

For The Seekers Of Knowledge

For The Seekers Of Knowledge: A Treatise On Seeking Knowledge



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This text examines the meaning of true knowledge and provides important advice to the seekers of knowledge to help them on their journey.

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A Treatise On Seeking Knowledge

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وصل الله على محمد و آله الطاهرين

Seeking knowledge is a distinctly human act, intertwined with the very nature of the human being who is curious and cannot help but think. We seek answers to the questions that are important to us and inherently recognise the value of knowledge. Knowledge helps us solve our doubts and problems. It is natural to seek knowledge from those who know and to respect the possessors and teachers of knowledge. But our material existence means that sometimes we prioritize certain types of knowledge and ignore others. Whereas perhaps the knowledge that is ignored is of more benefit than the knowledge we actively seek.

Such is the state of religious knowledge, which may not yield an immediate material profit, but benefits the soul and personality of its seeker in this world, and manifests as bliss in the next. At the same time, Islam is a religion of knowledge which pulled a civilisation out of its Age of Ignorance and continues to enrich the lives of those who benefit from it.

To seek religious knowledge is to be thankful for the potential we are endowed with as beings that can know the metaphysical. There is no bounty bestowed upon humans that is better than knowledge because of its impact on our spiritual development. With its pursuit comes spiritual attainment and intellection. These traits are what are ultimately important as the human condition is essentially meaningless, at loss and in poverty without God. It is through knowledge that this state is resolved and the human has honour in the eyes of God, even in their state of essential poverty.

In a narration in al-Kāfī it is reported that Imām Alī (as) was heard saying:

“O people! Know that the perfection of religion is seeking knowledge and acting by it. Surely seeking knowledge is more pertinent to you than seeking wealth. Wealth is apportioned and ensured to you. A just allocator divided it amongst you, has ensured it and will be faithful to that apportionment. [Whereas] knowledge is treasured with its people and you have been ordered to seek it from its people, so seek it.”^{[1](#)}

Imām Alī (as) is also reported to have said:

“O Kumayl! Knowledge is better than money. Knowledge protects you whereas you protect wealth. Knowledge judges whereas money is judged upon. Money decreases with spending, whereas knowledge purifies upon spending. O Kumayl! The storers of money are dead while they are alive, and the knowledgeable eternally remain.”^{[2](#)}

Wealth may be hard to come by, but it is apportioned. But what about knowledge, which has not been apportioned and is up for grabs? There is a clear need to strive in order to attain it, and without understanding what knowledge needs to be attained and what the pitfalls of the journey of knowledge are, attaining it is even harder. Not all who set out to attain knowledge achieve their goal and while many may have memorised information, knowledge deeply affects the personality of a person until they can be considered a person of knowledge; one of the knowledgeable who eternally remain.

In this short treatise the **meaning** of true knowledge will be explained as well as important **advice** for the seekers of knowledge to help them on their journey. Advice taken from what is in the scriptural sources, the books of those who have written about this subject before me and from my own experience as a seeker of true knowledge and wisdom.

It is important to continually remind ourselves of our purpose in seeking knowledge as many other distractions may cause us to forget, or our purpose may elude us while we are not aware. **Intention** is key to the effects of knowledge upon us as seeking knowledge is a type of worship. Just like intention is pivotal to the effect of worship both on the soul and the next life, so too intention plays a similarly critical role in the development which stems from knowledge. If we learn to be better than everyone else, our learning will result in pride, jealousy, argumentation on pointless details, self-admiration and showmanship. If we learn in order to attract wealth, our learning results in cowardice, flattery, disappointment and worldliness. But if our learning is always for closeness to God, understanding and

insight, then it results in spirituality, humbleness and success.

The ego is the seekers greatest enemy. To forget our goals, or to be swept up with other intentions is easy. That is why it is important to **remind** ourselves of why and for who we are seeking knowledge. As you will see, the path of knowledge is rewarding but treacherous, the responsibility of those who gain knowledge is increased and the potential to fall becomes ever greater the higher the seeker rises. Take the advice in this treatise seriously as it is inspired by the scriptural sources which have clarified just what seeking knowledge means, its reward and its pitfalls.

