

AL-ILM

(KNOWLEDGE)

Definition:

- To know is to understand and realize a matter according to reality.
- A basic knowledge of religion is essential for every Muslim.
- To worship Allah and understand our accountability to Him
- To establish prayer, give Zakat and fast Ramadan
- To be good to our parents and families
- To be good in our character and behavior

It is also incumbent upon every community to have some of its members devote themselves to more detailed knowledge and understanding of other aspects of religion such as the Qur'an, Sunnah and Fiqh (jurisprudence).

Proper knowledge corrects our belief and guides our behavior; useful knowledge is that which helps and improves our life as well as the life of other people. We should do our best to seek such useful knowledge spreading it so that others may enjoy its benefits. At the same time, we should avoid knowledge that is harmful and may cause corruption and evil.

We Will Discuss The Following Concepts

- It is only through proper knowledge that we know Allah and understand how best to serve Him.
- Seeking proper knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.
- Those endowed with knowledge are more conscious of their duty to Allah.

- Proper knowledge improves our character and behavior.
- Useful knowledge benefits others and guides them to the truth.
- We have an obligation not to hide our knowledge.
- We should be cautious as to how to use and spread knowledge.
- Useful knowledge will benefit us even after we die.
- Our knowledge is indeed limited compared to that of Allah who has all encompassing knowledge.

HOW TO KNOW ALLAH

Who is Allah (God) and how can we appreciate His blessings; and what is our role in life? The answer to these questions must come from divine revelation for our human mind is limited in its ability to comprehend certain issues that are unseen. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us to think of Allah as He described Himself and by looking at His creation, rather than trying to understand the innate nature of God. The Qur'an confirms this concept.

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ [الأعراف: ١٨٠]

"The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on Him by them; but shun such men as use profanity in His names: for what they do, they will soon be requited" (Al-Ara'f 7 : 180).

We understand that Allah is the Creator and that He provides for all His creation.

﴿وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ [هود: ٦]

"There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah: He knows the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit: all is in a clear Record" (Hud 11 :6).

Allah gave us our faculties of hearing, seeing and most importantly, reasoning.

﴿ وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ
وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾ [النحل: ٧٨]

"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that ye may give thanks (to Allah)"
(An-Nahl 16 : 78)

Allah taught mankind intelligent speech and gave him the ability to think and reason. He also sent down the Qur'an, God's words to guide mankind to His way:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ ﴾ [الرحمن: ١]

"(Allah) Most Gracious!" (Ar-Rahman 55 : 1

﴿ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ ﴾ [الرحمن: ٢]

"It is He Who has taught the Qur-an" (Ar-Rahman 55 : 2)

﴿ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ﴾ [الرحمن: ٣]

"He has created man:" (Ar-Rahman 55 : 3)

﴿ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ﴾ [الرحمن: ٤]

"He has taught him speech (and Intelligence)" (Ar-Rahman 55 : 4)

The blessings of Allah are too numerous to enumerate, yet most people are ungrateful:

﴿ وَءَاتَاكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا ۗ إِنَّ
الْإِنْسَانَ لَطَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴾ [إبراهيم: ٣٤]

"And He gives you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favours of Allah, never will ye be able to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude" (Ibrahim 14 : 34)

By contrast, Allah is tolerant with His servants. He knows their human weaknesses and forgives their sins and shortcomings repeatedly.

﴿ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصَوْنَهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾ [النحل: ١٨]

"If ye would count up the favours of Allah, never would ye be able to number them; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful"

(An-Nahl 16 : 18)

These examples cited from the Qur'an gives us an idea about God as the One Who cares for His subjects, provides for them, guides them, and forgives their mistakes. By contrast, the idea of God that we may receive from the Old Testament is that of a vengeful God who favors the Children of Israel above all His creation; or we may envision a God who has a dual nature, part divine and part human, as most Christians believe. The Qur'an warns us not to think of God in human terms for He is above human comprehension.

﴿ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَلِقُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴾ [الأنعام: ١٠٢]

"That is Allah, your Lord! There is no god but He, the Creator of all things; then worship ye Him; and He has power to dispose of all affairs" (Al-An'am 6 : 102)

﴿ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴾ [الأنعام: ١٠٣]

"No vision can grasp Him. But His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things"

(Al-Ana'm 6 : 103)

Therefore, proper knowledge corrects our faith and belief. In fact, knowledge precedes belief in God. Faith based on knowledge must lead to obedience and submission. When we do that, we are promised more divine guidance.

