In the final week of this course, we are going to focus on the practical implementation of the three-step model for tazkiyyah (purification of hearts) that we presented in lesson 7 of this course. The first step in the model is ‘to acquire knowledge’. In this lesson, we will provide further explanation for this aspect.

First Guidance of Islam:

The Prophet ﷺ used to go into the cave of Hira in Makkah before receiving the Prophethood in order to deeply ponder about the reality of this life and the marvelous creations of Allah swt. He knew that none of it is created in vain and there is a purpose to it. Allah swt then blessed him with the Prophethood and explained the purpose behind their existence and our existence – Uboodiyah of Allah swt – being his true and dutiful servants - so that we can all attain His love and reward and go

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23 Shaykh Yahya Ibrahim, is the man with the golden touch – touching hearts. Shaykh Yahya started his knowledge journey with the memorisation of Qur’ān in his teens and then pursued his studies in exegesis, jurisprudence and hadith with scholars from the Hijaz, and in Egypt as well.

As a proud Canadian yet happy Aussie, he travels the world regularly from his base in Perth, enriching the lives of thousands with his wise and balanced commentary on matters that are most important to Muslims in our time. His initiatives in Australia include diversity training, cultural sensitivity programs, educational lectures and media presentations. His expertise is sought by schools, universities and a wide range of government & non-government organisations.

Although, Shaykh Yahya is known for his spiritually uplifting discussions and addressing topics of Qur’ānic exegesis, Sunnah and tradition and juristic limitations, he is passionate also presenting on social topics including domestic violence, misogyny, gender discrimination, child protection, respectful relationships, disability and mental health.

Reflecting his dedication to these goals, Imam Yahya was awarded the West Australian Multicultural Community Service Award for Individual Excellence in 2013. He was also the selected facilitator for the federal government’s Muslim Community Reference Group for the Conference of Australian Imams. He currently served as Langford Islamic College in Perth as the vice principles and regularly delivers lectures around the globe at various universities, Islamic centres and other events.
back to our original home, Jannah. The first step that was told to the Prophet ﷺ was ‘Iqra’ – ‘read’. Acquiring knowledge is accordingly the first step in our journey of uboodiyyah.

**Key to knowledge is the ability to question**

One acquires deep knowledge if he really wants to. Accordingly, in our hearts, there should be a quest and hunger for knowledge. If that hunger is not there, we will not be keen to acquire knowledge if it is made within our closest reach. One of the ways to develop that hunger for knowledge is to ponder over the things and ask questions. In Islam, we are encouraged to seek clarification and ask those who know more than us. Allah swt says:

> “Then ask those who possess the Message (Ahl adh-Dhikr) if you do not know.” (Quran, 21:7 and 16:43)

**Asking questions is the Sunnah of the Prophets and their companions:**

Quran is replete with examples where the Prophets A.S. have asked questions to Allah swt. This questioning was not because of lack of faith but for the further strengthening of Iman in the hearts. Some of the examples of this are given below:

- Ibrahim A.S. once asked Allah swt about how he would give back the life to the dead. Allah swt asked him if he did not have faith in his heart? He replied that he indeed had full faith; the question was only to soothe his heart. Allah swt then asked him to slaughter four birds and put their meat at far off locations. He asked Ibrahim A.S. to call the birds back. When he called them, they came flying back to him.

- Nuh A.S. was told by Allah swt that he and his family will be saved from the storm. Nuh A.S. tried to convince his son to join him on the boat but he refused. A large wave came and drowned him. To this, Nuh A.S. asked a question to Allah swt that His promise is always the truth. What was the reason for his son to be drowned? Allah swt than told him that he was not from Nuh’s family as he was the doer of other than good deeds. To be able to be called the son of the Prophet, physical or biological ties are not enough; one has to meet the spiritual requirements and taqwa of that status too.

- The companions of Isa A.S. who had seen a number of his miracles already asked him to pray to God to bring down a table of food from the heavens. He asked them ‘have you not seen a number of miracles already’. To this, they replied that they are only seeking further contentment in the heart.

This, and numerous other examples tell us the importance of asking questions.

**The purpose of asking questions**

It is very important to ask questions with the right purpose. We know the example of Jews of Madinah who asked questions trying to trick the Prophet ﷺ, but Allah swt helped His Prophet ﷺ and their plans and their attempts to extinguish the light of Allah went in vain. These were the people
who had diseases in their hearts. We also know the attitude of the people of Makkah who asked questions such as why did God send a man as a prophet and that too an orphan. The hypocrites in Madinah are also known to ask similar questions to the Prophet ﷺ in order to irritate him. What is the common theme in this?

The common theme is that their purpose was not to seek knowledge but to debate, disbelief and insult. We someone asks questions with this intent, then he is fulfilling the Sunnah of the groups mentioned above. The Sunnah of our messenger is to ask questions in order to strengthen Iman. This is what he always encourage.

Once a group of companions was going somewhere and one of them fell and received a big wound on his head. The other companions tried to save his life by tying a cloth around his head which stopped the bleeding and he came back to life. Then came the time for prayer and the injured companion said that if I make wudhu with water, I may die. The other companions said that the instruction from the Prophet ﷺ is very clear; you can only do tayammum (cleansing through sand) if there is no water. So, the injured companions opened the cloth wrapped around his head, made the wudhu and died. When this matter was brought the Prophet ﷺ he showed his displeasure with what happened and asked the companions about why they did not ask.

