

The Importance of Religious Knowledge - Part 1

September 5, 2021

When Allaah (Ta'ala) intends or wills good for a person, He (Ta'ala) makes him understand the religion. One of the features of the Islamic character is religious knowledge. Allaah (Ta'ala) has honored this nation with religious knowledge through which we have achieved status and have value with Allaah (Ta'ala). Ignorance is a matter that takes one to the lowest of depths (أسفل السافلين) in ranks with Allaah (Ta'ala).

In our present times, there is a rarity of scholars, and a lack of students of knowledge. There is a dire need in the Ummah for learned people. It is very important to study the reasons and causes that make people turn away from religious knowledge and find a means to encourage people to seek this knowledge.

We are living a lazy way of life, especially when it comes to seeking knowledge. We have treasures in our hands, which no one knows about except Allaah (Ta'ala). We are heedless regarding the Qur'an and what it consists of, and we don't know the meanings of its Ayaat, and what Allaah (Ta'ala) wants from us. We are heedless regarding many of the Ahadeeth of the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). We hear them in Arabic and don't understand the meaning of the words.

We are facing many Fiqh issues in our daily lives and we don't know the solution for them. This is all due to ignorance in our religion. We don't have enough religious knowledge. People have turned away from religious knowledge and are focusing on worldly knowledge.

Many people are tempted and tried by the western civilization. This worldly knowledge brings them money, so it's easy to earn money needed to purchase possessions in the Dunya, while religious knowledge will not earn much money.

أَخْبَرَنَا أَنَسٌ، قَالَ لَأُحَدِّثَنَّكُمْ حَدِيثًا لَا يُحَدِّثُكُمْوَهُ أَحَدٌ بَعْدِي، سَمِعْتُهُ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ . وَإِنَّمَا قَالَ مِنْ أَشْرَاطِ السَّاعَةِ . أَنَّ يُرْفَعَ الْعِلْمُ وَيَظْهَرَ الْجَهْلُ، وَيُشْرَبَ الْخَمْرُ، وَيَظْهَرَ الرِّئَاءُ، وَيَقِلَّ الرَّجَالُ، وَيَكْثُرَ النِّسَاءُ، حَتَّى يَكُونَ لِلْحَمْسِينَ امْرَأَةً الْقَيِّمُ الْوَاحِدُ "

Anas (Radiya-Allaahu 'anhu) narrated:

I will narrate to you, a narration which nobody will narrate to you after me. I heard that from the Prophet. I heard the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) saying: "The Hour will not be established" or said: "From among the portents of the Hour is that the religious knowledge will be taken away (by the death of religious scholars), and general ignorance (of religion) will appear; and the drinking of alcoholic drinks will be common, and (open) illegal sexual intercourse will prevail. Men will decrease in number while women will increase so much, that for every fifty women there will only be one man to look after them." [Al-Bukhaari no. 6808]

Some Means of Encouragement for Seeking Religious Knowledge

1. Emphasizing the virtue of knowledge and the status of the scholars and their nobility

To emphasize the virtue of knowledge we should know:

- a. The virtue of religious knowledge and the honor of the scholars in Islam.
- b. The reward that Allaah (Ta'ala) has prepared for the seeker of knowledge.
- c. The needs of the people to knowledgeable people, and the need of Da'wah (calling others to Allaah).

With regards the Scholars, Allaah made them from among those in authority whose obedience is obligatory

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ سَفَايَا تَنْذَرَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ؕ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

“O believers! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allaah and His Messenger if you believe in Allaah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution.” [Surat An- Nisaa’ (4:59)]

Many interpreters [like Ibn ‘Abbaas, Jaabir (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhum)], etc. said that the people in authority mentioned here are the scholars, the jurists, and the learned people. This is in addition to the rulers who are commanding people to the obedience of Allaah (Ta’ala) and referring us to the scholars. Allaah (Ta’ala) commanded us to obey these people in this Ayah. We should reference the people of knowledge, even rulers.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ ۖ فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“We did not send (messengers) before you [O Prophet (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)] except mere men inspired by Us. If you (polytheists) do not know (this already), then ask those who have knowledge (of the Scriptures).”
[Surat Al-‘Anbiyaa’ (21:7)]

Ahlul Dhikr (people of remembrance) could be the people of the Scriptures (who have knowledge of the Torah and the Gospel), or it could be Ahlul Ilm (people of knowledge). We should refer to them, especially in times of calamity or when we are afflicted by anything.

