

1 Foundations of Knowing

- Module: Epistemology
- Lesson 4

2 Some Recommended Sources

- Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview: by J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig
- Knowledge and Christian Belief: by William Plantinga
- Where the Conflict Really Lies: by William Plantinga
- Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception Of Nature Is Almost Certainly False: by Thomas Nagel (an atheist philosopher):

3 Some Terms to Know

- Epistemic: having to do with knowing and knowledge
- Epistemology: the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge
- Epistemic justification: how one justifies one's claims to possess knowledge

4 Why Study Epistemology in an Apologetics Class?

- Many today do not understand the nature of knowledge, leading them to imagine an incompatibility or contrast between belief and knowledge.
- For many Christians there are confusions about the role and importance of knowledge in biblical teaching, particularly in relationship to faith.
- Many today mistakenly believe that our reliable sources of knowledge are far more limited than they actually are.
- It is popular today to question the possibility of knowledge (e.g. skepticism, postmodernism), undermining any confidence in the Christian claims.
- A misunderstanding about the prospects of certainty leads many to demand a level of evidence that is unwarranted and unnecessary.
- There is considerable confusion about what truth is, which is the actual object of knowledge.
- All of these issues, and more, go to the heart of our ability to effectively and convincingly communicate the Christian message in our contemporary culture.

5 The Bible Assumes The Possibility Of Knowing... Even In Some Matters Of Faith

- "Now I'm going to tell you, there's more in the bible about knowledge than there is about faith. The bible doesn't say we have faith in God. The bible says we know God exists. ...The bible is clear. There is knowledge of God and knowledge he exists."
—J. P. Moreland, Christian Philosopher. (video lecture: Loving God With All Your Mind)—
- Gen. 15:13—"Know for certain your descendants will be strangers..."

- Exo. 6:7—“You will know that I (Yahweh)...brought you out...”
- Deut. 4:35—“Know that Jehovah is God, there is no other.”
- Job 19:25—“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives...”
- Matt. 16:3—“You know how to discern the sky...”
- Jn. 6:69—“We have believed and come to know...”
- 1 Tim. 1:12—“I know whom I have believed...”
- 1 Jn. 5:13-15—“So that you who believe may know...”

6 God Holds Us Accountable Based On The Possibility Of Knowledge

- God holds people accountable to know what they ought to know.
 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (Rom. 1:18)
- God holds people accountable to act on knowledge they possess.
 - ...they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks... (Rom. 1:20, 21)
 - Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin. (Jas. 4:17)

7 Three Kinds Of Knowledge

- Knowledge by acquaintance (direct experience or awareness)
 - e. g. I know there are pyramids near Cairo, Egypt.
- Know how (awareness of how to do something)
 - e. g. I know how to build a bookcase.
- Propositional knowledge (awareness by description)
 - e. g. I know the southernmost continent is Antarctica.

8 What Is Knowledge?

- Knowledge is Justified True Belief (JTB)
- JTB is the standard definition of knowledge since the time of Plato.
- JTB sets forth a tripartite definition of knowledge:
 - Belief (A thought or proposition that a person holds.)
 - Justification (Reasons which someone has to hold a belief.)
 - Truth (That which corresponds to reality. More on this in our next lesson.)
- By this definition, all knowledge is a particular kind of belief.

9 **A Challenge To JTB**

- Edmund Gettier, in a 1963 paper, gave examples of situations that called into question the justification aspect of JTB.
- These type of problems are referred to as Gettier-examples.
- In spite of Gettier-like problems, some form of justification appears necessary to claim to possess knowledge.

10 **About Justification**

- There are varying degrees of justification.
- Hence, knowledge can exist with varying degrees of certitude.
- One can picture a "line" of belief from false belief, to true belief w/o justification, to true belief w/justification where that justification can increase with additional information.

11 **Apologetics and Justification**

- Christian apologetics helps to add to the justifications for our beliefs, and so moves us towards increased certainty.
- Christian apologetics provides non-believers with justifications for believing Christianity is true in the hopes of moving them to recognize and embrace its truthfulness.

12 **About Defeaters**

- A defeater is some information or fact which appears to counter one's belief about something and tends to "defeat" that belief.
 - A "strong defeater" would be one which seriously challenges or undermines one's belief.
 - A "weak defeater" would be one which tends to diminish one's confidence in one's belief.
- A defeater defeater is some information or fact which counters a defeater and hence reaffirms the original belief.

13 **Apologetics and Defeaters**

- Christian apologetics can provide us with defeater defeaters, which counter the claims and charges made against Christianity by unbelievers and skeptics.

14 **The Question Of Absolute Certainty**

- Full (or absolute) certainty is defined as being logically impossible for one to be mistaken.
- This level of certainty is rare or non-existent.
- If someone says: "I won't become a Christian until I am absolutely certain it is true", they are demanding a level of certainty that is likely unattainable, and which they do not demand in any other area of life.
- It is possible to know something without absolute certainty. (If one has sufficient justification to make the possibility of discovering a strong defeater highly remote.)

15 Swinburne's "Principle of Credulity"

- - The principle: What one seems to perceive is probably so.
 - The Existence of God, 2nd ed.
(Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 303-315

16 Some Sources Of Knowledge

- Perception: That which can be perceived through the experience of the senses. (The belief that perception is the sole source of knowledge is called empiricism.)
- Reason: Deducting truths from existing knowledge. (The belief that reason is the sole source of knowledge is called rationalism.)
- Introspection: Knowledge of oneself through internal self-evaluation.
- Memory: What we know through recall.

17 Some Sources Of Knowledge

- Faith: Things we hold due to confidence in God's character and integrity.
- Testimony: The input of others. (This would include the input of revelation, a form of testimony.)
- Intuition: That which I intuitively know. (Including what are sometimes called Properly Basic Beliefs.)
- Conscience: An inner awareness of right and wrong.

18 Two Inadequate Views Of The Source Of Knowledge

- Empiricism: one can only know that which can be perceived through the five senses.
 - e. g. Scientism: the belief that one can only know what science can show to be true.
- Rationalism: one can only know that which can be deduced from existing knowledge.
 - e. g. The French Enlightenment: Rene Descartes (1596-1650) ("I think, therefore I am.")
 - Reason is seen as being in opposition to faith (an either/or fallacy)

19 Next Week:

- How is knowledge justified? (Epistemic justification)
- What is truth?
- Skepticism: Doubting the possibility of knowledge.