What we learn from this is that we have to ask those who are more knowledgeable than us. We should not think that our opinion is the right one. There may be aspects of it that we have not fully understood. Our religion, accordingly, encourages questioning.

The methodology of seeking knowledge:

The above highlights to us the importance of acquiring the correct knowledge from the correct sources. Scholars have laid down the steps that one has to follow in order to acquire the knowledge of the deen. These steps are as follows:

1. Understanding the virtues of seeking knowledge: It is the human nature that when we understand the virtues of something, it becomes easier to acquire that or perform an associated action. The virtues of seeking knowledge are abundant as explained to us by Allah swt and his Messenger. Allah the Exalted asked His messenger to say: ﴿وَلَّهُ رَبُّ رَبِّي عَلَى مَا سَأَلْتَ وَعَلَى مَا ثُمِّنْتَ﴾. Say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge. This tells us that this is the commodity that irrespective of how much you have, you are more in need of it. Even the Prophet of Allah ﷺ to whom Allah swt bestowed more knowledge than any other human being is asked to seek more knowledge. Similarly, it is reported in a hadith that when Allah wishes to do good to a slave, He blessed him with the deeper understanding of the religion. Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said: ﴿مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَتَسْمِنَ فِيهِ عَلَّمًا سَهِيًّا اللهُ ﷺ حَرِيمًا إِلَى جَنَّتِهِ﴾. Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah makes easy for him a path to Paradise. So one should internalize these virtues and motivate himself to pursue to the journey of seeking knowledge.
2. **Sincerity**: The person who decides to seek knowledge should cleanse his intentions and identify the reason why he is seeking knowledge. If it is for anything other than Allah swt, this knowledge would only harm him.

3. **Action**: Put in practice what you learn. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ used to take a portion of the Quran, internalize and implement in their lives and then move on. This should be our approach too. We should not let any of our learning go unimplemented in our lives. If we don’t do that, we are missing the real objective of why we should seek knowledge.

4. **Teaching**: The sadaqa of the knowledge is that one should teach it to others. If someone learns with a mindset that he or she will then be teaching this knowledge, the learning is much deeper and much more meaningful. One should never think that one is too uneducated in religion to teach. We are authorized to teach even if it is one verse that we are going to teach, as long as we teach it in its true sense. This is what will become a light for us in the hereafter and our shade on the day of judgment inshaAllah.

5. **Be humble**: The final step is to acquire humbleness along with knowledge. The knowledge and the fact that we are teaching it to others should not become a source of arrogance for us. Rather we should feel humble. We should not feel shy to say that ‘I don’t know’ or ‘Ask someone who is more knowledgeable than me’. These were the statements that the famous Imams such as Imam Malik, Imam Ahmed, and others never felt shy of uttering. Then who are you and me in front of these giants. We should never give an incorrect response to a question for the sake of establishing a rapport with the questioner. That would become fire for us. If we don’t know, we should say that we don’t know; never misguide anyone. This also comes back to the questioner to seek knowledge from the people who have properly learned the religion and then internalized it.

**Three important take-home messages from this lesson:**

**Establish a connection with the people of knowledge**

We have seen that when the Prophets and Messengers had any questions, they asked Allah swt. When the companions of our beloved Prophet ﷺ required clarity on some matter, they used to bring the matter to the Prophet ﷺ and asked questions. For now, we have to realize that the inheritance of the Prophet ﷺ, the knowledge of this deen, has been bestowed to the scholars of this ummah. If we also want to drink from the same fountain of knowledge, we have to establish a connection with the scholars. Trying to come with answers by one’s own self and not asking questions to the Ulema (scholars) can offer result in deviation. It happens with many of us that when we receive a certain level of qualifications, we start to consider ourselves too big to go to scholars, sit in their feet and ask questions. Some try another different route and try to find answers from the sources that are either not meant to provide answers to our questions or are incapable of. This is a journey that leads towards misguidance. We accordingly should establish close connections with the authentic scholars who truly represent the deen of Islam.
Never kill questions

As parents, especially if we are living in the West, we come across difficult questions from our children. On these questions, we should never get angry and shut them up. If we do so, it will sow a seed of confusion in their hearts which will grow with the passage of time. We should rather try to answer these questions. For this, there are two approaches that we can follow:

- Acquire the knowledge yourself so that you can answer the queries from your kids. This would help you in two ways – it would strengthen your own yaqeen as well as the yaqeen of your kids
- Connect your children to authentic scholars and help them in finding the answers to their questions.

Both these aspects have to go hand in hand.

Never give up till you get an answer:

Whenever a question arises, do not settle down unless you find an answer. Go from one scholar to the other and seek their opinions. Choose what you consider to be closest to the Sunnah of the beloved Messenger ﷺ. Make sure that you go to scholars rather than the immature people who do not possess the sound knowledge.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 30

Find out how you can spare between 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time daily for learning the deen of Allah swt. Can you spare it from your sleep if it is more than 7 to 8 hours? Can you spare it from your screen time on mobile, tv, or computer? Can you identify an opportunity to find this slot when you are doing other things such as driving, walking, cooking and so on? We at least should dedicate this much time to accumulate our wealth for the hereafter, shouldn’t we?