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“And when they hear news of security or fear, they publicize it. Had they referred it to the Messenger or those having authority, it would come to those with sound judgment among them to validate it. Had it not been for Allaah’s grace and mercy, you would have followed Satan—except for a few.”
[Surat An-Nisaa’ (4:83)]

It means that when information came to them, they spread it around. But had they referred it back to the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) or those in authority among them (Ahlul Ilm), then they could have drawn the correct conclusions from it because they

would have known about it. Therefore, Allaah (Ta'ala) is commanding us to refer to the Ahlul Ilm when we are faced with any calamity. He (Ta'ala) also mentioned that the ones who truly fear Him are the scholars.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

And of people, living beings and cattle are of various colors as well. **Of all of Allaah's servants, only the knowledgeable (of His might) are (truly) in awe of Him.** Allaah is indeed Almighty, All-Forgiving. [Surat Fatir (35:28)]

أَمْ مَنْ هُوَ قَنِيئٌ ءِأَنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

(Are they better) or those who worship (their Lord) devoutly in the hours of the night, prostrating and standing, fearing the Hereafter, and hoping for the mercy of their Lord? Say, [O Prophet (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)]: **"Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"** None will be mindful (of this) except people of reason. [Surat-Az Zumar (39:9)]

The people should understand the status of the scholars with Allaah (Ta'ala). Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) mentioned in a Hadeeth, the virtue of the 'Aalim (teacher) over the worshipper. He said: "The superiority of one who has knowledge over one who merely worships is like the superiority of the moon over every other heavenly body." [Sunan Abi Dawoud no. 3641]

عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ الْبَاهِلِيِّ، قَالَ ذُكِرَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَجُلَانِ أَحَدُهُمَا عَابِدٌ وَالْآخَرُ عَالِمٌ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَضْلُ الْعَالِمِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِي عَلَى أَدْنَاكُمْ " . ثُمَّ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ وَأَهْلَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَتَّى النَّمْلَةَ فِي جُحْرِهَا وَحَتَّى الْحُوتَ لَيُصَلُّونَ عَلَى مُعَلِّمِ النَّاسِ الْخَيْرِ "

Abu Umamah Al-Bahili (Radia-Allaahu 'anhu) narrated:

"Two men were mentioned before the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). One of them, a worshiper and the other a scholar. So, the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: 'The superiority of the scholar over the worshiper is like my superiority over the least of you.' Then the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: 'Indeed Allaah, His Angels, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earths - even the ant in his hole, even the fish - say Salaat upon the one who teaches the people to do good.'" [Jamie' At-Tirmidhi no. 2685]

Abu Muslim Al-Khawlani (Rahimahullaah) used to say: "The scholars are like the stars in the sky, if they appear to the people, the people are guided thereby with them. And if they disappear, then the people are confused."

قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي سَالِمُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا عَلَى اثْنَتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ هَذَا الْكِتَابَ فَقَامَ بِهِ آتَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَآتَاءَ النَّهَارِ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَتَصَدَّقَ بِهِ آتَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَآتَاءَ النَّهَارِ " .

Salim, son of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar (Radia-Allaahu 'anhuma) is reported to have said on the authority of his father, that the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) observed:

“Envy is not justified except in case of two persons only: one who, having been given (knowledge of) the Qur'an by Allaah, recites it during the night and during the day (and acts upon it), and the person who, having been given wealth by Allaah, gives it in charity during the night and the day.” [Saheeh Muslim no. 815]

...فَقَالَ " عَلَى رِسْلِكَ حَتَّى تَنْزِلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ، ثُمَّ ادْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ، وَأَخْبِرْهُمْ بِمَا يَجِبُ عَلَيْهِمْ، فَوَاللَّهِ لَأَنْ يُهْدَى بِكَ رَجُلٌ وَاحِدٌ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ " .

The Prophet (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: "Be patient till you face them and invite them to Islam and inform them of what Allaah has enjoined upon them. By Allaah! If a single person embraces Islam at your hands (i.e., through you), that will be better for you than the red camels." [Saheeh Al-Bukhaari no. 2942]

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلَالَةٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آثَامِهِمْ شَيْئًا " .

