

# Knowing You're Right

By Andy Diestelkamp

Have you ever had anybody ask you, "How do you know you're right?" The question can be a little unnerving! Have you ever asked anybody that question? While there are certainly things that are unknowable, does everything fall into the category of the unknown? When it comes to spiritual things, the importance of knowing with confidence becomes all the more important. Can you know what you believe is right? Can you know that you are right with God? How do you know?

Many people treat life as a role of the dice. They place all their bets on one number and hope for the best. Others dabble in a little of everything, figuring that their chances are greater of coming in contact with what is true and right if they diversify. While that may sound more reasonable, the question is how will they know that they have found the truth? Will it just feel right? What is the right feeling? How do they know?

The struggle to determine truth is nothing new. Jesus said, "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate's response was, "What is truth?" (Jn 18:37-38). Unfortunately, some professing Christians are sounding more like Pilate than like Jesus these days. For many truth is virtually unknowable.

The purpose of scripture is to establish truth. Luke wrote so that Theophilus would know the certainty of those things which he had been instructed (Lk. 1:1-4). The apostle John wrote his gospel account so his readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 20:30,31). John wrote an epistle so that his readers might know they have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:11-13). Paul affirmed that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). From a scriptural perspective, there is no conflict between faith and knowledge.

Paul challenged the Christians in Corinth to examine themselves as to whether they were in the faith. They were to test themselves (2 Cor. 13:5). This testing cannot employ subjective personal opinion or experience. It must use the objective authority of God's word.

John said as much when he clearly stated "by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 2:3-5). This is not because keeping God's commandments earns us anything. It does not. Obedience to God is not putting confidence in ourselves, but in the God whose word we are obeying. We know we know God, not because we are so good, perfect, or faithful, but because God is so good, perfect and faithful.

Of course, we must beware lest we think that knowledge is the end. Knowledge, by itself, is insufficient and may only lead to pride (1 Cor. 8:1-3). To know but not act will not save (Jas. 4:17). To know but not act in love is a waste of knowledge (1 Cor 13:2).

Yet, these cautions about knowledge do not diminish the importance of knowing truth and keeping it. Indeed, Jesus made a willingness to keep His commandments an indicator of whether or not we truly love Him (Jn. 14:15,21). True discipleship is found in abiding in His word. The result of abiding in His Word is that we know the truth and

are made free (Jn. 8:31,32). How do we know this? It has been revealed to us by God in His word.

Whenever this needed emphasis is given to truth and obedience, there will be some who assume that we are teaching salvation by personal perfection. Frankly, we sometimes come across this way. Yes, we have been given complete and flawless revelation, but that does not mean that our understanding and/r application are perfect. Indeed we know that in the past our understanding and application have not been perfect (“For all have sinned... Rom 3:23). How do we know we have not been perfect in the past? God’s Word informs us. Thus, “If we say that we have not sinned we make [God] a liar and His word is not in us” (1 Jn 1:10).

If we can so readily acknowledge an imperfect past, then we should be able to concede an imperfect present (the past of the future). “For all have sinned [past tense] and fall [present tense] short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). If my personal fellowship with God is dependent upon my flawless understanding and application of God’s Word and my flawless recollection and repentance of every transgression of that word, then I am as doomed as those whose boast was in the law.

The emphasis upon knowing the word of God is not with the thought that we can be flawless. Hungering and thirsting to know and apply God’s word is the only appropriate response to God’s grace! Shall we continue in ignorance, apathy, and carelessness because God is so good? Certainly not (Rom 6:1,15). Respect for the will of God and His grace motivates us to know, make application and repent (Rom 2:4).

Let us, therefore, base our beliefs and practices on what we can know. It is time for those who claim to be disciples of He who came to bear witness of the truth to be a people who know the truth. The only way we can know that we are right with God is if we are hungering to hear the word, know the word and apply the word. By God’s grace He has revealed His word and counts faith in Him and His word as righteousness (Rom. 4:19-25). What a wonderful offer!