

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up

The Freakonomics podcast explored why the phrase “I don’t know” is so difficult for people to say. Contrary to the common belief that “I love you” is the hardest phrase, the hosts argue that “I don’t know” is even more challenging, and our reluctance to admit ignorance starts in childhood and persists into adulthood. The podcast hosts note that despite their reputation as “business experts,” they rarely hear anyone in corporate settings-especially in front of a boss-admit they don’t know something. The prevailing belief is that expertise means always having an answer, even if one must fake it. However, this mindset is counterproductive. Pretending to know everything may protect one’s image in the short term, but it stifles learning and personal growth.

The problem is when someone doesn’t have all the answers to life and godliness, but thinks they have.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.

1) Knowledge without love

- Knowledge puffs up
 - To puff up means to become proud and arrogant
 - Knowledge on its own can cause us to be proud and arrogant making us “know it alls”.
 - Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.
 - Proverbs 26:12 (Amplified Bible) Do you see a man [who is unteachable and] wise in his own eyes *and* full of self-conceit? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
- This doesn’t mean that we should be against knowledge and the acquisition thereof. On the contrary, we are encouraged to seek knowledge.
 - Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.
 - God doesn’t want us to live in ignorance. He wants us to use our minds.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:20 Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.
 - In order to give an answer to everyone of the hope we have, we need to have knowledge of our hope.
- So, knowledge is right, good, and necessary, but knowledge that is for the wrong reasons is bad and destructive.
- What knowledge then is bad and destructive?
 - Knowledge that causes us to be proud, arrogant, and unloving
 - 1 Corinthians 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
 - Such knowledge exalts a person above others and gives them an attitude of superiority which looks down on and belittles others.
 - He is often very judgmental towards others
 - Such a person cannot say that they don’t know something and will vehemently defend their case, even if they’re wrong.
 - For them, being right is more important than right relationships.
 - A boastful person will talk about all he knows, even if there’s no point to what he’s saying.
- The consequences of such knowledge are devastating
 - They break relationships with others
 - They break relationships between other and split churches
- It doesn’t bother them when people cut them off as they live with a martyr mentality even though it’s self-inflicted.
- How should we respond to arrogant people?
 - Don’t argue with them. You’re wasting your breathe
 - Proverbs 26:4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him.
 - Pray for them as only God can humble the proud

2) Love without knowledge

- 2 John 1:1-2 The elder, to the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth —and not I only, but also all who know the truth — because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever
- The knowledge that I'm referring to is the knowledge of the truth
- The love of God is always unconditional, but the application of His love is dependent on circumstances and our lifestyles
 - God loved His people unconditionally, yet He delivered them from bondage at one time and delivered them into bondage another time. He caused their crops to flourish at times, and dried up the ground in famine at other times
 - God loved in truth, not according to soppy feelings
- Love without knowledge of the truth can lead to deception as it will focus on relationship regardless of the person's lifestyle
 - It's the hippy era philosophy of love, which was a crude all embracing love that embraced everyone, except those who opposed their licentious lifestyles, of course
 - This kind of love can make us guilty by association
 - Romans 1:32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.
- In our love it is therefore essential to have knowledge both of the person and the truth against which we weigh their actions
 - This doesn't mean we shouldn't love sinful people, but our love for them will be demonstrated differently according to who they are and what they do.

3) The union of knowledge and love

- Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.
 - We must have knowledge, especially knowledge of the truth, but we mustn't allow that knowledge to cause us to become proud and arrogant, but to use it in love
 - 1 Corinthians 8:1 But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.
- Our knowledge ought to be used to build others up and not to tear them down; to edify and not to destroy; to bring repentance and transformation, not to be judgmental
 - If we don't have knowledge of the truth we cannot love in truth. The only true love is the of God revealed in His Word.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - Hence the knowledge of the truth is for us to first apply to our own lives that we can measure our lives against the scriptures to see whether we are living according to the will of God in thought, attitude, and action, the secondly to teach, rebuke, correct, and train others to do the same.
- Even when we are challenged in our faith we ought to respond in love and not arrogance
 - 1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.