Religious knowledge itself is vast and within its realm there is that which benefits and that which harms. The journey within this vast realm depends on the attitude of its seeker and for this reason I have written this treatise as an admonition foremost to myself, as those who seek knowledge of religion quickly learn that it is a path that they will eternally tread. Becoming a teacher is relational, as there are those who are newer to the path of knowledge. But being a student of the people of remembrance (*ahl al-dhikr*) is an endless ocean. Our role is **not to compete** with others but to contribute and everyone has a contribution they can make. Everyone has their own journeys, talents and demons. Concentrate on yourself and take inspiration from those around you, but do not vie to be better than anyone other than your previous self.

There are two types of knowledge. Knowledge of the **outward** and manifest, and knowledge of the **inward** and hidden. The first type of knowledge is attained through **study**, whereas the second is attained through **self-rectification** and unveiling (*kashf*). Both types of knowledge are intertwined as the outward is the shell of the inward. The outward directs our attention to the inward, and the nuances of the outward are then comprehended through the lens of the inward. When the outward does not result in self-refinement, or when the inward is not within the bounds of the outward, then they are no longer praiseworthy. A person should strive just as hard for each type of knowledge so that their culmination results in something better than each individual branch. When these two types come together as an organic whole, that is *true* knowledge and understanding.

A person who truly knows, acts, and true action comes from knowledge –so one who knows will not be a hypocrite. Hypocrisy stems from ignorance and the lot of too many seekers of knowledge, who become wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. It is the culmination of knowledge as that which deeply affects an individual which enables us to read the references praising knowledge in the scriptural sources.

The Qur^{٩٩}ān distinguishes a believer with knowledge:

يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

“...God will raise in degrees those among you who believe and those who have been given knowledge...” (Qur^{٩٩}ān, 58: 11).

The believer who is given knowledge is given stations beyond the stations of other believers without this

type of knowledge. The difference in station is intellectually evident to us, as shown when the Qur  n poses a rhetorical question:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“...Say, “Are those who know and those who do not know equal?...” (Qurʿān, 39:9).

In some traditions a worshipper is compared with a person of knowledge.

“A knowledgeable person who benefits from his knowledge is better than seventy worshippers.”³

*"The sleep of a knowledgeable person is better than the worship of a worshipper."*⁴

Rather, if a person doesn't seek and attain knowledge of their religion, their position is precarious. Perhaps they will be lucky and follow the truth in the majority of matters, but perhaps they will be swept up in their own baseless opinions or ignorant ideas of others.

وَإِنْ تُطْعَمْ أَكْثَرُ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضْلُوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ

“Wert thou to obey most of those on earth, they would lead thee astray from the way of God; they follow naught but conjecture, and they do but surmise.” (Qurʿān, 6: 116).

If doubts are left unaddressed, they fester and then surface at critical moments. Many people without knowledge will inevitably find themselves in **difficulty**, without the tools they need to find certainty, relying on others to help them as they cannot help themselves. If they fall into the wrong hands, they will follow those people to into a ditch. On the other hand, true knowledge is the fertile ground that fills the heart with the awe of God:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

“...[Yet] only those among His servants who know fear God...” (Qurʿān, 35:28).

Khashya is a type of awe deep within which stems from knowledge that has been completely internalised, not only through book learning, but through development. A seeker of knowledge needs to keep this in mind and let knowledge and the lessons of life affect them. **Embracing sadness** and pain in order to achieve **empathy** and **humility**, while at the same time never losing their **hope in God**. The fruit of true knowledge and wisdom is closeness to the Almighty. Emotional pain has been viewed by some philosophers like a disease that should be avoided at all costs, and while a person should not unnecessarily suffer due to ignorance or attachment to the material, that is different from using the pain

a person feels naturally to make them more human.

Imām ʿAlī (as) is reported to have one day taken the hand of Kumayl b. Ziyād until they reached the desert whereupon he (as) sighed deeply and said to him:

“O Kumayl b. Ziyād! Surely these hearts are containers, so the best of them is the one that has the most capacity. So remember what I say to you: Surely there are three types of people. A divine scholar, a seeker on the path of success and the riffraff, who follow everyone who shouts, bending to every breeze, they are not enlightened by the light of knowledge, and do not take refuge in a firm support — until he said — O! Here is ample knowledge — and indicated to his (as) chest.”⁵

And he (as) is reported to have said:

“Servants of God! Surely of the most beloved servants of God to Him, is a servant who He has helped over himself. So [as a result] he adorned sadness and wrapped himself with fear, until the lamps of guidance illuminated in his heart and he prepared good works for his day that is coming upon him. He brought what was far from him close and made light of difficult matters. He looked and perceived, remembered a lot and drank his fill from pleasant, sweet water whose drinking places were made easy for him; and then took his way again. He took off the clothes of desires and rid himself of concerns except for a single concern which occupies him. So he no longer is described by blindness or of the people of desires. He became of the keys to the doors of guidance and of the locks of the doors of perdition. He perceived his path and journeyed upon it. He knew its lighthouses, stayed away from its traps and held onto the firmest part of the rope. So his certainty is like the light of the sun...he made himself sincere for God so God extracted him, so he is of the treasure troves of His religion and of the pegs of His earth...”⁶

The most knowledgeable from amongst the community of the Prophet (saw) are the **Infallibles** (as) and this is the basis of Shiism. It is a natural principle of deciphering and following the most knowledgeable. The Shīʿa follow the Infallibles (as) as they are the true inheritors of prophetic knowledge and so nobody without such knowledge can reach their station. The seekers of knowledge are orphans in the absence of their spiritual fathers, and so those that **teach** in the absence of the Infallibles (as) based on their teachings are like kind **foster parents**. They will be distinguished on the Day of Judgement as those who took care of the orphans of the Family of the Prophet (saw).⁷ You are training to be a **doctor of the hearts**, curing pain, like water that is pure and purifies as this was the description of the Prophet (saw).⁸ Knowledge is the balm of broken hearts.

Disseminating the teachings of the scriptural sources and empowering seekers with the tools that they need to find their own understanding is like giving continuous charity. Its excellence is self-evident and its honourability is clear. At the same time, there are many who do not value it due to conflating their priorities. In the times we live in, many are absorbed in their lives and in chasing wealth and cannot see the value in finding deep understanding. The seeker needs to be **confident** that the path they have

chosen is special, even in the face of those who don't understand its value.

It is advisable to **surround** yourself with people who do understand the value of what you are doing and appreciate the time and effort that it involves. That results may not manifest for many years as you find yourself, your confidence in what you know and nuanced positions. Seeking knowledge is like swimming in an ocean. It takes time to master the waves and to find your stroke. At the same time, you will not be able to cross the whole ocean and examine all of its wonders. But when you find pearls, know that this was the purpose of learning how to swim. Do not feel jaded by the taunts of those who think that pearls are ordinary stones. The value of knowledge is only truly known by those who possess it as they experience the happiness it results in.

Do not be saddened by those who are satisfied with the **surface of knowledge** and content themselves with the outward alone or the surface of the inward. Both those who learn and disseminate the surface and those who don't know any better and are guided by them. People are not the same and everybody has a role and a place where they choose to drink from. If all people could see the value of knowledge, the Infallibles (as) would not have been disregarded for pretenders or thought to have just been like any other scholar.

Those with insight will find you. Those who appreciate your journey will value you, even if that is in private or many years after you have left this temporal abode, just as you value the scholars of old despite the people of their own times leaving them in destitution and poverty in favour of their village clowns, who sought fame by arguing with others and forming groups.

