

YOU CAN'T KNOW WHAT YOU WON'T KNOW



KNOW, LOVE, SERVE
PART 1

T. M. MOORE

A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

You Can't Know What You Won't Know
Know, Love, Serve: Part 1
T. M. Moore
Susie Moore, Editor and Finisher

Copyright, 2019 T. M. and Susie Moore
The Fellowship of Ailbe

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Cover image: Yahoo images.

Contents

Welcome to <i>You Can't Know What You Won't Know</i>	4
1 Learners and Lights	5
2 Whad'Ya Know?	7
3 Not an Option	9
4 A Matter of the Will	12
5 Key to Knowledge	15
6 Knowing Truly	18
7 To Judge All Things	21
Questions for Reflection or Discussion	24

Welcome to *You Can't Know What You Won't Know*

Jesus has called His followers *disciples – learners*. We are commanded to learn Him, that is, to increase in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.

Learning is a very active undertaking, and it's not an option for disciples. We must devote ourselves to learning and knowing as much as we can, so that we can fulfill our calling to be witnesses to Jesus.

But this means making up our minds to learn, and devoting ourselves to this calling. Happily, we have the mind of Christ to aid us in our undertaking.

So what are we waiting for?

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

And if you find this study helpful, please let us know. How have you benefited from this study? Go to our website, www.ailbe.org, and use the Contact Us button to share your story.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Learners and Lights

Small lights can make a bright difference.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 2 Thessalonians 2.15

Small lights?

For most of us, our world revolves around relatively small stuff – going to work and church, taking care of the family, watching some TV, staying up on the news, enjoying some time with friends, pursuing leisure activities, doing the shopping, taking care of the home, going to a movie.

It's small stuff, OK; but it matters. It really does. It matters to us, at least. And it has the potential to shine the light of Christ and His love on the people to whom God sends us each day. Even the small stuff of our lives can shine with eternal brilliance, but we'll have to work at letting our light shine by growing in the knowledge of Christ and His Word.

When the lights in our home go out, we replace them; and this is pretty much what the world has been doing for two-and-a-half centuries. As the light of truth, knowledge, and grace has dimmed from within the Church – or retreated underneath the basket of our local basilica – light-starved people are seeking illumination and warmth from a wide variety of sources, none of them more than part of the truth, all of them fleeting, and many of them patently false.

As followers of the Light of the world, and those He has designated as His light to the world, we need to devote ourselves more earnestly to making our light shine, even though our light may seem the smallest flicker in the cosmic candelabra of Christian truth.

Our worlds may be small and our projects important mainly to us. But we are involved with people all the time. None of us is a hermit. We touch the lives of others, and when we touch them, we must make our best effort to enlighten, enliven, stimulate, or provoke them to think of things higher than everyday existence. We must bring *light* to their lives, for only in the light of true knowledge will the Spirit of God work for salvation.

But for this to happen, for the light of true knowledge to shine from within us once again, we're going to have to become more serious about our calling as learners.

Called learners

Christians are called to be learners. "Learner" is the basic meaning of "disciple." One is a disciple of Jesus Christ who *learns* Him, and learning Him, is obedient to His call (Eph. 4.17-24; Jn. 20.21). We need to learn what such discipleship requires. The Lord speaks to us, revealing Himself and His will, through two "books" – divine Scripture and the world of creation and culture (Pss. 19, 145; Rom. 1.18ff; Acts 14.17; etc.). He calls us to press on in knowing and obeying Him, explaining that this is the essence of the new covenant and the substance of eternal life (Hos. 6.3; Jer. 31.31-34; Jn. 17.3). And He has provided us centuries of faithful teachers to teach and show us what such discipleship entails.

We cannot fulfill our calling to know the Lord apart from a dedication to learning and obedience. If we are averse to learning, to increasing in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, then it is questionable indeed whether we are disciples of Jesus at all.

It is incumbent on all who believe to get on the path of learning and true knowledge, so that we may walk in obedience to our King, fulfill our discipleship, carry out our calling, enjoy and serve our God, and bring the light of true knowledge into our world.

Where shall we begin?

Begin here

The anonymous author of the *Liber de Ordine Creaturarum* (Irish, 7th century), who was about to compose a far-ranging summary of everything that exists, insisted that the path of knowledge is not one we invent or discover on our own: “In this we are not following an invention of our own purpose which is nothing of itself...” Rather, he went on to explain, the Scriptures and our forebears in the faith have shown us the way of true knowing. We must hold fast to the traditions revealed in Scripture as our forefathers have followed and lived them over the years.

But this means taking up the call to *learn* and *know* many things which today are of perhaps little or no interest to us. We need to learn more about Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and the faith that makes all things new. We need to learn about how our Christian forebears have applied the Gospel to such areas as art and literature, music, science, business, law, politics, government, care for the environment, and much, much more. We should learn as much as we can by as many means as we can. J. I. Packer wrote that, no matter how young or old we are as believers, we can always learn something new and useful for serving the Lord (*Finishing Our Course with Joy*). We would expect nothing less of those who are true disciples of the Lord of all knowledge.

