

Interview with

Umm ‘Abdullaah

Wife of

Shaykh Muhammad

ibn Saalih Al-'Uthaimeen

(*rahimahullaah*)

Interview conducted by
Sis. Maha bint Husein Ash-Shammari
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All Praise is due to Allaah, and may the *salaah* and *salaam* be on Prophet Muhammad, his household, the noble companions, and those who follow them until the Day of Resurrection.

The following is an interview with Umm ‘Abdullaah, the wife of our Shaykh, Muhammad ibn Saleh al-‘Uthaimen (رحمه الله: *rahimahullaah*). The interview was conducted by Sis. Maha bint Husein Ash-Shammari & Published in "Al-Mutamayyizah Magazine," Riyadh, KSA; Issue No. 45, Ramadhan, 1427.

Question 1: Was there any change in the motivation of the Shaykh regarding ‘ilm (knowledge), *dawah*, and worship between his youth and his elder years?

Answer: I did not find any diminishing or weakness in his motivation (رحمه الله) in knowledge, *dawah*, and worship despite his progress in age. On the contrary, his busy schedule continued to increase with time, as was the case with his worship and call to the extent that during his intense illness, he (رحمه الله) was not negligent with one moment; he would spend every second in remembrance of Allaah (ﷻ: *subhaanallaahu wa ta’aalaa*), worshipping Him, teaching, or directing.

Question 2: What did you see that was amazing in the Shaykh’s (رحمه الله) life?

Answer: His life was an example to follow, especially his patience and motivation to seek the knowledge as well as teach and dissipate it. Also, his piety (رحمه الله) was something that those who were not close to him may not have known about.

Question 3: How did the Shaykh interact with his children in their private lives?

Answers: His dealings with his sons and daughters fell into two stages. First, in their childhood, he (رحمه الله) was keen to be close to them, take care of them, raise some of the Islamic principles in them, and follow their educational achievements. In addition, he made sure to direct, admonish, and incite them. For instance, he would sometimes take the children with him to the *masjid* to perform some of the *fard* prayers. Also, he would encourage them to fast some of the days of Ramadan. Furthermore, he would incite them to memorize some of the short *surahs* of the *Qur’aan* and reward them on that.

In the stage of youth and maturity, he (رحمه الله) was firm concerning their fulfilling of the religious obligations and in discipline in cases of negligence. He would couple that with direction and leniency. At certain times, he was not hesitant to do what was sufficient to change or correct their mistakes. In addition, he (رحمه الله) used to put full trust in them to do certain things so they could learn to depend upon themselves; he used to continuously encourage them on righteousness and check on them regarding that.

Question 4: Why did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) not use henna on his beard?

Answer: Maybe he did not have the time to do that. I think I heard him saying something to this effect.

Question 5: When did the Shaykh anger intensify, and how did he deal with your anger?

Answer: His anger used to intensify if the inviolable matters of Allaah (ﷻ) were violated. Regarding my anger with the children, he would try to calm me down first and then give the admonition to the one that was mistaken. In general, he (رحمه الله) was quiet and did not anger quickly; when he (رحمه الله) did, his anger would quickly dissipate, and this is from the favors of Allaah (ﷻ) upon him, something which I wished for the like of his condition.

Question 6: How did he (رحمه الله) get up from his sleep? Did he depend on an alarm clock, or would he ask someone to wake him?

Answer: He used to depend upon Allaah (ﷻ), then the alarm clock and then us. Usually he awoke before the alarm and before I would go to wake him.

Question 7: Would the Shaykh (رحمه الله) ever go outside with his family for a picnic?

Answer: Yes, the family used to have a weekly picnic on Fridays after *salaat al-jumu'ah*; we would go to an area in the wilderness close by and bring our lunch. He utilized this time to share in some activities with the children, like foot racing and solving puzzles. Also, he would bring a small rifle and compete with his children in aiming and shooting.

Question 8: How did the Shaykh fast during the year?

Answer: The Shaykh (رحمه الله) consistently fasted three days each month throughout his life. In addition, he would fast six days in Shawwal, the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, and the day of 'Aashooraa'.

Question 9: How did the Shaykh select the names of his children?

Answer: He used to choose names like 'Abdullaah and 'Abd ar-Rahman¹; he left the rest for consultation amongst us. We would pick a name and present it to him; he would either agree or ask us to select another.

Question 10: What were some of the things that would please the Shaykh (رحمه الله)?

