

## When Does Knowledge Equal Spiritual Growth?

Evangelicals have a love-hate relationship with knowledge, it seems. Many churches seem to be so embarrassingly anti-intellectual that it seems if you enjoy books, you may find yourself looking for a new church.

There seems to be a great fear of having a swelled, puffed up head (cf. [1 Cor. 8:1](#)), and with good reason—too many of us have made the error of putting too much stock in head knowledge that doesn't move to the heart. Too often we take someone's knowledge of Scripture and Christian theology as evidence of their spiritual maturity.

But where we go too far is when we assume that seeking knowledge is a bad thing.

In fact, knowledge should be a great concern of all Christians. We're to be transformed by the renewal of our minds ([Rom 12:3](#)). Our love is to be informed by "knowledge and all discernment" ([Phil 1:9](#)). Paul connects salvation with knowledge—a coming "to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).

He even prays that the Colossians will be filled with knowledge in [Col. 1:9-10](#):

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

So does growth in knowledge mean spiritual growth? Anthony Hoekema puts it well:

The answer depends on what one means by knowledge. If it is mere abstract, intellectual knowledge, mere rote-memory knowledge, mere "Bible Trivia" knowledge, not necessarily. Paul in fact, talks about a type of knowledge that "puffs up," but does not build up ([1 Cor. 8:1](#)). But if growth in knowledge means growth in understanding what Christ has done for us, what the Spirit is doing in us, and what God wants us to do for him and to be for him, then growth in knowledge is bound to bring spiritual growth. This is the type of knowledge Peter has in mind when he enjoins his readers, in [2 Peter 3:18](#), "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 142 ([Westminster](#) | [Amazon](#))

We are right to take little stock in knowledge that fills the head but doesn't transform the heart. But we should always rejoice as believers grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

Read more from Aaron [here](#).