God witnesses all, so make that the source of your **divine insecurity** as He witnesses what is deep in your own heart and what you do not perceive of yourself. You are not safe from yourself. Be small in front of Him, not in front of the people who don't understand. You are not of the elite. You are a humble servant seeking salvation who does not know their own end. Be the sun that doesn't need to tell anyone it is shining. The effects of your knowledge will be seen in the way you chose to live, your choices and when you speak. Find your light and let those who seek light to bask in its rays. It is not quantity of students; it is the *quality* of the effect you have on them.

Imam al-**ḥadiq** (as) is reported to have said:

“If people knew what was in the virtue of knowing Allah, the Most High, they would not stretch their eyes to what Allah has provided His enemies with of the embellishments and bounties of the life of this world. Their world would be smaller in their eyes than what they trample on with their feet and they would enjoy the knowledge of Allah, the Most High, taking pleasure from it like one who remains in the gardens of paradise with the friends of Allah. The knowledge of Allah is a comfort from every loneliness and a companion in every solitude. A light in every darkness, strength in every weakness, a cure from every illness...”^{[9](#)}

And it is reported from Imam **Al-** that “*Whoever knows themselves knows their Lord.*”^{[10](#)} So what is

more deserving of pursuit and effort than true knowledge? Rather, we should remain thankful for the **opportunity** to study and seek wisdom as it is not afforded to all.

There is no end to divine knowledge and wisdom. Indeed, even the most perfect creation, the true sage and knower, the Kaʿba of the hearts of the knowers, and the true beloved himself was told to seek an increase in knowledge. [11](#)

Pray for success in your quest for knowledge and put your **hope in Allah**. Whenever you feel satisfied, know that it is a veil stemming from your own ignorance. There is a point of satisfaction to book knowledge, when you have mastered the keys of the sciences to the extent that you need to benefit and what is left is detail.

Rather, a seeker shouldn't pursue that which is not going to benefit them but should pursue what they need of each science as it is not possible to retain all of the details. At that point focus on the scriptural sources and seek what is **beyond** your window of wisdom. Take God and the Infallibles (as) as your real teachers and look towards the metaphysical. If you cannot find your way out of it, God will give you a hand though life if you are sincere. Far be it from Him to leave the true seekers destitute in their ignorant delusions.

See your development so that you can learn from your mistakes and **know that the journey of life is your biggest lesson**. Focus on your **humanity**, on writing and on boundless love. It is important to develop emotional and spiritual intelligence as well as attain outward knowledge as they all come together to develop a truly Islamic personality.

Try and learn the science of *adhkār* from those who can show you and do not give up when they are unwilling. The path of wayfaring is dangerous and perhaps you are not prepared yet. Seek the sages that know the paths of the Infallibles (as) well. Make one of your most important prayers in the resting places of the Infallibles (as) that they provide you with one of their friends. In every time there are those who are entrusted with bringing orphans back to the fathers of this community. It is a special kind of success (*tawfīq*) which is in God's Hands, and it needs preparedness as well as other qualities. The casualties have been many and so the holders of this type of knowledge are precautions and have their own methods to check a person's suitability.

If you don't find someone, or if you cannot distinguish a true friend of God from a charlatan, stick to the safe *adhkār* like *salawāt* and *istighfār* and try to occupy your time with them until they are natural and your heart takes over. Quantity of dhikr is as important as quality. Seek to increase the quantity and the quality will come when your state is right. Make one of your goals to remember Allah all the time, but know that it is a journey and you will not understand how to do this at the beginning. But it will unfold with persistence. Just like all goals are attained with continual effort and small steps.

Remain continuously in the state of **ritual purity** as much as possible and never attend classes in the state of *janābah*. Always make **prayers at night** – without it everything else will lose its potency and you

will not attain inward knowledge. But pray in the night because that is the time you can build your **relationship with God**, not so that you can attain anything else. Focusing on that relationship is part of your job, so prioritise it and do not feel guilty for spending that time. It is hard in the beginning to wake up, but a time will come when you cannot sleep all night even when you are tired. When remembering Allah in the lonely darkness of the night is so pleasant that you really prefer nothing else.

