76010 - About seeking knowledge

the question

My question contains a number of points, but they are all connected to one another and have to do with seeking knowledge. I hope that you can answer these questions that I am posing to you, because I want one day to be like Shaykh Ibn Baz or Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen. You may think I am crazy or foolish, but Allah knows that these two great scholars are my example in the pursuit of knowledge.

1 – Marriage. Does being married conflict with the pursuit of knowledge, especially since I am at the beginning of seeking knowledge, and I have delayed it a great deal. I am 25 years old, but I have some awareness of many issues, but without any deeply rooted knowledge. There is another issue: I am a young man whom Allah has blessed with physical strength and good looks, and I fear for myself at the time of fitnah in which we are living. Moreover, it is not easy to find another like the girl I want to marry, because she comes from a very committed family, and I love her father and brothers, and I hope there will be ties of marriage between us.
2 – Time requirement for acquiring knowledge. How many hours must I spend acquiring knowledge, apart from the time devoted to the Quran, because I set aside special time for reading and memorizing Quran.
3 – Internet and satellite channels. I spend about an hour and a half each day looking at religious sites on the internet, such as your site and the Muslim site (Dr. Naasir ‘Umar) and Islamnet. I also spend about an hour each day watching the al-Jazeera news channel and any program that discusses important issues on other channels. This is with the aim of educating myself about various aspects of life. Should I continue doing that, or should I use this time to seek knowledge or do acts of worship?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I bless you for your great ambitions and for the keenness to acquire knowledge with which Allah has blessed you, because shar'i knowledge is the noblest pursuit in which a man may spend his life and his youth.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "This world is cursed, as is everything in it, except for remembrance of Allah (dhikr) and what he likes (righteous deeds etc), and a scholar or a student."

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi (2322), who said: it is hasan ghareeb. It was also classed as hasan by Ibn al-Qayyim in 'Uddat al-Saabireen (260) and by al-Albani in al-Saheehah (2797).

The path to knowledge is lengthy and it is a lifetime project. The seeker of knowledge will continue to seek it until he meets Allah.

It was narrated from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The believer will never have enough of listening to good things (seeking knowledge) until he reaches Paradise."

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi (2686) who said: It is hasan ghareeb. It was classed as saheeh by al-Haakim (4/129) and al-Dhahabi agreed with him. It was classed as da'eef by al-Albani in Da'eef al-Tirmidhi.

The following advice will answer your questions:

Firstly:

The best time to seek knowledge is when one is young, when one is alert and has a lot of energy. It does not matter if a person misses out on knowledge when he is young or in childhood, because when a student is young he is able to make up for what he has missed, if he works hard.

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated in his Musannaf (5/284) that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Learn before you reach a position of prominence.

Abu 'Ubayd said in Ghareeb al-Hadeeth (3/369):

He says: Acquire knowledge when you are still young, before you become leaders. End quote.

When al-Bukhari quoted these words in a mu'allaq report in his Saheeh (p. 39), he followed that by saying:

And after you reach a position of prominence; the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) acquired knowledge when they were older. End quote.

What al-Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) meant was that being older and being in a prominent position does not prevent one from learning. Many of the Sahaabah became Muslim when they were older, such as Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), then they became leaders of knowledge, light and guidance.

I also give you the glad tidings that the twenties are the best age to seek knowledge, because you are still young and strong. The scholars chose this age for learning difficult matters, and what comes before that is only memorizing Quran and some texts.

It says in Tadreeb al-Raawi (1/414):

Some of the scholars said: It is mustahabb to start listening to (i.e., learning) hadeeth after the age of thirty. This was the view of the people of Syria. And it was said after the age of twenty, which was the view of the people of Kufah. Sufyaan al-Thawri said: If a man wanted to learn hadeeth, he would worship for twenty years beforehand. Abu 'Abd-Allah al-Zubayri, who was a Shaafa'i scholar, said: It is mustahabb to learn hadeeth in one's twenties, because it is when his mind reaches maturity. Before that, I prefer a person to occupy himself in memorizing Quran and studying fiqh. End quote.

Now you are at the beginning of seeking knowledge, and you have not missed anything, in sha Allah. Try to make sure that your beginning is sound and strong, and do not waste any of your time, for what is missed can never be regained.

Secondly:

As seeking knowledge is prescribed throughout one's life, and life ends only at death, it is essential for the seeker of knowledge to combine meeting worldly needs with pursuit of knowledge. That includes marriage, because marriage should never be a barrier to seeking knowledge. If the seeker of knowledge regards the pursuit of knowledge as the greatest act of worship in which he may spend the years of his life, then marriage, work and taking care of worldly needs only serve that lifetime project, which is worshipping Allah by acquiring knowledge.

This is how the Sahaabah, Taabi'een and the early scholars were. Some of them were merchants, some were governors, some were married to one wife and some to four, and some had families, but that did not distract them from acquiring knowledge.

Abu Haamid al-Ghazaali (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Ihya' 'Uloom al-Deen (2/44):

If a man has the right quality and is free from problems, so his wealth is all halaal and he is of good character and he is serious about his religious commitment, then getting married will not distract him from Allah. Moreover, he is a young man who needs to calm his desires, and he is alone and needs someone to help him in looking after his house and keep him chaste. No doubt marriage is better for him. End quote.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked in Liqa' al-Baab il-Maftooh (3/56):

There is a seeker of shar'i knowledge who wants to get married, but he is afraid that if he gets married, that will distract him from seeking knowledge. What advice can you give him?

