

Perspective: To Know – Part I

Two Perspectives

Many of us approach God as a person about which we should be informed. We want to possess some personal understanding that gives us a feeling of connection.

Those of us who are, and are not in a relationship with God want to know more about Him to varying degrees. Many types of source material are used that includes the Bible, but not necessarily as the one most used by each of us. It seems to me that word-of-mouth may be the predominate source depended upon for our knowledge.

However, possessing that information, memorizing Bible verses, and knowing what scriptures to use when, is the focus of many of us. We truly want to know about God and how we should live. This perspective most often holds the belief that knowing about God equals a relationship with God.

There is another perspective. God is always intimate when it comes to knowing Him. This means that in order to really know God we must choose to be in an intimate relationship with Him.

God brings people into a shared experience of oneness. Perhaps nothing describes intimacy better than God gifting Himself into us through Jesus. Thus, creating His Eternal Living Unity within us..

When we talk about knowing God it goes much deeper than information about something or someone. God really desires to be in an intimate, Love filled, 24/7 relationship with us. This happens through Jesus Christ, by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

There is a big difference between these two perspectives. Let's look again at Gen 3:5b "...and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

It is difficult to find a way to say what needs to be said about "knowing" without raising everyone's hackles. You see, "knowing" is so very important to all of us. So much so, that anything challenging our personal perspective on the issue can easily be labeled as wrong, destructive, or even "just plain dumb".

Still this issue is at the core of the temptation of Adam and Eve. It is also the impetus of the result of Eve and Adam disobeying God.

Thus, it is at the core of the sins that we commit and all that is wrong in this world. Including our separation from God at birth, which if not resolved with God's Life will end in our eternal Death as explained in the previous chapter.

That's heavy stuff. One could say it doesn't get more important, and whether we realize it or not that's one of the reasons why we react so strongly. Knowing good and evil is the essence of our endeavor to have authority over our way of thinking and living on this earth. It's the key to our sense of control.

Thinking In Depth About Knowing

Educational systems, whether they be family based, mentoring, or formal structures within one's culture or society dominate our pathways to knowing. From the time we are born until we die we continue to learn unless there is some physical, mental, or emotional barrier that cannot be overcome.

Not only is "knowing" critical to us within our self-selected areas of interest, but knowing about how we learn has also been important. This is because we believe if we can better understand how we learn then we can know more by making learning more efficient and effective.

In fact, just implying that "knowing" is learning might get me in trouble in some circles because "knowing" may be seen by some as the lowest level of learning. Speaking only from a cognitive perspective we "know", "understand", "apply", "analyze", "synthesize", and "evaluate". These are the cognitive steps of learning from Bloom's Taxonomy developed by Benjamin Bloom. To "know" something is only the first step.

It's interesting that the Hebrew word used for "know" in Genesis 3:5 "...., knowing good and evil.", is the type of knowledge that is primarily experiential. We not only know about the event, or thing before us, but we also know its impact. Why? Because we not only live through its impact, we live out its impact.

Simply stated we must experience something to know about it. The flip-side being, we can't know about something we don't experience.

This is important to understand because it clearly shows that Satan, through the serpent, is telling Eve that she will know good and evil by experiencing them. In other words, she must experience good and evil to know anything about them.

That makes the intent clear concerning Eve's temptation and her acceptance of the same. She must take control over her actions to understand the meaning of good, and evil. This required her to take God's rightful place of authority. Only then could she experience either good or evil in a manner that fit her definition of the two, and learn more about them through her experiences.

According to the serpent, her first experience must be eating the fruit she clearly knows she is not supposed to eat. The implication being, only through disobeying God can we know what is most important for us to experience.

This constituted a self-defined and driven pursuit of knowledge by one's own experience with no place for God in the process. Humankind could now take control, except for the unspoken fact that whatever they did would now be controlled by the power of Sin.

With this approach humankind decides what is good, rather than accepting God's pronouncement of what is Good. Also, humankind gets to decide what is evil, and must learn this experientially. My view of that proposition is called "learning the hard way". This just happens to be an expertise of mine. 😊

To be clear "knowing", as it is used in this chapter, means learning with depth, and not just being able to store a bunch of data in your brain that we can effectively retrieve. Satan's hidden proposal is that our knowledge of good and evil will define who we are, what we become, and our eternal destiny.

The philosophy promoted by Satan means that by us being empowered with this knowledge of good and evil, we can be the ones to decide what is good and what is evil. Those decisions will be based upon our perspectives from a physical, mental, and emotional foundation. This supposedly gives us the right to decide everything about the meaning of our past, our current circumstances, and our future.

