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My Philosophy of Knowing and Learning

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My Perception of knowing

According to Steup (2012), a concise definition of epistemology is “the study of knowledge and justified belief” (para. 1). The notion of justified beliefs, specifically justified true beliefs, has been of issue since American philosopher Edmund Gettier brought it to light in 1963 (Hetherington, n.d.). There are some beliefs that do not fall within the normal parameters of what is or what can be defined as knowledge. As a result, there has been a lingering question on what can be defined as knowledge, according to the definition of epistemologists. From Hetherington (n.d.), there may have to be a broader acceptance of what is considered knowledge, and ways of knowing. With the Gettier problem, each case presented evidence of potentially fallible justification for the held belief.

The held beliefs were apparent or evident to Smith at the time they were embraced (Hetherington, n.d.). However, conditions of fallibility and luck influenced their veracity. It is possible that currently held beliefs are considered justifiable because of how they currently appear. As new information comes available, the once justified true belief or beliefs may no longer be true (Meek, 2011) – as was the case with geocentric understanding: it was found to be faulty and was replaced by heliocentric teaching. My perception of knowing embraces the potential for new understanding. Gettier’s problems presented scenarios that removed certainty from the then currently held epistemological views. As with the narrative of our lives, knowledge appears certain at the time it is received. When viewed retrospectively, new understanding and enlightenment can occur. Therefore, that which is today is considered a justified true belief, may be displaced tomorrow (or at any future time) by new learning. Though the

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way of knowing may appear unconventional (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005) to a group, judgment as to it not being a justified true belief should be reserved until it is proven as such. Leaders should encourage thinking and the exploration beyond what has been considered as being epistemologically sound. Else, how will we truly know?

My perception of learning and formation

Muholland (1993) looked at spiritual formation as bipartite – it concerns both ‘the doing’ and ‘the being’ as components of the spiritual identity. Mulholland (1993) gives the definition of spiritual formation as “a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others” (Location 40). This definition incorporates the aspect of ‘others’ into the formative process. While inadequately informed individuals incorrectly view spiritual formation as a process involving themselves and the Lord, our understanding embraces the collective component, which necessitates the inclusion of others into our spiritual formation. D. L. Moody shared the importance of others in our identity by the illustration of the flaming coals. As long as the coals remained in the fire, with the other coals, it remained fully aflame. When the coal was removed from the presence of the others, it lost its brilliance and soon went out (Mulholland, 1993). Our identity is sustained with and by our interaction with others. This is part of our action, or what we do – it is among others.

The second component of spiritual formation has to do with our being. Mulholland (1993) pointed out that spiritual formation is often viewed as “something that is added on to our personality that solves all our emotional, psychological, physical and mental problems” (Location 44). This view embraces the unilateral concept of doing. It fails to address the being portion of our identity. It is noted that our spirituality “is the very

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essence of our being” (Location 46). Our very essence should have expression in the material world. That’s what others see – the evidence of who we are. It is not the other way around. Our actions do not make us spiritual. This principle is mentioned in Matthew 7. Those who had done “many wonderful works” (v. 22) went before the Lord expecting acceptance. They failed to understand works alone do not effect spiritual formation. Jesus’ response to these people is that He never knew them (v. 23). We should be (a state of being) new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15). Because we are (a state of being) new creatures, we manifest different disciplines (prayer, fasting, reading the word, sharing, etc.) that are consistent with our new nature.

My Leadership Goals

I realize that I have the capacity to not only ignite the flame in others; I can help sustain that fire. I can also help them to burn brighter. A main component of my ministry is in educating others. The Christian school where I work has completed the process of accreditation. One of the main things the accrediting body has pointed out to us that they are interested in seeing is continuous improvement. It is important for us to seek ways of personal and corporate growth. It is not for the purpose of accreditation. It is for our individual and collective good. We can better serve others if we are continually searching for ways to improve our service and ourselves. If we are improving, the service we offer will improve. Rima (2000) pointed out the need for leaders to practice lifelong learning. This principle calls for continuous improvement. As disciples of the Lord, we realize that we are to always be in the process of learning.

We are also looking to multiply our ministry by re-creating our leadership model in others. Paul told Timothy, “the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses,

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the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). We get to express our identity to and with others. Maxwell (2002) stated, “You cannot consistently act in a manner inconsistent with the way you see yourself” (p. 13). The pressures of life will reveal the inner man (Kise, Stark & Hirsh, 2005). The values I embrace, evidenced to myself, will also be evidenced to others. The desire is to express these in the collective body of those in our *oikos* and experience the dynamic benefit of synergy.

Executing My Philosophy of Knowing and Learning Statement

This process has largely been stated in the previous section. Practically, it is executed in workshops, seminars, daily example, and giving others the opportunity to lead before they have the pressure of titles and positions.

My Growth as a Leader

It is understood that everyone, especially leaders, should grow (Rima, 2000). There are areas in which I desire growth:

1. Intellectual understanding and expression
2. Personal relationship and devotion to God, my Savior
3. Ability to influence others to and for righteousness

My completion of a Ph.D. program helped me in all three of the above-stated goals. I feel an inner pushing to promote Christian education, at all levels. Taking time to sharpen myself can help me do what I believe God has called me to do in a more effective manner. As I look back over the past few years, I thank God for the growth He is allowing me to achieve.

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