Answer: There is no doubt that the Shaykh's (رحمه الله) happiness used to increase whenever he saw the strength of Islam and Muslims. Regarding happiness at home, it was manifested in meetings with his family and children.

¹These are the names of two of his sons.

You would also see the signs of pleasure and happiness on him upon receiving his grandchildren. He used to open his cloak to allow them to enter underneath and then inquire about them a few times before reopening it; he would do this several times. Later, he would take them to his library where he kept a special kind of sweets they used to call “*halawat abooye*” (my father’s sweets). We were keen to ensure that they would not find it, except with him. In addition, despite his busy schedule, he made sure to visit his grandchildren at their homes or in the hospital if any of them were ill; this would have a great influence on them and their parents.

Question 11: How many children did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) have?

Answer: The Shaykh had five sons and three daughters.

Question 12: Who amongst his children was the closest to his heart?

Answer: The Shaykh used to deal justly with his children in all affairs, major and minor. If he found any kind of distinction between them, he would never declare it openly because this is not from justice. If he was keen to be just in matters lighter than this, then what should we expect here?

Question 13: Who amongst his children was most affected by his death?

Answer: All of them were, and the reality of the matter is that I used to feel that we were not alone in this as he was a father to Muslims around the world, who all felt a great shock by his death.

Question 14: Who is his youngest child?

Answer: The youngest is a daughter who is 21 years old.

Question 15: What were the steps the Shaykh took in seeking knowledge, and what was your role in that?

Answer: The Shaykh (رحمه الله) began teaching in the Grand Mosque in Unayzah following the death of his Shaykh, ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Naasir as-Saa’di (رحمهما الله) even before I married him. At that time, he used to consider himself a student of knowledge.

Concerning my assistance, it was manifested in not distracting him from seeking knowledge and propagating it. I used to serve and make available to him what would support his efforts. I would also follow the children and take care of them, except in matters that required his notification so that he could direct, admonish, and seek a solution.

Question 16: How did he reconcile between the *dawah*, which took most of his time, and his familial and social responsibilities?

Answer: He used to organize his time and gave this great attention. For instance, he would dedicate time for teaching, *fatawa*, *dawah*, worship, the family, the children,

social responsibilities, and upholding the ties of kinship. If he, at certain times, was unable to directly share in some of these responsibilities, he was still keen to share even by phone.

Question 17: What was his policy regarding educating and directing his children?

Answer: His policy was education; however, he did not force his children to seek a specialty but instead used to consult with them regarding this decision. The obvious proof is that his children graduated from different types of colleges, some *sharee'*, others military, and also educational.

Question 18: Taking into consideration the Shaykh's work and commitments, this inevitably led to him being away from home and the family. What was your role regarding this matter, and how did you cover for his absence (رحمه الله)?

Answer: Even if he was away from home whether for teaching and propagating inside Unayzah or while traveling, he used to follow up with his children through phone calls and by checking on their affairs upon his return. My role is not even worth mentioning because we always felt his presence with us. In general, I used to make the children feel their father's responsibilities were great and his works many. As such, I would incite them to be patient on that, and he (رحمه الله) used to compensate them on his return.

Question 19: Could you tell us about his worship at home?

Answer: He was keen to perform the *as-sunan ar-rawatib* (regular sunnah prayers), except in limited circumstances. He (رحمه الله) used to wake up in the latter part of the night as much as possible and then make the *witr* before *fajr*, in addition to the remembrances and *istighfar* that he did not discontinue.

Question 20: What was his daily program? For example, when did he sleep and wake, and when did he eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Answer: The Shaykh used to get up in the last third of the night, praying as much as Allaah (ﷻ) wished and then make the *witr* before the *adhan* of *fajr*. Following the *adhan*, he would pray the regular *sunnah* of *fajr*. Next, he would wake his family before going to perform *salaat al-fajr* at the *masjid*. He would then return home to read his daily remembrances in the courtyard as well as some of the *Qur'aan* until about sunrise. He would then sleep till about 8 am. This was on the days that he was not teaching at the university.