We are the light of the world, and we are called to shine our light, be it ever so small, in such a way that people will glorify God. As we learn what this involves, we can expect our love for the Lord to grow, and our witness to His Light become increasingly more consistent and effective.

Get on the path of true knowledge. Let the Scriptures and our forebears lead you. Let your light shine! Take every thought captive and make it obedient to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10.3-5). See the world with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16). “Take My Yoke upon you and learn of Me” (Matt. 11.29).

It’s time to get knowing. It’s time to let our lights shine with the eternal brilliance of our risen Savior and King.

For Reflection

1. Why do you suppose Jesus chose to call His followers “learners”? What did He expect us to learn?
2. Why do people find learning so difficult? Should the fact that learning is difficult keep us from pursuing it? Explain.
3. Why must we have Scripture as our foundation for all true knowledge? How can we look to our Christian forebears to guide us in making our light shine more brightly?

Next Steps: Make a list of subjects you’d like to learn more about. How would learning about these help to make you a brighter light? Share your list and your thoughts with a Christian friend. Invite your friend to join you in this study.

2 Whad'Ya Know?

You know more than you might think.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 1 John 2.20, 21

... *Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Colossians 2.2, 3

Not much. You?

Humorist Michael Feldman began his weekly radio program (now [a podcast](#)) by asking the audience, “Whad’Ya Know?” To which the audience, with one voice, would reply, “Not much. You?” The program then proceeded to consider all manner of everyday things – about people, places, local histories, and things in the news – in a winsome, intelligent, enjoyable, and informative format. I enjoyed this program because it showed how illuminating and enjoyable learning new things can be, even simple, everyday things.

Michael Feldman’s question is a good one for us to consider, as those who are called to learn Jesus, Who is the treasury of wisdom and knowledge (Eph. 4.17-24; Col. 2.1-3). Just what *do* we know?

In our day the question of what we know, or can know, or ever *will* know, has largely been taken over by the disciplines of materialist science. In many ways, this is a very good thing; in other ways, it creates a major obstacle to growing in true knowledge. The process and disciplines whereby scientists come to know things are referred to as “sciences”; and “science” is regarded as the primary means of knowing truth, especially to scientists and those who look up to them.

And right there is the problem.

As Dr. Harvey Mansfield complained in a recent issue of *City Journal*, “To scientists, the university is divided into science and non-science; the latter is not knowledge and likely to be mush...”

On these terms, since most of us are not scientists, what we claim to know is regarded as mush – soft, squishy, unreliable, and in the end, irrelevant to *real* knowing. Since we do not conduct our lives each day according to carefully considered scientific theories or formulas, whatever we might claim to know is regarded by our secular age either as tentative or merely personal. Which is to say, mush.

But is it true that human beings cannot know anything truly unless and until that claim to knowledge, whatever it may be, has been subjected to rigorous testing, evaluation, trial, publication, and replication by other “knowers”? Not even the most devoted materialist would make such a claim. There’s more knowing going on in the world than the boundaries of science can contain. We may puzzle at the apostle John’s saying that we who believe in Jesus know “all things”, but the fact is, we know a lot more than we think. And in the power and perspective of the Spirit, what we actually *do* know can take on a brilliance that can be illuminating.

The problem of knowledge

All this points to what philosopher A. J. Ayer referred to as “the problem of knowledge”: What does it mean to know? How can we know anything? And how can we know that we know it? Obviously, these are important questions, since virtually all our conscious actions in the world, all day long, are based on what we know, or think we know.

Happily, for most of us, the things we know, and of which we are fairly well assured, typically work out as we

expect: That driver in the other lane will obey the law and not suddenly veer in front of me. My employer will reward my labors every two weeks with a paycheck. My family will be waiting for me at home. My friends really do like me. Mashing this button on something called a “remote” will activate my CD player, and the particular choice I have indicated will bring pleasure and relaxation after a long day at work. And so on. We know all these things, but not because science tells us they are so.

Even more important for the followers of Christ, we know *Him*, know that our sins are forgiven, know that we have an eternal home with Him, know that He dwells in us and is transforming us by His Word and Spirit, and know that His Kingdom is coming on earth as it is in heaven. We know that His Word is truth, that prayer is real, and there is more to the world and reality than what we can see, hear, feel, taste, or touch. And we know all of this by means other than the latest reports in *Nature* or *Scientific American*.

Which thus begs the question, what *is* knowledge, what is it *for*, and how can we acquire it?

For the vast majority of our decisions each day, we act on knowledge which we have acquired by some means other than the protocols of science. And, since the actions we take on the basis of such knowledge combine to produce the daily routines on which we depend, we should have a better understanding of the process of knowing and the proper ends to which all knowledge should be put.

The source and end of knowing

All true knowledge issues, by a variety of means, from the treasury of knowledge which is in Christ Jesus (Col. 2.1-3). True knowledge derives from Him, belongs to Him, and is intended for His purposes. Further, everything we know, or might come to know, can help us grow in the knowledge of Jesus, which is eternal life (Jn. 17.3), and equip us to fulfill our calling as His witnesses (Acts 1.8). But we must *know* what we know, and *use* what we know *consciously, creatively, consistently, and fruitfully* in obedient service to the Lord. Since all that we know can enhance our walk with and work for the Lord, it behooves us to devote ourselves to learning as much as we can. We must never be content to say “Not much”, when the question of what we know is posed.

