The background of the page is a grayscale photograph of a study desk. It includes a laptop on the right, a stack of spiral-bound notebooks in the center, and a pen on a notebook in the foreground. In the top right corner, there are several concentric circles in orange and red, and in the bottom left corner, there are two overlapping semi-circles in yellow and orange.

Advice to the Student of Knowledge

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

One: The Matn

At each level, the student will have a specific text which will be taught by the teacher. It is vital for the student to memorise, understand, summarise and revise this text. If one engages in this then this will impact their method of learning and they will achieve the outcome they are looking to achieve. However, if a student jumps from one book to another then this will weaken their precision in the science.

If a student wants to study a book with a teacher then it is upon them to fully understand that book before proceeding to the next level. If the student follows this advice then they will notice a change for the better and appreciate the outcome.

Two: Memorisation

It is vital for a student to give importance to memorisation. Memorisation is categorised into two:

1. Verbatim memorisation e.g. of the Qur'ān and Hadīth. These are memorised verbatim and therefore require frequent repetition until they are firmly rooted in one's memory and heart.
2. Abstract memorisation; where one memorises the overall meaning and can paraphrase a text. This comes from frequent reading and revising.

The books that we advised for memorisation will require verbatim memorisation, however, the lessons wherein one is not required to memorise the text, we expect the student to have an overall understanding where they can inform us of its contexts and key points from memory.

Many students ask the question: How can I attain memorisation?

This question was posed to the great Imām Muhammad Ibn Ismāīl al-Bukhārī (رحمة الله) and he was the right person for this question as the Scholars state that he had photographic memory. When asked regarding this he said:

"لَا أَعْلَمُ شَيْئًا أَنْفَعَ لِلْحِفْظِ مِنْ نَهْمَةِ الرَّجُلِ وَمَدَاوِمَةِ النَّظَرِ"

"I do not know of anything more beneficial for memorisation than the aspirations of the man and consistent looking [at knowledge]"¹

These two qualities are required from the student of knowledge; the hunger for knowledge and to research in the books and verify information. An individual who is always asking the right questions and is with the people of knowledge will gain significantly.

¹ Tārīkh al-Islām by al-Dhahabī 6/148

Three: Progression

A student should not progress to the next stage or move to another book [in the same science] until they have a good understanding of the book that they had studied and have revised it.

At the AMAU student of knowledge programme there is no time limit. Therefore, a patient can take their time and study each book properly. My advice is that a student does not progress from one book to another until they have mastery over it. Some students of knowledge want to finish quickly to be distinct from their remaining colleagues and for people to say: that brother has finished all these books. This is not good for a student of knowledge if they do not understand that particular book. Therefore, if one is studying a particular book in 'Aqīdah then they should not progress until they have precision and understand it well.

Four: Comprehensive Book

It is important for a student of knowledge to choose a comprehensive book in each field which they use as a backbone for the science and return back to it whenever needed.

At the AMAU student of knowledge programme, we have selected the book that we will utilise for each science and make as a reference book.

The following are some examples:

1. **Tawhīd**: Fath al-Majīd by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Hassan Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. This book is an explanation of Kitāb al-Tawhīd.
2. **‘Aqīdah**: Sharh ‘Aqīdah al-Tahawīyyah by Ibn Abi’l Izz al-Hanafī.
3. **Fiqh** (Shāfi‘ī): Minhāj by al-Nawawī with the explanation of al-Haytamī or al-Ramlī.
4. **Usūl al-Fiqh**: Jam’ al-Jawāmi’ by al-Subkī with the explanation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī.
5. **Tafsīr**: Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr or Tafsīr al-Baghawī.
6. **Nahw and Sarf**: Sharh alfiyyah by Ibn ‘Aqīl.
7. **Balāghah**: ‘Uqūd al-Jummān by al-Suyūti.
8. **Mustalah al-Hadīth**: Sharh alfiyyah al-‘Irāqī by al-Sakhāwī.
9. **Sharh al-Hadīth**: Sharh ‘Umdat al-Ahkām by Ibn Daqīq al-‘Id or Subul al-Salām by al-San’ānī. If one is advanced then they can add: Fath al-Bārī by Ibn Hajar and Sharh Sahīh Muslim by al-Nawawī.

