

Sermon: Actionable Intelligence

Text: James 2:14-26

Discussion Questions:

This morning, we are taking a deeper look at the “*Learning*” aspect of our pathway to discipleship. There is no question about the fact that a disciple of Jesus is called to grow in their knowledge of the Word of God—and develop a deeper grasp on theology.

So how would you rate yourself on this? I recently ran across a questionnaire in a book that our elders were working through. These questions are designed to help you assess where you believe you are right now with respect to your knowledge of Scripture and Theology, and the level of competence that you believe you possess today. Take a few minutes right now to read through these statements, and rate yourself on a scale of 0-5 for each of them. A rating of “0” means “this doesn’t describe me at all”; a “5” means “this describes me perfectly.” Be as honest as you can, assessing yourself honestly and humbly:

- ___ I feel “at home” in the Bible—I can find passages quickly.
- ___ I know major themes, and I feel a general sense of familiarity with my Bible.
- ___ I have read through the entire Bible.
- ___ I can conversationally talk through the Upper Story of the Bible (the story of Jesus, and how He came to rescue us) without resorting to notes or study material.
- ___ I can place books of the Bible in their appropriate categories (minor prophets, historical books, wisdom literature, gospels, epistles, etc.)
- ___ I feel comfortable leading others in studying the Bible.
- ___ I can quote important passages Scripture from memory.
- ___ I am confident in my ability to explain the gospel to someone.
- ___ I understand basic theological concepts such as regeneration, justification, and sanctification.
- ___ I am able to confidently and humbly engage with a Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, or a Muslim, and witness to them about Jesus from the Bible.
- ___ I have been a part of leading someone to Christ.
- ___ I feel confident to disciple someone.
- ___ I feel confident to help others apply the gospel to their specific heart idols.
- ___ I am aware of my spiritual gifting and how I function best in God’s mission.
- ___ I am able to confront sin lovingly and directly.
- ___ People seem to be helped by my counseling and encouragements.
- ___ People often come to me for help in understanding and applying the Bible.

Take some time to talk through your responses with the group. Don’t feel at all embarrassed by your rankings.

- When discussing how you ranked yourself in light of how others ranked themselves, do you notice any trends or similarities?
- Do you think you would ever feel confident enough to answer “4” or “5”? How?
- Think about believers in developing or undeveloped countries (85% of world population). How do you think your knowledge of Scripture & theology compares?
- Would you say that your lack of confidence keeps you from sharing your faith?

Examination:

- Read **Matthew 28:16-20**:
 - As we continue our series this fall on the topic of discipleship, we are becoming very familiar with this passage. The things that Jesus says (commands) here lie at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian—and the plan that Jesus has put in place to take the message of salvation to lost people around the world.
 - What do you make of the fact that, even at this point, some of the disciples “doubted”? (v. 17) What do you think they doubted? Does it give you any comfort knowing that ALL disciples struggle at times?
 - What do you think it means for Jesus to say, “All authority has been given to me”? What kind of authority? Authority to do what?
 - How are we to employ or put into practice the authority of Jesus as we live our everyday lives?
 - What does it REALLY mean for us to go and make other disciples? Is it enough to do our very best to live a good life in front of unbelievers? Can this be done without ever being called upon to actually TALK about Jesus?
 - If you’re a parent or grandparent, would you say that you’ve disciplined your own children or grandkids? If so, how?
 - Have you ever been a part of disciplining someone other than family? Who?
 - Jesus mentions “teaching” as an important part of my role as a disciple-maker. Do you feel able to teach others about Christ or the Bible?
 - Would you say you know more about the Bible and how to have faith in Christ than the thousands of people in our community who don’t yet have a relationship with Jesus? Doesn’t this qualify you to be a “teacher”?
- Read **James 2:14-26**:
 - Making disciples of others involves far more than talking about our faith. It is rooted in the love we have for others. What do verses 14-17 have to say about the WAY we show love to others?
 - This entire passage has come under great criticism down through the years. There are some who say that James is saying here that we are SAVED by our actions (or our works). Do you agree? Is that REALLY what James is saying?
 - In many ways, faith is a mental thing. It’s based upon what we believe. And belief is ultimately rooted in knowledge. In this way, it can also be said that knowledge without deeds is dead (useless). Which begs the question—what do you KNOW about God that you’re failing to put into action? Discuss this as a group—it’s an important topic. How often do we see the American church consuming more and more information...more and more Biblical knowledge...and failing to ACT on what we learn and know?
 - Back in 1982, Amy Grant sang a song called **Fat Baby**. The lyrics are: *“I know a man, maybe you know him, too. You never can tell; he might even be you. He knelt at the altar, and that was the end. He’s saved, and that’s all that matters to him. His spiritual tummy, it can’t take too much. One day a week, he gets a spiritual lunch. On Sunday, he puts on his spiritual best, and gives his language a spiritual rest. He’s just a fat little baby!”* What is the message of this song?

Application:

Be thinking this week about ways that you can put your KNOWLEDGE of God into action. Pray for ways to share your faith. Look for ways to obey the command of Christ to “make disciples.”