For in the end, *all* that we know, and everything we may *come to know*, can help us in knowing Jesus and making Him known in the world. And this is why He has left us here as disciples.

For Reflection

1. How is it evident that the world looks to science as the primary way of knowing anything for certain? Why is this a good thing? Why is this a problem?
2. John says that the Spirit within us enables us to know “all things”. What does he mean by that?
3. All knowledge derives from and leads to Christ. How can you see that in your daily life?

Next Steps – Preparation: Take five minutes – just five minutes – and meditate on what you know about the day ahead. Let this exercise lead you to praise Jesus and to prepare you to use what you know in His service today.

3 Not an Option

This way to a fuller life of worship and service.

*Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
For I believe Your commandments.* Psalm 119.66

The knowledge option is not an option

We don't have to look very hard into the Christian community to realize that, for many believers – if not most – increasing in knowledge is even an option.

How many believers, for example, are faithful in searching the Scriptures daily, to learn more of the truth of God for all aspects of their lives (Acts 17.11)? How many would consider themselves students of the times we live in, so that they might better understand how to serve the Lord effectively (1 Chron. 12.32; Eph. 4.11, 12)? How many are diligent readers, as opposed to casual web-surfers or inveterate TV-watchers? Are the Bible study opportunities offered at our churches packed with believers, eager to learn more of God's truth?

Clearly, for most Christians, increasing in knowledge – both of new things and of deeper insights to the things we already know – is something to take or leave. And most choose to leave it. After all, they might protest, Paul said that knowledge puffs up (1 Cor. 8.1), and we don't want to be like those snooty know-it-alls who parade their learning like some badge of honor!

And, of course, that is correct. But the Spirit Who dwells in us, sent from the Fount of all knowing and all knowledge, is eager to unpack for our benefit more of the “all things” He brings for our encouragement, edification, and empowerment. God, Solomon said, has made us with eternity in our hearts; and we are called to discover and know, as fully as we can, all that pertains to living for Him (Eccl. 1.13; 3.9-11). The psalmist eagerly sought the Lord's instruction in knowledge and good judgment, seeing this as the logical outworking of his belief in the Word of God (Ps. 119.66). Believers constitute a royal priesthood, called to serve God and the world (1 Pet. 2.8, 9); and, as Malachi reminds us, the words of our mouths and works of our hands should be informed by sound knowledge, grounded in the Scriptures (Mal. 2.7).

It is clear, therefore, that increasing in knowledge is not an option for the believer. Either we are growing in knowledge – beginning with the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ – or we are living in disobedience to our calling.

Whad'Ya Know?

Believers should be eager to hear that casual greeting often employed between friends: “Hey, how ya doin'? Whad'Ya know?” Here is an invitation to draw from the Treasury of all knowledge and bear witness to the beauty, goodness, and wisdom of our God.

If, that is, we have prepared ourselves for such opportunities.

But if we are to increase in knowledge, what should be the focus of our efforts?

In the preface to his book, *On the Freedom of the Will*, Jonathan Edwards wrote, “Of all kinds of knowledge that we can ever obtain, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves, are the most important. As religion is the great business for which we are created, and on which our happiness depends; and as religion consists in an intercourse between ourselves and our Maker; and so has its foundation in God's nature and

ours, and in the relation that God and we stand in to each other; therefore a true knowledge of both must be needful, in order to true religion.”¹

We need true and increasing knowledge of God, and we need true and increasing knowledge of ourselves, and of everything with which we surround, occupy, adorn, or concern ourselves in this world. Such knowledge does not have to puff us up; rather, it may shape us for loving God and our neighbors, so that our worship of God improves, and our service to our neighbors is more consistent and effective.

Two reasons to increase in knowledge

There are thus two basic reasons for seeking to increase in knowledge. The first is that we might better know Him Who is the Treasury of all knowledge (Col. 2.2, 3). Eternal life consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ (Jn. 17.3), and the apostle Peter commands his readers to grow in such knowledge (2 Pet. 3.18). We can never exhaust the depths of what may be known of God, whether through the study of His Word or the contemplation of His world. Such study is indispensable for living as true disciples, and should have the highest place in each believer's daily agenda.

The second reason is that we can use our knowledge to edify others. We must not seek knowledge for its own sake, merely to know something for our own satisfaction. This is purely self-serving and can lead to a puffed-up ego that looks haughtily on others. Knowledge is a resource for growing us more completely into the image of Christ, and for equipping us to serve others well. As we increase in the knowledge of God, we will grow in our desire to know ourselves, our world, our times, the people God puts in our lives, and the infinitely many and varied ways that God surrounds us with His grace each day.

All who believe are priests unto the Lord, and are charged with the task of ministering His Word to the people in their Personal Mission Field. How shall we make ready for this high and holy calling? What is our duty?

