

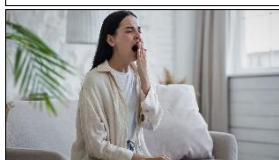
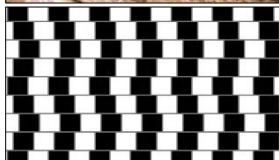
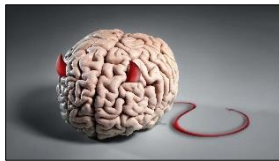
No To Self

Knowing We Don't Know

August 7, 2022

Today, we're talking about how letting go of what we know can stop sin and jumpstart faith. So answer this: **Do you know that you don't know?** Or do you think you *basically* know what you need to know – but *build* on it a *bit* – to show that you *do* know you've got some room to grow?

[Well, I hate to break it to you *but*:] If *anyone* thinks that he knows *anything*, he knows *nothing* yet as he *ought* to know. – 1 Corinthians 8:2 NKJ



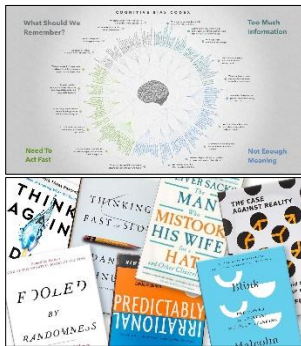
So, *no*, you don't know nuttin'! And **that's not just an insight – that's a threat!** It's in that "**ought to know**" part; because *that* means there's a *correction* coming for the *fault* in the *way* we think we *know* things. And I *loved* last week's look at exactly *how* God can *correct* us by *shaking* our lives to *open* our eyes so we can see if it's *truth* we're trusting or a pile of *lies*. And **nothing shakes us up like being confronted with something we don't want to hear.** Whether it's *challenging*, *confusing*, *unique* or just *new* – we'll wrestle *with* it until *it* fits with what we want *it* to say... unless, of course, it's *true*.

Because, **we can't overpower truth.** All we can do is keep up the *appearance* of an undecided fight; in the same way that I can hold my breath and *appear* to not *need* oxygen. However, the stubborn struggle *itself* does *reveal* a truth: **we don't like to trust anything outside of us!** And just *why* is that so *bad*? After all, *we're* made in *God's* image and all of human history has been focused on *growing* what we *know*! So why are we told we need to throw it out and:

Trust in the *Lord* with all your heart, And lean *not* on *your own* understanding; In *all your* ways acknowledge *Him*. – Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJ

Well, let's answer with an exercise: Remember how we *missed* the cigar in the wall because of our wrong *way* of thinking? That's because our brain *relies* on *convention*, and we don't *expect* to see a cigar in a brick wall as much as we might *expect* a rock. Well, it doesn't stop there. Take a look at this. It's an example of how *context* can confuse us; even straight lines can seem skewed in certain *settings*. Now read these words real quick. Easy peasy Chuck E. Cheesey. But let's try *again* at the same pace. A little more *stumbly* because processing *two* such sets of data (words *and* colors) maxes out our brain's systems and we mistakenly merge them in what's called *conflation*. And lastly, just *look* at this lady yawning. Merely *looking* at this picture and *hearing* me say the word "*yawn*" means around 33% of you *will* yawn in the next *minute*.

Well, that's because our brains are easily *contaminated* and *controlled* by subtle subconscious social *contagions*. And each of *your* yawns will infect *another* 33% and so on – until I've put everyone to sleep.



But here's my point: *convention, context, conflation, and contamination* are just four ways **our thinking gets compromised and leads us to a sense of confusion**. And *that's* just the tip of the iceberg, because our brains are *bursting* with biases. Take a look at the list of ways our *own* brain *misrepresents* information... to *us!*

Each of *these* biases were built by *your* brain when it had to handle and process some *challenging, confusing, unique or new* information! And **each bias compromises the truth in that information**.

And after generations of incredible studies and fascinating findings, nearly every book on the subject has repeatedly concluded, on one level or another, **believing our own brain is dumb**.

So when we run things through our personal fact-checker and then *trust* whatever passes – *as truth* – we should *know* we're lying to ourselves. And **we should admit that we desperately want to know the truth – but acknowledge that it's our stupid flesh that makes it impossible!** *Alas*, we should scream in humble frustration at our own humanity!



"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! *Everything* is meaningless." – Ecclesiastes 1:2 NIV

Yeah! Just like that! That's how the *wisest* human in the whole OT *kicks off his* book. And he just keeps the hits coming with an 'inspiring' *theme* of helpless human frustration and gems like *this*:

[God] has made everything beautiful in *its* time. He has *also* set *eternity* in the hearts of *men*; yet they *cannot fathom* what God has done from beginning to end. – Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV

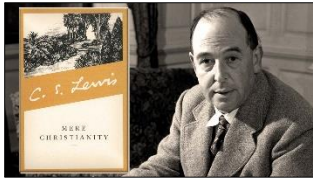
And what *happens* when you have an *instinct* for the infinite yet a *brain* that literally can't see straight? *Confusion, frustration, and desperation!* So why in the world would God create us with that constant uncomfortable internal *conflict*?! Well, **nothing motivates us to get moving like discomfort!** Ever have your house spring a leak? When I was in my 20s, I had one that was over my bed, so I just switched ends... until the *smell* got me. Discomfort even gets bachelor bartenders up! Because we just *can't* sit still while *uncomfortable*; so we seek a fix. And right there – we take the bait. *God* got us *all* looking for answers! Yet all He *did* was create a universe where we would see the need for truth. Because **our spiritual house is already leaky, God just brings the rain**. He set up a *situation* where we would teach *ourselves* what naturally needs fixing.

