

Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom

Scripture reading Proverbs 3:13-22

Well most of you who know me know that I enjoy games, riddles and puzzles. And when I mean puzzles I mean the problem solving kind, not the kind where someone has taken a perfectly good picture of something and cut it up into iddy biddy pieces and now you have to put it together again, only to take it all apart again once you are finished. I don't care much for those puzzles.

In many ways scripture can sometimes be a puzzle, a problem solving task in interpretation, in timelines, in prophecy, and in making things fit together, so that it makes sense and does not contradict other portions of the bible.

Well today I'm going to attempt to finish one of those puzzles, something I started a long time ago, I have pondered it, puzzled over it and many times wrote things down only to erase them later again, only to puzzle it some more. As the topic of this message is big I will only be able to give you a couple of seeds of my own thoughts and biblical references to show how they are used. I did put my own definitions of the words on the back of your outline so you don't need to write them out.

It all started a long time ago in a far away land, where Pastor Phil presented to us a challenge, it was the challenge of defining the words knowledge, understanding and wisdom and how they differ. So over the past 10 plus years in accepting the challenge, I have worked on this subject from time to time and I came up with the following definitions. they may not be absolutely correct but I think when they are presented in the following manner it will give us an “understanding” of what the words mean and how though they are different they all work together in the processes and development of our minds.

This was not a paper for marks or homework but a challenge to define the differences and meanings of each word in your own words. So this morning I will give you my own definitions of what these words mean. I will give the definitions to you first so that it will make more sense when I explain the examples of them later from my own thoughts.

And like I said earlier this is a big topic and I only have time to give you a couple of seeds for thought. And if you differ on what I have found I would have no problem being corrected or have a discussion on the topic or listen to what you come up with.

So to start us off the first thing I want to note is that these three words are different from each other, they may sometimes be thought of as being similar and maybe interchangeable but they are not, turn to Exodus chapter 31. Here in this chapter and the ones previous we have the Lords instructions to Moses for the construction of the temple in the beginning verses of the chapter we read of Bezalel, the artist who was to be the designer of all things pertaining to the temple. And notice how the words are used.

Starting in verse one we read;

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

2 "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

3 "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship,

4 "to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze,

5 "in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of* workmanship.

Now note verse 3, the Lord says 'I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship.

From this verse we can know that each one of these words is different from one another, wisdom is not understanding and understanding is not knowledge, and knowledge is not wisdom, for if they were then it would be redundant in using them in the verse the way they are.

So after much puzzling here are my definitions, as I said I want to give you my definitions first so that you can think of them as we continue through the message; and we will start with putting them up on the screen.

Definitions

Knowledge:

1. It is the element of information, that can be stored or recorded in books, mediums or our mind. It can start as a single bit of information or become a collection of bits to create a single larger piece of knowledge and thus continue to become ever larger more complex realm of knowledge.

Understanding:

1. It is the connection between elements of knowledge or the connection between different areas of larger pieces of knowledge. Understanding is never an element in its self it is always connecting two or more parts of knowledge together.

Wisdom:

1. It is the developed or acquired use of knowledge and understanding in life applications and situation that pertain to doing or promoting good.

And so now I will give my own explanations and examples.


Knowledge, as I defined it above begins as the element of information. By this I mean it is the start of all teachings, learning, definitions, and realms of reality that correspond to truth. For what is truth? You should know this; that which conforms to reality. Since understanding is the link between elements of knowledge the first point of understanding will be also explained in this same example.

I know that the first examples will sound simple but as we soon see even the simplest of elements of knowledge require large amounts of explaining. This is because our brain is such a fascinating organ that it can do things in milliseconds. It can do things so fast that take way longer to explain than to actually do.

Just think of blinking, how long does it take your brain to blink your eyes? Now think of how long it would take you to explain the neurological process it takes to blink.

Now think of how frustrating you will be at your pastor for making you think of blinking in the middle of a message and you will be doing this (Blinking) for the next 5 minutes.

Our brain is quite fascinating isn't it? But onward.