Abu Hurairah (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhu) reported Allaah's Messenger (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) as saying:

He who called (people) to righteousness, there will be reward (assured) for him like the rewards of those who adhered to it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who called (people) to error, he will have to carry (the burden) of its sin, like those who committed it, without their sins being diminished in any respect. [Saheeh Muslim no. 2674]

These all encourage us to seek knowledge and teach people.

عَنْ جَابِرٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " يُبْعَثُ كُلُّ عَبْدٍ عَلَى مَا مَاتَ عَلَيْهِ " .

I heard Allaah's Messenger (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) as saying: “Every servant will be raised (in the same very state) in which he dies.” [Saheeh Muslim no. 2878]

On the Day of Judgment, the seeker of knowledge, the teacher, will have a high status with Allaah (Ta’ala).

Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said that Allaah (Ta’ala) will continue planting plants in this religion, such that He will use them in His obedience until the Day of Judgment.” [Al-Silsilah As-Saheehah no. 2442 and authenticated by Al-Albaani. It is also mentioned in the book “Al-Faqeeh wal Mufaqiqh” by Al-Baghdadi]

Ibn Al-Qayyim (Rahimahullaah) commented on this Hadeeth in his book ‘Miftah Darus-Sa’adah’. He said about these plants and the knowledgeable people who are planting in Allaah’s (Ta’ala) land: “Whatever good they are teaching to the people is like a plant planted in the land of Allaah (Ta’ala). If there were no knowledgeable people teaching, it means the land would turn into a barren desert, in which there is no good, i.e., no knowledge or religion.”

In the book ‘Al-Faqeeh wal Mufaqiqh’ by Al-Baghdadi and in ‘Akhlaaq Al-Ulamaa’ by Al-Ajurri (Rahimahullaah), one of the Salaf (predecessors) said: “Seek knowledge because acquiring it is a good deed, studying it is a glorification, searching for it is a Jihaad, teaching it to those who don’t know is a Sadaqah, and giving it to your family is an act of nearness. It is a minaret for the people of Jannah, a joy for a person in his loneliness, his companion when he is travelling,

his guide in the darkness, and a sword against his enemy. By it (knowledge), Allaah (Ta'ala) elevates people and makes them leaders in the good; they will be leaders of guidance to the people who will be taken as examples. The angels will lower their wings for them, every wet and dry thing in the heavens and earth are asking forgiveness for them, even the whales in the sea, the animals, the sand, the stars in the sky, etc. Knowledge is the life of the hearts, a light for the eyes from the darkness. By knowledge, Allaah (Ta'ala) is obeyed, by knowledge, Allaah (Ta'ala) is worshipped and praised, by knowledge, Allaah (Ta'ala) is singled out in worship. Moreover, by knowledge, people will join relations with their kith and kin, they will know the Halal and the Haram. They are the happiest people, to whom Allaah (Ta'ala) has inspired and given knowledge. And the wicked people are those who are deprived of it. There is no good in any act of worship without having knowledge about it, and there is no good in any recitation without Tadabbur."

What is meant by this knowledge and every Ayah and Hadeeth concerning the virtue of knowledge refers to the religious knowledge, by which Allaah revives the dead hearts. Every Ayah concerning the knowledge we have mentioned is about religious knowledge, not worldly knowledge. Worldly knowledge is less in degree than religious knowledge.

Islam **does** call us to learn all kinds of beneficial knowledge (i.e., medical, mathematical, scientific, etc.), and it is not Haraam (forbidden) to do so, but religious knowledge is far superior in the sight of Allaah (Ta'ala).

2. Knowing the virtue and reward of the seeker of knowledge

Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allaah (Ta'ala) will make the path to Paradise easy for him." [Al-Bukhaari – Kitab Al Ilm – Hadeeth no. 10]

Shaikh As-Sa'dee (Rahimahullaah) said in an explanation of this Hadeeth: "Every sensible or insensible way that you take on, attempting to acquire knowledge and the path that leads to knowledge, any path, Allaah (Ta'ala) will make the path to Paradise easy for you; such as asking a question via the media, listening to a recording lecture, reading a book, thinking about a religious issue, studying with students of knowledge, searching in the books, any path, Allaah (Ta'ala) will make the path to Paradise easy for you."

