

I KNOW! ... DO YOU NOW?

Conversations are often filled with “fill words.” When speaking with someone regarding most any subject, the statement “I know” is common. On one occasion, I was involved in an evangelism effort (least ways that’s what I call it), and an individual was grazing through the scriptures and I asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?,” to which the individual said, “Yes.”

How many times have you engaged an individual, about any topic, and before you finish your question and/or explanation, they say, “I know”? The urge to respond with a “Do you now?” is strong. It is common for mankind to presuppose an answer before all the facts are in. I, even I, have commented on a statement or written article before finishing the whole of the conversation (I know most folks would find that hard to believe, but it is true). We’re often good talkers, bad listeners: sometimes it’s just simply easier to answer questions or have an opinion about matters not yet expressed. In some cases, it’s called rude, or interrupting. How many times have you said to someone, “Do not interrupt me”? We know a couple that can talk to each other at the same time on different subjects and not skip a beat! This brings us to the topic of my meanderings: “The Need for critical reading, and or hearing.”

Jesus said, “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). When Jehovah gave the law to Israel, He said, “Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, according to thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment” (Deuteronomy 16:18). Making a judgment based upon appearance is risky at best, and at worst destructive. To avoid this dilemma, the book of James says, “Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

The scriptures have a great deal to say about communication. Jesus said not only to “Take heed therefore how ye hear,” in reference to the truth and the doctrines of the gospel message (Luke 8:18), but also “take heed what ye hear” that you may understand it and diligently communicate it to others (Mark 4:24). The necessity of giving oneself to the understanding of the gospel, and the proper communication thereof, is magnified when an individual realizes “that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). Since every “light conversation,” or every “vain discourse,” (Gill) will be brought into judgment, how much more what and how, a man is to communicate to others, and how much more diligence should be given to the hearing of such?

Therefore, as Paul admonished the Ephesians, saying, “Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear” (Ephesians 4:29), would it not behoove the speaker, and the hearer, to be fully assured they understand what is said, and how to respond?

The only way an individual can “judge righteous judgment” is when a careful consideration is given to what is said, and how it is to be received. The safest way to arrive at a righteous judgment, as Solomon said is, when “all hath been heard,” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

What is an appropriate way to answer the question, “Do you understand what you’re reading”? How about, “Teach me”? ret