﴿ وَلَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾ [الحج: ٥٤]

"And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur'an) is the Truth from thy Lord, and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Way" (Al-Hajj 22 : 54)

SEEKING KNOWLEDGE IS A DUTY

The first verses of the Qur'an that were revealed extolled the virtue of learning. The order came to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to read,

﴿ أَقْرَأْ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴾ [العلق: ١]

"Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created" (Al-Ala'q 96 : 1)

﴿ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴾ [العلق: ٢]

"Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:"
(Al-Ala'q 96 : 2)

﴿ أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴾ [العلق: ٣]

"Proclaim! and thy Lord is Most Bountiful," (Al-Ala'q 96 : 3)

﴿ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴾ [العلق: ٤]

"He Who taught (the use of) the Pen," (Al-Ala'q 96 : 4)

﴿ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴾ [العلق: ٥]

"Taught man that which he knew not" (Al-Ala'q 96 : 5)

These verses illustrate the great blessing of Allah in teaching mankind. We learn the importance of reading, searching for the truth and

acquiring knowledge. The order came to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to seek knowledge,

﴿ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴾ [طه: ١١٤]

"but say, O my Lord! advance me in knowledge" (Ta Ha 20: 114)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the duty of every Muslim to seek knowledge,

Anas Bin Malik related that Allah's messenger (PBUH) said,
"Seeking knowledge is an obligation of every Muslim."

Narrated by Ibn Majja

As we explained previously, it is essential for every Muslim to have a basic knowledge of the essential concepts of Islam. It is also the responsibility of each community to be self-sufficient by having scholars that can guide and advise others.

﴿ وَمَا كَانِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَآفَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴾

[التوبة: ١٢٢]

"Nor should the Believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil)"

(At-Tawba 9 : 122)

THOSE WHO KNOW UNDERSTAND THEIR DUTY

Those who understand the Qur'an and its message realize how deeply they are indebted to Allah for all His blessings and guidance. They know His power and majesty and they appreciate His mercy and forgiveness; therefore, they fear Him the most, are the most obedient and pious and they are foremost in all good deeds.

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُتَّقُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٥٧]

"Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord;"
(Al-Mumenoun 23 : 57)

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٥٨]

"Those who believe in the Signs of their Lord;" (Al-Mumenoun 23:58)

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٥٩]

"Those who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord;"
(Al-Mumenoun 23 : 59)

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٦٠]

"And those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord;" (Al-Mumenoun 23 : 60)

﴿ أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْحَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ هَا سَابِقُونَ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٦١]

"It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them" (Al-Mumenoun 23 : 61)

A similar verse illustrating the concept that those of knowledge and understanding fear God the most is,

﴿ إِنَّمَا تَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ عَلَّمُوا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا مَحْفُورًا ﴾ [فاطر: ٢٨]

"Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving" (Fatir 35 : 28)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

“Amongst you I know Allah the best, and I fear him the most.”

Muslim

PROPER KNOWLEDGE IMPROVES OUR BEHAVIOR

The purpose of religion is to make us aware of our accountability to Allah, to improve our character and behavior and to make us better human beings helping others and guiding them to Allah.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained that proper knowledge of religion does indeed makes us better if we possess the right character and a keen intelligence.

Abou Horaira related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "You will find the people of different sorts; the best among them in Jaheleyya (state of ignorance before Islam) are the best among them in Islam if they learn and achieve knowledge."

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim.

Those endowed with knowledge will understand the truthfulness in the Qur'an and that it guides to a straight path.

﴿ وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴾ [سبأ: ٦]

"And those to whom knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to thee from thy Lord, that is the Truth, and that it guides to the Path of the Exalted (in Might), Worthy of all praise"
(Sa B'a 34 : 6)

Those who know, understand that the life of this world and its allure is transient, what is important is to prepare for our eventual accountability; therefore, they are devoted to Allah, seeking His forgiveness and pleasure, and hoping for His mercy. Only those with understanding and insight remain focused on the Hereafter as their goal.

﴿ أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَنِيتُ ءَانَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا مَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةِ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾ [الزمر: ٩]

"Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord,

(like one who does not)? Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition" (Az-Zumar 39 : 9)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave us the example of two different types of people concerning divine guidance:

- One who accepts divine guidance, learns and teaches others.
- The second refuses divine guidance and does not benefit himself or others.

Abou Musa related that Allah's messenger (PBUH) said,

"The example of the guidance and knowledge that Allah sent me with is that of a heavy rain that reached a land; part of it was pure and it accepted the water and it produced vegetations and plants that others ate from. Part of the land was not fertile, but it held the water, and Allah helped mankind. They drank the water, irrigated and planted. Another part of the land did not hold any water, nor did it produce any vegetation. Such is the example of the one who learned and understood the religion of Allah and benefited from what Allah sent with me; he learned and taught others. The other example is that of the person who did not benefit others, nor accepted Allah's guidance."

