

**Wednesday: 01/23/2018**

### **Only the Scientific Method?**

I define knowledge as being able to deal with things as they are on an appropriate basis of thought and experience. What “an appropriate basis” is depends upon the nature of the subject matter of the knowledge in question. There is, as far as we know, no perfect general formula for “appropriate basis” or “conclusive evidence” for all kinds of knowledge, and many of the unfortunate results of “modern” thought might be attributed to outstanding thinkers who insisted on one or another such formula.

Today it is not uncommon to hear people talk as if there were something identifiable as “scientific method” and claim that it alone is the appropriate basis of knowledge—that it alone is the “pipe” from which knowledge flows. The scientific method is used to draw conclusions based on measurable and testable data, and because those conclusions have been tested, they are considered to be verifiable knowledge.

There are various problems with this view. One is that almost everything we know turns out not to be this kind of knowledge. We do not use the scientific method for knowledge of the Greek alphabet or the best way to get from point A to point B or for knowledge of art, morality, and personal relationships. Another is that we have not the slightest clue about what a “scientific” solution to many urgent human problems would look like. If the scientific method cannot help us with some problems, must these be abandoned to power and other forms of irrationality?

#### **Reflect:**

(Q) When considering varying subject matters, how would we determine if a person did or did not know – for example, the Greek alphabet, multiplication tables, or how sewing machines work?

(Q) How might this highlight that there is not a perfect general formula for “conclusive evidence”?

#### **Optional exercise:**

Go to Wikipedia and search on “Superseded Scientific Theories.” As you look through these theories, do you think this should still be considered knowledge, since it did come out of that scientific pipe?

#### **Devotional by: Dallas Willard**

Book: *The Allure of Gentleness: Defending the Faith in the Manner of Jesus*



*Dallas Willard Ministries is excited to partner with Jeff Whitebread, who, through his work with Capitol Commission, ministers to those serving in the Pennsylvania State legislature, their staff members, and those in the lobbying community. We believe the thoughts and ideas contained in Dallas' book, *The Allure of Gentleness*, are timely guidance for those who seek to stand for truth in a manner that reflects*

*the character of Jesus himself. Dallas acknowledged he gave up trying to get people to do things, preferring instead to inspire them to think things through on their own and come to a different view of matters. We pray that in making this material available, we can continue in his footsteps, playing our part in helping others catch a vision of life with God, becoming his apprentice, and walking in the easy yoke of Jesus — even when engaging the rough and tumble world of the public arena.*