Try not to rush, but also do not procrastinate in laziness. Being patient for this is hard, but it is necessary to wait for God's time as the ego is a barrier that cannot be overcome with ease and your carnal self is always waiting to ambush you until you completely defeat it. Completely defeating it is a success only achieved by a few, and if you are seeking someone's help to do that, you are not there yet.

Find **knowledgeable company** and base your relationships on knowledge and the remembrance of God. It is narrated that Luqman (as) said to his son:

"O son, choose [between] the gatherings that you see [to sit in]. If you see a group who remember God then sit with them. If you are knowledgeable then your knowledge will benefit you and if you are ignorant they will teach you. Perhaps God, the Most High, will shade them in His Mercy and you will be included amongst them. If you see a group that do not remember God, then do not sit with them. If you are knowledgeable, your knowledge will not benefit you and if you are ignorant, they will increase you in ignorance. Perhaps God will cover them with His punishment and you will be included amongst them." [12](#)

Through keeping company with the knowledgeable you gain more than knowledge. You see their humanity, their tears and their laughter. You are included among them such that if you are not present, they enquire about your whereabouts. They are willing to include you as they love the seekers of knowledge and while their knowledge may surpass yours, they do not see it that way. They see you as one of them. On a journey of understanding. They see themselves in greater veils and danger from their egos. You see their softness and are included in their prayers. You can turn to them in your times of need and they can turn to you so that you can be useful to the cause of knowledge even if you don't have it. Through listening to them, asking them, watching them and interacting with them you will gain more than you bargained for.

Imam al-[Ghazali](#) (as) is reported to have said:

"Seek knowledge, and embellish yourself with it through clemency and dignity. Be humble towards those who seek knowledge from you and humble yourself to those you seek knowledge from. Do not be arrogant scholars so that what is true within you is destroyed by that which is false within you." [13](#)

The challenge is finding truly knowledgeable company which is not egotistical. So when you find it, value it and **be a good friend**. Let your emotional side be affected by the love of the knowledgeable and those who remember God a lot and do not be swayed by rumours that have no basis in what you see yourself. The friends of God will always have enemies. Do not seek to test them, they have forgotten more than you remember. Seek to understand and benefit. Recognise them for their merits unless it becomes clear

that their display of knowledge is a façade.

Never stop reading a **variety of books** and set time aside daily for some reading even if it is little. Continue to benefit from others and the way they have expressed things. You will open new doors, remind yourself of what you have already read and find expressions to clarify your ideas. Revisit the scriptural sources for inspiration regularly.

Keep writing, even if you don't share it with others. It takes time to develop your writing style and clarity. When you can't write due to fear and uncertainty in front of wisdom that is beyond you, or because of realising your own appetites, put your hope in Allah and continue researching until you find inspiration and write when your heart and mind **compel** you. Al-Ghazālī could not speak for two years because he realised his career in scholarship was only for fame, recognition and position. After this experience he devoted himself to the spiritual path and wrote a book that was to become one of the most influential in the history of Islamic scholarship called *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. There are other reasons that may stop you from speaking or writing, but you will find the other side and be better for the experience.

Do not disregard opinions and research until you have given them a valid **opportunity**. Knowledge is attained through humbleness and listening until you understand. There is not enough time to investigate everything, but do not take a strong position against a certain view until you have understood it in the light of its own presuppositions. That does not mean agreeing with everything, but to assess things in a fair light, rather than dismissing ideas that could have merit from a perspective you have not realised.

Knowledge is nuanced and so when you approach the world with a dichotomous mindset you will not go past the surface. If after researching and contemplating an idea or a method, if you find that you disagree with it, that is a different matter. But consider well your approach to **how you manifest your disagreement**. If you can do that on the table of conference and academic discussion with your peers, that is the best way, rather than in your own bubble.

