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# Words of Truth

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## What Good Is Knowing Scriptures Without Understanding Them?

By: Brian A. Yeager

The children of Israel were destroyed, sent into captivity, for a lack of knowledge (Isaiah 5:13 and Hosea 4:1-6). Concerning Israel, they erred because they had no knowledge on how to do good (Jeremiah 4:22). Knowledge is a key component in our salvation (John 8:32). Knowledge is supposed to be found among God's people (Proverbs 10:14, Proverbs 13:16, Proverbs 19:2, Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:10, and II Peter 3:18). Therefore, as we proceed, let's understand that this article is not intended to downplay the importance of knowledge.

Knowledge seems to be emphasized much more than understanding. Do you know where this verse is? Can you quote particular Scriptures? Do you know the "plan of salvation"? How many Scriptures can you chain together on a particular subject matter? Do you know the judges of Israel? Do you know all of the Apostle's names? As I have observed this amongst churches of Christ for many years, I have often thought that people confuse knowledge with memorization.

I can recall during my time preaching in Christiansburg, VA in 1999 something that has formed the way I study and teach to this very day. There was a woman who was impressed with my ability to preach a lesson from memory and quote all of the Scriptures in the lesson. She commented on this after one lesson. She loved the sermon. I asked her what she learned and she had nothing to say. She was just impressed with my "knowledge" of the Scriptures. She didn't learn anything from the lesson. I realized then that my focus on memorization of the Scriptures for a greater presentation meant the message was lost. The messenger had become more apparent than the message. This was wrong!

The truth is, my knowledge then was rather limited. My memory was much greater than my knowledge. Even worse, my understanding of the Scriptures I memorized was way more limited than my knowledge. Still, even as those things were, other "preachers" in the area had much less memory, knowledge, and no understanding of the truth. I pondered all of that during this time and refocused my attention from gaining more knowledge of words and memory to having a greater understanding of those words.

It doesn't matter how many Scriptures you "know" or can quote. If you do not understand them, the message is lost. So what if you can quote a thousand Scriptures? Do you understand those Scriptures? So what if you can speak of every Scripture about baptism? Do you understand the context of those passages and the applications for you if there are any to be made? In explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said this concerning understanding: *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side"* (Matthew 13:19).

## Hear And Understand

I thought of many ways to illustrate the importance of this subject matter. I could think of nothing remotely close to as clear as Jesus taught it. Thus, take note of the words of our Master: *“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, **Hear, and understand:** Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, **Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand,** that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man”* (Matthew 15:1-20).

The Lord expects us to understand what His will is (Ephesians 5:17). Think of a simple illustration. Prior to someone being converted (Acts 3:19), they will hear the word of God and believe it (Acts 18:8). (There is much more to the process of proper conversion, but for illustration's sake we will keep it simple.) What if someone hears everything and is ready to obey the Gospel but does not understand what they are committing to? Part of the process, often omitted by erring teachers, is counting the cost of being a disciple (Luke 14:25-33). Why does the Lord want people to count the cost of following Him? He wants them to count the cost of being His disciple so that they fully understand what they are committing to. Many are ready to follow Christ, but without proper understanding of what that means (Luke 9:57-62).

## Conclusion

At one point in time, when Israel came out of Babylonian captivity, they assembled to hear the word of God (Nehemiah 8:1-3). It wasn't enough though for them to just hear the word of God. Proper teaching meant that these individuals needed taught. The text says: *“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”* (Nehemiah 8:8). Brethren, let's learn from the Scriptures we have considered here in this text. Real learning is not about the volume of the Scriptures we can consume (II Timothy 3:7). There is no good in knowing Scriptures if you do not understand them.

## Milkshakes

### What Is The Church You Read About In The New Testament?

By: Brian A. Yeager

The question of our study would be answered in many different ways if you asked different individuals. Some think the church is a building. Some think the church is a collection of religious organizations/denominations. Some think the church is a mythical idea or a pipedream. Some think the church has come and gone. Some think the church is yet to come. On and on we could go. Yet, the word of God does not make this question difficult to answer, as do most confused people.

The church of Christ is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). The church of Christ is the people who have been saved (Acts 2:47 and I Corinthians 12:12-27). The church of Christ is the spiritual city of God that includes all just men made perfect and the angels of Heaven as well (Hebrews 12:22-23).

The church of Christ was to be established by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 16:13-18). To fulfill the promise He made, He had to die and purchase the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25). He did so. Thus, we whom are saved and are collectively called the church of Christ need to realize the heavy price that was paid for us.

The church of Christ is the house of Christ of which He is the head over (Hebrews 3:1-6). As His house, we are also known as the pillar and ground of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). This is a great responsibility that we have as the people of our Lord. The church of Christ is also known as the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:12-24, I Thessalonians 2:12, Hebrews 12:28, and Revelation 1:4-9).

The church of Christ is the only body of believers authorized by the Lord (Romans 12:4-5, Ephesians 4:4, and Colossians 3:15). The only plurality we read of in the Scriptures (Acts 9:31 and Romans 16:16) is that of separate local congregations. For example, in the Scriptures we read of churches [assemblies] in many cities (Acts 11:22, Acts 11:26, Romans 16:1-5, I Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:2, etc.).

The word translated "church" [ἐκκλησία] in Scriptures such as Matthew 16:18 means this: "a calling out, i. e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both):— assembly, church" (Strong's # 1577). Since the word can be so broad, even describing a mob (Acts 19:32), we always have to concern ourselves with the context the word is used in. Many times it is used in speaking of the local assembly of Christians (I Corinthians 14:4; 5; 12; 19; 23; 28; 33; 34; 35, I Corinthians 16:1, Colossians 4:15-16, etc.). Other times it can be used to describe the people of God as a whole to include all saved individuals (Acts 2:47) as the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23-32).

This brief study shows how simple it can be to understand what the church of Christ is. It is man that makes the simplicity of this subject difficult. We could have made this study much more in-depth and including multiple points to make it harder than need be. There simply is not the need to do so. As I reread through this I do not see a need to write a second article on the matter. Thus, we will move on to address the authorized works of the local congregation of Christ in our next study.