

Lately there have been several strong mental signals and social interactions that have aroused me to new planes. Not necessarily in order, these have been first, a long-time friend dying of cancer somewhat prematurely; secondly, a friend in malaise that won't work when there are abundant, lucrative opportunities; thirdly, a friend whose daughter is headed toward disaster, fourthly, couples who will not discipline their strong-willed children, and fifthly, a whole host of business dealings that have left me with the impression I cannot reach them, i.e., sell them new ideas.

Now all these have a common theme; they all involve my too-often futile attempts to say "there is more," or "another way," or this or that. They were not receptive to any suggestion that there might be another way to handle the situation. In fact, the reactions ranged from coolness, to embarrassment, to out-and-out anger. So my wife and I hover in degrees of angst on the sidelines watching destruction unfold.

In the course of processing all this I reached an impasse until this morning by the pond. The answer was that people, especially the people of God, live how they want. Their actions reflect the mental boundaries to which they have become comfortable. In other words, if they "wanted more," they would have already sought it.

I must want to know and change before anything "better" will come to pass.

In my part of the business world, many times an associate will ask if I "know" so-and-so. As I grow somewhat wiser (meaning my level of good judgment has had more occasion to experience bad judgment...), I answer that either I know *of* him, or I have *met* him, or I have had *some* dealings with him, or I *know* him well. The latter is based on numerous business relationships whereby I have gained knowledge about what this person likes or dislikes, the way he conducts business, etc. Usually the question has a reason behind it, i.e., whether or not the questioner should or should not do business with him.

So in all this, we see the word "knowing" is a relative term, and has many levels of depth to it. In the marriage relationship, there are an equal number of levels of "knowing" our spouses. The most obvious level is the physical, or sexual. We begin to "know" our spouse physically, which in and of itself has many levels. Also included in the physical realm are things like how often they take a shower, or brush their teeth, or the way they drive, sleep, et cetera. Thus by virtue of time spent with our spouses, we begin to know them better.

Thus, the "knowing" of our spouses, friends and business associates develops as we spend time with them in the midst of life's experiences. Such time allows us to know each other on a deeper and more intricate level. The same is obviously true as it relates to our children; the more things we do with them, the more that we "know" them and the more they "know" us.

The less time we spend with our seed, the less they "know" us, our thoughts, our traditions, our wisdom, our judgment, our standards. Indeed our seed, like it or not, will be reflections of the time we spent with them.

Delving a bit deeper, the closer and deeper we "know" someone, the more we realize all sorts of unspoken messages. When my friend Sam calls, I don't need caller ID-I "know" his voice; moreover, I can sense over the fiber optics when he is riled, happy, whipped, enthusiastic, discouraged or froward.

Deeper still, without having spoken a word I can sense when my wife has been hit up the side of the head, or been blessed, or has heard some good or bad news. By virtue of time spent with her, I can sense when she has reached the end of her rope, or has not slept well the night before.

So we have evolved from the physical to the mental to the quasi-spiritual, in terms of the depths of "knowing" someone. Again, the depth of "knowing" is directly proportional to the time spent with the one being known.

Around the very first light this morning as I sat in my chair with the last sip of coffee, for some reason I was in neutral. All of a sudden a phrase ran across the screen;

"Hearing me is the evidence and testimony that I **know** you."

That jerked me up in my chair! I realized then that He, being omniscient, "knows" *of* me; after all, He made the whole lot of us, as well as the entire universe. That, as we have said, is a far cry from Him **knowing** me, as in the quote, "I know ye not;" thus the passage, "My sheep **hear** my voice," starts to take on new meaning.

I cannot hear unless I know in the fullest sense. I cannot know in the fullest sense unless I spend time with the one speaking, and make the time available; that is a choice I make.

"I know ye not," becomes ominous while we are yet still close enough to hear even that; it becomes deadly as we drift away from even that proximity. The din of conflict and the flurry of battle are poor times to get the wax out of our ears.

There are three scriptures that have bothered me for years; these are found in;

Luke 13:24-28; "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, '**I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity.**' There you will weep and gnash your teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out." (kjb)

Matthew 7:21-23; “Not every one who calls me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, **‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers (workers of iniquity).’**”

Matthew 25:1-12; “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish (dull, sluggish, stupid, careless, presumptuous) and five of them were wise (discreet, cautious, prudent, and thoughtful). For when the foolish took their lamps with them, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Let us have some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ While they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterwards the other maidens came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he replied, **‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’**”

These passages have been arranged in what is perceived to be a logical order, according to what generally considered levels of spiritual maturity. The obvious common point is how well we “know” Him. It would seem the level to which we “know” Him is the root of life itself.

