The Knowledge We Need
Hosea 4:6

Objective: Help each grasp the vital knowledge we need to be pleasing to God.


Memory: Hosea 4:6. “...my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”

Introduction:
1. There is a saying that “Ignorance is Bliss”. Now there may be times when that is true, because it allows someone to go around without worrying, without being afraid of what might be about to happen. I confess, there are a lot of times I would simply rather NOT know some things.
2. Unfortunately, the “bliss” that comes with ignorance usually catches up with us in very short order; I don’t worry and fret about whether my car will pass inspection – until I get a ticket. I don’t worry about the poor condition of my plumbing – until a pipe breaks and results in hundreds of dollars damage. I would prefer to not know that my roof is leaking – until I see what damage it has caused.
3. And I might be more comfortable (blissful) being ignorant on religious matters – until it comes time for Judgment! Then I will definitely wish that I had paid attention and acquired the necessary knowledge.

We need to seek necessary religious knowledge. (WHAT?)

In my experience, Hosea 4:6 (“...my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”) is generally quoted to indicate that people need to learn more doctrine. In other words, people lack knowledge of God’s do’s and don’ts, procedures and rituals; that we need to study the details of things like baptism, qualifications for elders, how often to celebrate communion, and the list goes on…! Now, the need for knowing doctrine is vitally important and I don’t want to undermine that aspect of things at all. Valid doctrinal knowledge is essential for grooming our spiritual well being and development; BUT, a familiarity with Scripture is probably NOT really the problem at hand in the text. These priests in the context who are being accused of having a lack of knowledge and thus not leading the people as they should, were probably NOT lacking in their awareness of Bible facts. They probably knew more Bible than anyone in this room. They could recite the days of Creation and the Ten Commandments. They were probably already Bible trivia champions! It was not simple facts or Bible verses they needed to know. It was not Bible trivia questions they needed to know. The knowledge they lacked was most certainly more than facts and what we might call “head” knowledge.

What they lacked in knowledge was more simple and yet more profound than that.
The knowledge that the Israelites lacked is the very knowledge you and I need! Let’s take a look and try to understand what knowledge it was that they were lacking.

In working through the book of Hosea, contemplating the problems these people were facing, one of the things that is highlighted is that they lacked what might be called...

I. Relational Knowledge. (I call it this because we tend to forget who we are relative to God.)

A. An awareness of relationships.
1. We are the Created. He is the Creator.
2. He is thus worthy and deserving of ALL our respect and attention.
3. He is the party with all the power. We are the party with all the need.
4. He is the Leader. We are the followers.
5. He provides every drop of water we drink, every breathe we take, every morsel of food, every comfort and shelter, every item of love and blessing.
6. He owes us nothing, we owe Him everything.
7. Do we have a grasp on this? Do we have a knowledge of our need to be right and pleasing to Him? Do we have a knowledge of how desperately we need Him to be with us?
8. It is like the old bumper sticker says; “Know God, Know Peace. No God, No Peace.”
9. We live one breathe away from disaster and destruction. Do we know how fragile our life and welfare is and how desperately we need God??!!
10. This necessitates …

B. A knowledge of how to be faithful.
1. Allegiance to relationship necessitates a concept of “faithfulness”.
2. They don’t know how to be faithful. Hosea 6:4, “…Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.”
3. Our relation to God requires faithfulness to a covenant. Old for them, New for us.
4. In Hosea, “to forget” is the opposite of “to know” or, in other words “a lack of knowledge” is the same as “unfaithfulness to the essence of the covenant. “To forget” is the same as “to disobey”. A neglect of obedience is the lack of knowledge!
5. When we fail to pay appropriate attention / fail to obey, it demonstrates our lack of “knowledge”.
6. Somehow the Israelites lacked a knowledge of how to be faithful! The essence of this knowledge lies in the Hebrew word “Hesed”. “Hesed” relates to the right conduct toward one’s fellow man or towards God. It involves loyalty. Loyalty towards one you are in relationship with. God or man. Hence it is the sum of what God requires. It is variously translated as; “love, loving kindness, mercy, loyalty…” (do you relate “love” with “loyalty”?)
7. In Hosea 10:12; “Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love…” “unfailing love” is “hesed”. Those who are righteous, will reap the fruit of God’s “hesed”; His faithfulness and loyalty and unfailing love towards us on our side of the relationship. God is faithful.
8. So ‘hesed” includes all the relational qualities inferred in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 illustrating “love”. it is patient, it is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. it does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. This sort of relational “unfailing love and loyalty never fails.
9. This is the word “mercy” in Hosea 6:6, “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Acknowledgement is relational concept. Who He is, our dependency on Him, etc. )
10. Folks; this is the essence, the heart and spirit of the relational knowledge we need to acquire.

