

In his book, The Responsibility of Issuing Fatwa, Ibn Jawzi (D. 597 AH) share an important section: The Chapter on The Salaf Frequent Saying "I Don't Know"

He, may Allah have mercy upon him, writes,

“And they, may Allah be pleased with them, used to frequently say, "I don't know," even though the Prophet, peace be upon him, had already stated it.

1. From Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Aqil, from Muhammad bin Jubayr, from his father, that a man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Which places are the worst?" He said, "I don't know." When Gabriel came to him, he said, "Which places are the worst?" He said, "I don't know." Then Gabriel departed, then came again and said, "I asked my Lord - the Most High - and said, 'Which places are the worst?' He ﷺ said, 'The marketplaces.'"

2. Abu al-Bukhtari said: Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said, "Cool down! When one of you is asked about something he doesn't know, let him say, 'I don't know.'"

3. Khalid bin Aslam, said: We went out with Ibn Umar and an Arab man met us and said, "Are you Ibn Umar?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Do you inherit aunts?" He said, "I don't know, go to the scholars of Madinah and ask them." So, when he turned away, Ibn Umar touched his hands and then said, "Yes, what Abu Abdur-Rahman [Ibn Abbas] said is correct: when you're asked about something you don't know, say 'I don't know.'"

4. Aqabah bin Muslim said, "I accompanied Ibn Umar for thirty-four months, and he would often say, 'I don't know.' Then he would turn to me and say, 'Do you know what they want?' They want to make us a bridge to Hell."

4. Khalid bin Khadash, said: I heard Malik bin Anas (may Allah have mercy on him) say, "We were sitting with Ayyub and Umar bin Nafi asked him about something, but he did not respond. So, Umar said to him, 'I see that you understood,' he said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Why don't you answer me?' He said, 'I don't know.' Malik said - while we were talking."

6. Abu Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal said, "My father would seek fatwas, and he would often say, 'I don't know.'"

7. Muhammad bin Muslim bin Warah, said, "I heard Abu Nu'aim say, 'I have never seen a scholar saying 'I don't know' more than Malik bin Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).'"

8. Muhammad bin Warah said, "I heard Abu Nu'aim saying, 'I have never seen a scholar say 'I don't know more than Malik.'"

This section from Ibn Jawzi's book illustrates the humility and honesty of the early scholars who frequently admitted when they didn't have knowledge about a particular matter, unlike today: everyone has an opinion.

This approach comes from a deep understanding that acknowledging one's lack of knowledge is a mark of wisdom and a way to avoid giving incorrect information and suffering in the Hereafter.