To guard knowledge (Mal. 2.7)! That is, to acquire and possess knowledge, especially of the Lord and His Law and all His Word, but also of ourselves and our world; and to use our increasing knowledge to serve the Lord and glorify Him in even the smallest and most everyday aspects of our lives (1 Cor. 10.31).

Increasing in such knowledge does not come without effort. And it is not kept at the ready without continuous reflection, meditation, planning, preparation, and application. So let's make up our minds to become increasingly devoted to this effort, so that should the question be posed to us, "Whad'Ya know?", we might answer with grace, truth, and light from the Lord.

For reflection

1. Why do you suppose so many Christians consider growing in knowledge to be an option? What would you say to such a person?
2. What are some things you might do to improve your efforts at knowing the Lord? At knowing yourself and your world?
3. The Holy Spirit possesses "all things" to fit us for loving God and our neighbors. What should be our attitude toward His work of teaching in our lives?

¹ Edwards, Jonathan. The Works of Jonathan Edwards, volume 1 of 2, *On the Freedom of the Will* (Samizdat Edition with Active Table of Contents), improved 2/5/2011 (Kindle Locations 12725-12727). B&R Samizdat Express. Kindle Edition. (Samizdat Edition with Active Table of Contents), improved 2/5/2011 (Kindle Locations 12796-12799). B&R Samizdat Express. Kindle Edition.

You Can't Know What You Won't Know

Next steps – Transformation: What will you do today to improve your efforts at knowing the Lord? How can you bring those efforts more consistently into your whole day? Talk with a Christian friend about these questions.

4 A Matter of the Will

Learning is hard; but that's no excuse for not learning.

*The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge,
But He overthrows the words of the faithless.* Proverbs 22.12

Knowledge is out there

Knowledge is simply whatever can be known. What can be known – about God, ourselves, and our world – is objective reality; it's really out there. All that can be known is upheld by the powerful Word of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 1.3), Who preserves knowledge so that it can serve His eternal purposes. We need not fear that reality is some elusive, ephemeral, or shape-shifting thing, knowable only for a moment before it becomes something else. Knowledge is out there, inherent in the stuff of the cosmos; and God Himself preserves it for us to advance the purposes of faith in a world of widespread unbelief.

To know that God Himself is so intimately and continuously invested in what can be known should excite us to learn as much as we can. Knowledge is like an inheritance that parents lay up for their children, a rich endowment to be used, at the right time, for their wellbeing. But, unlike worldly inheritances, that which God is preserving for us is available in increments now. And while in the here and now we only know in part, yet we may know truly (1 Cor. 13.12; Eccl. 3.9-11), and what we may know is granted to us by God, so that we may live for His glory in all the everyday details of our lives (1 Cor. 4.7; 10.31).

All reality – and hence, all *knowledge* of reality – bears witness to God (Ps. 19.1-4; Rom. 1.18-21). All the stuff of the cosmos can teach us to know and love God, and fit us for serving others in His Name. God guards knowledge for this reason – that in our hands, it might realize its purpose and bear faithful witness to Him, and thus bring eternal benefit to others.

For example, Paul told the people of Lystra that their work in the fields – sowing, weeding, harvesting, preparing the soil, sharpening their tools, marketing their grain, making bread, and everything they needed to know to maintain this effort – bore witness to God, and was preserved by Him precisely for that purpose (Acts 14.17). That must have come as a surprise to those unknowing pagans, but it was no surprise to Paul; and he didn't hesitate to use his knowledge of their situation to press his own witness for Christ.

We should seek to be more like Paul and less like the unbelieving Lystrans when it comes to knowing God's witness in the stuff of the world.

All knowledge, being kept by God, unites to declare Him (Ps. 19.1-4); and it is thus the case that any knowledge we may acquire about anything what's no over has potential to enhance our lives as worshipers and equip us as witnesses for Jesus Christ. All knowledge is only complete when it leads us to the knowledge of God and worship. But knowledge will be of use to us in our witness for Christ if we *will not* seek it.

Equipped with knowledge

It is *God's will* that His people acquire knowledge and understanding, both the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves, as well as of the world and people. He has provided pastors and teachers for us, whose calling is to equip the people of God with knowledge and understanding, so that they can do those works of ministry that build the church in unity and maturity in the Lord (Eph. 4.11-16; Jer. 3.13).

But if we are hardened against, or even merely indifferent to, learning and knowledge, or lazy about the pursuit of it, and thus have become *prejudiced* against knowing, we are resisting the manifest will of God for

our lives. God *wills* that we should increase in knowledge. If we do not similarly *will*, then we are opposing His plan for our lives, whether or not we recognize or acknowledge this to be so.

We must not allow an unrecognized prejudice against learning and knowledge to rob us of the enriched experience of God and life that lies along this path. We “can’t know what we don’t know”, wrote novelist and historian Marilyn Robinson (“Theology for the Moment,” in *What Are We Doing Here?*). Unacknowledged prejudice against knowing robs us of rich treasures of knowledge, and hence of a fuller and more fruitful life.

