

The Limits of Knowledge

All of us have heard the statement, “knowledge is power.” I have a question, is this true? Nearly everyone recognizes there is a degree of truth in this statement, however, I want to suggest a different question, how much knowledge does it take to have power?

In October 2020, the managing director of Ericsson Global Services, Amitabh Ray, published an article on LinkedIn saying that in 1945 knowledge doubled every 25 years. I remember hearing in the 1980s knowledge was doubling every seven years. Many experts today suggest knowledge doubles every 13 months, while other experts believe the volume of knowledge has increased even more and now doubles not every 13 months, but every 12 hours.

Those who are highly educated and honest, realize how little they know in comparison to what there is to know. They understand there is no way for anyone to keep up with everything.

While knowing more is good, today’s society demonstrates knowledge alone neither automatically makes us either happier or more satisfied. Ironically, sometimes knowing more results in less meaning in life.

Many years ago, Dr. Hugh Moorhead, who then chaired the Department of Philosophy at Northeastern University, wrote to 250 famous philosophers, scientists, writers and intellectuals asking; “What is the purpose of life.” He published their responses in a book which offered little hope. Some submitted their best guess, some invented a purpose, and a few admitted they did not know. Here are a couple of the people he asked and their bleak responses:

- World famous psychiatrist Carl Jung, said, “I don’t know the meaning ‘the purpose’ of life, but it looks as if something were meant by it.”
- Isaac Asimov, author and biochemist, wrote, “As far as I can see, there is no purpose.”

As a person of faith, I am not suggesting knowledge is bad, it certainly is not. Medical and technological advances are almost always good. However, these developments are not the place we will find significant meaning. Could it be humanity will never find deep purpose until we find it in God?

This is the very thing the Apostle Paul wrote nearly 2,000 years ago, “So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world’s brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.” (1 Corinthians 1:20-21, NLT)

Some might suggest Paul was saying knowledge is bad, he was not. Paul’s point was that knowledge has limits, and no matter how much we know, we can never find peace apart from God. Our hope lies in knowing God, not in knowing ever more information.