

IMĀM ‘ABDUL-‘AZĪZ IBN BĀZ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)



A Brief Discourse With The
Individual Striving To Become
A Successful Educator

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Imām ‘Abdul-‘Azīz Ibn Bāz

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TRANSLATED BY

ABŪ ABĪ BAKR / ABŪ MU'ĀWIYYAH 'ABDULLĀH JALLOW

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Knowledge Constitutes a Fundamental Element of Human Existence

In The Name of Allāh, The Most Merciful, The Bestower of Mercy.

All praise is due to Allāh alone and may peace and blessings be upon the one (Muhammad (ﷺ)) after whom there is no Prophet. To proceed:

Undoubtedly, knowledge is the bedrock upon which the essence of human life is built. Of all forms of knowledge, the most important and deserving of focus is the knowledge of the Islamic Sharāh. Through it, we know the wisdom for which Allāh created us and sent Messengers for its fulfilment, and through it, we come to know Allāh and worship Him. Allāh says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” (Adh-Dhariyāt: 56)

Allāh — Glorified be He and free is He from all imperfections — says:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“Indeed, We have sent a Messenger to every nation, saying: “Worship Allāh alone and keep away from all false deities.” (Al-Nahl: 36)

Through these two verses, the wisdom behind the creation of Jinn and humans is known, as well as the wisdom in sending Messengers. Any nation without a sound creed or religion is ignorant regardless of how advanced and developed it may be, as Allāh — glorified be He and free is He from all imperfections — says:

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ

أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا

“Or do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are only like cattle; nay, they are even farther astray from the Path. (i.e. even worse than cattle).” (Al-Furqān: 44)

A good life is the life of the possessors of Islamic knowledge and faith, as Allāh – the Exalted – says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ

“O you who believe! Answer Allāh (by obeying Him) and (His) Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life.” (Al-Anfāl: 24)

Allāh – The Exalted – says:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْتَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً

وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment, and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter).” (Al-Nahl: 97)

The Importance of a Skilled and Upright Teacher

Beneficial knowledge can only be obtained through a teacher, and no person can be a teacher unless they are knowledgeable in the subject they teach, as one cannot give what they do not possess. The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, and that is why the task of a teacher is one of the most difficult tasks, as it requires one to possess the most perfect qualities as much as possible, such as beneficial knowledge, noble character, continuous good deeds, patience, perseverance, and endurance of hardship in order to improve and raise the student with pure Islamic upbringing. Therefore, the success of a teacher in their role depends on the extent to which the qualities of perfection are acquired.

The role model and leader of all is our master and leader, Muhammad the son of ‘Abdullāh Al-Hāshimī, who resided in Makkah and then Madinah, may the best blessings and peace be upon him from his Lord. He was the most complete of people in all noble qualities. He faced many difficulties and hardships while guiding and teaching people; endured every hardship and difficulty in spreading his religion and bringing his nation out of darkness into light. May Allāh reward him with the best and most complete reward for that.

He raised, under his guidance, a virtuous generation that is considered to be the best generation known to humanity in its long history. It is well-known that the Companions' remarkable reformation and achievements, after Allāh blessed them with guidance and led them to the truth, was due to the nurturing and guidance they received from him and his patience along that path.

If one knows this, then one of the most important tasks of a teacher in every place and time is to follow the path of the first teacher (of our Ummah); Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and to strive to understand that so that he can apply it on himself, and his students as much as possible. The Muslim Ummah is in dire need of the righteous teacher who acquires his understanding from the Qur'ān, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the path of the pious predecessors – instilling in his students the manners of the pious predecessors, such as truthfulness, honesty, trustworthiness, sincerity, exaltation of Allāh's commands and prohibitions, competition in every virtue, and being cautious of all types of vice – particularly in this present era, where the callers to moral decay are many and those who advocate for true rectification and reformation are few.

Responsibilities of a Teacher and Interaction with Students

With what has been mentioned, it is known that the teacher's task, despite being one of the most difficult tasks, is nevertheless one of the noblest professions, the most beneficial, and the loftiest if the teacher is blessed with sincerity, good intentions, and exerting effort. Moreover, he will have a reward similar to the one who benefits from his knowledge. In the noble hadīth, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

“The best among you is the one who learns
and teaches the Qur’ān.” (Sahīh At-Tirmidhī: 2907)

He (ﷺ) said:

فَوَاللَّهِ لَأَنْ يُهْدَى بِكَ رَجُلٌ وَاحِدٌ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ

“By Allāh, that Allāh guides a man through you is better for you than red camels”. (Al-Bukhārī: 4210 and Muslim: 2406)