But even more to the point, we can’t know what we *won’t* know, that is, what we *will not* learn. If we have *prejudged* that we already know enough, don’t need to learn more about the Lord or His will, or that knowing ourselves and our world better is too difficult, or just too much trouble, or something better left for others, then we’re going to resist – consciously or unconsciously – attempts on the part of pastors, teachers, writers, and others to move us to pursue greater heights of knowing.

Such prejudice against learning and knowing is a condition not to be tolerated among the followers of Jesus Christ. We are His disciples, His *learners*, and we must make the most of every opportunity to increase in knowledge, and to resist whatever seeks to discourage us from such an effort.

The fruit of knowledge

The pursuit of knowledge is a demanding task, as Solomon acknowledged (Eccl. 1.12, 13); but the fruit of it can be most worthwhile. Peter said that grace and peace can be ours as we increase in the knowledge that God is preserving for us (2 Pet. 1.2). And Paul shows in many ways how increased knowledge can enrich our worship of God and open doors of opportunity for bearing witness to Him.

Grace and peace are the hallmarks and privilege of those who have eternal life, that is, of those who know God and Jesus Christ. We may increase in grace and peace by increasing in eternal life, in the knowledge of God and Christ. Grace not only reveals the riches of God’s love for us, and thus endears us to Him more; it also fits us with power for serving others, so that we may channel the grace of God to the world more consistently and effectively and unto greater fruitfulness.

Increasing in peace brings that inward sense of wellbeing which is the narthex to joy, and which endures regardless of outward circumstances. It fosters that deep-seated hope of glory that becomes visible in everything we do, prompting many to ask a reason for the hope that is within us, and thus opening the door for our witness (1 Pet. 3.15). Such peace and hope increase as we grow in the knowledge of God and ourselves.

We can grow in the knowledge of the Lord, as well as ourselves and our concerns, and thus in grace and peace; and it is the Lord’s will that we should do so. It would seem to be a sin, or at least a mark of folly, not to do so.

We are called to seek knowledge, but we must want to do so. Pray that God will give you such a desire. Make it your daily request to increase in knowledge, then set a plan for learning all that you can. Find a friend to learn with you. Set your plan before the Lord, and ask Him, like Solomon of old, to give you wisdom and knowledge, so that you may know Him better, love Him more, and serve the people to whom He sends you day by day.

For reflection

1. Why is it God’s will that we should increase in knowledge? How does that benefit us? How does it conduce the progress of faith in the world?
2. What are the main obstacles to increasing in knowledge? How can believers help one another to overcome

these?

3. Why should we expect increasing in knowledge to enhance our worship of God and make our witness for Christ more consistent and effective?

Next Steps – Preparation: Pray about the day ahead of you. What opportunities for increasing in knowledge do you expect to encounter? Who might benefit from you increasing in knowledge in this area? How?

5 Key to Knowledge

True knowledge is gained within the framework of the Kingdom.

“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.” Luke 11.52

The goal and promise of true knowledge

We are pressing the point that Christians, who are called to be *disciples* or *learners* of Jesus Christ, should devote themselves to learning, that they might increase in true knowledge.

All true knowledge can enrich our relationship with God, since all things exist by Him, are sustained by Him, and bear witness to Him, in order to glorify and make Him known (Rom. 11.36). The more of all things we know, the more we will realize our true purpose and greatest happiness in eternal life, which is to know God and Jesus Christ.

We do not seek knowledge as an end in itself, that we should be puffed up with pride because we consider that we know more than others. We seek knowledge because it leads us to a deeper and more constant awareness of God, and an ever-increasing experience of eternal life. Since all true knowledge is *from* God, all knowledge is true as it leads us *to* God, to a fuller understanding of His greatness and glory, and a deeper and more joyful relationship with Him. Christians seek to know as much as they can because they may, in all that they know, increase their delight in the Lord, glorify Him more consistently in the world, and fulfill their calling as witnesses to Jesus Christ.

The fruit of true knowledge is greater grace in our Lord Jesus Christ – a more constant awareness and appreciation of His lovingkindness and faithfulness, and a more powerful and transforming experience of the renewal He brings to all of life. As we increase in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3.18), we experience more continuously the peace that passes understanding, and that leads us into the joy of the Lord.

Christians should thus be eager and active in the pursuit of true knowledge, for the more we know, the more of God and His many virtues and blessings become our cherished privilege and possession.

But the kind of knowing we are focusing on in this study requires a proper framework and setting – a key which can unlock all the riches of the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.

And that key is the Kingdom of God.

Knowing and the Kingdom

The parallel of Luke 11.52 is Matthew 23.13: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” Taking these passages together, it is clear that, according to Jesus, the key to knowledge is entering and living within the Kingdom of God. We know nothing, or, at best, know anything only imperfectly, unless we know it with reference to the Kingdom of God. If our experience of salvation is not as broad as the Kingdom of God, then we shall struggle not only to know true knowledge, but even to *want* to know it.

This was the gist of Solomon’s argument in Ecclesiastes. “Under the sun” – knowing and living in any aspect of life apart from God and His Word – leads only to vanity and feeding on the wind. True life and knowledge

are known “under heaven”, in continuous pursuit of God and His will.

