
Words of Truth

We Do Not Want To Overemphasize Knowledge

By: Brian A. Yeager

Not too long ago I had a discussion with an individual that provoked the thoughts motivating me to write this article. In the discussion I had, this individual was talking about how much more knowledge he had than other people in the congregation he was assembling with. This person was rather boastful of himself while degrading those he was assembling with. I was a bit taken back. The only thought at the time, which I expressed, was that knowledge without proper application is useless. He criticized the teaching among his brethren and exclaimed how much better of a job he could do, etc. Since that discussion, I have thought more about the matter and want us all to examine ourselves in such (Haggai 1:5).

In times past we have studied how knowledge can be dangerous. This is true in several ways. One of those ways, as was displayed by the man I talked to, is that knowledge can puff us up (I Corinthians 8:1). If we ever get a feeling of superiority because we know more Scriptures than another person, we are in trouble on multiple levels. For one, pride doesn't lead to salvation (Psalms 10:2-6, Proverbs 6:16-19, Proverbs 8:13, Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 15:25, Proverbs 16:18, Proverbs 28:25, Proverbs 29:23, Isaiah 2:11-17, Jeremiah 13:15, James 4:6-10, and I Peter 5:5). Additionally, being puffed up will cause us to err in how we think of ourselves better than our brethren. We cannot think in such a way (Romans 12:16 and Galatians 5:13). We should go as far as esteeming those weaker than ourselves as more necessary in the body than ourselves (I Corinthians 12:14-27). Who am I and who are you anyway (Luke 17:7-10)?

Let me illustrate how real knowledge of the Scriptures would keep someone who is strong thinking properly towards someone that is weak. If a weaker brother or sister in Christ struggled with a matter of conscience, as lawfully defined by the Scriptures, how should a stronger brother or sister react? The man I talked to would despise the weaker brother or sister and talk about how little that person knew of the Scriptures. However, the word of God shows us that the stronger, more knowledgeable person in the faith, would submit himself or herself to the conscience of the weaker Christian rather than despising he or she (Romans 14:1-15:7, I Corinthians 8:1-13, and I Corinthians 10:23-33).

In another thought, consider how if you had more knowledge than a teacher in a congregation, you could help rather than boast. First, you could realize that we are not all five-talent individuals (Matthew 25:14-30). You would know that the importance is not in how many abilities you have, but in how you use them (I Peter 4:11). Rather than bash the teacher, why not humbly help in teaching outside of "the pulpit" (Titus 2:2-8)? Think of it this way, aren't elders going to "know more" than many "preachers" (Titus 1:5-9)? Didn't the Apostles "know more" than the evangelists in the first century that they trained? Didn't Jesus know more than the Apostles? A person of real knowledge would apply that knowledge (James 1:21-25). A person of real knowledge would emphasize action over stored information in the mind.

The Scriptural Emphasis Of Action

Faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). What is knowledge without application? Here is the Scriptural answer to that question: *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17). What if you know more than anyone else in the congregation that you’re a member of? As we’ve already addressed, it doesn’t mean you should be more highly esteemed than others. What it does mean is that Jesus expects more out of you than everyone else.

Notice the principles taught in the following illustration Jesus gave: *“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”* (Luke 12:42-48).

If you are a knowledgeable Christian, you should already know the Lord requires much of you. What are you doing about it? God requires action of us (Luke 11:28 and Revelation 22:14). We can study and learn all we want, but it will not be a written exam that will save us or condemn us. It will be our actions or lack thereof that we are judged upon when our Lord returns (John 5:28-29 and II Corinthians 5:10). Learn and make the applications in your life so that your knowledge is shown through your actions rather than hidden in your head (Luke 19:11-27).

An Illustration Of Applying (OR NOT) Knowledge

A supposed Christian couple walks in among the assembled saints to worship. It is noticed that the man has long hair and the woman has short hair. The preacher sees such and remarks in the lesson concerning this. He teaches that it is a shame for a man to have long hair and for a woman to have short hair (I Corinthians 11:3-15). The couple was not without sin, though they were ignorant of these things, for ignorance is no excuse (Acts 17:30, I Peter 1:14-16, and I John 3:4). Having said that, they now have been surely taught that their behavior is sinful. The next time this couple arrives the man’s hair is cut and so is the woman’s. His hair is now short and hers is even shorter than his. They had knowledge, but did not apply it. She is shaming him and the Lord. He is allowing her to do it.

Conclusion

You can ever learn and never know the truth (II Timothy 3:7). It does not matter how many Scriptures you can quote or how quickly you can turn to Obadiah if you do not live the truth (Luke 6:40-49, Romans 2:13, II Peter 3:9-14, and I John 2:3-6)!