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ حُبَيْشٍ، قَالَ أَتَيْتُ صَفْوَانَ بْنَ عَسَّالٍ الْمُرَادِيَّ فَقَالَ مَا جَاءَ بِكَ قُلْتُ أُنَيْطُ الْعِلْمَ . قَالَ فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " مَا مِنْ خَارِجٍ خَرَجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا وَضَعَتْ لَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أجنحتها رِضًا بِمَا يَصْنَعُ " .

It was narrated that Zirr ibn Hubaish said that he went to Safwan ibn 'Assal Al-Muradi and he said: "What brought you here?" I said: "I am seeking knowledge." He said: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) say: 'There is no one who goes out of his house in order to seek knowledge, but the angels lower their wings in approval of his action.'" [Sunan Ibn Maajah no. 226 and graded Saheeh by Al-Albaani]

Lowering their wings has three meanings as stated by Al-Khattabi (Rahimahullaah):

- a- Extending and spreading their wings
- b- Showing humbleness for the students of knowledge

- c- Descending and attending the study circles and assemblies of the Ulamaa' and leaving flying. [Ma'alim As-Sunan]

3. Knowing the verdict of seeking knowledge

Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) made seeking knowledge an obligation upon every Muslim.

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ . صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ . " ظَلَبَ الْعِلْمُ فَرِيضَةً عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ وَوَاضِعُ الْعِلْمِ عِنْدَ غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ كَمُقَلَّدِ الْحَتَّازِيزِ الْجَوْهَرَ وَاللُّؤْلُؤَ وَالذَّهَبَ " .

Anas ibn Maalik (Radia-Allaahu 'anhu) narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swine."

[Sunan Ibn Maajah no. 224 and graded Saheeh by Al-Albaani]

There are kinds of knowledge that are Fard Ayn (obligatory) upon every individual. No one is exempt from learning Tawheed, knowing Allaah's (Ta'ala) Names and Attributes, believing in the Prophets, Books, the Day of Judgment, etc. One should be putting effort into learning these obligatory pillars of Iman and Islam because we are going to be questioned about it on the Day of Judgment.

There are other branches of religious knowledge that are Fard Kifayah, i.e., they are a collective duty. If some people have discharged the obligation, then the rest of the community are exempt from doing it, such as knowledge about inheritance.

4. Knowing the status and virtue of the one who acts in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah and teaches it to the people

عَنْ غَامِرِ بْنِ وَاثِلَةَ، أَنَّ نَافِعَ بْنَ عَبْدِ الْحَارِثِ، لَقِيَ عُمَرَ بَعْضَانَ وَكَانَ عُمَرُ يَسْتَعْمِلُهُ عَلَى مَكَّةَ فَقَالَ مَنْ اسْتَعْمَلْتَ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْوَادِي فَقَالَ ابْنُ أَبِي بَرْزَى . قَالَ وَمَنْ ابْنُ أَبِي بَرْزَى قَالَ مَوْلَى مِنْ مَوَالِينَا . قَالَ فَاسْتَحْلَفْتِ عَلَيْهِمْ مَوْلَى قَالَ إِنَّهُ قَارِئٌ لِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَإِنَّهُ عَالِمٌ بِالْفَرَائِضِ . قَالَ عُمَرُ أَمَا إِنَّ نَبِيِّكُمْ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ قَالَ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْفَعُ بِهَذَا الْكِتَابِ أَقْوَامًا وَيَضَعُ بِهِ آخَرِينَ " .