The knowledge we possess and acquire is improved and perfected from within the framework of the Kingdom of God, when seeking righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit are our overarching and ultimate objective (Rom. 14.17, 18; Matt. 6.33). The Gospel Jesus and Paul proclaimed and taught is the Gospel of the Kingdom, not merely of salvation. It speaks to all of life, since all of life has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. It calls us to take every thought captive for obedience to Jesus Christ, Who is making all things new.

All knowledge requires a frame of reference. We cannot know what a football is or is for apart from the game, the teams, the rules, and the field. We need a proper framework to understand what a football is and how it is to be used. The same is true of all knowledge. Nothing is a fact merely unto itself, and nothing exists apart from God’s purpose and will, and hence, with anything other than the meaning He assigns. If our frame of reference is not the Kingdom of God then it will be some variation on the “under the sun” kingdom of man, even if, like the lawyers and scribes and Pharisees, we dress it up in God-talk.

Thus, if we would know truly – whatever we are seeking to know – so that we increase in God, grace, peace, and joy, we must seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, so that all the boon and benefits of knowing anything may be added to us.

Seeking the Kingdom

Seeking the Kingdom involves a life of earnest prayer, deep study and meditation – especially of God’s Word; it requires mutual encouragement, edification, and assistance, and continuous monitoring of progress. Seeking the rule of King Jesus embraces all things in our lives, for all things have come to us from Him, are sustained with us through Him, and are designed to lead us unto Him, for His praise and glory. Jesus spent three years instructing His disciples in the Kingdom, then forty days more after His resurrection (Acts 1.3). All true knowledge is Kingdom knowledge and points to, culminates in, and finds its meaning in Christ, Who is all Truth and all Knowledge and all Wisdom. Christ rules His Kingdom unto the glory of God, administering from the treasure of knowledge and wisdom all that we need to glorify Him in even the smallest, most everyday aspects of our lives (1 Cor. 10.31).

We are on the path of true knowledge when Christ is our objective, His Kingdom is our context, His Word illuminates our every step, His Spirit is our Teacher, the people we are called to serve are the beneficiaries of all our knowledge, the reconciling of all things to God is our portfolio, and His glory is our constant theme and end. As we make progress on this path, the Kingdom of God increases on earth as it is in heaven, and grace and peace and joy are our constant companions.

Our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12) entails the mandate to seek the Kingdom, and to construct our Christian worldview within that framework. The Kingdom of God is the key to all knowing, for only within its framework, in the active pursuit of its greater coming, will the knowledge we possess find its true use and end. Have you entered that Kingdom? Do you know its transforming power (1 Cor. 4.20)? Are you seeking and bearing its fruit? And do you know – *know* – the joy of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which pervades that Kingdom for true knowledge in every area and aspect of life?

For Reflection

1. Why should Christians be eager and active learners?
2. What makes the Kingdom of God the only proper framework for the pursuit of true knowledge?
3. What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God?

You Can't Know What You Won't Know

Next Steps – Preparation: How well do you understand the nature of the Kingdom of God and what it means to seek that Kingdom? In what areas of your life will you seek the Kingdom of God today? How will this affect your outlook on those areas? Talk with a Christian friend about these questions.

6 Knowing Truly

All true knowing stops at Jesus.

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” John 5.39

*All Your works shall praise You, O LORD,
And Your saints shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And talk of Your power,
To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.* Psalm 145.10-12

... Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2.2, 3

Whad'ya know?

I have been arguing the point that, we who have eternal life should be consistently about the task of improving our experience of this great gift by taking seriously our calling to learn Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24), by all the means available to us. “And this is eternal life,” Jesus explained, “that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent” (Jn. 17.3). Since Jesus is the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of the Father (Heb. 1.3), by focusing on knowing Him, we increase in the gift of eternal life and all its many benefits.

Jesus is infinitely beautiful, wise, good, compassionate, loving, and powerful. We can never plumb the depths of the knowledge of Christ, and so we must not become complacent about increasing in it. As Peter insisted, we must seek always to grow in the grace *and knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ, for this is the great privilege, joy, and end of our salvation (2 Pet. 3.18).

Christians should always be at the ready to talk about Jesus, to extol His many virtues, point out the manifestations of His grace, relate the experience of His forgiveness, demonstrate the reality of His love, and encourage others to taste and see just how wondrously good He is. Everything in our lives derives from and bears witness to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We only know our lives in part, incompletely, if we are not able to see the connection between the things we know and the Lord Who is the source and end of all knowing.

Increasing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is not an option for believers. We are to take His yoke upon us and *learn* of Him (Matt. 11.29), by every means at our disposal, at every opportunity, and for the end of increasing our joy and improving our witness to Him. If we *will not* learn Jesus, and increase in knowing Him, then we resist the manifest will of God for our lives, forfeit the boundless joy He intends for us, compromise our witness and reason for being, and cast doubt on our claim to be His followers.

What do we know? We may not know much – or think we don’t know much – but everything we know is a gift from and signpost to Jesus. The better we know things, and the more things we know, the richer and more fruitful will be our walk with and work for the Lord.

