178489 - How can he strike a balance between his studies, his work and his pursuit of Islamic knowledge?

the question

I am a student in a business college. How can I combine seeking Islamic knowledge and studying in the college where I am? Should I give up college where I am studying so that I can seek Islamic knowledge? What are the books with which I should begin? Please note that I have very little time, because I am also working in a supermarket so that I can afford to pay for college, and my work is twelve hours.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The noble virtue of knowledge and of the scholars is firmly established in people’s minds and hearts, and the greatest and noblest of knowledge is knowledge of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and of His religion and what He has prescribed for His slaves.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say: ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not?’ It is only men of understanding who will remember (i.e. get a lesson from Allah’s Signs and Verses)”

[az-Zumar 39:9].

There is sufficient pride for the seeker of knowledge in the hadith of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “Whoever follows a path seeking knowledge, Allah will make a path to Paradise easy for him.” Narrated by Muslim (2699) from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah.

There are many verses and hadiths that speak of the virtue of knowledge.

You – in sha Allah – have high ambitions and aspirations, and we would like to highlight several points to you:

(a)How can you combine the pursuit of Islamic knowledge with your studies in college?

1. This can be done by organising your time and giving each matter its due share of attention. If college takes up one third of your time, then give two or three hours to seeking knowledge, and allocate the rest of the time for your work.

2. Find a branch of Islamic knowledge that matches the type of knowledge you are studying at university. You are studying business, but this business needs knowledge of many Islamic rulings having to do with transactions and buying and selling. This will help you to combine the two matters, or to contribute to the development of the Islamic economy or Islamic banking. This is an important area in which you can serve Islam.

3. You can attain divine help and blessing by asking Allah for that. How many people there are who have free time but they cannot find time to seek Islamic knowledge, because they are deprived of divine help. And how many busy people there are, who are burdened with worldly concerns and seeking halaal provision, but they find surplus time by the blessing of Allah. Among the things that bring them divine help and blessings is keeping away from sin and doing a lot of acts of worship and obedience.

4. Combining the two matters may mean delaying the pursuit of Islamic knowledge until you finish studying in the college, if college and work are taking up all your time and effort. In most cases studies finish within a certain timeframe, whereas the pursuit of Islamic knowledge is something that may last from the cradle to the grave. However, we would like to point out: even if you cannot attain it all, do not give it up altogether. Rather try your best, do what you are able, and fear Allah as much as you can. If you do not have many hours to seek knowledge, then at least give it one hour. If you do not have an hour, then give it part of an hour. It is possible to make use of much of your time at work, by listening to Islamic lectures whilst you are working; even if you cannot focus sufficiently on them, you will still benefit to some extent, and you can listen to them time after

time until you understand them. You can also listen to what you have memorised of Qur’an and hadith, and so on. We are sure that you can make use of much of your time at work, without that adversely affecting what you are doing.

(b)Do not give up college for the sake of seeking Islamic knowledge, because you may be able to focus on the compulsory study that you are doing at college, but you may lose energy when it comes to voluntary study, which is seeking Islamic knowledge. Therefore we fear that you may lose momentum and regret giving up college. Moreover, your studies at the college are a means of earning provision, and you know how great is the need nowadays for work so that you can spend on yourself. If wealth is available to you in the near future – by Allah’s leave – you will find yourself able to pursue Islamic knowledge.

(c)How can you seek knowledge, and what are the appropriate books for you, when you are short of time?

1. The pursuit of knowledge is based on sincerity and acting upon what one learns. So you should bear this in mind so that Allah might decree divine help and support for you.

2. You should try to receive knowledge from scholars or seekers of knowledge who are strong in their knowledge, if you can, because the people of knowledge will save you time and effort, and will guide you if you drift away from the right path. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets.” Narrated by Abu Dawood and at-Tirmidhi; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Targheeb (1/17)

3. Strive hard and try your best, for this kind of knowledge is heavy and it will not allow you to take some of it until you give it your all. You should make sure that you have a proper understanding of what you read and memorise what you learn of short textbooks that you may find.

4. Keep company with seekers of knowledge and those who are eager to attain knowledge, for this companionship will help you to revise and study, and will help you to aspire to more.

(d)What are the books that the seeker of knowledge should study?

As we have stated previously, it is good to sit with a shaykh who can direct you to the books that are appropriate for you. However we will mention here some books that are important for the seeker of knowledge.

1. The best of knowledge is knowledge of Tawheed (Oneness of Allah) and ‘aqeedah (belief)

Concerning Tawheed: al-Usool ath-Thalaathah, then Kashf ash-Shubuhaat, then Kitaab at-Tawheed – all by Imam Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab.

