

Knowledge - A Topical Study

Proverbs 15:14

“The heart of him that hath understanding seeks knowledge: but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.” - Proverbs 15:14 (Cf. ver. 21; 18:15).

It has always struck me that one of the most common traits that all men (not merely males btw) share is the idea that they understand and have a grasp on what is going on (here or there, now or then, etc.). We just had a national election in our country and I was, as always, both stuck and saddened by the sheer number of people who saw fit to paint themselves as one who were in the know and had a great grasp on the facts of the situation. The frustrating part was that as they opened their mouths and proceeded to make commentary it was made clear that they really DIDN'T have the grasp that they thought they did. Oh, there were surely some who seemed to have at least a bit of a grasp, but as they spoke, it became clear that their understanding was, at least in part, because they had invested the necessary time to gain the foundational understanding that lay at the root of what they were saying. They weren't just making it up as they went.

What is interesting about this whole thing is that the Bible speaks clearly when it addresses the basis of what we chose to speak of to others. Solomon was said to be perhaps the wisest man who ever lived. Of course, a part of this reputation/truth was because of the great gift of God given at the very beginning of his ministry. But we have to assume that he had followed a studious path throughout his life and that passages that speak as this one does were not just empty advice.

“The heart of him that hath understanding seeks knowledge: but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.” - Proverbs 15:14 (Cf. ver. 21; 18:15).

Just to note a couple things to lay more of a foundation for us as we think through this great verse. “Heart”, as always in the Book of Proverbs, is the Hebrew word “lēb” (leeb) and speaks of the essence of the inner person, including everything from the mind, to the will, to the emotions; and can address any one or all of those things depending on the context of its' use in the given verse. Here, it would, given the rest of the verse, it would appear, at the least, to speak of the mind, and perhaps would include the will as speaks of the desire and willingness to do what is needful to learn.

We'll note also that the verse is speaking of the result of the exercise of the subject here, the building on what knowledge is already possessed. It is upon this basis that Solomon draws and commends us to continue to build and seek for more understanding. When we think about it, this makes perfect logical sense. The gaining and possession of knowledge/wisdom both stands as a basis

for more and urges and leads to the desire and striving for more. This is what he means by “The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge...”. As we have said, it is the “having” of knowledge that serves to prompt the seeking of more of the same. Now, this does not mean that one cannot seek knowledge in an area that he (or she) knows nothing about. This is especially true in the area of Biblical spirituality. Truth be told, there are multiple areas in the coming to know and understand the things of the Lord that we are ALL deeply lacking in. There are actually quite a number of principles about knowledge that are contained in the Scripture. Without going into any real depth of explanation for each, let’s think about some of them:

1. Knowledge of the Law (and thus of the entire Scripture) is commanded.

Deut 4:1–9 “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you

5 “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. 6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? 9 Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

Hos 6:3 Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth.

2. Some Knowledge belongs only to God.

Deut 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Job 36:26 “Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered.”

3. Genuine Spiritual knowledge can come only from God.

Job 28:12–28 “But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? 13 Man does not know its value, Nor is it found in the land of the living. 14 The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; And the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ 15 It cannot be purchased for gold, Nor can silver be weighed for its price. 16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, In precious onyx or sapphire. 17 Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, Nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold.

18 No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, For the price of wisdom is above rubies. 19 The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, Nor can it be valued in pure gold. 20 “From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? 21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the air. 22 Destruction and Death say, ‘We have heard a report about it with our ears.’ 23 God understands its way, And He knows its place. 24 For He looks to the ends of the earth, And sees under the whole heavens, 25 To establish a weight for the wind, And apportion the waters by measure. 26 When He made a law for the rain, And a path for the thunderbolt, 27 Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. 28 And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’ ”

- Cf. Job 38:1–3; Ps 73:11

4. Knowledge Especially Derives from the Proverbs.

Prov 1:1–6 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion—5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.

5. Fear of God, the beginning of Knowledge.

Job 28:28 And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’ ”

Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

Prov 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Prov 2:4–6 *If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

Prov 9:10 *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Prov 15:33 *The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.*

Ecc 12:13 *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.*

6. God’s Knowledge is a Knowledge that is much higher than man’s.

Job 5:9 *Who does great things, and unsearchable, Marvelous things without number.*

Ps 92:5 *O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.*

Ps 145:3 *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.*

Ecc 3:11 *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.*

Is 40:28 *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.*

Is 46:10 *Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’*

Is 55:8–9 *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Acts 15:18 *“Known to God from eternity are all His works.*

Rom 11:33–36 *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or*

who has become His counselor?” **35** “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” **36** For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Heb 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

- Cf. Prov 30:2–4; Eccl 6:12; 8:17

7. The Spirit of Knowledge, rests (rested) upon Christ.

Is 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

- Cf. Is 53:11

The Knowledge Of the Lord

1. Will fill the earth during the Millennium.

Is 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

Is 19:21 Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

Is 33:13 Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done; And you who are near, acknowledge My might. ”

Is 40:5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Is 41:20 That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Is 45:6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other;

Is 45:14 Thus says the LORD: “The labor of Egypt and merchandise of Cush And of the Sabeans, men of stature, Shall come over to you, and they shall be yours; They shall walk behind you, They shall come over in chains; And they shall bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, ‘Surely God is in you, And there is no other; There is no other God.’ ”

Is 49:26 I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh

shall know That I, the LORD, am your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Is 52:10 The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.