'Amir ibn Wathila reported that Nafi' ibn 'Abd al-Haarith met 'Umar (Radia-Allaahu 'anhu) at 'Usfaan, and 'Umar had employed him as collector in Makkah. He (Hadrat 'Umar) said to him (Nafi'):

Who have you appointed as collector over the people of the valley? He said: Ibn Abza. He said: Who is Ibn Abza? He said: He is one of our freed slaves. He (Hadrat 'Umar) said: So you have appointed a freed slave over them. He said: He is well versed In the Book of Allaah, the Exalted and Great, and he is well versed In the commandments and injunctions (of the Shari'ah). 'Umar (Radia-Allaahu 'anhu) said: So the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: By this Book, Allaah would exalt some peoples and degrade others. [Saheeh Muslim no. 817]

This Hadeeth really shows how Allaah (Ta'ala) elevates the students of knowledge and the learned people, no matter who they are. You might come across some names when studying the Tafseer, for example:

- Abu Al-Aaliya: he was the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbaas (Radia-Allaahu 'anhuma). He accompanied Ibn 'Abbaas and learned from him. After that he became a scholar, and the people were seeking him and his knowledge.
- 'Ataa ibn Abi Rabaa': he was a slave to a woman of the people of Makkah. All the people of Makkah were referring to him regarding Fatwa. He was the Mufti of Makkah, the sacred city. Even the Khalifah, Sulaiman ibn 'Abdul Malik, came with his sons to ask 'Ataa about something.
- Al A'amash: he used to say, if it hadn't been for Allaah (Ta'ala) teaching us the Qur'an, I would be a man who is carrying the tray on my head and selling fish in the market.
- Mujahid: he was a freed slave of Ibn 'Abbaas (Radia-Allaahu 'anhuma). He also became one of the scholars and interpreters of the Qur'an.

If you contemplate and reflect on the state of many scholars, you will find among them, the blind (Ibn Baaz), the paralyzed, etc., but people were coming to them from every place, every mountain, to ask them about the religion. Religious knowledge has a power greater than the power of kings and rulers.

5. Knowing the dire need for scholars

We need knowledgeable people above all because of the statement of the Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), that near to the Day of Judgment there will appear misguided leaders who will misguide the people. We need knowledgeable people to teach the people what is Halal and Haram, not ignorant people taking the position of knowledge and giving wrong Fatwas to the people, making the lawful unlawful and the unlawful lawful.

6. Muslim countries/ areas are unable to find scholars to ask about Islam and are living in darkness.

The smart ones among the Muslims should feel the dire need of the Ummah for scholars. We have enough doctors, engineers, technicians, etc., and there is no harm in studying that. But we need more scholars.

The nation needs those who will judge between them in their disputes; those who will give them the correct Fatwas and repel the doubts which are raised from time to time by the enemies of Islam; those who will refute the doubts created by the Christians and Jews.

Hasan Al-Basri said: "Had it not been for the scholars, the people would become like animals." [Sayd Al-Khatir by Ibn Al-Jawzi, pg. 193]

Ignorance will prevail by the death of the scholars, as the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) mentioned in a Hadeeth. As the scholars die, their knowledge will be erased.

7. Knowing that religious knowledge is more virtuous than any act of voluntary worship

Al-Haakim reported in a Saheeh Hadeeth, that Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: “The religious knowledge is more beloved to me than the voluntary acts of worship.”

Hasan Al-Basri said: “This means that learning one chapter in Islamic knowledge and teaching it to the Muslims is more beloved to him (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) than having the whole Dunya and what it comprises, and giving it away is a charity in the Cause of Allaah (Ta’ala).” [Al-Faqeeh wal Mufaqqih]

In the introduction in his book “Al-Majmou’”, Imam An-Nawawi (Rahimahullaah) said: “The scholars of the Salaf used to say that being occupied with knowledge is better than being occupied with voluntary prayers, fasts, Tasbeeh, etc. because those will benefit the person himself, but knowledge will benefit the person himself and the Muslims. Therefore, it is more virtuous and beloved to Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam).”

By religious knowledge, many acts of worship will be corrected, but if the person is worshipping without knowledge, it is an affliction. He will not be able to worship Allaah (Ta’ala) as He (Ta’ala) should be worshipped, i.e., with knowledge.

8. Comparison between worldly issues with religious knowledge

Abu Hurairah (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhu) said that the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: “This world is cursed, and what is in it is also cursed, except the remembrance of Allaah (Ta’ala) and what pleases Allaah (Ta’ala) or what is conducive to it, or an Aalim (has knowledge) or Mutaalim (acquires knowledge).” [Ibn Maajah no. 4112 and Al-Albaani graded it Hasan in Saheeh At-Targheeb]

When you compare religious knowledge with worldly things you see how knowledge is the inheritance of the Prophets, while the wealth is the inheritance of the kings and rich people. The knowledge guards its owner, while the wealth needs a guard to guard it.