Now if I were to ask you what this is, maybe if I asked one of the younger children what is this? 

You would probably say it is a green square and you would be correct because that is the truth and that truth conforms to reality. Now you say it is a green square because it involves two base elements of knowledge. One is green, which is its color and the other is square, which is its shape.

If we take the first part, that is its color, we know that from young on we are taught many colors early on in our lifetime, and it is amazing to see how if you are born a boy or a girl affects this ability. Most men peak out at seeing or learning 20 -30 different colors where as women can see and learn a couple hundred. If you don't believe me just go to your local hardware store, find the paint aisle, find the paint color display and start naming the colors, and I assure you men you will learn a lot of new colors from the women folk.


You men will hear things like ‘no that is not brown’ and learn that ‘sun dried desert cactus root in sand stone earth tone’ is in fact a color

But as children we start off with basic simple ones when we are young and more detailed and precise differences when we get older for example we are taught things these...


- | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| We See the color purple and hear the word purple |  | We understand that this is purple |
| We See the color blue and hear the word blue |  | We understand that this is blue |
| We See the color red and hear the word red |  | We understand that this is red |
| We See the color yellow and hear the word yellow |  | We understand that this is yellow |
| We See the color orange and hear the word orange |  | We understand that this is orange |
| We See the color green and hear the word green |  | We understand that this is green |


From this we learn how we are taught elements of knowledge with understanding on how certain sights and sounds are associated to certain colors.


Even before we can read you associate the sound of the word with the color and eventually with schooling we later link those sounds to letters that form words as we will look at a little later because all of us learn the first basic bits of knowledge with understanding before we can read or write.


Now when we see this color  we ==understand== and associate that which we have been taught and it is recorded in our minds that it is the color green.


Now the second part is very similar only instead of colors we have shapes and just as the colors are taught to us so are shapes and millions of other bits of information are taught as well. We learn that this is a ...





Square ===


Triangle===


Circle===


Rectangle===

That is why when we saw this  our brain did this:

 == Green  == Square  ===== this is a green square

This is elements of knowledge connected with understand that is stored in our minds and our minds do this I think hundreds of times per second.

If you don't believe me just watch children playing with LEGO bricks, they have this sea of block before them and they are searching for... the green square brick, their mind is scanning over hundreds of bricks in seconds knowing exactly which ones are not the green square. And when they see it, bingo, it is identified and retrieved.

Now all these things would not progress to any higher level if we did not learn the most important elements of knowledge there is and that is the ones of sound as in speech or in language and the many forms it can come in. it can come as letters and words on paper, or as hand sign language for the deaf, or as brail for the blind. Even reading this paper would be impossible without the knowledge and understanding that comes from learning letters, hearing words and learning to read. And why is this most important, because this is how God chose to speak to us. By the written word we call the bible.

A basic simple example of this would be a word like CAT.



We are taught in English that;

C = (letter C) = (makes a C sound)

A = (letter A) = (makes an A sound)

T = (letter T) = (makes a T sound)

When we put all of these together it forms a word that we recognize and link it with ‘understanding’ it to its meaning.

When we see the letters CAT we think of a cat  or maybe if you are a boy like Leland you may think of a Cat  and if you say no that it's a caterpillar then it could also be this (worm)

You see in our minds there are many elements of knowledge stored, things that we are taught or have learned all connections with understanding and there still so much that is out there.

For example if I wrote טוב בוקר you probably would not know what this means, in your mind it would be like this: טוב בוקר=? You see the knowledge of these letters or the sound they make or the word they spell have not been taught to your brain, there is no knowledge of them or any understanding what they do,

and here is part of the definition, you could find those letters recorded in a book somewhere and look it up and then you would understand what they are and then translate them to what they mean, the connection or understanding of these letters would link them to their word and word to its meaning, now if I said that this arrangement of symbols are Hebrew letters and טוב בוקר spells “good morning” in the Hebrew language. And is pronounced ‘Böker töv’


When you hear the word and understand the letters you would gain a little bit more knowledge and understanding in your mind.

