

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with this warning from Jesus to those arrogant men who considered themselves "experts" in the Law. Jesus said: **"Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering" (Luke 11:52).** What was this "key to knowledge"?

These experts in the law did not believe in Jesus, did not follow Jesus, and hindered those who did follow Jesus. Further, they were so confident of their superior "knowledge" that they wanted no further investigation. As far as they were concerned the debate was over, Jesus was wrong and they were right. Investigation is one key to knowledge and these arrogant "experts" wanted to put a stop to any further investigation.

Let us be consistent in our approach to this Scripture. Let us not be arrogant, as they were. Let us not insist that our explanation is the only possible explanation. Nothing should be said or done to discourage further "investigation" on any subject.

These words of Jesus were spoken in the home of a Pharisee. The host was surprised when Jesus broke with tradition and did not "wash" before eating. This led Jesus to a scathing denunciation of their hypocrisy. It included six different "woes" exposing their hypocrisy (Lk. 11:39-54). Our text in verse 52 is the final "woe".

It is important to remember that Jesus welcomed investigation and the Pharisees did not. Jesus said nothing in secret (Jn. 18:20), but the Pharisees often made major decisions in secret. That's the way they condemned Jesus. Jesus, by contrast, was always open and transparent. When two disciples, for example, wanted to know where Jesus was staying he had nothing to hide and invited them to "come and see" (Jn. 1:39). When Thomas "the twin" refused to believe in His resurrection Jesus appeared to him and invited him to carefully investigate His wounds (Jn. 20:27).

The Apostle Paul was also transparent like his master. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to not to discourage prophetic utterances and thus to be open for all truth. They were, however, commanded to **"test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess. 5:19-21).**

King Solomon was famous for his wisdom and the "key" to his knowledge was a humble and contrite heart. **"He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. (I King 4:32-34)** This great wisdom and knowledge, as you know, came from God. As we have said, the "key" to obtaining wisdom and knowledge was Solomon's child like humility. Remember his famous prayer: **". . . I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (I King 3:7-9)**

Socrates was famous for asking questions. He was humble enough to believe that he could even learn from his students. The Pharisees and experts in the Law, however, were so arrogant that they exalted themselves and "looked down on everybody else" (Lk. 18:9). Their arrogance kept them from learning. Remember! **"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).** According to the Bible the "key" to receiving wisdom from God is first to admit that you lack wisdom.

Note' **“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5)**

History has not been kind to the arrogant! When Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone a Philadelphia newspaper called him as a “harmless mad man with a useless toy”. Fulton’s steamboat was called “Fulton’s Folly”. When Seward purchased Alaska for only \$7,200,000, it was dubbed “Seward’s Icebox”. Thousands died because medical doctors refused the simple advice of Dr. Ignaz Philip Semmelweis to merely wash their hands. Galileo was condemned as a heretic for daring to believe that the earth revolved around the sun. Einsteins’s teachers considered him too lazy to learn. Abraham Lincoln lost 26 elections before becoming president. Edison failed 10,000 times before he succeeded in making a light bulb. The Kansas City Star fired Walt Disney because they did not think he was creative. Vincent van Gogh only sold one painting during his entire life. Harland Sanders was rejected 1,009 times before someone finally gave his fried chicken a chance. The University of Southern California rejected Steven Spielberg three different times when he applied for work at their school theater. Beethoven’s music teacher said he was too stupid to compose music. Milton Hershey was a 43 year old failure when he stopped selling candy on the street and founded the Hershey Chocolate Company. Soichiro Honda was fired by Toyota before he started making automobiles on his own. Etc. Etc. Etc.

Pride is at the heart of every quarrel (Prov. 13:10). Every parent has had the experience of hearing a child say “I know daddy”, or “I know mommy”. Such pride prevents them from learning. As we have said, God promises to give wisdom to those who admit that they lack it. So the wisdom of parents is best received when the child stops arguing. Like wise King Solomon, we all need to admit our ignorance and be willing to ask for help.

Remember that “the full riches of complete understanding” and “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are in Christ (Col. 2:2-3) The “key” to getting into Christ is to be humble like a little child (Matt. 18:3). When we think that we are standing, we need to take heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12). It was Peter’s cocky self confidence that caused him to deny Christ three times. It is our cocky self confidence that will take away the “key of knowledge” and lead us to spiritual ignorance and failure.

Please don’t ever lose your curiosity and willingness to investigate. The “key to knowledge” involves a willingness to “test everything”. When Thomas put the resurrected Jesus to the test he found Him true. That’s when Thomas confessed **“my Lord and my God”**. When we test Jesus and find Him true, we need to do the same!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce