



Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

Friday Sermon

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The Importance Of Being Guided By A Teacher

In Seeking Religious Knowledge

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَقَّهَ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِهِ خَيْرًا فِي الدِّينِ، وَرَفَعَ مَنَازِلَ
الْعُلَمَاءِ فَوْقَ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا
شَرِيكَ لَهُ، شَهِدَ لِنَفْسِهِ الْوَحْدَانِيَّةَ وَشَهِدَ بِهَا مَلَائِكَتُهُ وَالْعُلَمَاءُ
مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
الْمَبْعُوثُ حُجَّةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ أَجْمَعِينَ، اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا
مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلِّمْ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا. أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَا
عِبَادَ اللَّهِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Blessed Friday Jemaah,

Let us increase our taqwa to Allah s.w.t. Obey all of His commands and abstain from His prohibitions. Let us increase our knowledge, as taught by our beloved messenger Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. who was also our educator.

Beloved Jemaah,

For the past two weeks, we have been reminded of the importance to seek both knowledge of the temporal world and the religious knowledge, to bring ourselves closer to Allah s.w.t. We have also been reminded of the importance to carry out good deeds and to attain a balanced frame of thought, as well as not to be fanatic (taassub) to a certain way of teaching. This is to ensure that the knowledge we gain will benefit us in this world and the hereafter insyaAllah.

Besides that, we should also ask ourselves some important questions. How we can ensure that the knowledge that we have gained is *sahih* or authentic? And what are the characteristics of a good teacher or “guide” in educating and presenting Islamic knowledge?

Friday Jemaah,

Acquiring true, authentic Islamic knowledge requires a qualified teacher. The necessity of an educator and the educator’s role to guide a person on the path to attain Allah’s pleasure is pivotal. Hence, although Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. was given the title “the educator of all educators”, Allah still sent the angel Jibril a.s. to teach the Prophet about Islam.

Besides sending revelation and reading the Quran (tadarrus) with Rasulullah s.a.w. during Ramadan, Jibril a.s. also came to the Prophet s.a.w. when he was with several of his companions

(sahabah). In a well-known hadith, Jibril a.s. came in the form of a man who was fair, clean with black hair. He sat close to the Prophet s.a.w. and asked him on several matters including the meaning of Islam, Iman, Ihsan and the Day of Judgement as well as its signs. After Rasulullah s.a.w. answered, the man confirmed his answers and then went away. It was then that Rasulullah s.a.w. told his companions: “*That’s Jibril; he came to you to teach you about the religion*”. [Hadith reported by Imam Muslim]

This narration, among others, aims to teach us the importance of having a teacher to seek and understand religious knowledge. It is a sunnah and tradition of Islamic knowledge.

Jemaah,

Today, with the ease of accessing knowledge through various platforms including the Internet, we may feel that we can simply acquire religious knowledge solely via the Internet and our smart gadgets such as phones, tablets and so on.

However, with easier dissemination of information, the role of an educator, guide or teacher becomes all the more pertinent. Every individual needs to verify with a teacher or an *alim* (learned person) that the religious information they have obtained, or read about, is accurate and true. Any information received must be corroborated – the authentic (*sahih*) information must be filtered from the inaccurate or false

information; and this applies to the misleading interpretations and false hadith as well. These efforts are challenging, but are very much needed to ensure that we, as well as our families, are rightly guided on the righteous path. It is feared that if a person rushes to uphold a practice based on information that he or she has obtained, without verifying with a learned religious teacher, then the person may be led astray. Allah s.w.t. says in surah Al-Anbiya' verse 7, regarding the role of an *alim*:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧﴾

Which means: *“And We sent not before you, [O Muhammad], except men to whom We revealed [the message], so ask the people of the message if you do not know.”*

In a hadith reported by Imam At-Tirmidzi, Nabi s.a.w. said:

إِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ هُمْ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ، إِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا وَلَكِنَّهُمْ وَرَثُوا الْعِلْمَ، فَمَنْ أَخَذَهُ فَقَدْ أَخَذَ بِحِظٍّ وَافِرٍ.

Which means: *“The scholars (ulama) are the inheritors of the Prophets, for the Prophets do not leave behind dinar or dirham for inheritance, but rather, they leave behind knowledge. And he who acquires it, has in fact acquired an abundant portion.”*

One also needs to ensure that they seek knowledge, and learn from many different teachers and scholars, and not just one teacher. This will expose us to the different understandings and

thought processes, and at the same time help mature our thinking and spirituality as a seeker of knowledge. It was a tradition of the scholars to learn from various teachers. For example, Imam Al-Bukhari was reported to have studied from more than a thousand teachers. Besides that, we need to ensure that we are learning from teachers who display good character and good manners (*adab*), and that he or she practices what he or she preaches. A religious teacher must have a noble *akhlak*; he or she must instil in us the love for goodness and politeness, develop our wisdom, and help us to improve our relationship with Allah s.w.t. and the people around us. If we find that our teacher is the reverse, then we need to reassess our choice of teacher. How can we be a good person if the person who is guiding us does not act likewise?

Beloved jemaah,

We must also be smart in choosing a teacher that is qualified and fulfils the guidelines of *syariah*. There are members of the community who are learning from teachers whose qualifications are unknown, and whose religious education background is unknown. Then there are deviant teachings, cloaked under the guise of *tasawuf* practices, to trick and gain followers, even stating that one does not need to perform the five daily prayers or any of the other religious obligations with the excuse that they have reached a high standing (*maqam*) in the sight of Allah. How can this be plausible when even Rasulullah s.a.w. who knows Allah best and has been promised paradise, would

stand up in prayers until his feet were swollen and cracked! Our beloved Nabi s.a.w. upheld the *Syariah*, and in fact, performed acts of worship that are both obligatory (*wajib*) and encouraged (*sunnah*), more diligently and intensely, compared to anyone else.

To conclude, as a sincere believer (*mukmin*) who wants to bring oneself closer to Allah s.w.t., we need to increase our knowledge, do not self-learn so as to prevent ourselves from misunderstanding or misinterpreting religious knowledge. It is best for us to seek a teacher or educator who is qualified to guide us with authentic knowledge, and can be a source of reference for our families and ourselves.

Let us make doa that Allah s.w.t will continue to grant us His *taufiq* and *hidayah* (guidance) to be obedient to Him, and grant us beneficial knowledge for our goodness in this world and the hereafter, insyaAllah. Amin.

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ
الآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ
الْعَلِيمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ فَيَا
فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.