

Getting the Facts

Understanding Your World:

Proverbs 1:7

June 6, 2004

High school and college educations end with commencement because they mark beginnings. Your formal education might stop with a diploma or degree, but not your learning. It actually may accelerate. Whatever the case, there is a lot of anxiety at graduation time because there is a lot of uncertainty. Am I beginning right? Do I really know what I am doing? Did I have a good grasp of the facts when I made these decisions? You may be confident, but is your confidence justified? Do you really know?

I don't want to raise anyone's anxiety level here. Well, maybe I want to raise it just a little. I want to raise it enough so we'll learn something. What we think we know always gets in the way of learning what we need to know. It was the religious that had the hardest time listening to Jesus. It was the educated that had the hardest time learning from Jesus. They thought all of their education made them so knowledgeable. They did know a lot, yet with all their learning they missed critical facts that were pivotal to their future. Truthfully, all of us make some far-reaching decisions with little grasp of the critical facts. You choose a school, career, mate and even a road without knowing whether good or evil, fulfillment or misfortune are down that particular path.

There is only one who knows all that. There is only one who knows this world utterly. He created it, and he sees and lives in all time. There is only who knows what school, job or companion will bring you the greatest blessing or deliver significant sorrow. There is only who

knows fully the result or consequence of each attitude and each action. There is only one who really knows and has a grasp on those facts.

King Solomon was specially gifted with wisdom. God poured ability to think and comprehend into his life. Then God preserved many of his words in the book of Proverbs, so that you and I could benefit. He began that book with these words:

The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair. These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people. Let those who are wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. And let those who understand receive guidance by exploring the depth of meaning in these proverbs, parables, wise sayings, and riddles. (Proverbs 1:2-6, NLT)

God inspired Solomon to write Proverbs because we need the wisdom and discipline it fosters. God inspired Solomon to write because we need assistance in doing what is right, just and fair. God inspired and preserved these proverbs so that those with little foresight would see and young people would acquire knowledge and purpose. God collected these proverbs so that you and I would grasp important facts that will make a difference in what we know, what we choose, what we encounter and what results. God does not want you to be ignorant and vulnerable. Ignorant and vulnerable children do not reflect well on their parents, and your heavenly father wants you to reflect well on him.

In the first six verses of Proverbs, Solomon tells why they are written. Then he delivers the first proverb. The order is not accidental. He writes:

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. (Proverbs 1:7)

God directed Solomon to start his book on wisdom with the beginning. God is saying that we begin to know about our world by fearing him. Without the fear of God, our knowledge lacks the most critical and basic facts necessary to understand life.

The theory of origins or how we came to be is a good illustration. Some believers insist that God created the earth in six 24-hour-periods. They insist that is true because of the language *“there was evening and there was morning, one day.”* They note that those words describe the first acts of creation and conclude that they imply a 24 hour period. My question is how do you know that the earth rotated at the same speed then as it does now? You don’t even have the sun, moon and stars until the fourth day; and according to the Bible their creation established the measurements for time, and that is the fourth day. Even then, you have to make assumptions about the rotation of the earth on its axis and the speed of its orbit around the sun to produce a time frame for the next two days. Do you really know from Genesis how fast in our time today creation of this world occurred? Remember, it is what we think we know, those assumptions, that get in the way of learning what we need to know. And that is exactly the problem that evolutionists suffer. They make an assumption. The driving assumption that interprets all the data, the fossil record and the geology, is that there was no divine intervention. That is not a conclusion. That is the assumption used to interpret the data and produce their results. With that assumption the scientific community then draws its conclusions. When you rule out the truth by assumption, you produce nothing, absolutely nothing worthy of trust. When it comes to science, we in many ways are in the dark ages. There are areas where we seem to be doing well, but in other areas we haven’t begun to grasp the facts. You see... the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. Fear of God doesn’t add to knowledge. It is the path to knowledge. It is the path to understanding yourself and your world. It is the path to grasping reality.

I firmly believe in religious freedom. The fact that every person is made in the image of God means that they have the divine right to rule. In other words they have the right to decide what they will and will not believe. That means that they don’t have the right to force another to

practice their theism or their atheism. At the same time, every self-governing people must decide what practices will be encouraged and what will be discouraged in the community they form. The fear of God is relevant; because without it, that people will miss the most crucial facts for ordering their life together.

What then is the fear of God? In the Bible it is the understanding that, first, there is one God, and second, that we all are accountable to him. Therefore, knowing and following his word is critical. Suppose you were in a 90-minute history class. A teacher assistant spends 30 minutes telling you what he thinks will be on your final exam. Then a former student spends 30 minutes telling you what was on the last exam. Finally, the professor, who will make the test and give it, comes and spends the last 30 minutes telling you what she wants you to know. Which 30 minutes would direct most of your study and preparation? Whose word would you most regard? Solomon writes another book of wisdom called Ecclesiastes. Listen to how he concludes it:

Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, NLT)

Fear of God means that his word is *the* word for you. It means that you are hungry to know it and careful to obey it; for you know that your life depends on it.

Jesus spent his life giving his full attention to God's will. His father's will was his only business. It was all that mattered. It was his trust and his vision. What commands your trust and directs your eyes? That is what you most regard.

As important decisions as they may be, it matters less what school you choose, what job you take or what home you make than it does whether you know and obey the word of the Lord. This is our father's world and we will give an account for everything, absolutely everything we do. Because he is good, that is really good!