9. Knowing that religious knowledge protects a person from trials

Every time a calamity befalls the Muslims, only the knowledgeable will stay firm and keep the people firm. Every time a calamity strikes the people, they run to the scholars, to the learned people; asking them what to do, say, how to behave, etc.

10. Adhere to the study circles

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ سَوَاءً نَعُدَّ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا سَوَاءً نَطِيعُ مَنْ أَعْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرْطًا

And patiently stick with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure. Do not let your eyes look beyond them, desiring the luxuries of this worldly life. And do not obey those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follow (only) their desires and whose state is (total) loss. [Surat Al-Kahf (18:28)]

This is how we should be, i.e., accompanying the students of knowledge, not those who are heedless and distract us from the right path. This is important advice even for the knowledgeable people; that they should choose their companions and not accompany the people of the Dunya, who do not give much heed to the knowledge.

11. Studying the biographies of the previous scholars.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), Ibn ‘Abbaas (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhuma) was keen on asking the Companions about the Ahadeeth and sayings of the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam). Whenever he learned that there was a man who knew about a Hadeeth of the Messenger (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), he would go to him. If he found that man sleeping, he would sit at the door and he would wait for him until he woke up, to the extent that he would be covered by the sand of the desert because of the wind. And when the companion went out to meet Ibn ‘Abbaas, he said: “Oh cousin of the Messenger (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), why did you come, you should have sent someone for me, and I would have come to you.” Ibn ‘Abbaas (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhuma) said: “No, I am the one who should come to you to ask you about the Hadeeth.” [Reported by Al-Haakim and graded Saheeh]

It was mentioned about Al-Bukhaari that food was put in front of him to eat, but he would be so occupied with seeking knowledge, that the food would be taken away and he still hadn't touched it. They would serve him another meal, and again they took it back without him touching it.

Yusuf Al-Maghami said that one time he knocked on the door of ‘Abdul Maalik ibn Habib in the very early morning, seeking knowledge from him. He said: “When I entered, I saw him sitting in his Majlis reading many books. He was looking in these books with a candle in his hand.”

The Salaf used to say: “The heaviest hours of the day upon me are the hours of eating.”

‘Abdullaah ibn Jaabir (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhu) travelled for a month to obtain a single Hadeeth (reported by Imam Ahmad). He bought a camel and put his saddle on it. Then he travelled on it for a month until he came to Ash-Sham, where ‘Abdullaah ibn Unais was. ‘Abdullaah ibn Jaabir told the doorkeeper: “Tell ‘Abdullaah ibn Unais that Jaabir is at the door.” So he asked: “Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullaah?” He said: “Yes.” ‘Abdullaah ibn Unais came out still putting his garment on and they embraced. Jaabir said: “I heard a Hadeeth narrated by you, that you heard from the Prophet (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) about reciprocal punishment, and I was afraid you or I would die before I could hear it.” ‘Abdullaah ibn Unais said: “I heard the Messenger (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) say: ‘Allaah (Ta’ala) will gather his servants on the Day of Judgment naked, uncircumcised, having nothing with them.’” [Hadeeth Hasan]

12. Knowing the reward of the knowledge after death

It is mentioned in the Hadeeth that knowledge brings great reward after the death of a person. The one who points the way to something good is like the one who does it. When the knowledgeable person dies, his reward with Allaah (Ta’ala) does not cease. Rather it continues to increase so long as people benefit from his knowledge.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " إِذَا مَاتَ الْإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ
أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ " .

Abu Hurairah (Radia-Allaahu ‘anhu) reported that Allaah's Messenger (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: When a man dies, his acts come to an end, except three: recurring charity (Sadaqah Jariyah), or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son who prays for him (the deceased). [Saheeh Muslim no. 1631]

The person who is spreading knowledge among the people will have the reward like that of those who are following him. Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: “Whoever calls people to guidance will have the reward of those who follow him without it detracting from their reward in the slightest. Similarly, whoever calls the people to misguidance will have the burden of the sin like those who follow him, without detracting from their burden in the slightest.”

Source:

Summarized and paraphrased from the “Importance of Shar’i (religious) Knowledge” by Shaikh Al-Munajjid