

How do we bear witness to the eternal kind of life, now?

Witness: Someone who is able to bring knowledge.

Knowledge: the ability to represent something as it is, on an appropriate basis of thought and experience.

- Knowledge is not a rare thing.
- People today have a fear of knowledge for fear it will limit their freedom.
 - You can't live by guesses, or by luck.
- Knowledge is threatening in the modern world. Research is not threatening. Research gets funded. Research doesn't guarantee knowledge.

Knowledge gives you the right and responsibility to act...to direct action, formulate policy and supervise it, and to teach.

- Belief doesn't do that; nor does tradition, feelings, politics, power. Only knowledge does that.

The way that you know that they KNOW it is by watching how they BEHAVE.

Witnessing has to do with bringing knowledge. In court, they want to know what you have seen. This gives people a basis for being able to report on something truthfully.

The world wants to know what we KNOW. It doesn't care about what we believe.

- They may have respect for a tradition but that doesn't make them think they ought to join.
- The world thinks we do something called faith. That's not knowledge. It does not authorize us to act, or to direct action, or to formulate policy, or to supervise it, or to teach.
 - That's something that has happened in the last 120 years. Back that far, a Sunday sermon may have been written down and published in Monday morning's paper. A pastor who spoke in the community would be very carefully listened to, on the assumption that they had knowledge.

One of the most powerful problems for living an eternal life, being a disciple of Jesus, is the idea that we are not dealing with knowledge.

- Sincerity is substituted for a basis of approval for someone in a ministry.
- They don't think that a representative of Christ speaking for Christ is communicating knowledge.
 - Because of that, they do not think they have the right to act, to direct action, formulate policy, supervise it and teach.
- That's the fundamental basis of how separation of church and state has developed.
 - Could you imagine talk about the separation of chemistry and state?
- The Founding Fathers believed that the Christian religion was a body of knowledge.

You cannot do Christian discipleship on the basis of will, feelings and traditions.

If you're going to do Christian discipleship, you're going to do that on the basis of knowledge.



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A life of steadfast discipleship to Jesus Christ can be supported only upon assured knowledge of how things are, of the realities and terms of which that life is lived.

- One reason we have such troubles in steadiness, goodness, of Christians, is because Christians are taught that their life is not based on knowledge but based on decision.
 - When the decision begins to waver, the life begins to waver.
 - And the decision will begin to waver if all that it's based on is itself.
- Take an ordinary electrician or plumber, who knows what they're doing. Their activities are steady because they're based on knowledge, not decisions.

Belief: the readiness to act as if it were true.

Belief can be false. That's one difference between belief and knowledge.

- You don't have to have a good reason to believe things.
- Beliefs are caught... (like children catching beliefs from their parents/siblings/playmates/etc.) (like a virus - they float about and settle into people's minds.)
- Much of social authority is based on beliefs based on beliefs.
 - E.G. - multiplication tables
 - There's nothing wrong with authority.
 - Bad authority is an authority that can't be questioned and tested.

Knowledge: the ability to represent something as it is, on an appropriate basis of thought and experience.

- You can still be wrong.
- Knowing is a very simple thing. It's the framework of life.

Belief goes with knowledge. You want to believe the things that you know and know the things you believe, as much as you can.

- The Bible is not just a book about faith.
- The story of David & Goliath: David's basis of his confidence that he could take care of Goliath was the bear, the lion. He took care of them, saved the sheep, and he knew how he did it - supernaturally. *On the basis of that knowledge*, in faith, he steps out towards Goliath.

Biblical faith is always environed in knowledge.

- The idea of a leap of faith is a figment of the fallen imagination to try to dismiss the Christian faith.
- What is called a leap of faith now is actually a leap without faith.
 - At best that's not even belief, that's commitment.
- You can commit yourself to something you don't even believe in.
- Profession is saying you believe something or are committed to something.



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When we come together as Christians and we try to bear witness in our community, are we working from knowledge, belief, commitment, or profession?

On what basis do we take people into our fellowships?

- Baptists take people in and baptize based on their profession. That doesn't mean they believe or are even committed, much less know.
- Could that be connected to the distance between being a disciple and being a Christian?
- Is that connected to the fact that in many of our groups the main job of the preacher is to get people to do things they don't want to do?

The issue of knowledge goes very deep. If you allow yourself to be drawn into the posture where you say faith is one thing and knowledge is another, you have shifted the basis of your witness and your ministry...you're not providing people with knowledge, realizing that knowledge will put people in touch with reality, and reality will motivate them to do the things they need to do.

Example: the plumber. What motivates the plumber to put the pipes on right? Knowledge of reality.

Reality motivates. Knowledge puts you in touch with reality.

Belief can do some of that, but it's hit or miss with belief.