Look after your **body** and **mind**. Get enough sleep. Don't over eat, but eat enough. Go through periods of asceticism but remain healthy. Exercising will clear your mind and enable you to study more effectively. Your disregard for the material should not go so far that you disregard your health as that can be detrimental to your journey. The time for deep asceticism is specific and until then balance is the order of the day.

Find time to relax and enjoy your time with your family and friends. How you treat them is part of manifesting what you have learnt. You cannot study if you are stressed or in pain. The body naturally decays and the mind becomes stressed without perspective. Don't become stingy or bitter because of life's circumstances. Rather, a seeker of knowledge needs to have regard for their mental state. Be warm, sincere and generous especially with your smile. Approachable, reliable, informed and humble.

“There are eight vices related to scholars. Coveting what others have, stinginess, showing off, elitism, loving praise, diving into that which will not take you to its reality, waffling to make yourself sound more

intelligent, losing bashfulness in front of God, boasting and not acting on what you know.” [14](#)

The source of these vices is that certain words have been associated with other than what they mean. [15](#) For example, a *faqīh* in its linguistic sense does not mean a jurist but rather it signifies someone who deeply understands. Studying the intricacies of law qualifies you as a jurist but does not make you a *faqīh* in the sense used in the scriptural sources. Or the word *knowledge* which we use signify the Islamic sciences. A person may feel that they are more knowledgeable delving into the particulars of argumentation, only to find that they become less devoted to God, argumentative about issues that are not beneficial, but just to flaunt their self-perceived intellectual superiority and full of pride. True knowledge does not result in ignorance, and ignorance is the source of all vices. Rather, true knowledge results in every virtue. So a person may feel that they are studying *fiqh* or have become a *faqīh*, or that they have become knowledgeable of the Islamic sciences, but in truth they have not benefited from knowledge at all. Similar is the case with the word *tawqīd*, which is studied in the intellectual sciences. *Tawqīd* is not only a cerebral concept, but it is something that is witnessed and deeply affects the soul. A person may think that they have understood *tawqīd* from the intellectual sciences, but until it deeply affects them, they have yet to understand. So if they were truly aware of their insufficiency, what would cause them to have the vices mentioned above? Rather, knowledge itself has become a veil rather than the means to truly develop. It has become the source of vices not the source of praiseworthy traits.

This does not mean that it is better not to become knowledgeable and remain ignorant, rather it highlights the importance of firstly understanding the **pitfalls** of pursuing this lofty goal. There are many traditions about **evil scholars** and such an end must be avoided carefully.

In a *ḥadīth* Imām *ʿAlī* (as) is reported to have said:

“The seekers of knowledge are of three types so know them by their categories and their attributes. A group seeks it for ignorance and quarrelling, a group seeks it for domination and deception and a group seeks it for understanding and intellection. The possessor of ignorance and quarrelling is offensive and argumentative, exhibiting views in gatherings by mentioning knowledge and the quality of clemency, wrapping themselves [externally] with awe (*khushʿā*) while they have no piety. So Allah cuts him off. The one who is dominating and deceptive, cheats and is insolent with his peers, while humble in front of the rich, eating their sweets and destroying his religion. So he is forgotten and not remembered amongst the scholars. [While] the possessor of understanding and intellection is broken by sadness and sorrow, awake in the last part of the night...praying in the darkness of the night. He acts and is in awe, fearful, calling, compassionate, proactive about his state. He knows the people of his time, desolate from his most reliable friends. So Allah makes the one with these characteristics firm and on the Day of Resurrection grants him safety.” [16](#)

Consider carefully where you choose to work, what the **expectations** of you are and whose **agenda** you work under. Whether you have to prove yourself or you are recognised for your abilities. Satan uses poverty and expectations as leverage to disrupt all that you may have achieved up to that point. The

world will keep attempting to convince you to give up what you know and follow its ways to find happiness. But after a point your time will only be spent well in gaining and disseminating knowledge. Once you have turned your back on the world how can you expect it to give you what others who have pursued it have? Do not lower yourself by falling into that trap.

