

Chapter Three: Man's Way or God's Way

Many years ago a man by the name of Dr. Benjamin Bloom, who was a noted psychologist and teacher, studied how people take in and process information. With his team he constructed what has become known as Bloom's Taxonomy which is a fancy name for the steps we go through in "learning-thinking" and thus developed what he termed "higher order thinking". Think of taxonomy as a way of grouping ideas together in a way we can visually understand the process.

Why do we need to take time to understand this? One of our goals in life should be to acquire wisdom that is centered upon God. This will be reflected in godly ["wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and not hypocritical" *Jam 3:17*]. To use our analogy of the reporter again, we want investigate the scene and to take notes of what we observe. Later we will read those notes and using our recall seek to to understand/comprehend what we wrote. This is our "aha" moment! We now understand what we have written and now we need to decide what to do with that information. We make a decision to use it to record or write an article, a blog, a letter etc. to be read by others. Thus you are "applying" by incorporating what you know, the facts, to what you understand, to share with others what you understand and they have yet to grasp. Another visual picture to help us is to think of climbing a ladder. A ladder helps you go from the foundational point to a point above your head. You don't start at the top rung; you begin at the bottom rung! That is how all of us learn, think and make decisions. Thus, learning and thinking starts at the bottom which King Solomon tells us is the fear of the Lord. Some of us are still at the foundational step and need encouragement to climb higher and higher to reach the prize of wisdom. And some of us have climbed higher as Paul said he was doing in Phil 3:14 "I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Note Paul said he was striving, that means he was continually "climbing" but as his own words say "Not that I have already attained this." He, like us, had not yet arrived at what God would see as a mature child of God. Now to help us understand where we are and where we need to be we will take time to look at these visual representations and ponder how this process occurs.

