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YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A KNOW-IT-ALL.

Acts 10:44-48

John 15:9-17

I am going to ask a question that I am pretty sure that I know the answer to, but I will ask it just to confirm. How many of you have a cell phone? Here's a follow-up: Do you know how it works; the science behind it?

Many of us depend on GPS navigation to get us where we are going. Do you know how GPS works?

We use the bathroom several times a day, do you know how the toilet works? Do you understand the physics involved?

We can recall things that happened yesterday, last week, last year, ten, fifteen, twenty, fifty years ago; do you know how our brain works?

There are so many things that go on around us, that happen to us and that we use daily; things with which we are very comfortable, but of which we know very little. The truth is that we know very little about most of the things that play very important roles in making our lives what they are.

I have this book Titled: "The Knowledge Illusion – Why We Never Think Alone, written by Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach. It addresses the "Myth of individual thought and the power of collective wisdom". The authors make the point that human reasoning is remarkably shallow - in fact, our thinking and justifications just scratch the surface of the true complexity of the issues we deal with, and that our intelligence resides not in our individual brains, as we would think, but in the collective mind. Simply put, as individuals, we know relatively little, but together we know a lot.

We may know very little about most things, including things that are important to our lives, but that does not stop us from embracing and enjoying those things.

We may not know much about how our phone works, but we use it, nonetheless. Most of us don't go anywhere without it, and many would rather leave home without their wallet than without their phone. For many, it has become indispensable.

We may not understand how GPS works, but we trust it to get us where we are going.

We may not be able to explain how our toilet works but that doesn't stop us from using it.

We may not understand just how our brain works, but we value it more than any other organ in our body.

The fact that we may have just a little knowledge of most things in life does not prevent us from embracing and enjoying those things; it does not stop us from accepting and benefitting from what they have to offer. We have come to understand that for most things in life, we don't have to master them in order to enjoy them, we just have to know enough to trust them.

I like my car. I enjoy driving it. I benefit from the convenience of having it. But I know very little about the mechanics of it. What I know is that when I start it, and I put it in drive and press the accelerator the car will move, and when I turn the steering wheel the car will turn, and when I step on the brakes the car will stop. That's all I need to know to trust my car.

There are very few things in life that we are required to master, but for all things, we are required to trust them before we can enjoy them.

From the most informed among us to the most uninformed, from the expert to the empty-headed, our knowledge of things is limited; and that includes our knowledge of God. And when it comes to God, like most things that are a part of our lives, we are not required to master the knowledge of God before we can embrace and enjoy that which God extends to us; we just need to know enough to trust God.

I want to leave with us two things about God, that I believe that if we can understand them, they will help us to trust God, and embrace and enjoy that which God calls us unto.

The first is that God is the God of Grace.

Grace speaks of God's unmerited or unearned favour. The very definition of grace makes it that which is unexpected. God is the God of the unexpected. With God, anything can happen. God is full of surprises.

This is the message of today's reading from Acts 10.

In the second chapter of Acts, we are presented with the story of the birth of the church. We call it the Pentecost story. On the day of the Jewish festival of Pentecost, something spectacular happened. The Spirit of God blew through the gathered believers and caused quite a stir. It was a marvellous moment. Diverse groups of people were brought together through an unexpected visitation of the Holy Spirit and community was created. However, the gathered community was a community of Jews.

Here in the tenth chapter of the book of Acts, a different kind of Pentecost occurs. It has been called the "Gentile Pentecost" because here we have a record of the Spirit of God visiting Gentiles - the non-Jews of that world.

Now that is a surprise! No one expected God to act in that way. For most, God is the God of the Jews. They are the people with the great faith tradition. It would be only fitting that on the day of Pentecost God would do a special work like sending his Spirit to the Jewish believers gathered at the sacred site of Jerusalem.

But God's spirit is always larger than our expectations. In Acts 10, that spirit confirms that God loves Gentiles too. The community of the excluded is included. The ones regarded as "non-people" are elevated to the status of God's children. The Jewish believers present are astounded that the Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. Such is the story of the New Testament. Over and over we read of persons being surprised, perplexed, amazed, astounded by God.

The most surprising thing we read about in the Gospels is the people that Jesus found time for and gave attention to. He is the friend of outcasts and sinners: the blind, the lepers, the lame, the insane, the drunkards, the prostitutes; these are the marginalized, the forgotten, and the overlooked. They are the ones who get noticed, and who get included in the story of grace. Not the "brightest and best" in town. Not the power brokers, not those whose names graced the local social register.

God is constantly pulling surprises; loving the most unlikely people and turning up in the most unlikely places, constantly moving toward those from whom others are moving away. When we trust God, God surprises us too by doing the unexpected in our lives as well.

Some of us spend a lot of our time trying to master the knowledge of God, believing that by so doing we will enjoy a superior relationship with God, we will be able to anticipate how God will act, and predict and forecast how things will likely turn out.

Then there are those who discount God altogether, who have no place for God in their lives because they can't figure out who God is - they can't make sense of God.

All the while, God does not ask us to master the knowledge of him, but to allow ourselves to be surprised. To give ourselves the chance to see God do the unexpected. To open ourselves to God's grace. To trust God.

The second thing that we need to know about God is that God is love.

I am not going to go into much detail about this except to say that God's love, like God's grace, surprises us. God's love invites us into places that we never thought we would go, opens us to experiences that we never contemplated, and draws us into relationships that we never knew were possible.

And when we love one another as God loves us - as we are commanded to do in reading from John 15 - that love also surprises us. It brings out a vulnerability in us that makes us humble, a patience in us that makes us more understanding, a strength in us that makes us more courageous, and a gentleness in us that makes us more approachable. It surprises us with goodness.

God treats us with grace and love, and knowing that is enough for us to trust God, and to allow ourselves to be surprised, as God does the unexpected for us and through us. When God surprises us, it changes our lives for the better.

Let us not seek to pin down God on the one hand, or dismiss God on the other. Let us let God be God, and embrace and enjoy that which God calls us unto.

Faith and discipleship are not about knowing all there is to know about God; it is about trusting God who reaches out to us with Love and grace.

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