If we're going to bear witness to eternal living now, we must do that in terms of knowledge of reality that we communicate.

Witnesses give knowledge based on first-hand experience.

- Matthew 13:52 – "And Jesus said to them, 'Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of God is like a householder, who brings out of his treasure things both old and new.'"
- We teach the kingdom of God out of our firsthand experience of it.
- What we live testifies to reality and brings knowledge.
- We live in "the invisible landscape" and the effects of that landscape on our lives makes those around us who are open to it turn to that landscape and find the reality of it.

Normally, motivation is provided by reality. This is true in any area of life. But motivation is a primary problem for churches.



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The **Great Commission** was put into practice, and with great effects. But nothing was said about going out and *motivating* people. They went out to bear witness; and on the basis of the witness to make disciples.

- **John 8:31** – Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, then you are my disciples. And you will know the truth...and the truth will set you free.”
- It will motivate you, too, *and* it will set you free, because it will bring you in touch with reality.
- Abiding in his word isn’t a matter of nonstop Bible study; it’s **LIVING** in it. “If you put my words into practice, you will come into contact with reality, and that reality will set you free.”

You cannot start a religion like Christianity (or any of the main branches) by encouraging people to make leaps of faith.

If you don’t present it as knowledge, it will move no one.

One reason why cults have such power over people who have been raised in churches is because they’ve been raised in churches that did not communicate the teachings of Christ as knowledge.

Knowledge must be taken with great humility. Knowledge has a tendency to puff up, which is dangerous.

Churches can do this (follow the Great Commission) but they must do it on a different basis than saying, “Would you share our beliefs?”

- Witnesses give knowledge on the basis of first-hand experience. This is what they teach. These are the questions upon which the Christian teaching brings knowledge.
- The basic essential truths, what C.S. Lewis calls “*Mere Christianity*” is a body of knowledge, which as the people of Christ, we present to the world as such.

Think about the alternative! If I’m not telling them what I know, what am I doing?

- That’s where the church is left when they hand off knowledge to the secular world...and then the authority goes there. And when I stand up to preach the best I can hope for is that divine lightning would strike you. Rather than...

“I am providing knowledge upon the basis of which you can pursue understanding and begin to test it in life, and reality of God, Christ, the church, the spiritual life – it would come to you in response to your acting upon the knowledge you gained and affirm itself and allow you to live a life of stability, truth, openness, and humility.”

What am I doing if I’m not providing knowledge?



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THINGS GREAT TEACHERS MUST TEACH

- The nature of reality
- Who is “well-off”
- Blessedness
- The Good Life
- Who is a “really good” person?
- How to become a “really good” person

*Jesus answers each of these in a manner far superior to anyone else—Plato, Buddha, Freud.
Jesus is the smartest One ever!*

CHRIST ANSWERS THE QUESTIONS

- Reality is God and His Kingdom
- Anyone alive in the Kingdom of God is well-off, blessed.
- A really good person is one who is permeated with agape love.
- You become a really good person by trusting Jesus and living as His apprentice.

THE SECULAR SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

- Has no answers to these questions. None. But claims to push aside as irrelevant the answers upon which that very system has been built.
- The vacuum created in human life is filled by an array of dreams and illusions with no basis in reality or reason.
- Human lives have no guidance to what is good and right
- *The Making of the Modern University*, by Julie Rubens

The church stands as the representative of knowledge on these questions.

- e.g. Paul in Acts 17
- The Christian gospel came into the world as information in answer to those questions.
- People who heard the answers were convinced they were the right answers -and they were not gullible! They were smart, sophisticated people.

*If we are going to bear witness to the eternal life now, we must present these things
as knowledge.*



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Notes Dallas had in his handouts, and while he didn't speak directly to them, they are helpful insights:

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

- The Bible and the historic Church presents knowledge of God—accurate representations of God on an appropriate basis of thought and experience.
- Faith, on the Biblical model, is always environed in knowledge.
- The disciple does not profess faith, but lives faith in the context of knowledge.

MAKING DISCIPLES

- You make a disciple of Jesus by ravishing people in the vision and reality of the greatness of Jesus and of life in the Kingdom.
- The Jesus of the birds and the flowers and the care of the Father lives in the real lives of those who rely upon Him and constantly learn from Him.

TEACHERS OF THE NATIONS

- Pastors, spokespeople for Christ, must see themselves and present themselves as teachers of the nations.
- No one else has:
 - The knowledge content,
 - The position in God,
 - The public platform.

Living in the Kingdom of God:

- We want to be open, humble, learning...
- We don't say that we don't know anything, or that we just make leaps of faith!
- We say:
 - "Here is knowledge of reality. You can test it. You can watch me and see what reality there is."
- It's the living people of Christ in the community, skin on skin, that is the primary witness to the truth of the gospel. Nothing substitutes for it.