He (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said:

مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَى خَيْرٍ فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ فَاعِلِهِ

“Whoever guides someone to goodness will have a reward like one who did it.” (Sahīh Muslim: 1893)

Undoubtedly, the teacher is the religious mentor of the student. Therefore, it is incumbent upon him that he possess virtuous manners and good character, so that his students emulate him. Additionally, it is incumbent upon him to fulfil the religious obligations, staying away from prohibitions, managing his time effectively, jokes little, be open-minded (within the confines of the authentic Sharī'ah), having a pleasant countenance, being kind-hearted, being welcoming, maintaining a good appearance, independent, competent, well-informed (or well-read), and having a deep understanding of the Arabic syntax in order to fulfil his duties to the fullest.

An Overview of the Acquisition of Knowledge

Undoubtedly, those who are interested in studying the human psyche from all aspects, and seek to understand the reasons that lead to the knowledge of how to easily and smoothly implant knowledge in this psyche will achieve good results in uncovering its secrets, as well as the emotions and feelings it entails, and the extent to which it accepts the desired information to be implanted in it. Through such study and research, one will acquire information that is actually part of the general principles on which teaching is based. These principles can be summarised as follows:

[01] — When any teacher wants to implant their knowledge in the minds of students, he must first have a thorough understanding of the lesson assigned to him, as well as profound knowledge of teaching methods and effective presentation techniques. He should be able to clearly and explicitly draw students' attention to the main topic of the lesson and focus their research on the subject matter without delving into tangents that may confuse the students and cause them to miss out on the benefits.

[02] — Instil in their minds the concepts of things as a whole, and then gradually delve into the details because the importance (or essence) of every matter lies in its

fundamentals. As for branches, on the other hand, they follow on from the fundamentals. Additionally, he should focus on the materials and present them in a way that is easily comprehensible.

[03] — Make the lesson appealing and engaging to students, sparking their interest and encouraging them to listen attentively, while also teaching them about its benefits and objectives. It is crucial to consider each student's understanding and use a language that they comprehend, as not all students are the same.

[04] — Allow room for discussion with them and to tolerate mistakes that arise from their discussions as they are a result of searching for facts.

[05] — Encourage them to research every topic that leads them to discover the truth, as well as considering environmental factors, personalities, habits, and climate, as these factors have a significant impact on the students' psyches, reflecting on their understanding, behaviour, and actions (or performance).

It is well-known that an intelligent and perceptive teacher who takes these matters into consideration has a greater impact on his students compared to other teachers. The role of a teacher is similar to that of a doctor, and it is his duty to understand the inclinations of his students and the extent of each student's intelligence. Based on this understanding, he can determine the fundamental measures by which he

approaches his students' minds and understanding. This is one of the key factors contributing to a teacher's success in their task.

Striking a Balance Between Sharī'ah Expertise And Practical Worldly Sciences

The most important subject matter – without exception –that must be taught is the rectification of one's creed under the light of the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and the guidance of the righteous predecessors. Then, attention should be given to the rest of the religious sciences, followed by other sciences that are essential for human kind, provided that the outcome of these sciences does not lead to turning away from the fundamental knowledge for which the creation was created, and that these sciences should be utilised for the public interest without it hindering the path of beneficial knowledge (i.e., the Shar'īah).

Allāh has guided those whom He has guided to obtain beneficial knowledge and through His guidance, grace, and profound wisdom, they taught it, and through them, He benefited the people and the land. They achieved a beautiful mention, good reputation, increased rewards, and a good departure from this world. Whereas others have been deprived of guidance due to their deviation from the right path, thus their sciences became a calamity for them and their students, misguiding them into the pitfalls of disbelief, atheism, and heresy. They misguided others and incurred

the same sins as those they misguided as a just punishment, based on Allāh's perfect justice and wisdom, and His recompense for those who deviated from the truth and followed desires, thus they brought failure upon themselves as well as deviation from guidance, as Allāh says:

فَلَمَّا رَاغُوا أَزَاعَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ

“So, when they deviated (by choice), Allāh deviated their hearts.” (As-Saff: 5)

Allāh says:

وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

“And We shall turn their hearts and their eyes away (from guidance), as they refused to believe therein for the first time, and We shall leave them in their trespass to wander blindly.” (Al-Anām: 110)

The verses that convey the meaning of this affair are many. We beseech Allāh to bestow beneficial knowledge and righteous actions upon us and all Muslims. May He shower us with kindness, favour us with understanding of the religion, and to be steadfast upon it. May He rectify the rulers and leaders of the Muslims, and aid the truth through them. Indeed, Allāh is able to do all things.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon His servant and Messenger Muhammad, as well as his family, companions, and those who follow his guidance until the Day of Judgment.