BIBLE STUDY TECHNIQUES- LEARN HOW TO STUDY THE WORD

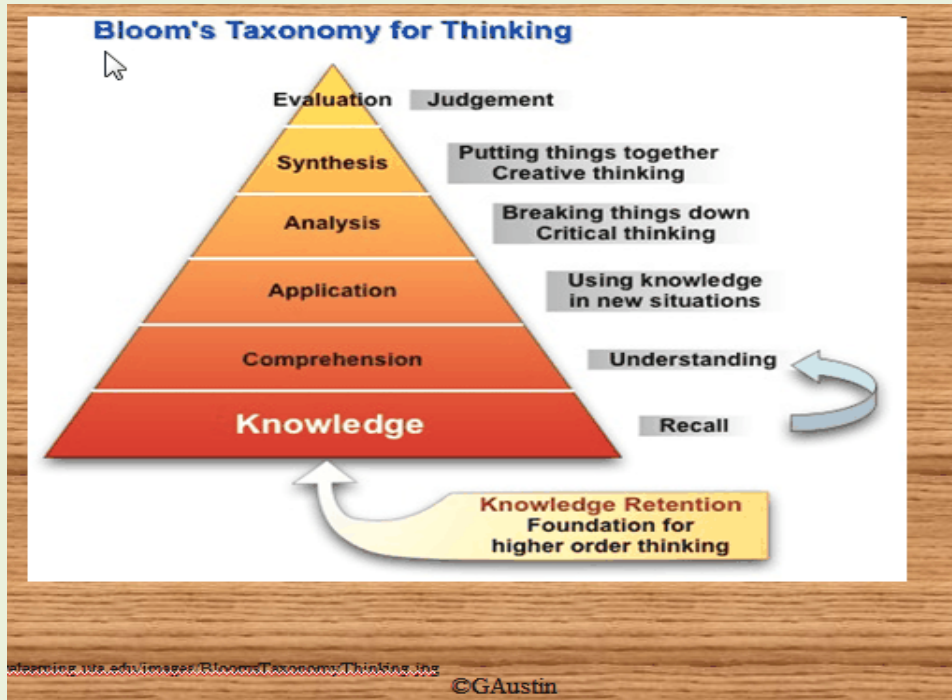


Figure 1-Bloom's Taxonomy

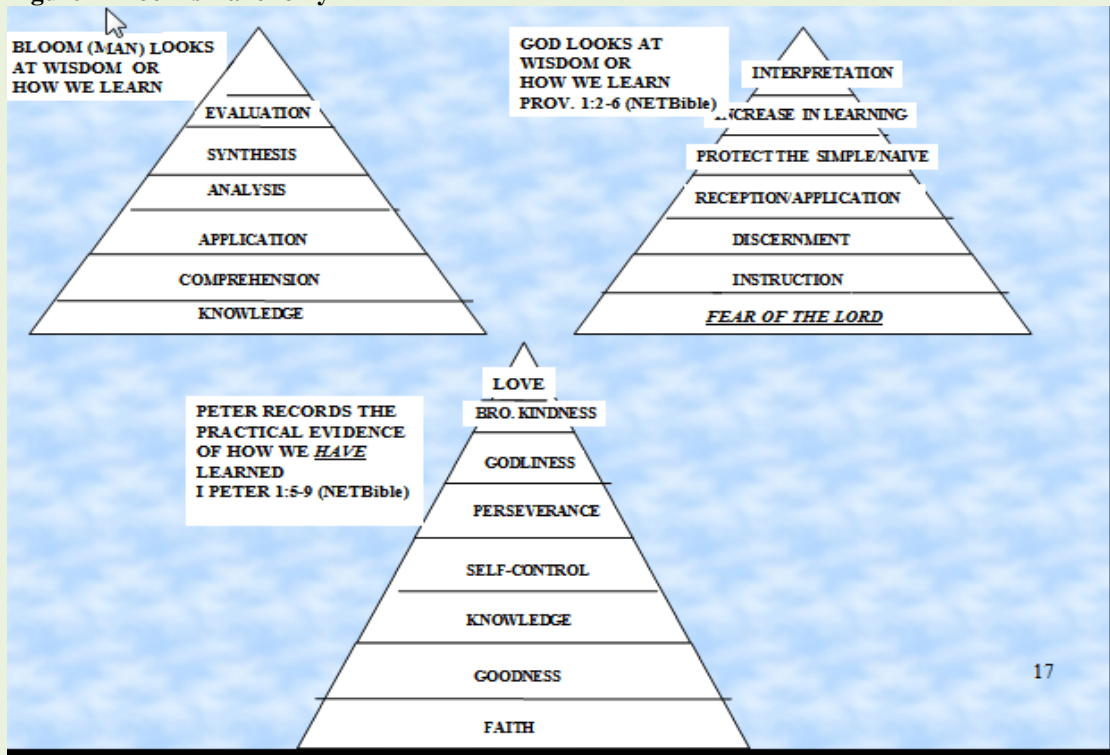


Figure 2-Bloom's Taxonomy-Austin

Our visual picture or taxonomy can be thought of as a “ladder of thinking.” The Apostle Peter shows us the practicality of our climbing by giving us clues as to what we should be demonstrating as we climb.

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Now let's look at each "rung" on our ladder and try to understand what each represents.

Knowledge is gathering of facts. Think of it as your reporter notes or if a fisherman as your "bait, fishing hook, poles etc.." King Solomon in Proverbs said you can think of it as Instruction. So what is this and how do we know if we have it? Knowledge/ Instruction are the facts which answer simple questions "who, what, where, when." Take a simple example: what are the names given to the City of David. Answer: Jerusalem or Zion. OR where was Jesus born? Bethlehem. When was He born? During the reign of Caesar Augustus. What are some names given to Jesus? Son of God, Messiah, Christ etc.

Comprehension is being able to understand what the facts mean. In Proverbs King Solomon used the word Discernment: As a "thinker" when we arrive at this step we can explain to someone else what those facts mean. By saying Bethlehem is a city in the country of Israel you are able to show that you have an understanding of the geographical location of that city. In Bible Study if we truly understand the scripture under examination we will also be able to discern or explain the spiritual principles (that is the biblical truths that never change) in that section of scripture. A spiritual principle example would be "God is the same yesterday, today, as He will be tomorrow because God does not change."

Application or Reception/Application is being able to explain what we remember and understand as we come in contact with experiences and to apply the understanding. A good example of application is seen in the Samaritan Woman. She observed, asked questions, began to see that the person talking with her "*just might be*" the Messiah. So what did she do? She left her water jars, returned to the village and told everyone she met: "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." We might say it like this: she put 2 and 2 together and then set off to apply that to her present situation. She went and told.

Analysis or Protect the Simple/Naïve is our next growth step. Here, we as the "learner-thinker," are able to see the facts, understand them, have applied some facts in a new situation; stepped back and considered what occurred. Thus this step does some overlap with our application step. As we apply we are also analyzing what we know, understand, and comprehend. It is then that we we can look and analyze what has happened. We can see the steps involved, we can explain the steps to another and we can determine if our steps were correct. We sometimes think we understand but when we actually do something then we know if we did or did not truly comprehend. It is at point that we can then step back and ask ourselves: Did our actions reflect a clear understanding? An example would be the question Jesus asked the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees or why they did not understand the loaves and fishes miracle. Using the example of Peter launching out is to see the facts become crystal clear as to miracles but the application was then to realize that he could see it was the simple step of faith that brought so many fish that he could not bring in the net alone.

In Proverbs we add a new step that correlates with *Synthesis* and King Solomon noted it as "*increase in learning*". Why would we call it that? When we are able to

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synthesize we can see what has happened, and use what we have learned in a new situation. The disciples were given a task to go out two by two yet take no provisions for themselves. This was a test of synthesis. Had they increased enough in learning to be able to use what they knew in a new situation? He gave them wise counsel and instruction but now they had to trust God to provide for them. When they returned they rejoiced that even the demons were submissive to them. They had missed some of the points but they had stepped out in faith and had trusted God. We might say that they had gone from knowing to understanding to applying to increasing in their learning from this experience.

Evaluation and Interpretation are two sides of the same coin. As we work through the process of mentally importing data, processing it as far as understanding, utilizing it in experiences we are left to then step back and evaluate. How did we live out the principles? How can we explain what we have learned to another? Then can we step back and evaluate our progress and our decision-making. How would we judge our actions, motives, and thoughts?

CHAPTER THREE QUESTIONS: Please take your time and record the answers to these questions prayerfully.

1. What one component did Bloom ignore that would make his taxonomy a biblically based taxonomy?
2. How did Peter envision this idea of information processing being lived out? Peter said “add to your faith”. That gives us a clue that we must begin there. Is faith knowledge or something different? Explain your answer.
3. Where are you on the “ladder of growth” according to any of the designs in the visual illustration?