After waking again, he would eat some breakfast and then finish his work and readings in his study. He would also pray *salaat ad-duhaa* before going to the *masjid* for *salaat adh-dhuhr*. Upon his return, he would eat lunch with his family at about 1:30. Next, he would take phone calls until about 20 minutes before *'asr*. He would then rest for fifteen minutes or less before going to the *masjid* to pray *'asr* and meet the needs of people who went to the *masjid* knowing he would be there. He would return to his study after addressing the people's needs to read before going again to the *masjid* for *maghrib* and his daily classes that would last until *isha*. Usually he

would return home after that to eat a light dinner before going to his study to either give lectures outside of the Kingdom via telelink or hold meetings. This was almost his regular schedule throughout most the year, although it would change during some seasons such as Ramadan, Hajj, and the summer break.

There were also some weekly commitments, and these would take place either at home or outside. Some of his weekly commitments included: Wednesday night meetings with the judges, meetings with the *imaams* that were scheduled to give the *khutbah* of *jumu'ah* in the *masjid*, meetings with university staff and professors, and meetings with the people of *hisbah* (those that enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong) until 11 or 12 pm then he would go to sleep.

Question 21: What was his schedule during Ramadan, especially after *iftaar*?

Answer: During Ramadan, the Shaykh (رحمه الله) had a different schedule. He would spend most of the time at the *masjid* reciting Qur'aan and meeting the needs of the people. Also, he would invite some of the students of knowledge and the poor to eat *iftaar* at our home. After *salaat al-isha*, he would return home for dinner and to give *fatawa* over the phone. In addition, many people would visit our house to either say *salaam* to the Shaykh (رحمه الله) or seek a *fatwa*.

Question 22: Where did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) like to spend his rest time?

Answer: In reality, the Shaykh (رحمه الله) did not know rest time; all of his time was busy. Even when he was sitting with us, the phone sometimes would ring, and he would spend a long time addressing the call. His rest time was in propagating the knowledge, meeting people's needs, and *fatawa*.

Question 23: How many hours a day did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) sleep?

Answer: The connected time did not exceed 3 to 4 hours. In total, it did not exceed 6 hours daily.

Question 24: Who amongst the students of the Shaykh did he praise, mention often, and was pleased with their visits?

Answer: He (رحمه الله) looked the same upon all of his students. All of them were like his sons, and he did not praise any of them in particular, but he looked upon them equally when he would meet or welcome them to the house. Also, he would share in their special occasions, meetings, trips, or support them if they were in need of something.

Question 25: How did the Shaykh's (رحمه الله) family deal with his asceticism and piety?

Answer: We used to see him (رحمه الله) as an example in all things, and we used to revere his asceticism and piety, which would comfort us since he (رحمه الله) did not like

any unnatural mannerisms nor did he want that around him. He was a simple person who liked ease in all of his matters.

Question 26: Did he (رحمه الله) cry upon the death of Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baaz (رحمه الله)?

Answer: He was greatly affected by the death of his Shaykh, from whom he took knowledge. Everyone around him felt the extent of the profound impact it had. May Allaah (ﷻ) make us meet them all in the Paradise of bliss.

Question 27: Did he travel for other than seeking knowledge?

Answer: No, he did not travel except to seek knowledge. He used to travel to Makkah for *‘Umrah*, where he would dedicate times for *duroos* (talks). In addition, he went to Riyadh and Ta’if to attend the meetings of the Grand Scholars Committee, where he would also schedule *duroos* and lectures.

Question 28: Can you tell us about the apparent generosity of the Shaykh with those in need?

Answer: We used to feel his care (رحمه الله) for the people in need, whether they were distant or close. For instance, he used to check on the affairs of his family and relatives that were in need. Also, he would do the same with his neighbors, helping them in all that they needed, comforting them concerning their worries, and sharing in their joyous occasions.

Question 29: What did you learn from the Shaykh? Did you learn matters of *fatawa*? Did you ever give *fatawa*?

Answer: I learned from the Shaykh (رحمه الله) everything that relates to the affairs of this life, whether from the social or legal aspects. Concerning giving *fatawa*, I would not even dare to do this. I only used to present the questions I received to him and then relate the answers and *fatawa* to those that had asked.

Question 30: Before the Shaykh’s (رحمه الله) death, what did he admonish his household and beloved ones with?

Answer: The Shaykh (رحمه الله) did not give a specific direction before his death, but throughout his life, he would direct everyone to that which benefited them in their life and in their *deen* (religion).

Question 31: We would like an admonition from you to the wives of the callers and students of knowledge.