Now all knowledge does not have to start out simple, we can actually bypass vast amounts of knowledge on how something works and yet understand what it does, for example if I were to ask a young child again what is this?



They would say it is an ‘airplane’. In their mind  = (airplane)

And if I would ask what does and airplane do the answer would be ‘it flies’. In their young mind it would be recorded as:

 = airplane = and it flies

Now do they understand all the dynamics that take place in an airplane to make it fly, the design of the wings that give it lift, the action of the rudder to steer, the elevator for moving up and down, the propeller that pulls the aircraft forward, the engine that turns the propeller, all the workings of the internal combustion engine that make it turn, the pilot who flies the plane, do they understand all of these things? No they do not, and the list of knowledge and understanding could go on and on going down into smaller and smaller bits of information that we would store in our minds as knowledge with understanding.

This is an example of a large piece of knowledge understood by another piece of knowledge, simply the airplane flies. As we grow older and understand more of the components of the airplane and how they all work we begin to gain more knowledge and understanding of this once simple flying airplane and begin to create a vast amount of information to create the knowledge we have of an airplane in our mind. But this knowledge is not only limited to one realm of information, it can be connected to an almost unlimited amount of different elements or realms of knowledge that through understanding our minds understand the world around us.


For example, we could have the illustration of an atomic bomb. There are many things that we understand in regards to an atomic bomb and in general they would be things like:

- Atomic bomb = is very powerful
- = is very destructive
- = causes radiation damage to people
- = long term exposure causes cancers
- = was developed in the mid 1940's
- = was first dropped on Japan by the US in WW2

And the list could go on and on and each one of these bits of knowledge can be linked to many other realms of knowledge related to the atomic bomb and so on, it becomes a vast realm of knowledge linked with understanding that creates this immense realms of knowledge and larger realms of knowledge all with the connections of understand. Again without understand knowledge stays isolated with itself, away from other knowledge. In going back to the airplane example you could ask a young child the same question as before;

 what is this

They would say:

 = (airplane)

And what does it do?

 = airplane = it flies

And how does it fly or what is the scientific principle behind flight and propulsion for them it may be only draw a blank.

For a young child there is no knowledge that is linked to how flight is achieved, and therefore it is knowledge they do not know or understand and the understanding of flight is not connected to any knowledge that contains that information.

Well I hope I haven't lost you or bored you yet but there is one more thing we need to look at and that is wisdom.

Wisdom is very different, wisdom is often thought of as vast amount of knowledge and understanding, this is not true. A vast amount of knowledge and understanding is simply that, a vast amount of knowledge and understanding.

Wisdom is as I said in the definition, is the developed or acquired use of knowledge in life applications and situations that pertain to good. It has been said that knowledge and understanding knows that a tomato is a fruit; wisdom knows you don't put it in a fruit salad. And that is well put, for wisdom is what we do with the knowledge and understanding we have in our minds.

A good example of this would be again of an atomic bomb. There is vast amounts of knowledge and understanding that went into making the first atomic bomb in the Second World War, it took many of the world's top scientists many years of pouring over thousands of bits of data (knowledge) and connecting them through another thousand links of understanding to create one device that had such destructive power that we had never been seen before or as of yet ever surpassed.

Listen to the top scientists of the atomic bomb project Robert Oppenheimer and what he stated after the first test detonation "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds". Think of his comment, in this quote it's not wisdom speaking. It is not wisdom speaking in the developing aspect of the device but knowledge and understanding of the death and dread the device could and would have on human lives.

It was the recognition of what all this knowledge and understanding had become and could do and the applications it could be used for, both wise and unwise.

Now I ask you do you know or understand how an atomic bomb works? Somewhat, maybe a little, we know it has to do with nuclear fusion but not much more. Even your limited knowledge and understanding of the device you know it is a weapon of great power and destruction and it is ‘wisdom’, wisdom that tells you that if you had one you would not sell such a device to some rogue terrorist group because of what they would do with it.

Now if we take all this information of knowledge, understand and wisdom and take it from a biblical sense I would summarize it as follows.

The bible is a book that is filled with knowledge, bits of knowledge, and sections of knowledge from cover to cover; there is not one part of this book that does not contain knowledge. Every line every verse every word is knowledge. And to start off simple for someone who cannot read it or has access to hear it its knowledge remains locked in the pages, with no understand of fit at all.

1 Corinthians 34a says;

Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God.

For many people it looks something like this:

Bible = ?

Without reading or hearing words of scripture there is no knowledge or understanding of the bible or of God. This is why we have the verse in Romans chapter 10 verse 14

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?
And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?
And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Verse 17 then says ‘so then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Once the person reads the words and then understands the words and what they say then knowledge of the bible begins to come together with understanding and form larger parts of knowledge. We would read the first words of the bible which says;

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth

We begin to understand that ‘the beginning’ means creation

We read: in the beginning = God created = the heavens and the earth

And we begin to understand that God created all things

That he created the heavens and the earth and that all things are created by Him and as we keep reading we understand that I am created by God

This sounds very basic and simple but this is how the word of God begins in the mind of an unbeliever and it continues throughout the entire bible, every word is a bit of knowledge that becomes connected to another bit of knowledge with understanding and goes on to form large realms of information and knowledge through more understanding. We eventually begin to form large realms of knowledge linked with understanding from many parts of scripture to form doctrines and teachings of truth.

For example we have the doctrine of creation, where we have all the bits and larger bits of knowledge of information related to creation linked together with understanding to create one large information base of creation which we then call doctrine or the teaching of creation.

And with this knowledge and understanding if we read far enough we find that God created man and that man is accountable to God. This now changes everything for man, to know that I am created by God and will be accountable to God for my actions. This should change everything in the mind of the unbeliever.

This same process works for all other doctrines and teachings of the bible such as salvation, sanctification, justification, sin, fall of man, heaven, hell, and every other doctrine, topic, teaching we can find in the bible. All are comprised of knowledge fit together with understanding.

Gary Ezzo the founder of Growing Kids Gods Way has said this in one of his lectures; His context is in regards to raising children, but what he says is applicable to the entire word of God

He says and I quote;

“In The contrast between knowledge and understanding, is Knowledge without understanding is very limiting”

Meaning that without understanding knowledge remains very much limited to what you can do with it or what it can do for you.

Now remember he's talking about raising children but he goes on to say;

“God has created a beautiful plan ~~scere~~ for your child's life, how it's played out really will be determined by the amount of understanding you diligently seek after, for understanding is really the key that leads to wisdom.

Do not be satisfied with just information about a baby, learn to understand the fullness God intended for your life for your family and for your child”

EOQ

You could say from his words, Don't be satisfied with just information or knowledge, learn to understand, how things connect together, for understanding is the key that leads or can lead to wisdom.

Because you could have someone who has the entire bible memorized from cover to cover and we would sometimes think that such a one has lots of wisdom. This is not true. Someone who has the entire bible in their memory, every word, every comma, every period, only has a lot of knowledge stored inside their head. Because if the knowledge is not linked with certain aspects of understanding and applied with wisdom it is all just knowledge in their mind. No more helpful is the

bible to that person than it is to the one who cannot read. Sometimes we call this condition 'head knowledge and not heart knowledge'.

What good is it if I know that on page number 1580 in the bible there is a section call John, and in the third chapter of that section called John there are verses and in the 16th verse it says:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Anyone can memorize the verse;

But if the person does not make the wise choice in understand that he is the one who is perishing and that God has provided atonement by His Son, the verse is only knowledge in the head and does nothing to save his soul.

If they do not follow the definition of wisdom I used in the beginning which is 'the developed or acquired use of knowledge and understanding in life applications and situation that pertain to doing good.' And Good meaning in this case their salvation, then such a one is not wise but a fool.

To put it bluntly without the acquirement or application of wisdom, all of scripture is nothing to the person possessing it,

For example. If I know all of the knowledge in the bible and have it all linked all together with all understanding and then I am left with one decision, am I going to apply this knowledge with all of its understanding links to my life in doing good? Or unto salvation? Or to living right according to His word?