The Shaykh (may Allah have mercy on him) replied:

Marriage is not an obstacle to pursuing knowledge, rather it may help in the pursuit of knowledge. A man may be blessed with a wife who reads and writes and can help him. Even if she does not do that, at least she can take away waswaas and thoughts of marriage, for marriage helps in the pursuit of knowledge, because it provides a suitable atmosphere for pursuing knowledge, a calm and peaceful atmosphere. The wife can free up lots of time for her husband that he used to spend

in meeting his needs in the house. So my advice to this young man is to go ahead and get married, for there is a lot of good in it, and it is obedience to the command of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and following his Sunnah and the Sunnah of his fellow-Messengers. End quote.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Fatawa ‘Ulama’ al-Balad al-Haraam (277):

My advice to all young men and women is to hasten to get married if they are able to, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “O young people, whoever among you can afford to get married, let him do so, for it helps one to lower the gaze and protect the private parts (i.e., remain chaste). Whoever cannot afford it, let him fast, for it is a protection for him.” That serves many interests as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed out, such as lowering the gaze, guarding one's chastity, increasing the numbers of the ummah and keeping one safe from any negative consequences. End quote.

Thirdly:

As for speaking about the time required for seeking knowledge, this is something in which people vary and no one has the right to stipulate specific times. I will give you some examples here, then leave it to you to work it out.

Ibn al-‘Attaar, the student of al-Nawawi, said:

Our Shaykh (may Allah have mercy on him) told me that he never spent any time, by night or by day, without being busy with knowledge, and even on the road he would be reading. He continued like this for six years, then he began to write books. He never ate during the day or the night, except a meal after ‘Isha’ prayer, and he drank only once, just before dawn. He said: I am afraid that my body may become hydrated and make me want to sleep. End quote.

Ibn ‘Aqeel al-Hanbali said:

It is not permissible for me to waste an hour of my life even when my tongue is not busy with

memorizing or debating with others, or my eyes are not busy in reading. I would think even when I am resting or relaxing, so I would not get up without an idea to write down. I limit the time I spend eating as much as I can, to such an extent that I choose a few crumbs and follow it with water rather than bread, because bread takes more time to chew, so as to save my time for reading or writing down some useful ideas. The best thing for the wise man to save is time.

End quote. See Salaah al-Ummah (4/169-175).

Fourthly:

The seeker of knowledge should not ignore current events and the state of his society. These are essential to knowledge. The faqeeh is the one who understands the texts properly and understands the reality to which he applies them.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Liqa’ al-Bab il-Maftooh (1/330):

It is well known that a person should have knowledge of real life, so that he will know how people are living. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) indicated this in the words he said when he sent Mu’aadh ibn Jabal to Yemen: “You are going to some people of the Book,” and he told them about their situation. But it is not permissible under any circumstances to let that outweigh his study of religion. Neither youth nor anyone else should focus only on what is happening here and there and focus only on issues that he cannot do anything about. Moreover, if he is keen to set the affairs of the ummah straight, proper understanding of religion is the basic requirement. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When Allah wills good for a person, He grants him proper understanding of religion.” Proper understanding requires applying proper understanding of Islam to people’s lives, but it is not permissible under any circumstances to focus on studying life and reality at the expense of studying religion to such an extent that a person has no concern but reading newspapers and magazines, and so on, and neglects to study the Quran and Sunnah. End quote.

But you know that much of what is shown on satellite channels is things that it is not permissible for a Muslim to watch, because the programs show women who are displaying their beauty, and

are accompanied by music. Allah has caused us to have no need of that, praise be to Allah, because you can watch what you need on a channel that is free of things that are haraam, or a trustworthy Islamic news website, especially since we agree that what is required in your case is to familiarize yourself in general with current affairs, then focusing on the issue which you care most about, which is seeking knowledge and doing da'wah, especially if it is an evil that you can change, or something good that you can enjoin or take part in.

But if your ambition is to reach the same level of knowledge as the great imams, that is a blessing which Allah bestows on whomsoever He will, and that is not difficult for Allah. But you must prove what you say, and the way to prove it is by striving hard to acquire knowledge and devoting yourself and your wealth to that, then seeking Allah's help to enable you to reach the status of an imam in knowledge and religious commitment, for that is a quality that Allah commends in His slaves. Allah says of the attributes of the slaves of the Most Merciful (interpretation of the meaning):

"And those who say: Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring the comfort of our eyes, and make usleaders of the Muttaqoon (the pious" [al-Furqaan 25:74]

But we warn you against doing to extremes in your ambitions and dreams, which may lead to unrealistic thinking for a while, then soon you may feel despair and frustration because you have not achieved much.

We advise you of the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning):

"He who emigrates (from his home) in the Cause of Allah, will find on earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by. And whosoever leaves his home as an emigrant unto Allah and His Messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward is then surely, incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" [al-Nisa' 4:100]

And we remind you of the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to those who are following the path that leads to Allah:

“Do your duties as well as you can and try to be near to perfection; make use of the morning, evening, and part of the night. Be moderate, be moderate and you will reach your goal."

Narrated by al-Bukhari (6463) and Muslim (2818).

And Allah knows best.