

Knowledge

Introduction

In our previous lesson we discussed the need for *moral excellence, virtue*, or as the Christian Standard Bible translates it, *goodness*. It's a term full of nobility and dignity. It often described the fulfillment of a task with excellence. For the Christian, this *goodness* or *moral excellence* is never to be lived in secret, but out in the open, within our normal daily life, for all to see.

In this lesson, we now focus on the heart of *goodness*, which is *knowledge*.

Sometimes for us, the idea of acquiring spiritual knowledge is intimidating. We look at the Bible sitting on our desk and the thought of how much we don't know may come to mind. There may be certain passages we have wrestled with in understanding for most of our life. How do we challenge ourselves to break through these things and go farther?

In this lesson we'll define the knowledge Peter references here. We'll also talk about how God wants us to be filled with the knowledge of His word so that we can become more like Christ. And finally, we'll share three practical suggestions on how you can become more effective in growing in grace and knowledge.

Defining the “Knowledge” of 2 Peter 1.5

In their teachings on moral ethics, Greeks used two words for the one word we use in English for *knowledge*. First, they used *sophia* to refer to the knowledge of “first causes and of deep and ultimate things.” Second, they used *gnosis*, the word Peter uses in our text, to refer to the “ability to apply to particular situations the ultimate knowledge which *Sophia* gives.”²²

In other words, the spiritual *knowledge* Peter references is simply the divine truth that serves as the foundation of spiritual discernment and wisdom.²³ It is the wise practice in daily life of what one has learned of God's will.²⁴ For example, a football player may know all the rules of the game, but effective play requires knowing how to handle and move the ball down the field. The Biblical knowledge we possess enables us to make the proper decisions in life. This leads to us to pursue the right course and move with honor and effectiveness in our day-to-day circumstances.

In Colossians 1.9-11 Paul's prayer for the Christians in that city is notably important. There he prays that they be *filled* with knowledge.

²² Barclay, p. 348.

²³ MacArthur, p. 40.

²⁴ Harvey, Robert, and Philip H. Towner. *2 Peter & Jude*. Edited by Grant R. Osborne. Vol. 18. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2009, p. 43.

For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully

– Colossians 1.9-11

In verse 9, “filled” means *to fill to completeness*. It implies the absence of anything else. It wasn't good enough that they just know facts, but that they be dominated by those facts. The idea is that the knowledge they acquired would totally change and control their life. The more we spiritual knowledge we acquire, the more it will squeeze out any desire to do things that are contrary to God's will.

God Wants to Give you Knowledge

In 1 Corinthians 1.5 Paul spoke of God's desire to *enrich you ... in all speech and all knowledge*. God is not stingy ... He is more than generous and will do all that is necessary to equip us with everything we need to be successful. Remember what Peter said at the beginning of 2 Peter 1: *His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness*.

Also, consider Philippians 1.8-11. As you read this passage below, give attention to the practical purposes behind receiving knowledge. Knowledge helps us:

- *Approve the things that are superior.*
- *Become pure and blameless.*
- *Be filled with the fruit of righteousness.*
- *Bring glory and praise to God.*

Paul says:

For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

– Philippians 1.8-11

Again, focus on what God gives us in this passage. He supplies is with everything we need in order to live the type of life He desires. Referencing again the Colossians 1.9 passage, it is God who does the filling. Our job is cooperation.

How to Grow in Knowledge

Develop Your Desire

What did Jesus make the center of His life?

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work,” Jesus told them.

– John 4.34

For Jesus, doing the will of the Father was everything. It was as vital as food for Him. Likewise, as His disciples, our mission is the same, i.e., to carry out the will of the Father and that of His Son.

Earlier I mentioned how sometimes Scripture has an intimidation factor. *There is so much I don't know. How will I ever learn it all? There are so many things that are so hard to understand.* These feelings are not unique, so we must be careful that we do not make the study of God's word harder than it should be. Scripture is not hard to learn, but if we're going to learn there must first be a desire to learn.

If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.

– John 7.17

If we want to, it is there for the taking. We can learn it. And the promise is that the Spirit will help. As He does, we have the responsibility to engage our mind and cooperate with God as we take in what He has revealed by the Word.

Eliminate things that hamper your spiritual development

A commitment to growing in knowledge will involve the need to say “no.” To what? *Anything that directs you to embrace empty, deceitful philosophies that is according to human tradition and the elemental spirits of the world,* Colossians 2.8. The knowledge of the world is passing away. Much of it is corrupt and will matter little once this life is over.

Instead, focus on *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things,* Philippians 4.8.

Embrace opportunities to learn

As I write this lesson, football season is upon us. (At least it is in theory with all the abbreviated practices and game schedules for this fall.) Teams are gathering for fall camp. Starting positions are being battled for. All the dates of rivalry games have been circled on the calendar. Some teams are thinking about getting to the playoffs this year ... and still others are dreaming of a national championship. In order to be successful, the players have to seize every opportunity to learn. They have to be present at the practices. They have to study the playbook. They have to listen to the coaches, who hand out correction and encouragement. And they have to embrace it all with great desire and enthusiasm.

What about us when it comes to receiving the knowledge God has provided? If we want to be effective and successful players on the field of life we have to embrace the opportunities we're given to grow. Here are the suggestions you would expect to read: attend Bible class. Do your Bible class lesson. Listen to the preacher and take notes during the sermon. But more than that, purposely set aside quiet time at home to get into the word. Read your Bible with a notepad beside you. Listen to spiritually minded podcasts. Sign up for the daily Bible reading. Ask the elders for a personal study. Watch our webcast. Attend the Thursday study (It begins again in October).

You can't learn if you don't participate in the process.

For Thought and Reflection

1. What is the type of knowledge Peter references in 2 Peter 1.5?
2. What does it mean to be filled with knowledge?
3. Elaborate on what it means to you about God *enriching you* with knowledge.
4. How does Philippians 1.8-11 describe the practical effects of using our knowledge?
5. What are some ways you can strengthen your desire for knowledge?
6. What are some things in your life right now that may be hampering your spiritual growth and development?
7. What is your plan to eliminate these things?
8. What are some opportunities available that you may have been missing when it comes to growing in knowledge?