The knowing stops here

Knowledge of anything is incomplete until it arrives at Jesus Christ. All things are from Him, through Him, and unto Him, as Paul reminds us (Rom. 11.36). The better we know that portion of “all things” which enters our experience, the more we may honor Jesus with our lives and lips, both in worshiping and bearing witness

to Him at every opportunity.

What does this require? How can we improve all that we know, and add to it, so that the Presence of Jesus is always before us, and we are always finding ourselves in the ambience of His joy and love?

The implications and scope of our calling to know Jesus are staggering. All our study of Scripture should lead us to see Jesus more clearly. As He Himself said, He's there on every page, showing us more about Himself and, hence, about our Father and His. We must pore over the Scriptures with a view to encountering Jesus. Not that we skip the more obvious things of the Word – its doctrines, promises, commands, and virtuous examples. But that beyond even these, we seek Jesus in the Bible – some new detail, perspective, insight, or depth of clarity about Him.

Further, because the *works* of Jesus also declare Him, we must see those works, and everything they encompass – which is everything that exists – as pointing to Jesus, reminding us of His grace, enlarging on His beauty or wisdom, inviting us into His Presence and power, and leading us to give thanks and praise for the myriad ways He shows Himself to be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28.20). Only when we see Jesus in the works by which He blesses and sustains us, will we achieve that continuous communion with Him that leads us into His praise and our joy.

All knowing stops with Jesus. Jesus is the reason and explanation – the *Logos* – for everything, and everything we know or might come to know invites us to gain a deeper, richer, more satisfying, fulfilling, and fruitful relationship with Him.

Knowing Jesus

How, then, may we increase in this glorious and life-changing knowledge of Jesus Christ?

First, we must begin the pursuit of knowing by embracing as the end of all our knowing some clearer understanding of Christ. Like those ancient Greeks, we would see Jesus (Jn. 12.20, 21). All knowledge, about anything and everything, can lead to a more expansive and intimate view of Christ. Whatever you're reading, studying, or trying to learn, by whatever means you are seeking to know, wrestle with your subject until Jesus releases the blessing of Himself, so that you increase in the knowledge of our beautiful Savior.

Second, all knowledge should lead to worship, since to know Christ is to worship Him. Let this be increasingly the case in your life. Expect to worship Jesus throughout the day. Listen for every "call to worship" that comes from the things you know and are learning to know. A simple word of thanksgiving or praise, or an extended encomium of joy for this, that, or the other, is appropriate at all times, throughout the day, and in every situation, even in the midst of people who have no interest in God.

Third, all knowledge, being knowledge of Christ, must be invested according to His agenda, which is that His Kingdom should come on earth as it is in heaven; thus, all knowledge must be made to serve the purpose of glorifying God by good works that make disciples, build the Church, and further Christ's rule over all things. As we shall see in our next installment, those who know their God *act* on that knowledge, to bring the rule of King Jesus to expression on earth as it is in heaven.

Whatever we know or may know can lead us into exciting, amazing, and life-changing experiences of Jesus, and to the confidence, ebullience, and power that can make us effective as His witnesses in the world. So let's get on with the knowing – *truly* knowing all things to the praise and for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to say that all true knowing stops with Jesus? Why is this necessarily so?

You Can't Know What You Won't Know

2. Should Christians be content only with *partial* knowing? Explain.
3. What can we do to see Jesus more consistently in our reading and study of Scripture?

Next Steps – Preparation: Peter says we are to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. What steps can you take to accelerate that process in your own life?

T. M. Moore

Need help understanding the Kingdom of God? Order a copy of our book, The Kingdom Turn, by [clicking here](#).

We hope you find ReVision to be a helpful resource in your walk with and work for the Lord. If so, please prayerfully consider supporting The Fellowship of Ailbe with your prayers and gifts. We ask the Lord to move and enable many more of our readers to provide for the needs of our ministry. Please seek Him in prayer concerning your part in supporting our work. You can contribute online via PayPal, or by sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

7 To Judge All Things

All things are ours to judge and use for God's glory.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2.12-16

In your right mind

Who wants to be a 98-pound weakling in the life of faith? A wimp, to be bullied by the world and cowed by taunting friends or co-workers? Who wants to be a do-nothing couch potato in the Name of the Lord? Would we not all rather be strong and do great things for the Lord and His Kingdom? The followers of Christ are *commanded* to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6.10). Further, Jesus *promised* that, if we truly believe and follow Him, we will do greater works than even He Himself did while amongst us on earth (Jn. 14.12).

Shouldn't this be what we *want*, what we aspire to, what we strive every day to achieve? To be strong and do great works for the Lord?

But how can we get to the place where we are strong in God's power and able to do mighty works? The Lord Himself told Daniel (Dan. 11.32): "the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*." It is a mark of those who truly know the Lord, that they are strong in their faith – even in the face of mockers, deniers, opposers, and troublemakers of all sorts – and they do great works – like Jesus did, but even more.

Have you made up your mind to *want* to grow in the knowledge of Jesus? To increase in the knowledge of Jesus by every means, as fully and fruitfully as possible? You can't know what you *won't* know, and wanting to know is a decision you must make and renew daily.