And **that's how He can simultaneously be the source of grief and relief and never stop loving you for a moment**. And throughout Scripture, He reminds us how this works to explain that He's *not* a monster, just a loving parent:

The Lord is known by His acts of justice; [whereas] the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands. [Because:] – Psalms 9:16 NIV

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. [To teach us what needs fixing] – Jeremiah 17:9-10 ESV

But My people would not listen to Me ... So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. If My people would only listen to Me, if Israel would only follow My ways, how quickly I would subdue their enemies! – Psalms 81:11-14 NIV



You get the message? **We punish ourselves when we lean on our own understanding** – and God designed life in His creation to highlight our flaws to provoke us to find a fix outside ourselves. I love C.S. Lewis's take on our unachievable instincts - like finding truth down here:



Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for desires exist. A baby feels hunger: there is food. A duckling wants to swim: there is water. ... Therefore, if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. – C.S. Lewis; *Mere Christianity*

Solid logic. But if we accept that we're stuck hungering for knowledge that we can't comprehend, what can we do?! Well, we can know that we don't know like Paul said at the beginning. And that is a surprisingly significant step! Because first, **it means we can root out all of our beliefs that were built by broken-brained humans.** And *that doesn't* mean they're completely wrong, it just means they shouldn't be trusted as completely right.

Because **every preacher, teacher, philosopher, and author has the ability to contaminate our way of thinking** with new *conventions* or *context* that we can *conflate* with real truth. Like when iconic coach Mike Ditka got fired by the Chicago Bears but reassured the media that Scripture says "This too shall pass." Even though it *doesn't*. Nor is there a verse that says "God works in mysterious ways" or "God helps those who help themselves"! In fact, I'm preaching the *opposite!*

To cut down the confusion in our lives, we gotta cut out the human contamination, even though they provide other options that may be more *attractive*. Which is why sometimes we like reading books *about* God more than the book *by* God! But *that's* subtly scratching the deceptive desire of our itching ears! And once again we learn:

Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. – James 3:16 NKJ

If we want an untainted truth, we gotta go beyond our biased brains. Because the *second* thing we *can* do after knowing we don't know – is look for someone who *does* know – outside *us!* We gotta give God His shot at being our source of truth. *For real.* Not preachers, pastors, or publications, we gotta take Him at His word in His Word to see what would actually happen "If **My people would only listen to Me**" right where He says He *speaks*. And oddly, as if to confirm we're in the right place, the Bible echoes a key concept: **believing our own brain is dumb.**

Instead, we're told to put our faith in *God's Word* by just *receiving* it regardless of how much we even *understand* it. And then we're free to wrestle with it, as long as we know that we don't know – but trust He *does*.



It's like being given an alien spaceship. It's clearly superior to what you've got and although you don't know *how* it works, you can get in and prove that it *does*. And the more you fly around, the more you'll *understand* how it works. And the closer you *look*, the more you can reverse engineer *why* it works. Yet, even if you fully understand it and learn how to build one of your own – **it wasn't a product of your knowledge, it was a product of your trust!** You merely made a copy of something you recognized to be beyond your ability. Well that's essentially how our faith works! We've been given God's Truth in His *Scripture* and in His *Son* – now it's up to us whether we want to look closer to try and copy something outside our ability or look away to try and cope with the things inside our ability. Just remember:

Everything that does not come from faith is sin. – Romans 14:23 NIV

But it's hard to let go of what we've built because we don't like to trust anything outside of us! Cuz we wouldn't get to live out or even *believe in* what makes the most *sense* to our biased brains!

My brother is a professor at the Air Force Academy and I remember when he went through boot camp he told me, "You'd never make it through." And his reasoning was that I couldn't tolerate irrational things. *Fair enough!* I probably would've walked because I couldn't bring myself to believe that wiping a shower bone dry every day made any sense! But *now*, I see that's just one *part* of a *bigger plan* and **what's important isn't how much sense it made to me, but the trust it revealed about me.** And it's easy to make the same mistake in our faith. We want to *understand* first, and then maybe we'll *trust*. But who's being irrational *now*?! Cuz *our* understanding is *NOT* a trustworthy measure of truth, remember?!

If anyone thinks that *he* knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But **[Oh! Did you know there's more?]** if anyone *loves God*, this one is *known by Him*. – 1 Corinthians 8:2-3 NKJ

Because **if we love Him, we'll trust Him and let go of what we know to make room for Him to come in.** And once He's there, He can know *us* and then show us what we need. Because when we lean on Him and let Him lead, we start to see how free we can be. And *that's the way we ought to know*; by trusting *only* what *He* shows. And really listening when He says:

Be *still* and *know* that I am God. – Psalms 46:10 NIV

Cuz if we know that, **there's no limit to what we can know and no frustration in what we don't know.** And there's no desperate need to cure our confusion with our own understanding, because:

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good. – Romans 8:22-28 ESV