Concerning other aspects of ‘aqeedah: al-‘Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah, then at-Tahhaawiyyah, and the books of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim, for they are filled with these two branches of knowledge: ‘aqeedah and Tawheed.

2. Another aspect of knowledge that the seeker of Islamic knowledge cannot do without is Arabic language, and the fields of nahw (grammar), sarf (morphology) and balaaghah (rhetoric)

Concerning nahw: Matn al-Ajroomiyyah and the commentary thereon, at-Tuhfah as-Saniyyah; then Qatr an-Nada by Ibn Hishaam, then al-Alfiyyah by Ibn Maalik and Ibn ‘Aqeel’s commentary thereon.

Concerning sarf: Matn al-Bina’ by Imam az-Zanjaani; Laamiyyah al-Af‘aal by Ibn Maalik; Shadha al-‘Urf fi Fann al-Sarf. This is a field of knowledge that it is essential to learn.

Concerning balaaghah: Duroos al-Balaaghah al-‘Arabiyyah, which was written by a group of Egyptian scholars, and a commentary on it was written by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen; al-Balaaghah al-Waadihah by ‘Ali al-Jaarim and Mustafa Ameen.

3. With regard to fiqh, it is good to follow one of the madhhabs of fiqh, which may then be a starting-point to learn the other madhhabs.

The Hanbalis have the book Akhsar al-Mukhtasaraat by Imam Muhammad ibn Badr ad-Deen ibn Balbaan; then ‘Umdat al-Fiqh by Ibn Qudaamah, on which there are many commentaries; then Zaad al-Mustaqni‘ and its commentary ar-Rawd al-Murbi‘; then you can move on to al-Mughni fi’l-

Fiqh by Ibn Qudaamah.

Or if you want to study the books of the Shaafa'is, you can start with Matn Abi Shujaa' and its commentary by Ibn al-Qaasim al-Ghazzi; then 'Umdat as-Saalik wa 'Uddat an-Naasik, or al-Fiqh al-Manhaji, written by a group of Syrian scholars; then Minhaaj at-Taalibeen by Imam an-Nawawi; then the commentaries thereon, whilst noting that the issues of 'aqeedah in them differ from the 'aqeedah of the salaf; then al-Majmoo' by an-Nawawi, with the same proviso.

4. In the field of hadith:

Al-Arba'een an-Nawawiyyah [an-Nawawi's Forty Hadith] and its many commentaries, and 'Umdat al-Ahkaam – to be memorised and understood. Then Buloogh al-Maraam, then Saheeh al-Imam Muslim and its commentary by an-Nawawi; then Saheeh al-Bukhaari with its commentary Fath al-Baari by Imam al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar.

5. In the field of mustalah al-hadith (hadith science):

Matn al-Bayqooniyyah or Tayseer Mustalah al-Hadith; then Nukhbat al-Fikar and its commentary by Imam Ibn Hajar; then Muqaddimat Ibn as-Salaah. After that you will have knowledge of which book to choose.

6. In the field of tafseer (Qur'anic exegesis):

The tafseer of Imam as-Sa'di, Tayseer al-Kareem al-Rahmaan fi Tafseer Kalaam al-Mannaan; then Mukhtasar Tafseer Ibn Katheer by Shaykh Nusayb ar-Rifaa'i; then Tafseer Ibn Katheer itself; then Tafseer at-Tabari. And you cannot do without other tafseers that discuss balaaghah and language.

It is also essential to read books of literature such as al-'Iqd al-Fareed by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, al-Bayaan wa't-Tabyeen by al-Haafiz, and so on.

7. In the field of history:

Tareekh al-Khulafa' ar-Raashideen by as-Suyooti, al-Bidaayah wa'n-Nihaayah by Ibn Katheer, and Tareekh al-Islam by Mahmoud Shaakir.

This syllabus is just a rough outline, and is not compulsory. Books other than those mentioned here may be more appropriate for you, but you must pay attention to taking a gradual approach in seeking knowledge.

(e) How can you reconcile between having little time and seeking knowledge?

If your work takes up twelve hours and you add to that efforts to seek knowledge, this may be too physically exhausting, so we advise you to be kind to yourself and seek knowledge little by little. As we mentioned above, try to invest whatever time you can at work into listening or reciting your regular portion of Qur'an, and the like, in such a way that this will not adversely affect the work that you are doing and that has been entrusted to you.

For more information and details on what has been mentioned above in general terms, please see the answers to questions no. 20191, 153227 and 138389.

And Allah is the source of strength.