Not understood clearly is the intent of Satan that we become constrained from ever knowing God through this self-defined process. Satan wants us to be totally absorbed by deciding and dealing with the good and evil we identify, or is identified for us by others or societal structures.

In this way our attention can be drawn away from God by our own pursuits, and Satan can influence, or directly control this process. Most often this may happen by Satan prompting thoughts within our minds, and through the manipulation of our circumstances. Peer pressure seems to be a big part. The initial form of this being between the serpent and Eve, and then Eve and Adam.

The statement, "Knowledge is power" is reflective of what Satan intended in the temptation. After all it was knowing good and evil experientially that Satan said would make Adam and Eve like God. Of course, he's a liar who lies, but that was the idea that Adam and Eve accepted, and it became an essential part of their nature.

Thus, it is a part of the essence of all of us. Essentially this puts us in a position to be a god unto our self. Tragically, for a very few of us who've made it to the "top" there has be a temptation to think they really are like a god to others. The many options between these two represent different levels of power.

Knowledge gives us the ability to discover pathways to control, which is something we greatly desire. Within this context power and control are interchangeable. After all "knowing" for the sake of just knowing something does us little good.

Knowledge is to be used for something, and we get to decide how to use what we know to do what we desire. In so doing, we decide what is "good" and what is "evil". We act according to our inclination to live out either possibility as we choose, or as we must given the circumstances.

Now there is something that is insidious within the temptation of Satan. We might think that it is knowing evil, which is a subject that seems to get an awful lot of attention. That, however, is not the insidious part. Actually, it is Satan's suggestion that we will know "good".

"Why is that?" That's a question worth answering. After all, the idea of knowing good seems like a good idea, doesn't it? When we think about that we are probably considering the things that we believe to be good, and wonder "What could be wrong with knowing something like that?"

For us to know what is good following the invasion of Sin into the world, we always must decide what is good. That, however, is God's right, not ours. If we serve as the source for determining what is good, instead of letting God define for us what is Good, then we are essentially taking His place of authority.

Go back and read the first chapter of Genesis and you will find that as God created He either saw or said that His creation was "good". God is the Person Who establishes what is Good, creates what is Good, and thus defines Good. This is not just an adjective to qualify something. It is the result of what God does; it is the expression of Who He is now and forever.

Let's go one step further. Remember that God was the Origin and Originator of all of creation. Since all that was created by God came from Him, what was it that God was calling good? That's right, what came from Him. Not anything that came from some other source.

That's why He could call it Good. God is Good. He is Perfection, so what comes from Him is always Good. When Adam and Eve sinned, everything changed concerning the Goodness of all that was created. Now let's twist our minds a bit further.

It turns out the general perspective of good in the world is all wrong. Good is not a what, it's a Who. That "Who" is Almighty God! Anything that does not come from God cannot be truly Good. It can only be considered good through a Sin influenced perspective. Now, please, let that soak in for a few minutes.

If a person who truly knows God, through Jesus His Son and has an understanding of God's work, sees a person healed miraculously, they would probably call it good. If not good then perhaps a miracle, and amazingly wonderful. In this case their idea of good is coming from what they know God is doing, thus it must be Good.

While a person without a relationship with God might call it good, which would mean it's a good thing that happened from their perspective. They may or may not see it as miraculous, and may never believe God had anything to do with it. It's a phenomenon. It can't be explained within our current understanding of what is normal within our experience.

Only by separation from God, thus from Good, can we ever begin to think about good as being something other than God and what comes from Him.

Why? Because without being separated by Sin the question would never exist. Why ask what is good, when all a person like Eve and Adam has ever experienced was Good. The evidence of this separation within all of us today is by our wrong-doing, our sins.

Prior to their original sins, Adam and Eve experienced Good by experiencing God within the Unity that He had established with His creation, and His relationship with all of creation. Good was never a question. God was pervasive within their reality. No one needed to define what was good because everything created reflected the Good of its Creator.

The only way that we can even have a concept of good is because God originally created the world in which we live. We may not realize it but good as we know it only exists through the remaining influences of God in us and this world. So, the word “good” meant something different to Adam and Eve during the temptation, and was not exactly the same as what it means to us today.

Why the Change?

Eve and Adam knew only “Good”, because there was no barrier between themselves and God. They knew all about “Good” in ways we will never understand while we are still alive on this earth.

That’s because Satan has dominion over all of creation now. Thus, the world we live in is very different from the world that Adam and Eve lived in prior to their sins. It is so different we cannot know what it was truly like for them.

The point is they really did know “Good” in ways we cannot know God until we are with the Lord in Heaven. At the same time Satan knew if Eve and Adam accepted his lie, and disobeyed God their connection with God, and knowledge of Good would be utterly broken. Satan knew this to be true from his own previous experience.