*For the sake of God and for the sake of the people in this desperate world,
dare we do anything less than organize our lives as apprentices of Jesus, and
our churches as groups of his students, around knowing by experience and
communicating in love the Eternal Life that He has brought to us*

- It's not modesty, not to do this.
 - It's a failure to love our neighbors, just as would be the case in any area of important knowledge.
- We have the responsibility and the right, and we can expect God to go with us.



Question and Comments

Q. How should a Christian respond as a citizen or as a legislature in response to issues like abortion or economics?

We live in a country where the official attitude is that citizens should participate in government on the basis of the things they believe to be true, in openness and fairness, and that's what we should do.

- Some people should attempt to achieve office
- We are now living under a tyranny of the minority
- People have learned how to turn the system of freedom against the people they disagree with.
- We need to be involved: to seek office, if that's appropriate. To be involved in the discussions. To vote.
- Christians need to make a point of informing themselves and voting their convictions.

Q. In a pluralistic society how do we respond to accusations of intolerance?

We help people understand that to present knowledge and to act on the basis of truth is not intolerance.

- This is a part of the general strategy to get rid of knowledge as a basis for action.
- Tolerance...ultimately derives from Jesus's teaching of equality before God, of loving your neighbor as yourself, and defining that around specific issues.
- You don't discriminate by law between people who have divergent views of politics and religion, people who are different races, or who are different genders.
 - *You do discriminate by law between people who like to steal and those who are honest.*
- There is an active problem of telling where discernment ends and discrimination, in a bad sense, begins.
 - Discrimination in the bad sense is where you are using distinctions that have nothing to do with what is good and right as a basis for mistreating one group and not another.
- Tolerance is a vital principle of the Gospel and if you depart from that you don't have any reason to accept it at all.

Why should we have human rights?

- Tolerance is defined around human rights.
- If Christians will follow their Savior and love their neighbors as themselves and live in the kingdom of God there will not be any problem with discrimination.
- I do not treat you right because...I treat you right because you are a human being. *There is no such thing as "___ rights."*
 - That's a contrivance of human misunderstanding and when we get that straight all of the anger that permeates our society around rights issues will go out.

"Justice never does justice to justice."

- Only love will do justice to justice.
- We have an unfortunate history where people have said they loved and did not do justice, and that's terrible. But you can't deal with that situation by pretending to have justice without love.



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- o Now we have a nation almost sick with anger across lines where justice has prevailed.

Tolerance is an important Christian virtue. It's an important human virtue. You have to be wary of it and not think tolerance is everything. Tolerance does not justify what is wrong.

Q. What is Jesus' gospel?

Jesus's gospel is this: trust me and walk into the kingdom of God.

The gospel that we hear often is "trust Jesus" – but when you probe into it, it turns out that's not quite what's being said. You're being asked to trust something he did or something he said.

Rather, you trust JESUS and as you trust Jesus you become his disciple at living in the kingdom of God. If you don't do that, you're not really trusting him.

If you trust Jesus then you will learn from him and if you learn from him you will live in the kingdom of God. And if you live in the kingdom of God you will grow in the reality of eternal life now.

That's the gospel of Jesus. Textually, there's no question about it -look at the gospels, that's what he preached.... The availability of life in the kingdom of God now, to everyone, no matter what they were like or what they had done. Just come and trust him.

Q. Can you say something about the notion of being "called" to discipleship.

Discipleship is for everyone.

Bonhoeffer's famous book, *The Cost of Discipleship* – you should also read the book 'the cost of non-discipleship.' When you count the cost, if you're buying a car, you count the cost not just of buying it but also of *not* buying it. That's counting the cost in gospel terms.

Q. Can you share some of your thoughts on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and knowledge; how we have an assurance about certain truths or have an aid in identifying truth vs falsities?

John chapter 16 v 8-15: He when he comes will convict the world ... (51:13)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, and he brings knowledge of Truth.

- Knowledge of Christ is brought to us by the Holy Spirit but that doesn't mean you're passive. You have to work for it.
- Knowledge never jumps down your throat.
- The Holy Spirit is in the knowledge business.
- A part of the mythology I've touched on in this hour is that the Holy Spirit only deals in faith and not in knowledge. That's only true to the extent that faith is envired in knowledge. The Holy Spirit brings knowledge. Scripture provides us with knowledge.
- If we have knowledge, faith will come along, and action, commitment, profession will follow.



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- As a student in any field, you should be open and invoking the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. He is right at home with knowledge. It's his primary task to bring knowledge of Christ to us.
- We just have to get over the way we use the language. Today many people use "knowledge" and they mean "faith."



Conference with Dallas Willard, February 18-21, 2010, Church of the Apostles, Fairfax, VA