

# A Little Knowledge

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There's an old saying that says, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Unfortunately, that is so true. Almost everyone has at least a little knowledge of the Bible, and often use it to various effect. Given a choice, I would have everyone know and remember a statement that appears 9 or 10 times in the Bible, depending on which version you prefer.

It first appears in Leviticus 19:18; Jesus quotes it in Matthew and Mark, and congratulates a man for knowing the words in Luke; Paul uses the phrase in his letters to the Romans and the Galatians, and even James gets into the act in his letter.

The words are "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus identifies these words as being the second greatest commandment. Second only to, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." He was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 when he said that – people tend to forget that there was no New Testament when Jesus was alive. Jesus taught scriptures from what we now call the Old Testament. (I mention this because there are those who tend to discount the importance of that testament.)

So back to that other statement – the one about a little knowledge. Think of how much better the world would be if everyone knew, and followed this one, single statement: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Realizing, of course, that Jesus wasn't referring to romantic love, and that their neighbor isn't just the person who lives across the street.

But there are those who don't seem to know or remember this statement, or perhaps they simply forget the emphasis Jesus put on it. Maybe they've never read these parts of the Bible. Perhaps they've never read Paul's teaching to "Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law" (Romans 13:8, NLT).

But they do know their Bible. Their Bible. The parts that support their points of view, especially when taken out of the context into which they were written. For example, there are those who support corrupt politicians using Romans 13:1-5, which begins with the words, "Submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God." Words written at a time of royal succession, and not human (and thus fallible) elections. They are also words that must be applied to all leaders, if they are going to be applied to any leader, and not just the ones we support. Failure to do so raises the flag of hypocrisy, something Christians are too often accused of.

The Bible is full of words that can be used for good, and many that can be used for harm. There is even a place where the Bible says, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). But, of course, that is taken out of context, because the full verse reads, "Only fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; not one of them does good!"

Whether fools or people seeking power - people who chew up scripture and spit it out like bullets at those they disagree with - a little knowledge can be dangerous: a lot of knowledge, all the more so! Dangerous to those who corrupt God's word for their own purposes. Whether a practicing Christian, a Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindi – all of whom are neighbors – knowledge of the Bible is useful (as is knowledge of the Quran and other Holy works). Because when you possess true knowledge, you can dodge the bullets of falseness. Seek the truth, love your neighbor: you owe God nothing less. We can do better America. Stay well, think big. Amen.  
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