So, Adam and Eve were tempted with not only deciding what was good in the world, but also being able to know the essence of evil, which Sin dominates. How they thought that would put them in a position of power is something we cannot imagine on this side of their sins in the Garden of Eden.

By holding God’s position of authority, perhaps they would be able to control their experiences themselves, and perhaps for others concerning good and evil. They would do this by shaping their own perspectives, and that of others concerning the quality of what was, or wasn’t good about everything.

Instead of an expression of the nature of the Creator, good became a qualifier of the attributes of something, or someone according to their perspectives and those of others. All of creation became interlocked in this struggle to define good and evil.

To be the one to define what was good or evil was a very powerful position to hold. More than this there was no choice in the matter because survival was now interlinked with this assumed position of authority. They now faced an extremely different world, and process of living by their own initiatives.

Adam and Eve could only define what was good by taking God’s place, and using their false sense of control to decide for themselves what was good or evil. In order to experience the good as proposed by the serpent Eve and Adam had to create their own experience of good.

The difference for us is that we are born this way. What we want is what becomes good to us initially. After that it's whatever we decide is good, unless we accept the perspectives of others, and choose to adopt those perspectives as our own. This can happen either by choice, or because we are forced to.

It's an appropriate time to suggest that one should always check their assumptions. Adam and Eve seemed to have assumed that they could retain their knowledge of Good while knowing evil. By this they would be at the pinnacle of knowledge, fully enabled to decide for themselves the meaning of all things.

They were wrong. As we've seen when they sinned their relationship with God was broken, and while they may have remembered what that relationship had been like they could no longer "know" Good as they had; it was outside of their grasp.

That's because Good can only be known in the perspective of God by being in Unity with Him, and they had destroyed that Unity. Being able to remember what it had been like was only knowledge in the form of recalled information. Information is not knowing Good where a relationship with God is concerned. We can only know God by experience.

So, by experiencing evil fully they would know about evil, which became the foundation for them to know enough about people and all of creation to decide what they would call good. Information about anything could be enough to decide if someone, or something was evil or good. Why? Because they became their own foundational authority for knowing what was evil or good.

The idea of good took on a completely different definition that was limited by their sudden separation from God. They were separated from truly knowing Good, and became like an empty shell to be filled by their limited understanding of good and evil experientially and by information, which was now dominated by the power of Sin..

A Few Thoughts About Evil

What is evil? Is it the bad things that we do, the acts of humanity twisted by the power of Sin? Or is evil a force that serves as the foundation of such actions? Perhaps Satan is evil personified, so should we name him evil?

Evil is anything that is not Good, in essence anything that is not of God, or that which accurately demonstrates God's will resulting in the manifestation of God in the world. The origin of evil is Satan. Some may say evil is the manifestation of Satan through us and the rest of God's creation. For me the power of Sin is the root of evil, and Satan is the source of the power of Sin and Death.

Perhaps it is correct to say that Sin and Death are not a what, they are a who. That who is the angel-of-lights, Lucifer, who we know as Satan. This seems correct since Satan is the origin of Sin and Death.

While we may not really know in detail what evil is, we are compelled to know its nature and experience its results. Internally it always seems to be manifested in the same way. Like an urge that wells up within us and compels us to decide to take some action we know, or suspect is wrong.

It's almost as though we are hungry deep within for the experience of evil, because actions seem like the pathway to knowing what evil really is and how it feels. Many of us may think that by knowing evil more completely we may better discover what is truly good. We each long for the good we cannot find, because we look not unto the Lord.

If we can't experience it then we seek to gain information about either evil or good concerning the aspects of both that interest us. It's like some of us, or most of us, are attracted to knowing about evil things or events like moths are attracted to a source of light.

Conversely, the same can be said about our attraction to what we call good. Once we decide what would be good for us, or others our attention can become highly focused on its source. For many this results in greed and envy. Wealth becomes critical since it is most often seen as the pathway to obtain what we understand to be the source for our idea of good.

Try as we may to know either good or evil completely, we will always fall far short of our goal. One is outside of our grasp, and the other will destroy us before we can know its essence completely.

Even Paul writes that when trying to know God while we are alive on this earth we only see through a piece of glass "darkly" (KJV), or only see dimly (NASB).

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." (1 Corinthians 13:12)

He means that our ability to see is inhibited, as though there is not enough light to enable us to see clearly. This is placed in contrast with what it will be like when we are face-to-face with God and can really know Him. Paul's words are wonderful. To know as discussed above, whether we are in a relationship with God or not, is not just about possessing knowledge; it is a state-of-being.