The word “know” in Matthew 7 is the Greek word *ginosko*, from which we get our word “knowledge.” Moreover, according to Vine, “it suggests inception of progress in knowledge.” Here it indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known.

We all have choices to make every waking moment of our lives; we make decisions:

- as to the hour we arise.
- the direction of our thoughts, meditations and affections.
- how we start our day, with coffee, turning on the TV, etc.
- if we read the Bible or the newspaper.
- the type of breakfast we eat, toast, *Wheaties*, bacon and eggs.
- whether we brush our teeth.
- the clothes we wear.
- if we fill the tanks of our cars.
- the route we take to work,
- how we answer our colleagues.
- who our business associates are to be.
- the direction and attention of our eyes, the tone and content of our voices.
- the quality and quantity of the food we eat
- what we do with our evening hours, from the station we watch to what we read.

If we do not take care of our teeth, they will decay.

If we drink aspartame, sodium nitrate, sodium benzoate, chlorine and fluorine, the chemistry of our bodies will rebel and take their toll. Sooner or later our brains will fry or our bodies will mutate.

If we eat too much sugar and starch, we will get fat. Fat will destroy our bodies.

If we listen to and watch radio or TV that is garbage and trash, our minds will become garbage and trash.

If we pervert or exceed any of the laws of nature, we will pay the price, sooner or later.

If we neglect the foundation of all things, curses of all sorts will beset us.

If we inject our two-day old babies with deadly vaccines, they will fry. There is no horror equal to this type of call from the doctor.

In other words, we make choices concerning all of our ways, from waking to going back to sleep that night. Backing up a bit, the choices of our thoughts determine our actions; our actions determine our consequences. Consequences shape our lives, both short term and long term. The short term literally obliterates the long term; it is the long term effect of our choices that leave us in unnecessary pain and torment. When death, disease and torment have us in their talons, we are left with few answers and frustrated prayers having no resolutions.

By then it is too late.

It's far too late when he's 28,
to find relief for your grief,
or by his grave your pain to stave;
for you see, there are no trades, when your son is dead of AIDS.

There is an old adage, "Po' folks got po' ways." It has always bothered me that death (other than peaceful), demon possession, disease and destruction simply do not agree with the Word. If it did and does, why then would Jesus have healed? Why would He have cast out demons? Why would He have come in the first place to save, deliver and grant all sorts of blessings, health, and protection from the Destroyer? As I pondered this incongruity between what is amongst "believers" and the Word, an answer came forth.

We do not **discriminate** about the various bases of our choices. There is little if any foundation for our decisions. Foolishness (dull, sluggish, stupid, careless and presumptuous) will result in all sorts of destruction. Wisdom on the other hand, will result in all sorts of blessings and benefits. It is the **discrimination** between the two extremes that makes all the difference, particularly in the long term.

So what is the basis of this discrimination? From the passages given earlier, it would seem to be obvious. But it is not obvious.

A close friend of mine asked me the other day, “If you were to teach before a large crowd, with what scripture would you begin?” That took a moment; finally I decisively said, “Job 28:21 and Job 30:30.” The former says, “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” The latter says, “Who is this that contends with the Almighty!” Said another way, “Who are *you* to question what I do?!”

The former is the earliest recorded words of God, even though it is Job quoting someone else. The latter is definitely the earliest actual words spoken by God Himself. The book of Job precedes the first five books written by Moses by many years.

Now if these are the first words spoken by Him, it would seem we should pay especial attention to them. In other words, these put forth the notion that awe, respect, attention, reverence, and proper perspective are the bases for everything that would follow. The word Wisdom includes everything of importance to us mortals.

Following this thought, we had better fear Him with whom we have to do. If He says, “I never knew you,” or “I do not know you,” that is serious business. The consequences of Him not knowing us are undoubtedly of grave importance, as is obvious by what the closing of the door signifies.

Words mean things; we glibly and carelessly say words all day long without giving their meaning a thought. As this continues, words begin to mean less and less to the point of absurdity. “Awesome” has come to describe a good football play or a neat tank top.

Whether or not anyone cares, I choose to explore the word “know,” for in the light of what we have just read, it is critical to my eternal position. The true meaning of “know” makes a difference as to how I behave; in particular, how I treat the Son of God.

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Ben-Issachar