

## "Ah-Ha"

1 Corinthians 8: 1–13 / Mark 1: 21–28

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I have come to the conclusion that there is a huge difference between having a WOW moment and having an Ah-Ha moment. A wow moment is that moment that you witness something, and you are impressed. You are caught up in that moment when someone does something remarkable, even extraordinary but not really paying attention to its overall impact. Like watching a magician, don't get me wrong, I love to watch a good magic show, but in the end. All the magician has done is to entertain with his knowledge of how to create an illusion.

But an Ah-ha moment, to me, that is a moment when I am more than impressed; I am enlightened. I am inspired to be a better person. It goes beyond giving me knowledge to touching my God-given Spirit to be more like the person God means for me to be.

Francis Bacon once said, "Knowledge is power," but Albert Einstein said, "The only source of knowledge is experience." And then there was Socrates who said, "True knowledge is knowing that you know nothing." Yet it was a man by the name of John Young who said, "The greatest enemy of progress is the illusion of knowledge."

What could he mean by that? Maybe another way to say that is we only know what we know until we have learned something more. Perhaps the best quote that I have come across is from theologian William S. Burroughs (no, not the Bill Burroughs we know from here, but a rather well-known author) who said, "The aim of education is the knowledge, not of facts, but of values."

With just a few of these quotes on knowledge, it is safe to say that having knowledge is important. What we know does matter. To not know something certainly can leave us in the dark. Whether it is something as basic as knowing how to read, write or do math, carry out a skill, or think critically or discern right from wrong. It is also true that we can always know more. But is it all we need?

Knowledge was a very important value to the Corinthians, as it seems to be to most Americans these days. But can we overestimate the value of knowledge? Is there such a thing as having too much knowledge? Meaning can it become an obstacle to our well-being or our relationships with others around us? In other words, is it more important to have and showcase our knowledge over and above having and building relationships with people with who we live in community with?

It is one thing to be right about a matter, and that bit of knowledge saves the day or the life of someone, and it is quite another to be right about something just for the sake of being right and boasting about how knowledgeable you are. While knowledge may be a value, arrogance is not.

That is what Paul is trying to get across to the people of Corinth. As you read through Paul's two letters to this church, but especially this first one, it becomes apparent that even though

they may indeed have had a lot of intelligent, well-read people, they seemed to lack maturity, especially in the faith.

For all of the knowledge they had, they lacked wisdom. Maybe it was because they also lacked, as Albert Einstein said, "Experience." Experience is what it takes to be a faithful Christian. They enjoyed their "wow" moments, but they seemed to be missing their "ah-ha" moments.

As Paul points out, yes, certainly having knowledge is important, especially as it pertains to our faith. Knowing God and understanding our Judeo-Christian history, the laws, the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the one who sacrificed his life on the cross to save us from our sins, the knowledge of the gifts of the Spirit, which is an issue Paul addresses in Chapter 12. Knowing all of that is undoubtedly impressive in theological circles. But having knowledge of God and who God is, is not what saves us. It is in knowing that God knows us. If we can grasp that, that is when we have an "ah-ha" moment.

In Mark's Gospel, when Jesus comes to the town of Capernaum and enters the synagogue on the Sabbath to teach, the people there were astounded at his teaching. Not only did he have the knowledge, as he taught with authority, but it becomes clear that he has more authority than even the scribes. That becomes clear not only in what Jesus says but also in what Jesus does. Everybody say, "WOW!"

They see what he does when a man appears in the synagogue. We are not told who he is; we do not know if anybody in the synagogue knows him. We may assume that Jesus knows him, but that is kept quiet. But we are told that the evil spirit that was in the man knows who Jesus is. This evil spirit has knowledge. In fact, it has more knowledge than those who have been listening to Jesus.

The man the evil spirit possesses, who is he? Is he important? Does he have any knowledge? Perhaps the evil spirit may have brought him into the synagogue that day. My guess is that the man was already there as a member of the synagogue. Maybe he was that crazy odd guy that everyone pretty much avoided. And as he sat there and listened to Jesus' teaching, the spirit within him is so offended that it could no longer remain silent.

The spirit knows who Jesus is, and it also knows exactly why Jesus is there. To destroy the power-hold it has on the man and ultimately all of humanity. The knowledge the evil spirit has comes from the selfish desire for power and control over the man's life.

Perhaps it has persuaded the man that he can have his own way through such knowledge. Everybody say, "WOW!"

But the knowledge that Jesus has is a knowledge rooted in God's word, a word that has the power to set free captive souls, to heal the sick, to restore God's good kingdom. It, too, is power, but not for the sake of having more power. It is a power that stems from the Love of God. Everybody say, "Ah-ha!"

That is what the Corinthians in Paul's letter, seemed to be confused about. Much like the scribes referenced in Mark's gospel, they were more interested in having the status and power and perhaps privilege that comes with it than what that knowledge can help them achieve when applied in the right Spirit.

**Sadly, they failed to understand the most important knowledge; that God needed to know them. It is not that God did not know them, but God could not see God self-reflected in them; therefore, God did not see Spiritual growth in them. But then, that is why Paul is there, to teach. To help them understand what is truly important. Of course, that is what Jesus is also doing as he begins his ministry in Mark's Gospel in the town of Capernaum.**

**Jesus begins his ministry teaching with power and authority, which impresses the people. Still, the real power Jesus shows is that God cares enough to cast out an evil spirit taking up residence in a man known only to God. The people of Capernaum never seem to catch on to this.**

**Like the Corinthians, they fail to understand that the best knowledge we can have is to know and thus demonstrate love for our neighbors. Say, "Ah-ha!"**

**I think that is why we are never told the demon-possessed man's name. For the people of Capernaum, he was not important. What impressed the people of Capernaum the most was not even the man Jesus, not who he was anyway. Rather, it was what he could do and the authority and power he had.**

**But then we are not so different, are we? We get caught up in the prestige, power, and the sense of authority some claim to possess, that we tend to ignore their character, their integrity. We get caught up in what they can do, what they have, but we fail to see who they are. We get so caught up in the WOW moment that we lose the Ah-ha moment.**

**As I said at the beginning, knowledge is important. Even power is an important attribute that comes from having knowledge. But if we are more caught up in the wow moments than the "ah-ha" moments, we will miss the more important matters. The most important thing to God is not what we know but how we choose to use the power we have in knowing who Jesus is. Will we choose to be arrogant and boastful about it? Will we abuse it? Will we act as if we are better than others? Especially towards those who may not be in our circles?**

**Or will we choose to use our knowledge of God as we reflect God's love back to the ones God suddenly brings into our path with the care, kindness, patience, love, and understanding that Jesus teaches us with authority to have?**

**You see, what is most important is knowing that when we reflect back to God his love for us as we love one another, that is when God truly knows who we are. To know God is indeed very important, but to be known by God is even more important. Thanks be to God. If you can say this was an "ah-ha" moment, then I have done more than impress you; God has enlightened you.**