

1 Corinthians 8 v 1 to 13

Love over Knowledge

Knowledge is a good thing but it comes with some inherent dangers. The more we have, and certainly if more than others, can lead to pride and a 'know it all' superiority.

Knowledge is not in its self a bad thing and is important in how we lived in the past, live today and in the future. **Bill Murray said "Knowledge is like underwear. It is useful to have it, but not necessary to show it off."**

Instead of trying to impress others with our knowledge, we should always try to encourage and build one another up in love. Using our knowledge for good and not for arrogance.

Knowledge can so often lead to pride and arrogance. What really matters in life is loving God and living a life of love worthy of the calling we have received. Paul writes:

Ephesians 4 v 1 to 2

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Love is more important than knowledge, hence the title of this sermon, 'Love over Knowledge'. God does not measure our Christianity by how much knowledge we have but by how much love we have.

With the Holy Spirit inside us we should be displaying the fruits of the Spirit, and love comes first in the list. It is not about what we know but all about who we know.

After all God is the creator of all things and the greatest of man's knowledge in the smallest part of God's knowledge. Therefore, even the greatest have nothing to boast about compared to God.

Points from this passage

- 1. Priority of love over knowledge**
- 2. Knowing God is the greatest knowledge anyone can ever have**
- 3. Copy love in action**

- 1. Priority of love over knowledge**

1 Corinthians 8 v 1b

'We all possess knowledge.' But knowledge puffs up while love builds up

Much of 1 Corinthians 8 could be summarised as Paul arguing for the priority of love over the pursuit of knowledge.

Paul is very clear that the most important thing for the Christian is to have and to display love in everything that we do and say.

This was obviously an issue for the Christians in Corinth as further on in this letter Paul devotes a whole section explaining what love is and what it is not:

1 Corinthians 13 v 4 to 8a

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

If anything is worth pursuing then it is love. The problem is that mankind pursues knowledge at the expense of love.

I had a colleague at BA who was a whizz with IT, in its early days. Every time I asked him how do something, instead of telling me and showing me, he moved me out of the way and did it.

To him knowledge was power and superiority and he was going to keep it to himself as much as possible, instead of sharing what he knew and showing me how to do what I was asking him.

He, and I am sure me as well, fall into the trap of thinking we know it all on a given subject, when in fact we know very little in the scheme of things.

Paul makes this point in verse 2. The Message puts it like this, we never really know enough until we recognise that God alone knows it all.

My colleague knew more about IT than I did but he knew nothing in comparison to God. After all, who gave man the knowledge to invent IT, God.

I am sure I have been guilty of doing the same thing to others.

There have been massive advances in technology. We now have Artificial Intelligence, not that I understand it.

In the future it is thought that advances in medical science that they may be able to prolong life.

An Oxford professor claims it may be possible to prolong life to 115 years. An increased lifespan is of no value unless it is for a life that is worth living.

If only mankind put in as much effort in the pursuit of love then that would be a life worth living.

Paul sums this point up in 1 Corinthians 13 v 3

1 Corinthians 13 v 3

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

If I give all the knowledge I possess to the poor and give over my body in pursuit of knowledge that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

2. Knowing God is the greatest knowledge anyone can ever have

1 Corinthians 8 v 6 to 7a

Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone possesses this knowledge.

To have knowledge is to have facts, information, or awareness of something or someone. When we have knowledge of God, we understand his nature, his character, and who he is.

This process of growing your knowledge and understanding of God will require us to engage with God and get to know him better.

Part of growing in understanding of God is not just learning facts and information about him; we must experience who he is.

When we experience who God is, it takes the facts that we have learned and it makes them come alive.

It is impossible to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God if we neglect his word. God carefully crafted his word over 1500 years and in it he reveals who he is.

The whole of scripture points out that God is worth knowing. Simply knowing or understanding things about the character of God is not an end in itself

Through our knowledge of God, we are gifted a deeper, more fulfilling and complete relationship with Him.

The Bible makes it clear that knowing God is so important that it can be likened to eternal life itself. Jesus when praying in John 17 says:

John 17 v 3

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

A lot of people have an enormous amount of knowledge and most use it for the benefit of others and mankind. Not everyone knows or understands God.

Sermon on the mount, Jesus said:

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things, including knowledge, will be given to us as well.

3. Copy love in action

1 Corinthians 8 v 9

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling-block to the weak.

I have two Grandsons, one 7 and the other 3. The 3-year-old copies or tries to copy everything his older brother does.

The problem is, not everything that the older brother does is good, if he does something he has been asked not to do and the younger one copies him, they both get into trouble.

I was with them a few weeks ago and we walked through a wood with a stream. They both had wellington boots on and were told not to go in the river. They did and got wet feet.

It is the same for us as adults we can sometimes be seen to copy what someone else does in the hope they are doing the right things.

As Christians and adults, we have a much bigger responsibility to one another, by not causing others to copy some of the things we should not be doing, especially to those young in the faith.

Paul in this passage was pointing out to the church in Corinth to be careful about their eating of food sacrificed to idols, and others copying what they are doing.

When looking at all the ways God calls us to grow in our faith, love in action is right up there with knowing, believing, and following.

Jesus talked about love as an action and gave us a positive command to love one another as he has loved us. Paul says in Romans 5:

Romans 5 v 8

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God doesn't just say, "I love you." He demonstrated his love by sending Jesus to die for us while we were still at our worse. In doing so, we get an amazing picture of true love.

We have worldly knowledge and Knowledge of God; we also have the love of God in us. It is this love that takes priority over any knowledge we have.

We are called to copy and demonstrate God's love to everyone we meet. How good at it are we? Could do better.