

COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH

The divinely inspired and experienced apostle Paul warns the young Christian Timothy (2 Timothy 3:1-7) about evil men who would operate under the disguise of Christianity in the last days. In Paul's warning he says they are *"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."* Sounds like a contradictory statement? Not if you understand the difference between "learning" and the "knowledge of the truth." Let's look at what might be the difference and see if we can come to the knowledge of what Paul wanted Timothy to know.

Know someone that seems to be really smart in some things but just can't seem to get their life together? Maybe they can make plenty of money but can't manage it. Maybe they have health but are ruining it. Maybe they have a big family by marriage and birth but are driving them away. Maybe they have talent and skill to affect people but are wasting their time on material things and TV.

Do you see the point? There is a difference between what a person has and what he does with it. Having knowledge is different from coming to the knowledge of the truth through experience. I can read chapters and memorize verses, but that's only getting facts into my head. Doing the word, experiencing the word, feeling the word, trusting the word - that's what puts the word in my heart, so to speak, and brings me to the knowledge of the truth.

For illustration let's consider three negative examples and one positive example:

Negative Example No. 1 - Cain

In Genesis 4:3-5,8 we read of Cain offering a sacrifice of the "fruit of the ground" unto the Lord. His brother, Abel, brought an offering of the flock. God had respect unto Abel and his offering, but not to Cain. Why, does God have something against vegetarians? No, just the unfaithful! Hebrews 11:4 tells us faith was the difference between Cain and Abel. By observation we see that Cain knew what he was supposed to do (make an offering), but he didn't exercise the knowledge of how to feel (offer by faith). This lack of feeling carried over to his social life with Abel, also (Cain killed him).

Negative Example No. 2 - Aaron

In Exodus 32:1-5 we read of Aaron, Moses' brother, who had a lapse between what he knew and what he understood to do. This is the same Aaron who was Moses' mouthpiece before Pharaoh (Exodus 4:16) and the father of the priests (Exodus 40:12-15). But when Moses "delayed to come down" from the mount where he received the Ten Commandments, the people became restless and demanded that Aaron do something. So he took their earrings, made a molten calf, proclaimed it a god and the next day a feast. Moses and God were very unhappy with this. So we see that Aaron knew enough that God needed to be worshipped, but he didn't exercise the knowledge of how to do it right.

Negative Example No 3. - Jesus' disciples

Matthew 10:1 tells us that Jesus gave his disciples power over "*all manner of sickness and...disease,*" but in Matthew 17:15-20 a man brought his lunatic son to Jesus because the disciples had not been able to heal him. Jesus healed the boy and later explained to the disciples that they could not heal the boy "*because of your unbelief.*" They knew they had power, but they didn't understand just how much power they had! Just like Cain and Aaron, they didn't exercise the knowledge of the truth.

A positive example - David

In I Samuel 17 we find Israel's army pitched on one mountain and the Philistines pitched on another mountain and a valley between them. The Philistine's champion, Goliath, is challenging Israel to send their champion to fight. Jesse sent his youngest son, David, with corn, bread, and cheese to the battle to see how David's oldest three brothers were doing. When David saw the army of Israel being bluffed by Goliath, he told King Saul that he would go and fight Goliath.

Saul tried to discourage David, saying he was just a youth. But David's answer in v. 34-37 is a classic example of one that has had prior success following God, with that past success leading to a sense of being successful in the future. David relayed to Saul how the Lord had been with David to defeat a lion and a bear that were attacking David's sheep. David knew the Lord was with him against those beasts, and the Lord would be with him against this "*uncircumcised Philistine*" too. What courage! But it came from the knowledge of his past successful experience with God's strength. This is exactly the kind of knowledge we need to exercise, the kind of knowledge that affects our actions

toward God's purposes. I hope you have already experienced some success in your life by doing something in God's strength and not your own. It will surely prepare you for what lies ahead in your life. If not, then I hope that very soon you will face a difficulty too great for you to face on your own, one so great that the only one that can help you is God. Your life will be changed from that moment, and you will live life with the bravery of David and not the doubt of David's three older brothers.

The Steps to Coming to Knowledge

These examples illustrate what I think it means to come to the knowledge of the truth. But can we break down the learning process into steps, and will it help us to experience the knowledge? Yes, on both parts. I believe the process can be described, in very simple terms, in four steps. They are:

- Education
- Meditation
- Participation
- Evaluation

First consider education. This involves getting facts into our heads. This gives a legitimate foundation of reason to the other steps. If we don't recognize education as the first step, then we're saying we could experience the knowledge of the truth by accident, and we know that no one is accidentally going to please God and gain heaven.