Is 52:13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.

Is 52:15 So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

Is 54:13 All your children shall be taught by the LORD, And great shall be the peace of your children.

Is 66:23 And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD.

2. Knowledge Is available to all.

Rom 1:18–20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Rom 2:1–2 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

Rom 2:14–16 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) 16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

1 Tim 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- Cf. Heb 10:26; 2 Pet 2:20–21

3. *We Have Some Knowledge Of the day of Christ's return.*

Matt 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

Mark 13:32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

In the OT, Knowledge Of truth was sadly prevented by teachers of the Law.

Matt 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Luke 11:52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

Any True Knowledge Of sin comes from the law.

Rom 3:19–20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. **20** Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

4. *Knowing the Lord is Possessed by believers.*

Jer 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Rom 15:14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

1 Cor 1:5–7 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, **6** even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, **7** so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Cor 8:1 Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

2 Cor 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

2 Cor 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor 8:7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.

Eph 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Phil 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

Col 1:9–10 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Col 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

Col 3:10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

2 Pet 1:2–9 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, **3** as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, **4** by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. **5** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, **6** to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, **7** to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. **8** For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

2 Pet 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

5. The “Word of Knowledge” is a spiritual gift.

1 Cor 12:8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

Cf. 1 Cor 13:2

6. Man’s Human Knowledge, cannot grasp Christ’s love.

Eph 3:19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

7. Knowledge Of Jesus Christ is more valuable than anything.

Phil 3:7–11 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

8. There is a Definite Warning Against Knowledge Given By False Teachers.

1 Tim 6:20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge —

2 Tim 3:1–9 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without selfcontrol, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also

was

Having said all of that, (and we want to emphasize that we have merely mentioned these points, there was no attempt to explain or elaborate [as I'm sure was noticed]). Also, we can see just how very important that this matter of knowledge, seeking it, possessing and putting I to use really is.

One thing that we DO want to emphasize is that this is NOT necessarily (or even in likely fashion) talking about the normal, everyday type of knowledge that all men possess and accrue in their daily lives. This is speaking of spiritual knowledge that begins at the moment of our redemption and perhaps a bit before as the Holy Spirit communicates with us as unredeemed men and leads us to understand the truths of the Bible as regards unsaved men. That new knowledge grows and flourishes in us as we pursue the Scripture and the truths that God's Spirit desires us to know.

*14 The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,
But the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness. (Proverbs 15:14)*

Just to note the contrast once again, Solomon makes the point that it is the nature of fools to both embrace foolishness and disdain what is, in reality, the knowledge which results in wisdom. How many do we see in our day and age, fulfilling the very image portrayed here? Over and over again we see the unredeemed (and sadly a good number of those who profess Christ) decrying the truths of the Bible and pointing fervently to what is, in reality little more than foolishness as far as God is concerned.

Spiritual knowledge, attained only from God and by the taking in and study of His Word, is virtually the most precious commodity we have within our grasp as believers. It stands as the foundational stone of our ability to know our Lord and Master, as well as to grow in His service.

By way of rehearsing our interpretation - "The man of understanding," in other words, the enlightened man, is here again contrasted with "the fool" of every class and degree - the godless one. The *heart* of the first having already received divine truth, is bent upon acquiring more and more of that best knowledge. While the other, with no "heart" for anything but self, gratifies a brutish appetite by feeding his mind upon what is purely "of the earth earthy." The proverb, in a sense is secondary to the religious idea portrayed, may be understood of a difference of tastes, that for what is high-toned and improving, and that for what is frivolous and low.

As always, there are several Scriptural illustrations to help us clarify the matter in our thinking.

- David, as we gather plainly from his Psalms, was always intent on adding to his stores of sacred knowledge.
- Solomon in his prayer sought wisdom from above, and by diligent application became conversant with all sorts of useful learning.
- The Queen of Sheba we're told, showed an understanding heart in her eagerness to gain information which she might turn to account for the benefit of her subjects.

- Over in the NT, Nicodemus, and Mary of Bethany, the Bereans, and the Ethiopian, were all wise enough to be teachable.

These all (and others as well) obtained the precious knowledge they sought. Whereas we're told that the Athenians, with their ears only open to gossip, lost their opportunity of being made "*wise unto salvation.*"

By way of application, we can see how widely different are the tastes of men, even men of equal standing and education! A grand generic contrast at once makes itself seen between those renewed by grace, and those who (though regenerated in baptism) still "*mind earthly things.*" Sin is the element of the one, just as holiness is of the other class, and each breathes most freely in its own element, and feeds upon that which is adapted to its own nature. So you will find, here, a hungering and thirsting after all good, pure, useful, elevating knowledge, divine and human. While there, the appetite is keen after knowledge only at the best "earthy," and much of it not even useful in any way, but frivolous, sensational, debasing. Men betray their tastes by the books they read, the company they keep, the conversation they enjoy. To God and themselves their thoughts are known, and the bent of the thoughts is the index of the character. Let me try myself, then, by this criterion, with a view to my prospects in the future. For heaven will satisfy those only who have acquired a taste for heavenly things. It will not be changed to suit me; therefore, I must be made meet for it. Those two divisions will outlive the world—the men of understanding and the fools. With which will my lot be bound up? According as my heart now seeks knowledge or my mouth feeds on foolishness, so *must* my final portion be.