Choose the **center of knowledge** in which you want to stay in the subjects you want to study, your **teachers** and the **texts** you are to pursue so that you are not forced to make changes and interrupt your studies as going through a few texts effectively is better than switching from country to country, from teacher to teacher or from text to text. Discuss with teachers and other students and benefit from their experiences in this regard. After you have chosen your way, be patient until your investment bears fruit. You will also need to choose wisely **which students to keep company** with as they will affect your habits and attitudes to your work. Friends who are demotivated and lazy will always find ways to avoid study. If you can't find anyone, stay secluded until you find those serious students who will aid your progression. There are all kinds of students studying for different reasons.

As a student you need to be serious about your studies and **timely**, **regular** and **patient** in attaining them. Without these qualities you will not attain what you set out for. Gaining knowledge takes time, experience and patience. At the same time, studies need to be **balanced** with the rest of life's challenges. Go over what you have learnt and **summarise** in your own words. Speak with other students and explain your understanding and listen to theirs. Joke with each other using the terms you have learnt so that they become clearer and their use becomes sharper.

If you organize *mubāharah* always come to it **prepared** after having read over the lesson and its commentaries even if your partner doesn't do the same. If you can find someone who will read different commentaries to you, then that is better so that you can benefit from each other's readings and identify useful passages in the commentaries.

To get into the habit of studying, the **majority of your time** should be devoted to it and attending lessons in the beginning, until it is unnatural for you not to study anything for a day and you feel uneasy. If you get bored of one subject switch to another. Peruse books and read what you find interesting. Later, as your teaching and other responsibilities increase you can decrease that time to about four or five **effective** hours daily.

At the same time, it is important to **cultivate good study habits**. Learning how to read and digest academic content is different from leisure reading. How you make notes and retain information that will come in useful later and is a personalized craft. Some information needs to be memorized, while other information needs to be understood to be retained. Your personal study time is where you really develop, connections are made and where your own ideas will start sprouting. Time needs to be spent reflecting and connecting information together.

Take a lesson from everything, not just your books and keep a notebook to jot down reflections and

points you hear from those with knowledge. Carry a book with you everywhere so that you can read when you have opportunities travelling and waiting. Always have some time set aside for reading *tafsīr* and *adab*.

May Allah open your ways and guide you to becoming truly knowledgeable and may He accept this small treatise for the orphans of the Infallibles (as).

1. Kulaynī, al-Kūfī, (1) 73. The order to seek knowledge is clearly expressed in the well-known tradition narrated from the Holy Prophet (S): “Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim.” Al-Barqī, al-Maṣṣin, (1) 225; al-Ḥaffīr, Baṣṣir al-darajāt, (1) 3.
2. Thaqafī, al-Ghurrat, (1) 150–151.
3. Kulaynī, Al-Kūfī, (1) 79.
4. Ibn Bāwayh, Man lī yaṣūruhu al-faqīh, (4) 367.
5. Raḥī, Nahj al-balāgha, 496.
6. Raḥī, Nahj al-balāgha, 118.
7. Kāshānī, Maḥajjat al-bayān, (1) 29–31.
8. Raḥī, Nahj al-balāgha, 156.
9. Kulaynī, al-Kūfī, (15) 563.
10. Al-Tamīmī al-Ḥamadī, Ghurar al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim, 588.
11. Reference to the following Verse:
وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا
“And say: O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge.” (Qurʾān, 20:114).
12. Kulaynī, al-Kūfī, (1) 94.
13. Kulaynī, al-Kūfī, (1) 86.
14. Attributed to Imām al-Ḥadiq (as), Miṣbḥ al-sharḥ, 20.
15. Kāshānī, Maḥajjat al-Bayān, (1) 83–95.
16. Al-Kulaynī, al-Kūfī, (1) 121.

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