

What Do You Know?

Chinor M. Lee

United Methodist Church at New Brunswick



ADVENT

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? *✠* I CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

"By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest." These words were spoken by the Chinese philosopher and social thinker, Confucius. Now before you start throwing leftover cranberry sauce at me, give me a chance to show you where I'm going with this. So, for the next few moments I will focus on the second reading from today I Corinthians 1:3-9; speaking from the theme, "What Do You Know?"

Being the founder of the Church at Corinth, Paul had a deep fondness for the Corinthians. He spent 18 months of his life living with and amongst them. He preached, taught and missionized to and with them. The Epistle, or letter, we know as I Corinthians was written to correct the Corinthians, to encourage the Corinthians, to provide them with additional insight as well as to reaffirm that which Paul has already shared and they themselves have already experienced.

To address the divisiveness in the church Paul first commends them on what they are doing well, a point of commonality. He praises them and acknowledges that they have been enriched in both "speech and knowledge of every kind." As I was reading this verse I was struck by the word "knowledge" and what it may have meant to Paul at that time.

You see, I studied Greek 2 summers ago and I was like, "Yeah, now is the time to flex my intellectual muscle!" I started looking at the Greek and looking at the English and looking at the Greek and looking at the English and pretty soon I was just looking at the English, because I'd forgotten all of my Greek! But, in all of that looking back and forth one word stood out to me...*knowledge*. For Paul the word probably meant, "gleaned from first-hand or personal experience."

I believe this was vitally important for Paul. Paul was writing this letter to help set some things straight in Corinth that had gone astray. He praised them for the knowledge they had. This is not something they gleaned from reading, remember this society was a highly oral one and many things

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? *✠* I CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

were not written down. This was not knowledge they received simply by hearing it. Sure they were able to come to know about Jesus because of the missionary work that Paul did in Corinth with his preaching and teaching. But it is deeper than that, they actually *experienced* the transformative powers that God can have in one's life. Without the transformative power of God how could they do the preaching, teaching, and speaking in tongues that Paul praises them for throughout the epistle of Corinthians?

What did the Corinthians know?

Sure, the Corinthians knew how to speak in tongues, but did they know how to speak peace and love into the lives of their brothers and sisters?

What *did* the Corinthians know?

Maybe they knew they were different from the pagans that inhabited the city, but did they know that though they were all different they were a part of the same body of Christ?

What did the Corinthians *know*?

What they did not know was when Jesus was to come back. Paul and the Corinthians believed that the coming of Jesus was imminent and would happen in their lifetime.

As time passes, they became more impatient and the Corinthians began to move further away from the teachings Paul left with them.

Have you ever lost your patience? I know I have. Depending on the day of the week, I might be *that* guy at the stop light that violently blows their horn a split second after the light turns green.

During the holiday season, it's extremely difficult NOT to be impatient. Once I started paying attention to this I noticed that Christmas music came on earlier and earlier with each passing year. I remember at one time you didn't hear Christmas music until at least after Thanksgiving. Not this year,

| *WHAT DO YOU KNOW? ☞ I CORINTHIANS 1:3-9*

I'm sure I heard it on Halloween—granted that freaky snow storm we had that day didn't help matters much either. I could see the Christmas Sale signs, see the snow on the ground and hear the Christmas music and mentally I know Christmas is at hand, but I didn't quite feel it in my heart. I don't know exactly what "it" is, but I do know that it does not involve Christmas music and jack 'o lanterns being placed side by side.

It is also easy to become impatient during this season of Advent. This time when we are expectantly waiting and preparing for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want to challenge each of us to become more in touch with what we know, through our own experiences. I also want us to become more in touch with Jesus, the one for whom we are waiting and celebrating during this Advent season. Let us not passively count down the days until Advent is over, let us actively seek to experience God's love during this season of expectant waiting. In order to do this I believe we can look back to the three ways we can attain wisdom...reflection, imitation and experience.

As we reflect, let's each look inwardly and examine ourselves. Realizing that we have all sinned, yet our sins were paid for by the blood that Jesus shed on our behalf. Let's reflect by spending more time in prayer. Not only praying for ourselves, but praying for others. Praying for those we know and those we don't know. Being thankful for the grace and mercy God has extended to us. As we read and study God's Word, let's reflect on how those words written over 2000 yrs. ago can reach across time and eternity and impact our lives today, in the here and now.

I've heard it said imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Jesus doesn't need or want our flattery. He simply wants our obedience. So as we seek to gain a better understanding of what and for whom we are waiting let us also seek to be imitators of Christ. We do this by praying for one another. We do this by being supportive and encouraging to one another. We do this by loving the LORD our God

| *WHAT DO YOU KNOW? ☞ I CORINTHIANS 1:3-9*

with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our strength. We also do this by loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.

We've looked at reflection. We've looked at imitation. Now we must go to experience. Confucius would describe experience as being bitterest. I am going to say that experience is the best. Because as you reflect and imitate you will begin to experience the goodness and mercy of God in new and different ways. Not only will you begin to see the changes in your life, but those around you will be able to see the changes in you as well. You will walk differently and you will talk differently. People will treat you differently.

What do you know?

Someone knows that God not only created this world, but also created them to be special.

What do you know?

Someone out there knows that God answers prayers. God may not answer them when we want, but they are answered.

What do you know?

Someone knows that the Holy Spirit has the power to comfort. The Holy Spirit can wipe the tears from the eyes of a parent that has lost a child, or from a patient who is suffering from cancer.

What do you know?

Someone knows that Jesus died on a cross on Calvary for the remission of their sins and mine. Someone knows that through Jesus we have access to life eternal.

What do you know?

| *WHAT DO YOU KNOW? ☞ I CORINTHIANS 1:3-9*

What do you know?

I know I am not the man I was and it is all because of my experience with God. I know I am not the man I will be because there is so much more that God has for me to experience. So what do you know? I know that the person you see today is not the same person you are going to see tomorrow and I pray through your own reflection, imitation and experience with God that you can say the same. Amen.