Five: Revision

It is vital for a student of knowledge to revise. Many students of knowledge attend a class, listen, take notes but then place their notebooks on a shelf until it collects dust and then they take it to the next lesson without reviewing.

As the AMAU classes are pre-recorded a student can take their time. If they have not revised the previous lesson then they should only listen to the next lesson when they have reviewed their notes and understood the lesson.

I encourage the brothers to revise with their brothers and likewise for the sisters. It is extremely beneficial to revise matters and to compete with one another in these affairs. There is a lot that a student can learn from their peers. As the Scholars would say:

"العلم بين الطلبة"

"Knowledge is amongst the students"

Sometimes a student can explain a matter better than the teacher and this may aid ones understanding. Therefore, one should try their best to look for brothers in their locality or online to revise with.

Six: Reading

In the AMAU programme, myself and Shaykh Muhammad Tim will suggest a reading guide for the students. This is for the student to read in their spare time. These are important books to read and when reading one has to perform these three affairs to ensure that they understand it:

1. Note the benefits inside the first page of the book
2. Re-write the content page
3. Summarise the book

This demonstrates that the student has understood the book and is therefore able to remove any repetitions of the Shaykh. Furthermore, it allows the student to review the book easily when it comes to researching different matters as they can refer to their content page. These are factors which distinguish between a normal and elite student of knowledge.

Seven: Returning Subsidiary Matters to their Foundation

The student of knowledge should put importance on returning matters to their origin. For example, the Scholars have disputes in subsidiary matters and it is upon the student to find out the source of differing. What principles do these Scholars agree upon and where are they differing?

For example, Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

﴿وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا﴾

“If you anticipate a split between them, appoint a mediator from his family and another from hers. If they desire reconciliation, Allah will restore harmony between them. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”²

If there is a dispute between a husband and wife then Allāh states that a representative should be chosen from both sides. They will then discuss the matter. Regarding this, the Scholars have disputed whether it is obligatory or optional to follow the ruling the two representatives agree upon.

In this scenario, the student of knowledge needs to return the matter to its original root of the difference. In this case, the root of the difference stems from whether the two representatives are mere representatives or are considered judges. The Scholars who see them as judges will say it is obligatory to be followed and those who see them as representatives will stay that it is optional to follow them. This is the root of the difference. When a student of knowledge is able to bring a matter of difference to the root of dispute it will strengthen the student and they will rarely contradict themselves in issues.

² al-Jumu’ah: 35

Eight: Strange Opinions

The student of knowledge should stay away from strange and odd views from strange people. It is a must for a student to tread upon the way of the Scholars and the people of knowledge. Opposing the verdicts of the Scholars in one's era is an evil matter.

Nine: Excessive Reading Whilst Neglecting Classes and Mutūn

A student of knowledge should refrain from going overboard in their reading and research when they are not focussing on their classes and key Mutūn. For example, for a student to read Majmū al-Fatāwā whilst they have not taken the key texts that are being studied in the classes. This is not the correct methodology.

It is upon the student of knowledge to gain a deep understanding of each science via the Mutūn which have been specifically chosen and once the teachers are happy then we will advise the students to read books accordingly.

Ten: Muhaqiqān

These are the elite scholars who analyse all the different views in issues and came to a final conclusion. These books will save the student a lot of time and will increase them in knowledge. We have selected books from each science from authors that are considered from the Muhaqiqūn.

From these books are: the six books of Hadīth, Musnad Ahmad, Muwatta Malik, the books of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Hajar and the A'immah al-Da'wah al-Najdiyyah and many others.

