Knowing vs Actually Knowing

What Sort of Humility Is Godly?

I was substitute teaching in a fifth grade class that I had been in multiple times before. The class actually cheered when I came in through the door. They were in science class and the science teacher needed to leave at noon so I came to take over for her. However, the class was much worse than I remembered. They interrupted me, they were not working on the project assigned, several students talked over me as I was addressing the class. They were in fact the worst elementary school class I ever had in my eight years of substitute teaching. There was one girl in the class who was the worst of the group and the most disrespectful, one who wasn't in the class the previous times I taught. She argued with me, interrupted me and made sarcastic comments. In front of the class, I reminded her that her behavior would not be acceptable in middle school next year and to be successful, she had to become respectful of her teachers. The young girl told me she didn't care. She was going to be a housewife and she didn't need school. Now how did she come to that conclusion and why did she think she was right about that? We decide things all the time and are certain we know what we are doing. Doctors are certain of their diagnoses. Coaches are convinced they have chosen the right player for the position. Young men and women believe they are right about who they are marrying. Students pick out classes and are convinced they have chosen the right ones. We make decisions all the time about ourselves and others but what if we are wrong? What if we actually don't know what we are doing, what if we aren't right about how we think about someone or something? The Bible has a term to describe those who realize they may be wrong about things. You do too. It is humility. Today our big idea is a word of warning. Be careful about what you know.

What many do not realize is how honest the Bible is about what it reports. It does not try to sugar coat things. One would expect that when Jesus did His most amazing and public miracles, there would have been a great upsurge in popular support for Him. If the Bible was a collection of fictional accounts, it would most likely imply that was the case. But it wasn't. When Jesus healed the man born blind, local Jewish authorities questioned the authenticity of the miracle. **The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.** (John 9:18 NIV) It seems clear that even with the eye-witness account, they still did not think someone as bad as they considered Jesus could have done such a thing. They were confident that their view of Jesus was right too. When they brought in the man healed by Jesus to tell what happened, they expressed their confidence in their assessment of Christ. **A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."** (John 9: 24 NIV) Literally it is "we ourselves know". In other words, they were very certain Jesus was a sinner so it was clear to them He could not have done a miracle like healing a man born blind. They were of course completely wrong, but they couldn't see it. If I could speak to those Pharisees, I would tell them, "Be careful about what you know!" It can cost you dearly if you are wrong.

Job's friends knew that the reason he suffered so badly was because he was a sinner who was a worse one than them. One of his friends made this accusation. **Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless?** (Job 22: 5 NIV) And yet this is what God Himself said of Job. **Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."** (Job 1: 8 NIV) Job's friends were good men and we can be certain they were not unintelligent. And yet they were wrong, completely wrong and their defamation of Job was so bad that God required they each make a sacrifice and ask Job to pray for their forgiveness. Even the best of us can be way off base and yet be certain we have it right. Would you say to Job's friends if you were with them, "Be careful about what you know"?

What about Sarah who laughed when God told her she would bear a child at the age of ninety. She knew it was impossible and not even God could make it happen. Of course she was wrong, but she didn't think she was wrong. She was certain she was right. The Lord gently rebuked her. **Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."** (Genesis 18: 13-14 NIV) She was fortunate the Lord was as patient with her as He was. He could have just told Sarah that if you think you can't have a baby, then you can't but God did not. Just because you are certain about something does not mean you are right. Be careful about what you know.

The Apostle Paul is perhaps the greatest Christian since the church began but even he got it wrong. When John Mark abandoned his mission trip with Paul and Barnabas, Paul was not ok with it. The next time Paul and Barnabas planned on going on a mission trip, Paul refused to include John Mark in the work. Barnabas insisted John Mark go with them but Paul refused. He was certain John Mark was unreliable and a liability to them. The argument over John Mark got so bad that Paul and Barnabas chose to go their separate ways. **Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.** (Acts 15: 37-40 NIV) Paul clearly knew he was right about John Mark and could not be convinced otherwise. But he was wrong. Later, John Mark became one of Paul's most trusted companions. Paul learned an important lesson. Be careful about what you know. You may be wrong and your mistake can cost you dearly.

A haunting account from Genesis is a sobering reminder of just how dangerous it can be when you think you know but you don't. When two angels went to Lot to warn him of the destruction coming to Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot believed them and immediately went to the two young men pledged to marry his daughters. **He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.** (Genesis 19: 14b NIV) Imagine being so wrong when you think you are totally right. It was disastrous for them. It could be for you too…and me. Be careful about what you know. You might not know…and it could cost you. Humility is your best friend and greatest resource. Keep in mind that maybe you don't know what you think you know but be certain God knows and will help you change directions if you need to do so. Here is a simple prayer to make as you go through the day. "God, show me what I do not know and where I am wrong." Keep in mind this crown jewel of thinking. It comes from the Proverbs. **When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.** (Proverbs 11: 2 NIV) This statement, if taught in premarital counseling sessions could save many marriages if adhered to as a way of life. It could save many friendships, work relationships and academic goals. With humility comes wisdom. Say it out loud. Repeat it several times today. Write it on your mirror. With humility comes wisdom. The easiest way to be careful about what you know is to remember that with humility comes wisdom. That insight will carry you far in life and make you successful as you go. Our Big idea again. Be careful about what you know.