



166923 - He only learned directly from books, and he does not think that there is a need to sit with da`iyahs and learn from them

the question

I have a friend who says that he does not listen to Islamic lectures by seekers of knowledge who are studying in the Islamic University, and who call people to Islam in our country, because he says that Allah has given him a brain with which to read and understand. He also says: Why should I learn Islam from others? Hence he reads a lot of books (including a translation of the Quran in English) and has even started to issue fatwas. What is your view on that?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Seeking knowledge is one of the noblest of deeds and most beautiful characteristics. It is sufficient indication of the virtue of knowledge that the angels lower their wings to the seeker of knowledge in approval of what he is doing, and there are other virtues.

There are many ways and means of attaining knowledge, which include learning directly from the shaykhs, reading books and listening to recorded lectures. If your friend is qualified to read books and understand them correctly, and there are no scholars in his country with whom he needs to sit and learn from them, there is nothing wrong with him limiting his personal efforts to learning by himself, but he should also refer to audio and written material by contemporary scholars, such as Shaykh Ibn Baz and Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on them), Shaykh Salih al-Fawzan (may Allah preserve him), and other scholars of virtue, because their methodology is sound and their language is straightforward. Thus he will be safe from deviation – in sha Allah – because the one who only reads books, without referring to trustworthy scholars, is vulnerable to error. He should also sit with seekers of knowledge and talk to them, because a person on his own is weak, but with his brothers he is strong. From the seeker of knowledge he may learn something



useful, or learn that a certain text is specific in meaning or learn the explanation of a text that is ambiguous. So let him be humble and happy to learn from others, and learn wisdom from whoever brings it.

Learning directly from the shaykhs has an advantage and is more useful. Regarding that, Shaykh Bakr ibn `Abdullah Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to learning knowledge from the shaykhs, the basic principle is that knowledge is to be acquired through meeting and learning from teachers, and hearing it directly from the scholars' mouths, not from pages and books.

It was said: The one who enters to explore knowledge on his own will exit from it on his own. In other words, the one who begins to seek knowledge without a shaykh will exit without knowledge, because knowledge is like a trade or craft, and each trade or craft needs a practitioner, so the one who wants to learn it must learn it from a skilled teacher.

This is the consensus of almost all scholars, except those who held an odd view, such as `Ali ibn Radwan al-Masri the Physician (d. 453 AH). The scholars of his era and those who came after them refuted him.

Al-Hafiz adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his biography of him:

He had no shaykh; rather he focused on learning from books, and he wrote a book about learning the trade from books, in which he said that it is more effective than learning from teachers, but this is wrong. End quote.

As-Safadi wrote a lengthy refutation of him in *al-Wafi*.

The tangible evidence which proves that the view of Ibn Radwan was wrong is the fact that you see thousands of biographies of scholars throughout the ages and in all disciplines filled with the names of shaykhs and students. Some scholars had few shaykhs and students, and some had many.



Al-Walid said: al-Awza`i used to say: This knowledge is precious and men of knowledge learned it from one another. But when it started to be written in books, people who are not qualified began to be counted among the people of knowledge.

End quote from *Hilyat Talib al-`Ilm*.

As for issuing fatwas, this is a much more serious matter. A fatwa must be based on knowledge and insight, otherwise the one who is issuing it is sinning and he takes on the burden of sin of those who follow him.

For more information on the danger of hastening to issue fatwas, see the answer to question no. [21018](#).

We ask Allah, may He be Exalted, to enable us all to do that which He loves and pleases Him.

And Allah knows best.