Eleven: Contemporary Verdicts

The student of knowledge should listen to the verdicts of Scholars from the contemporary era e.g. Shaykh Ibn Bāz, Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn and Shaykh al-Albānī. This allows the student of knowledge to understand how the Scholars apply theories to practical matters.

One can listen to these verdicts when driving and their audio recordings are available. For example, Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s Liqā’ bāb al-Maftūha and Nūr ‘ala al-Darb. Shaykh al-Albānī’s Silsilah al-Hudā wal-Nūr.

Twelve: Workshops on Benefitting from Books

We will teach some workshops regarding how to read and benefit from books. A student of knowledge needs to know these matters to truly benefit from the books that they are reading. These will include questions to the following common questions:

- What to read?
- What to start with?
- How to choose the best publication?
- How to attain knowledge from a book?
- What is the author’s methodology?
- What order to study an author’s books in?

These are some of the questions that we will answer in these workshops.

Thirteen: Curriculum

The curriculum and methodology chosen is not a revelation from Allāh, however, it is what has been chosen and we are happy with it. A student may see another programme and jump between various programmes. This wastes the time of a student and they spend many years seeking knowledge with little benefit. A student should follow the curriculum which has been set for them and not worry about anything else. This way they will benefit.

Ibn al-Qayyim (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

"والعلم ست مراتب: أولها: حسن السؤال، الثانية: حسن الإنصات والإستماع، الثالثة: حسن الفهم، الرابعة: الحفظ، الخامسة: التعليم، السادسة: وهي ثمرته وهي العمل به، ومراعاة حدوده."

“There are six stages to knowledge: firstly: asking questions in a good manner, secondly: remaining quiet and listening attentively, thirdly: understanding well, fourthly: memorising, fifthly: teaching, sixthly: and it is its fruit: acting upon the knowledge and keeping to its limits.”³

³ Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa’ādah by Ibn al-Qayyim

Fourteen: Procrastination

Beware of procrastination and using tomorrow as an excuse. One is not guaranteed tomorrow. Thus, the Scholars from the Salaf would say:

"التَّسْوِيفُ جُنْدٌ مِنْ جُنُودِ إِبْلِيسَ"

"Procrastination is an army from the armies of Iblīs"

Ibn al-Qayyim (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

"إِنِ الْمَنَى رَأْسُ أَمْوَالِ الْمَفَالِيسِ"

"Wishful-thinking is the capital wealth of the bankrupt"⁴

That is how the bankrupt live. Everything for them is left until tomorrow and they are sitting today doing nothing.

A student of knowledge should not procrastinate. If something needs to be done today then get it over and done with. This is very important because tomorrow might come and one is no longer alive.

The poet said:

"ولا ترج فعل الخير يوماً إلى غد *** لعل غداً يأتي وأنت فقيد"

"Do not delay a good action until tomorrow *** perhaps tomorrow will come but you are missing"

Abī Ishāq (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

"قِيلَ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ عَبْدِ الْقَيْسِ: أَوْصِ، قَالَ: «أَحْذَرُوا سَوْفَ»"

"A man from 'Abd al-Qays was asked: Advise me, and he said: Beware of I will"⁵

Hasan al-Basrī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) would say:

"ابْنَ آدَمَ إِيَّاكَ وَالتَّسْوِيفَ فَإِنَّكَ بِيَوْمِكَ وَلَسْتَ بَعْدِي، فَإِنْ يَكُ غَدًا لَكَ فَكَسِرْ فِي غَدٍ كَمَا كَسَبْتَ فِي الْيَوْمِ، وَإِنْ لَا يَكُنْ لَكَ غَدٌ لَمْ تَنْدَمْ عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتَ فِي الْيَوْمِ»"

"Son of Ādam beware of procrastination. For you are in today and not tomorrow. If tomorrow comes to you then work tomorrow as you worked today. However, if tomorrow does not come, then you will not regret what you left off today"⁶