The next step is meditation. This is the link between what we think and what we do. Do you know a professed Christian that can't/won't pay his bills (there are many other examples)? Then you know someone that has a broken link - the link between what they know to do and what they actually do. Meditation is that broken link. God expects me to read a truth from a 2,000+ year old book and make it shape my life now, in 2007. That takes meditation! I must read what Jesus said about a pearl (Matthew 13:45,46), or a piece of silver (Luke 15:8-10), or a bad seed (Matthew 13:24-30) and meditate on it to see how it can change my life. I did, and it is. How about you?

The third step is participation. This means we must do something. Christianity, like life, is not a spectator sport. It

is meant to be enjoyed, embraced, and experienced by all our senses. Christianity is something we must do to appreciate. How do we know a thing works unless we make it work ourselves? OK, I know someone else can tell you a thing will work, but you cannot be sure unless you see/use it for yourself. And Christianity is certainly something that cannot be experienced second hand! It is above all things a most personal experience. Not even your spouse, your "one-flesh" partner, can do Christianity for you, though some do try and some do try to let them.

The fourth and final step is evaluation. This is when we look back on our actions and ask ourselves, "Did Christianity work for me? Was my reply what it should have been? Did I respond as Jesus would have?" This is the step where we evaluate how well we performed the first three steps. If we can say we handled ourselves as Jesus would have in a given situation, then we have come to the knowledge of the truth. But if we didn't, then it is time to go back to education, meditation, and participation in a different way and keep on repeating until we get it right!

Anything less is to say the scriptures don't work. I don't think we want to settle for that conclusion. So please, consider this description of the learning process and master each step completely so that we can truly come to the knowledge of God's wonderful saving truth.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: In Genesis 6:2, we read "*The sons of God, saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.*" Does this mean that the angels married women and produced children?

ANSWER: There are some who believe that this is exactly what happened. They believe that the wicked angels who were cast down desired the women and took them as their wives.

There are some difficulties associated with this view. It grows out of a misunderstanding of angels and the phrase 'sons of God' First of all, it should be noted that angels are not physical beings, but rather spiritual. It is true that they were able to take the form of men, but remember they were not men. Jesus also informs us that angels do not marry. In his confrontation with the Sadducees (who attempt to trap Him with regards to His

teaching on the resurrection of the dead), He states that *"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."* (Matt. 22:30) We see from this statement that the angels do not marry, thus the Sons of God referred to in our question are not angelic beings. The phrase 'sons of God' can and does refer to angels in some instances, such as Job 38:7. However, it is not limited to angels only. It also refers to men who obey God.

In John 1:12 we read, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"*

From the Garden of Eden we find two groups of people emerging:

- ▶The descendants of Cain, who were disobedient
- ▶The descendants of Seth, who were faithful to God

When one puts these facts together, we can determine that the Sons of God are the descendants of Seth (the faithful), and the daughters of men (the children of disobedience) are the descendants of Cain. The children of God began to marry the children of the world thus leading to the wickedness which resulted in the great global flood. This seems to be the case when the children of God become yoked with unbelievers. God gave instructions to the children of Israel not to marry women of the world for the very reason stated above.

The view that Genesis 6:2 refers to angels marrying women is not substantiated by the scriptures.

SAM DICK
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES

LOCATION

SPEAKER

April
2 – 6

Oak Grove Congregation
Eubank, KY

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

April
2 – 6

Liberty Congregation
Liberty, KY

James McDonald
(Woodbury, TN)

April 13 – 15	Cold Springs Congregation Cold Springs, MS	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 16 – 20	Mount Zion Congregation Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
April 20 – 27	Valley Congregation Valley, AL	Danny Abercrombie (Gay, GA)
April 26 – 29	West Broad Street Congregation Wedowee, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
April 27 – 29	Willow Oaks Congregation Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 27 – 29	Verona Congregation Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How long did Moses stay on the mountain?
2. According to Solomon, how is a fool's voice known?
3. What did God provide for Jonah and then take away?
4. In Romans, what relationship does Paul use to symbolize the law's authority over the people?
5. Paul instructed the Colossians to share their letter with which other church?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .