

Devotions with Matt

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June 6, 2020

UNDERSTANDING OVER KNOWLEDGE

One summer after my first or second year of Bible College in Kansas, we came back to California to visit family and friends. On one of those visits I had a chat with our friends' 15 year old son. It turns out their family dog died a few months before and he wanted to ask me, since I was studying the Bible, if his dog would be in heaven and if he would ever see him again?

I was happy he asked me that as now I could put on my theologian hat and impress him with all my Bible knowledge. I told Him that God breathed His breath of life into humans and gave us our spirit. It is our spirit that goes to heaven. Since God did not breathe His breath into the animals that they did not have a spirit and therefore were not going to heaven. I know, what a jerk!

Whether I truly believed that or not I should have just said that I didn't know. After all, the more I think about it, I really don't know if animals go to heaven. The Bible does say that in heaven the lion will lay down with the lamb. Whether that is pictorial language or not I don't know. Maybe God did breathe His breath into animals, but just did not record that event in the Bible. The correct answer to a grieving 15 year old who wonders about his dog making it to heaven is "I don't know". We will find out when we get there.

That incident, and many others along the way, have shaped my thinking in how we are to read the Bible and what we are to do with the information we glean from it. Do we read the Bible for knowledge alone? Do we read it so we can get facts and figures correct? Do we read it so we can regurgitate the genealogy of Jesus? Do we read the Bible so we can have a list of what is moral and what is not? What is right and what is wrong? Do we want to read it so we can impress our friends with how much we know about the Bible? None of those things are necessarily bad, but knowledge of them alone is not enough.

We read the Bible for understanding. We read it to know the heart of God. We read it, not to just know what is moral or not, but why are those behaviors moral in the first place. We read it to understand how our sin hurts God and hurts others. We read it so we can understand at our heart level just how much God loves us. We read it to see just how much He sacrificed to redeem and restore us. In reading the Bible we see the agony and pain Jesus went through to save us on the Cross. We read the Bible so we know how we should live, treat one another and what our purpose in life is.

We can read the Bible to know all these things, but in this case, knowledge is not power. Understanding is. Understanding is not just keeping all the information about God in our minds, but rather putting what we learn about God, about ourselves and about life into practice. It is taking the Word of God and putting flesh and bone to it- our flesh and bones. It means we live out the life He has called us to live out. It means to take our knowledge to where the rubber meets the road- where the love of God in us meets our neighbor. We read the



It is the same with my word.

I SEND IT OUT, AND IT ALWAYS PRODUCES FRUIT.

IT WILL ACCOMPLISH ALL I WANT IT TO,

AND IT WILL PROSPER EVERYWHERE I SEND IT.

Isaiah 55:11

Bible to allow the Grace and Truth of God to wash over us and make us living sacrifices for Him. Understanding means to experience God in every aspect of our lives as He walks with us.

Understanding the Bible means speaking to a 15 year old kid with compassion, grace and understanding of what he truly needed in the moment.

This is the last in this series of devotions that I have done since we stopped in-person services here at Denair Friends. I hope these devotions have been an encouragement to you as you walked through some very tough times. But in no way were they written for knowledge only. I hope they pointed directly to God and that, through them, you were drawn closer to Him. I hope they will help us to spend more time in His Word and, when we read it, we will read it for understanding and not just for knowledge.

Knowledge is knowing about Jesus. Understanding is knowing Jesus. That is a huge difference and makes all the difference.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11

In Christ,
Matt