Answer: They should preserve their husbands, openly and secretly. In addition, they should prepare for them the best situations and conditions to continue providing their duties of *dawah* and knowledge. Also, I incite them that they should not be bothered by the busy schedule of their husbands and their time spent traveling, seeking

knowledge, reading, and doing *dawah*. By Allaah's (ﷻ) Will, they are sharing in the reward.

Question 32: Could you tell us about the way the Shaykh (رحمه الله) used to receive his guests?

Answer: He (رحمه الله) would receive his guests with simplicity and a real sense of welcoming. He ensured that they felt like guests, and no day passed, except that he brought a guest either for lunch, dinner or in between. We were pleased with his guests and would honor them.

Question 33: What about a rare and pleasing encounter he had with his children or neighbours?

The Shaykh (رحمه الله) acted with simplicity towards his children and neighbors and all those surrounding him. And one of those rare and nice occasions is that the Shaykh (رحمه الله) used to record some short recitations and *nasheed*² for his children and sometimes in the presence of one of the neighbors' kids. He then would re-play the cassette to them during some meeting with them at older ages. We even still keep some of these recording to this date.

Question 34: What is your advice to those that spread mischief in our Kingdom?

Answer: We ask Allaah (ﷻ) to preserve our land and to continue to bestow upon us the favor of security and safety. The Shaykh (رحمه الله) would often repeat and mention that he does not know any nation on the face of the earth that applies the *sharee'ah* and holds to the correct creed like this one. Similarly, he (رحمه الله) used to incite us to deal with affairs using wisdom, good admonition, and leniency instead of resorting to violence.

Question 35: Is there anything that the Shaykh (رحمه الله) asked you to do that seemed strange and made you feel hesitant?

Answer: It may be unknown to most that I was illiterate and did not receive any kind of formal education. When I first married the Shaykh (رحمه الله), I was fully busy in his service and in providing him the correct, comfortable environment to seek knowledge and teach. After we had our children, I was busy with them, and it took all my time to raise them, in addition to the time I used to spend to help and support the Shaykh (رحمه الله) in seeking knowledge.

After the children grew up and my responsibilities began to ease slightly, I was surprised that the Shaykh (رحمه الله) began to incite me to join the schools for the elderly. Although hesitant at first, I decided to join. During this period, he followed my

²The Shyakh's (رحمه الله) position on the so-called *Islamic Nasheeds* as posted on the site (www.understand-islam.net) is not to be confused with this innocent children-directed recordings referred to here.

achievements and would not accept for any of my sons to sign my transcripts of record. He (رحمه الله) would say, “I am the one to sign for all that relates to your academic achievements.” This moment of learning is a period that can not be forgotten because of the great, innumerable benefits.

Question 36: What kinds of gifts would the Shaykh (رحمه الله) give you, his children, and people in general?

Answer: During his lifetime, he (رحمه الله) would not withhold anything from those that were close and those that were distant, to the best of his ability. The greatest gift he used to give us was his *dawah* and *du'aa*; I ask Allaah (ﷻ) to accept his *du'aa*, hold them for him in his good record, and bestow upon us the ability to be righteous to him after his death.

Question 37: Did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) relate to you anything nice that occurred in the *masjid*?

Answer: He (رحمه الله) would always tell us those things that he thought were fit to mention.

Question 38: When did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) travel for *dawah*, and how would you deal with him concerning that?

Answer: I used to incite and encourage him as well as make things easy for him by providing him what he needed. In general, his trips were few, and I used to join him on most of them.

Concerning travel outside of the Kingdom, he did not leave the country, except to seek treatment in America for ten days, and I joined him during that.

Question 39: Could you tell us about the Shaykh's use of the internet when it was first introduced to the Kingdom?

Answer: He was one of the earliest to hasten to benefit from this service and tried to utilize it to dissipate, propagate, and serve the Islamic knowledge. There is nothing more evident of this than the establishment of his website, which contains all of his works. His site is currently supervised by the charitable organization that was setup after his death.

Question 40: When did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) buy the automatic, telephone answering machine?

Answer: From the things that are unknown to many is that the Shaykh (رحمه الله) was keen and had interest in modern electronic instruments. There were those that used to provide him with the newest technology, such that you would often find with him some electronics that had not yet been released to the open market; examples include: electronic watches, instruments that could determine the direction of the *qiblah*, audio recording devices, mobile phones, and automatic telephone answering machines

among many other gadgets. He (رحمه الله) acquired the automatic answering machine as soon as it became available in the Kingdom. He used it a great deal, often programming it and recording the messages himself, to the extent that when he would travel, he would leave a detailed message on how to contact him while he was away. He was in that, a reference to all of us.