Taken from 'Majmū' Fatāwā Wa Maqālāt Ash-Shaikh Ibn Bāz' – (2/316-317)

The Three Stages of Imparting Knowledge

It is important to note that the effective teaching of sciences to students is achieved through a gradual and incremental approach. Initially, the teacher imparts knowledge to the student by introducing the basic principles in each chapter. The learner is then familiarised with these fundamental principles through a general explanation, allowing the teacher to assess the student's intellectual capacity and readiness to grasp the upcoming material. This process enables the student to establish a foundation for further learning, even if it is initially incomplete or weak. Ultimately, this method facilitates the student's understanding and familiarity with the subject matter and its complexities.

The teacher subsequently revisits the topic with the student for a second time, delivering instruction at a more advanced level compared to the initial instruction. This entails providing the learner with a comprehensive explanation and clarification that differs from the initial general explanation and clarification. The teacher also enlightens the learner about varying viewpoints and perspectives within the subject matter, extending this discussion until the conclusion of the topic. As a result, the learner becomes aware of their potential and capabilities in the field of study.

Finally, the teacher brings back the learner once they have built a strong foundation – and at this point, they clarify all the aspects that are vague, crucial, or intricate and unlock all the secrets in the subject for the learner to establish a firm grasp on it. This exemplifies the approach of beneficial teaching, and it is demonstrated through repetition – three times. Undoubtedly, some learners may reach their maximum potential in fewer than these three stages depending on their natural aptitude and what is facilitated for them.

Common Errors Made by Teachers

Many teachers in our current era lack knowledge of effective teaching methods. As a result, they introduce topics at the beginning of the learning process that hinder the learner's understanding and motivation. This approach forces the learner to focus on unravelling these obstacles instead of grasping the core concepts. These teachers mistakenly believe that this is the correct way to teach and impose the requirement for learners to comprehend and familiarise themselves with these complex issues. However, this approach only confuses the learner by presenting advanced concepts at the beginning, which should be introduced in the later stages of learning.

In reality, the ability to acquire knowledge and develop understanding should be nurtured gradually over time. Initially, the learner is only able to grasp a few specific details, as their understanding gradually improves through the use of general concepts and specific examples. As they encounter more challenging aspects of the subject matter, these concepts are reinforced and repeated, allowing the learner to progress gradually. This transition from a slower learning process to a higher level of understanding is crucial. However, if the learner is presented with complex details

right from the start, it hinders their comprehension and prevents them from adequately preparing for the subject matter. Consequently, the learner may feel overwhelmed, perceive knowledge acquisition as difficult, become unmotivated, and ultimately give up on learning. This negative outcome can be attributed to ineffective teaching methods. Hence, it is inappropriate for the teacher to surpass the comprehension presented in the book being examined by the student, irrespective of whether they are just starting or nearing the end of the topic.

The teacher must refrain from blending the content of the book with unrelated matters until the students have familiarized themselves with its introductory and concluding aspects; comprehend the objective of the book and have absorbed its content, which they can then utilize when delving into other books to be explored under the guidance of the teacher. This is because once an individual comprehends a specific topic, they are equipped to comprehend other aspects within the same subject, actively seek to enhance their knowledge and understanding, and aspire to progress until they reach the most advanced level of knowledge. However, if the matters are presented in a perplexing manner, the learner will struggle to comprehend and consequently become disengaged, cease critical thinking, lose motivation to acquire knowledge, and ultimately forsake the pursuit of knowledge and learning. And Allāh guides those whom He wishes to guide.

Likewise, you should ensure that the study of a single subject for the learners is not prolonged due to splitting the study up into many sessions and causing disruption of the flow between them. This can make it challenging for the learner to fully understand the subject due to the lack of connection. When the learner consistently reviews and repeats the material, ensuring that both the initial and final details are retained in their memory, forgetfulness is minimised, making it easier to comprehend the subject matter. Regular practice and repetition are key to acquiring knowledge and achieving proficiency.

Another effective method of teaching is to avoid presenting the learner with a combination of two subject matters simultaneously. This is because dividing one's attention between two subjects can hinder the learner's ability to gain proficiency in either of them. Consequently, the learner may find both subjects unclear and challenging, leading to a failure in comprehending and mastering both. However, if the learner's mind is focused solely on studying one subject matter without any distractions, it may increase their chances of accomplishing it. Ultimately, it is Allāh who guides individuals towards the correct path.

Taken from 'Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn' – (page 604-605)

Notes

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