

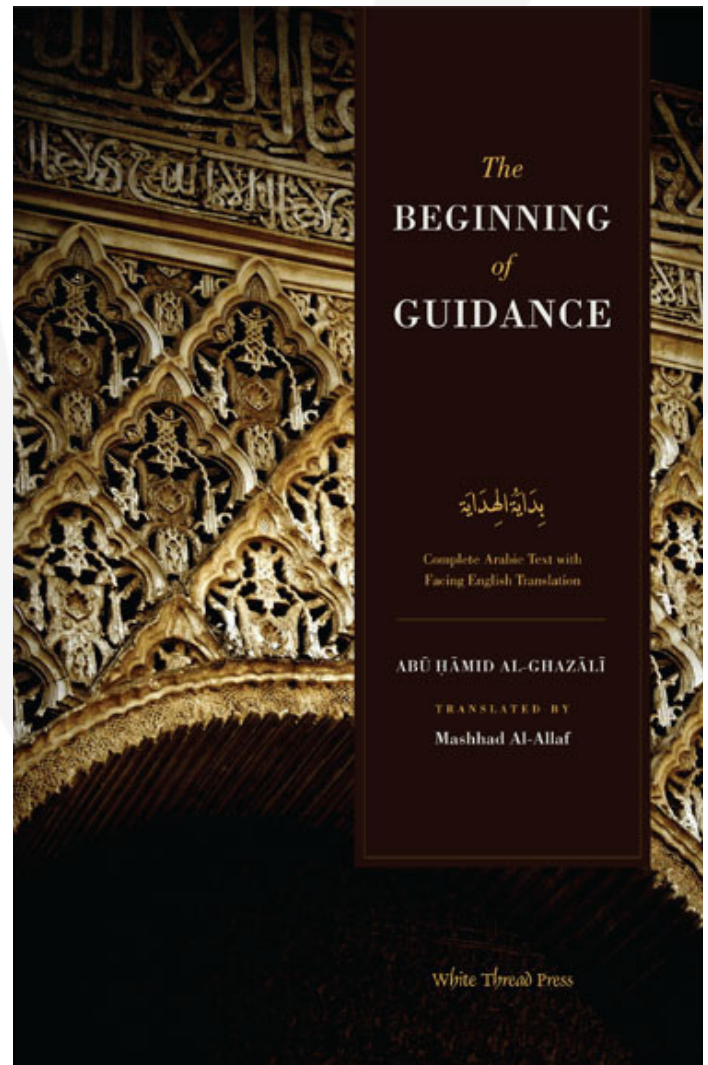
THE BEGINNING OF GUIDANCE



Ustadh Ubaydullah Evans

The Beginning of Guidance by Imam Ghazali

- Imam Al-Ghazali's *Bidayat al-Hidaya* is a highly motivational manual detailing the fundamentals of acquiring guidance through God-consciousness (taqwa). Studying this text is a great way for us to make our hearts sincere to Allah SWT. Imam Al-Ghazali (rh) wrote this text after he traveled across the Muslim world.



Background of Imam Al-Ghazali:

- Before beginning to study this text, we have to understand the background of Imam Al-Ghazali. In some of the Muslim countries of today's world, religious knowledge is not given the highest importance. It has become an afterthought and lost its grandeur.
- In Imam Al-Ghazali's time it was the complete opposite. Becoming a scholar was given the highest of status and fame. One would be able to control flows of money. People would fight each other to become scholars. It would not be an exaggeration to describe it as "toxic."
- "Why do we spend so much time talking about Imam Al-Ghazali? Why is he quoted so much?" These are natural questions that come up in one's mind.

Why do we Study Imam Al-Ghazali's Works?

- That same toxic culture is one that he personally excelled in. He attained high status. Generally, there are three main reasons we study Imam Al-Ghazali:
 1. **Erudition** – he was widely learned
 2. **Sincerity** – towards the faith
 3. **Credibility** – he spoke about the culture he was a part of

- Imam Al-Ghazali withdrew from his scholarly circles in which he attained great fame, career, and status because he felt like he lacked sincerity. He attained his sincerity after traveling and learning for ten years after leaving his post.
- It is important that we learn from his example in our own pursuit of knowledge. We must be vigilant in our own studies. If our goal is attention, then we want the particles of the dunya. We should not learn so that we may speak knowledge in front of others or have respect within our circles.

Categories of Students of Knowledge

Imam Al-Ghazali states the three categories the students of knowledge fall into:

1. The first type are the sincere. Their knowledge is only provision for the akhirah. It is only to please Allah SWT.
2. The second type are those that begin their journey of knowledge, but secretly want the glory, but they conceal it in their heart. But eventually this person acts by what they learn and corrects their intention.
3. The third type are completely insincere. Shaytaan has a firm grip upon them. They speak like the scholars but are nothing like them.

- **Please keep in mind that these are standards we should only look to self-examine ourselves with, not the scholars we learn from. We should always assume good of them.**
- The proper manifestation of knowledge should do two things:
 1. Lead to practice. Otherwise the knowledge is not true if not reflected in our actions.
 2. Build humility. Sometimes we increase in talking more when we get knowledge when we should be humble.

Next week, Ustadh Ubaydullah Evans will examine the steps taken towards sincerity.

FAQs

Q: What is the difference between our current culture and Imam Gazzali's culture with respects to students attaining knowledge?

A: During his culture, ilm mattered and the best students were known to study it. It held high esteem.

Q: Why are Imam Gazzali's books so important to ilm and so revered in Islamic traditions?

A: His irradiation, sincerity, authenticity.

Q: What do miracles that happened to the Prophets confirm for us?

A: That Allah is always in concern.

Q: What caused Imam Gazzali to have an emotional breakdown and withdraw from his career?

A: Because he lacked sincerity.

Q: What did Imam Gazzali warn against at the beginning of his book The Beginning of Guidance?

A: Attaining knowledge to show-off. He said that if that is your goal then you are striving toward your own destruction.

Q: What did Imam Muwardi say regarding being the selective learner?

A: He said not to be selective about what you want to learn, start with the basics.

True or False:

Q: You should only focus on learning the easy subjects and disregard the difficult ones.

A: FALSE

Q: What are the three types of students and what is their fate?

A: a. The very sincere student who only is attaining knowledge because they know that they will face Allah SWT at the hereafter. This student is victorious.

b. The second student begins seeking knowledge for fame but conceals it within his or her heart. But later on they start putting actions to their words and become sincere. They will become victorious as well.

c. The third student is the one who is seeking fame but thinks that he or she is sincere because they speak like scholars.

Quotes

“Don't be like an older student who doesn't want to start learning with the young students. Take knowledge from its root, as the root supports the branches.”

“If the knowledge does not lead to practice, then the knowledge is not true.”

