those who manage to combine all things and not let any one of them dominate the others, they would not be upset about their children listening to tapes or attending a study circle or reading a book about Islamic knowledge.

So young people should pay attention to that and realise that many families and guardians complain about their children falling short in their school studies, which leads to those young people failing their exams sometimes, and that causes their families stress and extra financial costs.

No doubt there are many who go too far when it comes to paying attention to studies and exams, to the extent that some of them hardly remind their children to pray or remember Allah, let alone encouraging them to offer prayer in congregation in the mosque. These people exaggerate in their

veneration for schools and their curricula, and they regard the matter as make or break for their children, thinking that the one who has a degree is the only one who will live and eat and get married, and whoever does not get a degree is doomed and will never have a good life, even though cases of the opposite in reality. Whatever the case, we would like the families of young people who are steadfast in obedience to Allah and are keen to seek Islamic knowledge take it easy with regard to concern about school and study, and we would like our young brothers to strike a good balance between the two objectives, and to save the time that they waste on things that are of no benefit, and use this time to help them strike the necessary balance between the two objectives.

Secondly:

In order to combine the pursuit of knowledge in accordance with the Prophetic command to seek it, and obedience to your mother who is not telling you to do anything that is haraam, try to pay attention to what we are telling you and advising you to do, in the hope that Allah may benefit you thereby. These things include the following:

1.

Be keen to seek the company of righteous people and keep away from bad company, because righteous company will help you to make good use of your time and will remind you of what is obligatory for you. If you help one another to seek Islamic knowledge, they will advise you to allocate some of your time to your regular studies, and you will find them to be the best help to you, unlike bad company and bad friends, who will not guide you towards anything good or show you the way to true guidance.

2.

Take care to avoid wasting your time, hours and minutes, and try not to be negligent with any of your time, because being careful with your time may help you to find some room in your day for reading and seeking Islamic knowledge, whilst also paying attention to your regular studies.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

Man’s time is in fact man’s life, for it is the basis that will shape his eternal life in perpetual bliss, or it will shape a life of misery in eternal torment. Time passes more quickly than clouds, so whatever time one spends for the sake of Allah, and by the help of Allah, that is his life. Anything other than that is not counted as part of his life, and even if he lives in this world, he will be living the life of dumb beasts, for if he spends his time in heedlessness and in pursuit of physical desires and false wishes, and the best he can do with his time is to sleep and be idle, then the death of such a person is better for him than living.

Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi (p. 109)

Al-Hasan al-Basri said:

I met some people, one of whom was more careful with his time than with his dirhams and dinars.

3.

Organise your time, for that will help you to give each matter its due share of attention. So you can allocate a certain number of hours for sleep, a certain length of time for seeking Islamic knowledge and for your university studies, and do not give anything any more or any less time than that which you have allocated to it.

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) and an Ansaari took it in turns to attend study circles with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). They did not regard pursuing a livelihood is contrary to seeking knowledge, so they combined both without neglecting either.

It was narrated that ‘Umar said: I and an Ansaari neighbour of mine in Banu Umayyah ibn Zayd, in the suburbs of Madinah, used to take it in turns to visit the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). He would go one day, and I would go one day; when I went, I would bring the news of that day, revelation and other matters, and when he went, he would do likewise.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (93); he included it in a chapter entitled: Chapter on taking it in turns to seek knowledge. Muslim (1479) narrated a similar report.

4.

You should understand that the duration of university studies is short and limited, whereas the path of seeking Islamic knowledge is long and only ends with one’s death. So hasten to complete the short task successfully and as quickly as possible, so that you can devote your time to following that longer path without obstacles.

5.

Whatever you learn of Islamic teachings, put it into practice in your daily life, and let the knowledge that you acquire have an impact on your deeds. Based on that, it is expected of you to honour your mother more, and try to be a lively, wise and loving son to her, pure at heart and physically pure. By applying what you learn in the way you deal with others, you will present to your family and to the society around you a message that says: Islam calls to good manners; there is no contradiction between Islam and science; the seeker of Islamic knowledge is a good example to the youth in his behaviour and conduct.

And seek the help of Allah, may He be exalted, in all the things that we have told you of and advised you to do; constantly ask your Lord for help and guidance.

And Allah knows best.