Another way of understanding the knowledge that is needed on Israel’s part (and on our part) might be to describe what was lacking as…

II. Heart Knowledge.

A. An understanding of the very nature of God.
   1. They knew in their heads Who He was. But somehow missed it with their hearts.
      a. In their brains they knew they couldn’t ignore God, but in their hearts they did so. (Like we do?)
      b. In their heads… they couldn’t sidestep God’s instructions. but in their actions they tried…
      c. In their heads… they knew they couldn’t fend for themselves, couldn’t solve their own problems with military alliances and politics. But their hearts failed to grasp this knowledge.
   2. They effectively exchanged the glory of God for things and idols.
      a. Hosea 8:6; “… This calf—a craftsman has made it; it is not God. …” They knew this in their heads! Where was their heart?
      b. But don’t we do the same thing with our money, our efforts, our inventions, our things? Don’t we pay more attention to them than we do to God? Don’t we really rely on them more than we really rely on God? Where are our hearts when we do this?
   3. Sometimes little children have better heart knowledge of God than we adults do. We “forget”! We loose our knowledge! We can recite things. It’s there in our heads, how do we loose this knowledge from our hearts?!

B. Our hearts need to feel and act on what our heads “know”.
   1. Why do we sometimes act so ignorant when we really do have the information? How often do we “do” what we really know better than to “do”?
   2. We do things we know are physically and even spiritually destructive. But we still DO them!
   3. We get drunk, then the next day, say, “Why did I do that?!” And then DO it again!
   4. We offend and hurt those we love the most, “knowing” we’ll regret it latter when we cool down.
   5. We ignore God, when we “know” that judgment is coming! Where are our hearts in this?
   6. Don’t people “know” that sin leads to hell? To separation from God? In their heads we “know this! But we need such knowledge in our hearts too!
C. Our hearts need to “know” enough to resist temptations.
   1. In Hosea 4:15, God tells them “…Do not go to Gilgal; do not go up to Beth Aven.” (places of temptations to false worship) Can’t we see and learn from the mistakes of Israel and Judah?
   2. Don’t go to the pub; you know what will happen if you do.
   3. Don’t go to the OTB; … you know what will happen if you do.
   4. Don’t stay up until 3:00 AM… you know what will happen if you do.
   5. Don’t hang around with those particular companions… you know what will happen if you do.

D. God wants us to have vital “knowledge” in our hearts.
   1. Once again, Hosea 6:6, “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”
   2. This is the verse Jesus quoted to the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13, when they were upset about Jesus sitting with tax gatherers and sinners. He said, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” In essence, he was telling them that they knew technicalities of doctrine, but were completely missing the heart of things.
   3. We can go through rituals, procedures, services and sacrifices without them touching our hearts and souls. God wants our hearts involved and moved!
   4. Did our Lord’s Supper “ritual” this morning really touch your heart or was it just an external thing?
   5. People know how to do “church” things, but somehow fail to really acknowledge God in them. Even holiday baskets can be done this way. Something we do, or really heart motivated?
   6. We can know “doctrine” but still fail to live in a way that is pleasing to God. And often we do.
   7. God wants us to grasp, in our hearts, the knowledge of:
      a. What our relationship to God is.
      b. How very holy and pure and awesome God is.
      c. Our own need to be holy in order to stand in God’s Presence.
      d. That the wages of sin is death. That any sin is horrible in God’s sight.
      e. That we cannot hide anything from God.
      f. That we must not flirt with temptations. That we need to guard our hearts and minds from evil.
      g. That we need to readily and openly confess our guilt when we are guilty.
      h. That we need to lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth.
      i. That we need to be led and governed by LOVE. (hesed)

So What?

The concept here is plain. It is repeated in Hosea 4:14, “… a people without understanding will come to ruin!” “Understanding” is more than simple intellectual knowledge of facts. It is knowing the deeper significance of those facts.

The conclusion to the matter is stated in Hosea 14:9, “Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.”

We are not in reality, so very much different from Israel in the time of Hosea. We need to grasp the concepts of righteousness. We need to learn the “knowledge” the Jews lacked. We need to open our hearts to the knowledge of God.

Closing Prayer:
The Knowledge We Need
Hosea 4:6

Memory: Hosea 4:6

“…m_ p_ a_ d_ f_ l_ o_ k_.”

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The knowledge that the Israelites lacked is the very knowledge you and I need.

I. Relational Knowledge.
A. An awareness of relationships.

B. A knowledge of how to be faithful. Hosea 6:4 Hosea 10:12 Hosea 6:6

II. Heart Knowledge.
A. An understanding of the very nature of God. Hosea 8:6

B. Our hearts need to feel and act on what our heads “know”.

C. Our hearts need to “know” enough to resist temptations. Hosea 4:15

D. God wants us to have vital “knowledge” in our hearts. Hosea 6:6 Matthew 9:13

So What?
We need to open our hearts to the knowledge of God.