Yūsuf Ibn Asbāt (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

"كُتِبَ إِلَيَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ سَمُرَةَ السَّائِحِ، بِهَذِهِ الرِّسَالَةِ: أَيُّ أَخِي، إِيَّاكَ وَتَأْمِيرِ التَّسْوِيفِ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ"

"Muhammad Ibn Samurah al-Sāih wrote to me with this letter: O' my brother, beware of procrastination overcoming your soul"⁷

⁴ Madārij al-Sālikīn 2/92

⁵ Qasr al-Amal by Ibn Abī Dunyā p.140

⁶ Qasr al-Amal by Ibn Abī Dunyā p.144

⁷ Iqtidā al 'Ilm al-'Aml p.114

Procrastination stems from not giving importance to one's time.

Let us provide some examples of how the Salaf were when it came to guarding their time.

The leader Yahya Ibn Hubayrah said:

"والوقتُ أنفُسُ ما عُنيتَ بحفظه *** وأراه أسهلَ ما عليكِ يضيعُ"

"Time is the most worthy to be protected *** but I see it as that which is easiest for you to lose"

al-Sam'ānī mentions in his book 'Adab al-Imlā', that the Scholars did not waste time. When they would give their lesson, as there were no microphones, the students would repeat what the teacher mentioned so that the people further back could hear. In these periods, the teacher would make adhkār. They would benefit from every second and take this extremely seriously.

Some would say regarding 'Abdillāh Ibn Ahmad (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

"والله ما رأيته إلا مبتسماً أو قارئاً أو مطالعاً"

"By Allāh, we never saw him except smiling, reading or researching"

It was said about al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ):

"ما رأيت الخطيب إلا وفي يده كتاب يطالعه"

"I never saw al-Khatīb except in his hand was a book he was reading"

The poet said:

"تمر بنا الأيام تترى وإنما *** نساق إلى الآجال والعين تنظر"

"فلا عائد ذاك الشباب الذي مضى *** ولا زائل هذا المشيب المكدر"

"See the days are passing us by, and only *** are we heading to our finality whilst the eyes are looking

For there is no returning of this youth that has passed *** and these grey hairs are not temporal"

Hasan al-Basrī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

"ابن آدم إنما أنت أيامٌ وكلَّما ذهبَ يومٌ ذهبَ بعضُك"

"son of Ādam, you are nothing except days, if your day goes so does part of you"

He also said:

"ما من يوم ينشق فجره إلا وينادي: يا ابن آدم أنا خلق جديد وعلى عملك شهيد، فتزود مني فإني إذا مضيت لا أعود إلى يوم القيامة"

"There is not a day from the onset of Fajr except it is said: O' son of Ādam, I am a new creation and a witness over your action, so benefit from me, for when I go; I will not return until the Day of Judgement"

al-Khalīl Ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī – the teacher of Sibawayh said:

"الناس على ثلاثة أوقات: وقت مضى عنك فلن يعود. ووقت أنت فيه، فانظر كيف يخرج عنك ووقت أنت منتظره وقد لا تبلغ إليه"

"The people have three times: a time which has passed and will not return. A time that you are in; therefore look at how it passes from you. A time you are waiting for and you may not reach it."

Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Bāqī (رحمه الله) said:

"وَمَا أَعْلَمُ أَيَّ ضَيَّعْتُ سَاعَةً مِنْ عُمْرِي فِي لَهْوٍ أَوْ لَعِبٍ"

"and I do not know anytime that I wasted time of my life-span in vain speech and playing"

al-Dhahabī (رحمه الله) mentioned in the biography of 'Abd al-Wahhāb Ibn al-Wahhāb Ibn al-Amīn:

"أن أوقاته كانت محفوظة ، فلا تمضي له ساعة إلا في قراءة أو ذكر أو تهجد أو تسميع"

"His time was guarded; so that an hour would not pass except that he was engaged in reading, dhikr, Tahajjud or listening"

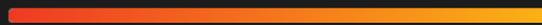
This is how the Salaf were.

Editor's Note

These notes have been compiled by a student and have not been comprehensively reviewed by the teacher.



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