

The High Cost of Ignorance

"Ignorance is bliss" may suffice for kids too young to understand, but for the rest of us it's a disaster. We need to get serious about expanding our knowledge.

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk. 23:34).

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

"The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble" (Prov. 4:19).

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6).



Postmodernism has convinced our society that there is no such thing as objective truth, that each one of us creates our own "truth" based on our personal experiences, perspectives, and biases. Consequently, millions of people do not recognize any external reality "out there" in the world around them. They build their lives upon this fluid foundation, confident that they can pick and choose whatever beliefs and behaviors they want and discard the rest. You know, "I am the master of my soul," and so on.

This philosophy overlooks the presence of an external truth that doesn't care about our proclivities. Both in the physical realm and in the moral, these laws of nature operate independent of our personal preferences. When we violate those laws, they push back with

relentless certitude. One of the great challenges of life, therefore, is to recognize how these principles work and learn how to conform our lives to their iron grip. The role of parents, mentors, educators, and sages from past generations is to train us to recognize these eternal truths and build our lives around them.

That education process is long and laborious, tempting us to exchange it for the self-centered cultural zeitgeist of our day. But as comedy writer Robert Orben once said, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." We are free to ignore the wisdom of the ages, but that ignorance will inflict a terrible toll on our quality of life. Like someone trying to grope through a dark forest at midnight, "they do not know what makes them stumble" (Prov. 4:19). That's not an arbitrary punishment inflicted by God, but a natural outcome of not knowing how the world operates.

In our youth, our ignorance usually comes from an honest lack of knowledge. We've not yet been exposed to all the cause-and-effect details of how life works, so we will make a fair number of mistakes. If we're smart, we'll learn from those mistakes and grow wiser as we grow older.

If we're not smart, we will deliberately reject the truth and its consequences, and charge full steam ahead into whatever make-believe "truth" we have invented for ourselves. The Bible calls this "willful ignorance" (2 Pet. 3:5, HCSB). It was willful ignorance that sent ancient Israel spiraling into a vortex of violence and corruption (Hos. 4:1-6). Willful ignorance led the Jewish people to destroy Jesus rather than embrace Him as their Messiah (Lk. 23:34; Rom. 10:3). When people choose to ignore the bedrock truth this world is built on, they set themselves up for a terrible fall.

How can we escape the clutches of ignorance? First, we must *pursue knowledge with all the passion of a treasure hunter*. We should seek God's counsel by regularly reading His word, and reach out to older mentors who have demonstrated their ability to navigate life's difficult journey. Listen and learn!

More importantly, we must *grow a heart of humility*. When we make dumb mistakes, we should swallow our pride and evaluate why we made those mistakes; then take the necessary steps to correct and learn from them. Ignorance is destructive, but *pride* is the chain that keeps us locked in its deadly grip.

— David King