We have the mind of Christ! Do you suppose the mind of Christ would be indifferent to or sluggardly about knowing more of God? If you are *not* willing to get on board with growing in the knowledge of the Lord, you are thinking with the wrong mind. Put another way, you're not in your right mind. Your *right* mind is the mind of Christ – to know, love, and serve Him as fully as possible. Your *wrong* mind is unmoved by such a prospect, and simply wants a faith that is comfortable, untroubling, and demands as little as possible.

That's not the road Jesus walked, and it's not the road they walk who truly follow Him.

Know the givens

Paul says that God has freely given us things to know. Gifts of revelation and grace abound to us day by day, as the Lord calls out to us from His Word and from His world, so that we might see Jesus and increase in Him. But we must *truly* know the things freely given to us, and know them within the framework of Christ's Kingdom agenda, and not merely as people in the world know them.

The Spirit can teach us all things, since we have the mind of Christ and are thus set and inclined to learn Him. But knowing with the mind of Christ, knowing the things freely given to us, knowing by the help of the indwelling Spirit of God, and knowing so that everything we know leads us to know, love, and serve Jesus

more consistently and fruitfully – such knowing doesn't just happen. Make up your mind that you are going to get on the path that leads to increased knowledge of God. Take your soul out of cruise control and step on the gas to make further, faster improvement in knowing Jesus.

God has freely given us *the entire world*: “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men” (Ps. 115.16). All plants and animals, all terrestrial features and ecosystems, every aspect of culture, all of life in society, things present and things past, things beautiful and things difficult to know (Eccl. 1.12, 13). With the mind of Christ, rooted in His Word, all this which God has freely given us can help us grow in the knowledge of Him Who saved us and keeps us for His eternal glory. As disciples – learners – of Jesus, we are privileged to learn as much as possible, so that we may take *every* thought captive, and put *all things* under our feet, so that everything God has freely given us leads us deeper into Jesus and the life of following Him (2 Cor. 10.3-5; Heb. 2.5-9).

As we come to know these things, we will grow strong in the Lord, and our love for Him will increase with great confidence and joy. And then, Paul says, we will talk to others about this world and everything in it, not in the ways “under the sun” people do, but in the exalted “under heaven” terms that help us bring the glory of God to light throughout creation, and to exalt Jesus, Who rules all things for His glory.

Have you made up your mind to take on this high and holy calling?

Competent judges

God expects us to judge everything He has freely given us, so that we might understand its true nature and purpose, and use it according to His good plan (1 Cor. 2.15). That Greek word, ἀνακρίνω (*anakerino*) means “to try to learn the nature or truth of something by the process of careful study, evaluation and judgment – to examine carefully, to investigate, to study thoroughly” (Louw and Nida). When we are truly living under the power and by the leading of the Spirit, we can make right judgments about everything, understanding how everything fits into the divine economy and contributes to bringing glory to God and Jesus Christ.

Christians are the people wearing 4-D glasses in a 4-D world, where everyone else is wearing only 3-D glasses, and thus is missing all the best parts of the show. We know this world is spiritual. We know all things come from and are sustained by God. We know that all things reveal the glory of God and have been freely given to those who know Him to aid them in being strong and doing great works for His glory. We *know* this.

Meanwhile, people in the world can only make out the barest outlines of things. Everything looks to them like trees, walking. They can't see into the world deeply enough to get to the truth that is in Jesus. It falls to us to speak the things God has freely given to us in such a way as to communicate our hope, shine the light of truth, and bring the goodness of God to light in the land of the living. The more diligent we are in seeking to know the Lord – by all the means He has freely given to us – the more we will refract the reality of Jesus to the people around us, so that, when we talk about Him, and how we see and love and serve Him in all things, there will be no doubt in anyone's mind about where we stand and what we seek.

They who know their God are strong and do exploits. And one of those great exploits must be increasing in knowing the things that have been freely given to us by God, so that we might rightly judge all things, and boldly speak about all things unto the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But you can't know what you won't know. Won't you decide, right now, that you will take up the adventure of getting to know Jesus better, through all the things and by every means God has freely given to us?

For reflection

1. What does it mean to be strong and do great exploits in the Name of the Lord? Should this promise guide our everyday lives? Explain.

You Can't Know What You Won't Know

2. What would keep you from wanting to increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ?
3. How can believers help one another to grow in the knowledge of the Lord?

Next Steps – Preparation: Make up your mind to learn more of the things freely given to us, so that you can judge how to use them for Christ and His Kingdom. What will this require of you? Whom can you enlist to support and assist you?

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why is it significant that Jesus called His followers *disciples* and not *students*?
2. All things are from Jesus, by Jesus, and for Jesus, according to Paul. What does this say about the importance of learning?
3. Learning means increasing in knowing, and what we are to know is Jesus – Whom to know is eternal life. What does it mean to know Jesus? How do we increase in the knowledge of Jesus?
4. The Kingdom of God is the only proper framework for increasing in true knowledge. Why? Why does this make Matthew 6.33 so important?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.