Narrated in Bokhari and Muslim

We learn from this saying of the Prophet:

- It is our obligation to study, understand and accept divine guidance.
- It is also our duty to teach others and spread useful knowledge.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized that those who strive to learn the Qur'an and teach others are truly the best in any community.

Othman related that Allah's messenger (PBUH) said,

"The best amongst you is he who learns the Qur'an and teaches it."

Narrated in Bokhari

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE BENEFITS OTHERS

It is the blessing and mercy of Allah that He sent His messengers to

inform and teach their people their religion. The prophets applied the message in their character and behavior and became our examples to follow. The Qur'an explains the great blessing of Allah in sending Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to guide his people and teach them.

﴿ لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

[آل عمران: ١٦٤]

"Allah did confer a great favour on the Believers when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while before that, they had been in manifest error" (Al-Imran 3 : 164)

We are advised to spread useful knowledge from the Sunnah, as this will surely help others. Sometimes, we may not fully understand the text or implications of the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings, however, others may understand it better.

Ibn Masoud related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

"May Allah make the face beaming and happy, the one who hears my saying, understands it, memorizes it and relates it; for it is possible that someone may carry knowledge to someone else who is more knowledgeable. Three things that a believer does; he does not hold a grudge or feel envy in his heart. He is to be sincere and devoted in his work for the sake of Allah; he is to give sincere and sound advice to Muslim leaders; and he is to keep close to the congregation of Muslims, because their reward and Du'aa (prayers) reach those close to them."

Narrated by Termedhi and Ibn Majja

It is a blessing from Allah that He guides His servants and gives them the ability to learn and understand. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Whomever Allah wants something good for him, He will let him understand and master his religion."

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim.

SPREAD USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

On the Day of Judgment, we will be asked to account for the knowledge that Allah has imparted to us.

Abou Barza Al-Aslami related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "Every one will be asked to account for four things on the Day of Judgment. He will be asked about his whole life and what did he do with it; about his youth, did he waste it or use it properly; about his money, how did he earn it and how did he spend it; and about his knowledge, what did he do with it?"

Narrated by Termedhi

If we do our job and teach others by spreading useful knowledge, our status will be elevated and we will be with Allah's angels as our witness is accepted.

﴿ يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَأَفْسَحُوا يَفْسَحَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ آنشُرُوا فَأَنشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴾ [المجادلة: ١١]

"Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted Knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do" (Al-Mujadalah 58 : 11)

And:

﴿ شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَابِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٨]

"There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He the Exalted in Power, the Wise" (Al-Imran 3 : 18)

In contrast, if we hide useful knowledge we are threatened with a severe punishment.

Abou Horaira related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

Whoever was asked about something that he knows well, but he hid that knowledge and kept it to himself, on the Day of Judgment he will be harnessed with a harness of fire."

Narrated by Termedhi, Ahmad, Abou Dawood, Nesa'ee and Hakim

The Qur'an denounces and condemns those who hide the knowledge of the Qur'an, unless they repent, amend their conduct and explain the truth.

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَهْدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ ﴾ [البقرة: ١٥٩]

"Those who conceal the Clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the Guidance, after we have made it clear for the People in the Book, on them shall be Allah's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse" (Al-Baqara 2 : 159)

﴿ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنَّوْا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ [البقرة: ١٦٠]

"Except those who repent and make amends and openly declare (the Truth): to them I turn; for I am Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (Al-Baqara 2 : 160)

We should be cautious of what to say or the type of knowledge imparted

Whenever we encounter a verse of the Qur'an, or saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we should try to understand its meaning and how we can apply its principle to our life. If we are sincere, Allah will guide our hearts and minds to the truth. Sometimes, we may not be able to comprehend the meaning or implication of Divine Revelation. A verse of the Qur'an or a Hadith may seem illogical or impractical, we may then be tempted to make a judgment that such a text is irrelevant to our time or may even reject such a Hadith as not authentic. We have taken our mind and judgment as superior to the Word of God. We understand Divine

Revelation and interpret it according to our own intellect and we are ordered in the Qur'an to think and reflect, but our minds are fallible and our understanding and knowledge is limited especially in metaphysical areas. To accept or reject divine text according to what we consider appropriate is a trap that our minds make appealing and logical to us. The next step is to accept what we like, and reject what we dislike. Such a pitfall has been committed by others in the past, and still plagues many in our time.