Question 41: Did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) buy newspapers, and how did he learn about local and national news?

Answer: We used to receive one of the newspapers at our home as a gift, and he (رحمه الله) would look at it if he had time. Sometimes he would ask us for scissors to clip out important articles or news so he could keep it. Also, he would hear the news on the radio, especially during breakfast around 7 or 8 in the morning when he would listen to either the Qur'aan broadcasting station from Riyadh or the BBC. In addition, he would listen sometimes at length to the analysis of the news if there were important developments.

Question 42: Was there ever an offer for the Shaykh to move to Riyadh?

Answer: Several times he was asked to move to Riyadh, Madinah, and Makkah. He was even assigned as a judge in the eastern province of al-Ihsaa, but he used to see that his staying in Unayzah had a great benefit, so he (رحمه الله) refused these offers.

Question 43: During the visits of King Faisal (رحمه الله), King Khaled (رحمه الله), King Fahad (رحمه الله), and other princes, what did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) offer them?

Answer: When he was at his home which is made of mud in Unayzah, he was visited by King Saud (رحمه الله), King Khaled (رحمه الله), and King Fahad (رحمه الله); they were amazed by his humbleness, piety, simplicity, and asceticism.

Question 44: Did anyone offer to install any echo instruments for the microphone in the Shaykh's *masjid*?

Answer: The Shaykh (رحمه الله) did not see to that.

Question 45: Was the Shaykh (رحمه الله) married to anyone else other than you, and how many wives did he have?

Answer: No, the Shaykh (رحمه الله) was not married to other than me. He married two wives before me; his first wife died, and Allaah (ﷻ) did not intend for the second marriage to continue.

Question 46: We need from you an admonition to men who have more than one wife.

Answer: Justice. Justice. Justice.

Question 47: If one would ask the father (i.e. the Shaykh) to admonish me as a girl, what would you expect him?

Answer: He would admonish you as he would admonish one of his daughters and all of the daughters of the Muslims to fear Allaah (ﷻ) openly and secretly, to be righteous to the parents, uphold the ties of kinship, preserve the husband, and fear Allaah (ﷻ) regarding raising the children Islamically based on leniency and kindness.

Question 48: Did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) use to tell you about the *Mujaahideen* in *Sheeshaan* (Chechnya) and other places especially since it reached us that he was keen concerning their news and Fatwa?

Answer: He (رحمه الله) was keen on following the status (affairs) of Muslims everywhere, in Palestine, Algeria, Afghanistan, and Sheeshaan.³

Question 49: How did the Shaykh (رحمه الله) receive the news of his illness, and how did he tell you about it?

Answer: He (رحمه الله) received the news with patience, anticipating the reward. One of my sons reported to me that after they (رحمه الله) received the news, he instructed them not to mention anything to their brothers, sisters, or me and that the matter should be left to him. He (رحمه الله) related the news to us gradually. We ask Allaah (ﷻ) to forgive him and give him a spacious residence in Paradise.

Question 50: We came to know that the Shaykh (رحمه الله) during his illness refused to call his cancer the “evil disease,” choosing instead to simply refer to it as dangerous. Would you tell us about this and his patience?

Answer: This was not only after his illness, but rather he had this opinion before because he disliked using the term “evil” for this disease.

As for his patience, this was manifested in his illness, and I knew that he suffered greatly from it. The pain would wake him many times during the night; whenever he was asked about it, he would confirm that it existed, adding that he only told them this as information and not as a complaint, since he (رحمه الله) knew the reward for those that were patient.

All Praise is due to Allaah, and may the *salaah* and *salaam* be on Prophet Muhammad, his household, the noble companions, and those who follow them until the Day of Resurrection.

³It is known that the Shaykh (رحمه الله), like the other reliable scholars of our times, al-Albani and Bin Baaz (رحمهم الله), as well as Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (حفظه الله), exerted great efforts to correctly direct the Muslims in these countries and in others as well as to the reality and conditions of Jihaad and warned them from deviation as evident in their published *fatawaa* and advices. The reader is referred to www.understand-islam.net for further details on this, especially under "Contemporary issues," "Jihaad," "Clarifications," etc. May Allaah, the Most High, guide all Muslims to understand and properly adhere to the true conditions and rulings regarding Jihaad. Aameen.