If I am, then there is wisdom.

As Solomon says in Proverbs chapter 4 verse 5-7;

Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you.

7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *Therefore* get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

If I use all of this knowledge for good, for my good, the good of my fellow man, the good of society, the good of God and His gift of salvation, then that is wisdom. It would sound something like this:

I know and understand that God is the one and only true God

I know and understand that I am created by God and that I am a sinner and am lost and sentenced to Hell for my sin but I know and understand the Jesus died for sin, my sins and that I can be forgiven.

I know and understand that I need to repent of my sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only way to eternal life. And that I need to change my life to live right, to live right and to please God so that I may live with Him in glory forever. If all of these things I do and do because I believe and understand that the bible is true, therein lies wisdom.

Because I can also have all knowledge from the bible that says that there is a God and understand from its doctrine that there is a God, have it all in my head but I do not follow through in believing its truth in wisdom and do not apply it to my life and not use that truth in life application and situations that pertain to good then I am unwise.

And actually the bible says I am a fool.

When you have the information of the bible presented to you in the form of knowledge and link it with understanding in all its pages it is

then the words of scripture in psalm 14:1 speaks of such a person saying

‘the fool has said in his heart, “there is not God”’

Such a person is unwise and has no wisdom.

If you use the bible for evil, you are not wise; if you ignore the knowledge found in the bible that comes in the form of warnings and judgment you are not wise.

Just as when we are young and we learn the first elements of knowledge and link them together with the early links of understanding so also is the word of God. To many, at first it looks like just any other book, but once you begin to understand the knowledge that is in its pages and your knowledge through understanding grows the more the word of God grows. And one day when it all comes together in the understanding of salvation, and you accept it, then wisdom is born, there wisdom is obtained. As I said wisdom is the developed or acquired use of knowledge and understanding in life applications and situation that pertain to doing good.

And in the biblical sense, that good is the salvation of your soul and the souls of others, the spreading of this knowledge called the gospel the good news. Knowledge is the seed and understanding is the soil, wisdom is the plant that comes up and gives life.

This is why Proverbs 4:5-7 say;

5 Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you.

7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *Therefore* get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

Because the more understanding there is in the knowledge of God the more wisdom can grow.

Pr 16:16 How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

Pr 19:8 He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; He who keeps understanding will find good.

Proverbs 23:23 says; Buy the truth, and do not sell *it*, *Also* wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Knowledge:

1. It is the element of information, that can be stored or recorded in books, mediums or our mind. It can start as a single bit of information or become a collection of bits to create a single larger piece of knowledge and thus continue to become ever larger more complex realm of knowledge.

The bible is a book filled with knowledge

Understanding:

1. It is the connection between elements of knowledge or the connection between different areas of larger pieces of knowledge. Understanding is never an element in its self it is always connecting two or more elements of knowledge together.

From the bible I understand that God created everything including me

I understand I am accountable to God, I understand that I am a sinner and are in need of a savior, I understand that savior is Jesus Christ

Wisdom:

1. It is the developed or acquired use of knowledge and understanding in life applications and situation that pertain to doing good.

Believing that the knowledge that is found in the word of God is true and that I understand that I must repent and believe in Jesus that I may be forgiven and live forever with my Lord in Heaven forever. And I make this choice, this is wisdom. And it will far surpass any riches this world have ever to offer.

However if you reject this knowledge as false, and believe that the bible is untrue, and that there is no God, and continue to live your life in sin and wickedness, this is foolishness which is the opposite of wisdom.

For us it looks like this

Bible = life

But not jus life but life eternal

This is why the bible says The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." Because the amount of knowledge that is found in the scriptures regarding God and His salvation is irrefutable and that it takes a fool or someone who is unwise to not heed what God has to say in this book.

The beginning of the verse in Hosea 4:6 says My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,

But then it goes on to say; Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priests for Me,

Pr 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.

Turn to Ephesians chapter 1

Ephesians chapter 1 and I will start with verse 15, and think of the words that we have been looking at; and I just want to close with these words, Ephesians chapter 1 starting with verse 15:

15 ¶ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.