The Qur'an warns us not to follow our desires in interpreting its verses. We should refer any verse that is subject to interpretation to other verses that are basic and clear and we should follow the spirit and essential guidelines of Islam.

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾ [آل عمران: ٧]

"He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical. Seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its true meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding" (Al-Imran 3 : 7)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sought Allah's protection from knowledge that was useless or harmful.

Zaid bin Arqam related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "O Allah I seek protection and refuge in You from infirmity, laziness, covetousness, cowardliness, and old age; and from the suffering of the grave. O Allah give my soul its righteousness and purify it, You are the best to purify my soul, You are its Guardian and Protector. O Allah I

seek refuge in You from knowledge that is not useful (or harmful), and from a heart that does not submit to You, and from a soul that is never satisfied, and from a prayer that is not answered nor responded to.”

Narrated by Muslim.

OUR KNOWLEDGE IS INDEED LIMITED

Some feel happy and mighty because of the knowledge that they possess, and may even become arrogant. The Qur'an warns against such an attitude.

﴿ فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴾ [غافر: ٨٣]

"For when their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they exulted in such knowledge (and skill) as they had; but that very (Wrath) at which they were wont to scoff hemmed them in"

(Ghafir 40 : 83)

The Qur'an reminds us that no matter how much knowledge we possess, there is someone who knows more.

﴿ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ دَشَاءٍ ۗ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴾ [يوسف: ٧٦]

"We raise to degrees (of wisdom) whom We please: but over all endowed with knowledge is One, the All-Knowing" (Yusuf 12 : 76)

Our knowledge is limited, especially in matters that we have no proof of or have not witnessed. Such "Unseen" matters as God, His angels, the Day of Judgment, our Fate, etc.

﴿ وَتَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۗ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾

[الإسراء: ٨٥]

"They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: "The Spirit (comes) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)" (Al-Isra'a 17 : 85)

The more we study and acquire knowledge, the more we should realize that our knowledge is indeed limited, and that what we do not know far exceeds that which we do know. This conclusion should prompt us to be more humble and considerate.

REWARDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Working hard to learn, improve our behavior, teach others and spread useful knowledge has a great reward.

Abou Horaira related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

“Whoever relieves the distress of a believer in this life, Allah will relieve his distress on the Day of Judgment. Whoever makes it easy for a Muslim who is in difficulty, Allah will make it easy for him in this life and in the Hereafter; and whoever covers the faults of a Muslim or shields him, Allah will cover his faults and will shield him in this life and in the Hereafter. Allah will continue to help His servant as long as he is helping his brother. Whoever seeks a path to knowledge, Allah will make it easier for him to seek a path to Paradise. Whenever a group of people gather in the House of Allah reciting the Book of Allah and studying it amongst themselves, until peace and tranquility descends upon them and Allah's mercy encompasses them and the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them to those in His presence; whoever his deeds are few and fails to improve, his heritage cannot help him.”

Narrated by Muslim

We learn from this Hadith:

- Seeking knowledge is a path that guides us to Paradise.
- When we recite and study the Qur'an Allah's blessings surround us:
 - Peace and tranquility.
 - Allah's mercy.
 - Allah's angels surround us.
 - Allah mentions our activity to His angels.
- What is important is our good deeds and effort, not our noble ancestry.
- If we are helping others, Allah will help us.

The good deeds that we start and continue to do in our life, will help us after we die providing others are benefiting from our effort and example.

Abou Horaira related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

“Once man dies all his deeds cease except for three: A charity that its benefit is continuing; or a useful knowledge that benefit others; or a good son or daughter who prays on his behalf.”

Narrated by Muslim

A scholar who teaches others and spreads useful knowledge is more valuable than a person who puts all his energies into prayers and fasting. The latter helps himself; the former helps others.

Ali Bin Abi Talib said,

“The scholar is better than the person who is fasting, standing in prayer and striving. When a scholar dies Islam loses a great deal, such a loss cannot be replaced except by a scholar like him.”

Narrated in Lisan Al-Arab

He also said,

“Knowledge is better than money, knowledge will guard you, while you guard your money; knowledge rules, while money is being ruled; money will decrease when it is spent, but knowledge increases when it is spread.”

Narrated by Ghazali

BENEFITS OF KNOWLEDGE

- It is necessary before firm belief settles in our hearts
- It allows us to understand our obligations towards Allah
- It guides us to Paradise
- It improves our character and behavior
- It benefits other people and guides them to the truth
- It renders us humble, sincere and willing to help
- Its reward continues even after we die and our deeds cease