

SPIRITUAL DILIGENCE

“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Since they did not know God’s righteousness and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to the righteousness that comes from God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”. (Romans 10:1-4)

In the 16th century, when Luther was ordered to recant or face death, he said, “My mind is bound to the Scriptures.”

“God has no favorites; but He has those who favor Him.” (Japa Poa)

“What matters is what the Scriptures teach, not what you believe.” (Paul Washer)

Zeal can be positive (holy fervor) or negative (blind fanaticism), depending on the context.

Zeal, fervor, appreciation, care, value, dedication, and discernment... attachment, cherishing the things of the Kingdom.

“For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.” (Romans 10:2)

The problem isn't zeal.

The problem isn't understanding.

The danger lies in one existing without the other.

1. Zeal without understanding

That’s when there is fire (passion, fervor)... but without biblical direction (a lack of teaching, a lack of foundation, a lack of guidance).

- Emotion without discernment.
- Movement without transformation.
- An unfounded practice.

It’s doing things “for God,” but not God’s way.

“As for zeal, I was a persecutor of the church...” (Philippians 3:6)



That's how Paul was before his conversion. He had passion, intensity, and dedication... but he was fighting against the very thing he claimed to defend.

“Zeal without understanding produces mere religiosity; zeal with understanding produces transformation.”

Zeal without understanding is serving God... without doing it God's way.

“Zeal without understanding burns in the wrong way. Understanding without zeal warms nothing. But when the two come together, a mature Christian is born.”

Zeal without understanding leads to:

- fanaticism;
- religiosity;
- vigilante justice;
- spiritual excesses;
- carnal attitudes in the name of God.

“A fire with no direction turns into a wildfire.”

2. Understanding without zeal

That's when there's understanding... but no life.

- Too much information and not enough training.
- Lots of arguing and little remorse.
- Lots of meetings and little unity.
- Unprocessed information.

You know:

- What is a church?
- what grace is;
- What is discipleship?
- What is reverence...

But he lost:



- or fear;
- honor;
- passion;
- spiritual sensitivity.

Understanding without zeal produces cold believers: they correct everything, debate everything, explain everything, but live little.

“Firewood without fire won’t warm anyone.”

3. Zeal with understanding

It is the balance of the Holy Spirit.

I’d like to share some biblical advice from Ecclesiastes 8:3: *“Do not be quick to leave His presence.”*

In Psalm 69:9, David says: *“Zeal for your house consumes me.”*

David knew that any sacrifice was worth it for the sake of God’s Kingdom. His love for the things of the Kingdom was greater than anything else.

Do not be slothful in your zeal; be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. (Romans 12:11)

Understanding provides direction. Zeal brings intensity. Understanding protects zeal from fanaticism.

Zeal protects understanding from coldness.

The mature Christian:

- has a sense of reverence without being religious;
- has freedom without being disrespectful;
- possesses knowledge without arrogance;
- is passionate without being over the top.

“Zeal without understanding burns in the wrong way. Understanding without zeal warms nothing. But when the two come together, a mature Christian is born.”



In Ecclesiastes it says:

“Watch your step when you enter the house of God.” (Ecclesiastes 5:1)

This verse is a principle.

A careful study of Scripture leads us to understand that, in the new covenant, you and I “are God’s temple”; He dwells within us.

Zeal without understanding speaks like this: “This is a sacred, holy place...”

Those who understand this truth know that wherever there is a saved, baptized person, He is there.

On the other hand, understanding without zeal—knowing this—turns the place of worship into a stage, a playground... Extremes are dangerous, and that is precisely what I am emphasizing. Sometimes we, who have understanding, seem to forget reverence... zeal.

I’m talking about devotion to worshiping God—anywhere, really. At the table, praying (praying silently, sometimes out of shyness, not out of prudence).

- No one is suggesting that you have to be on your knees praying when you arrive... but sometimes you’re so distracted by talking.
- May your offering not be insipid (lifeless). Pray over your offering and your tithe. Give with enthusiasm, not as if you were paying a bill.

People who lack zeal:

- arrive late and leave early (1 Corinthians 15:58);
- do not engage with the Scriptures;
- do not honor God — “I honor those who honor me”;
- They are dedicated to (honor) their work, schedule, attire, and fellow workers, but those who lack dedication to the Kingdom invert values and violate principles;
- They seek first the rest, and then the Kingdom is added.

There are people who have no zeal for fellowship. They have understanding, but they lack zeal. They are “E.T.” believers (big heads and small bodies—full of information, but lacking in character).

You don’t come here as if you were going to the beach... The atmosphere here teaches you discipline.



For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. (Romans 10:2)

The apostle contrasts fervor (zeal) with a lack of true knowledge of God's will.

Paul also had a zeal without understanding: "as for zeal, a persecutor of the church." That is the negative aspect: the lack of understanding.

"They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." (Romans 10:2)

Worse than zeal without understanding is understanding without zeal.

There are people who are zealous for the church, but without understanding (they still say "let's go to church," "let's go to the temple...," thinking that the church is made of sand, bricks, and cement).

But there are others who understand what the church is (the body of Christ, made of flesh) and yet behave as if they did not understand, because they lack biblical zeal (they have zeal, but it is a religious zeal that leads them to say what everyone else says).

We often hear about people who have signs in front of their places of worship that say "church," referring to the building rather than the people, while we say that a church is not a building.

Zeal without understanding seeks to correct and guide without any biblical basis (based on personal preference, religious belief...).

"It is not good to be zealous without knowledge; much less to be rash and lose one's way." (Proverbs 19:2)

The same applies to the Scriptures:

- Some people are capable of reading them all, but lack the dedication to read them every day.
- Some understand the principle but lack zeal for it (they even know that "elder," in the original text, refers to the same person as a pastor and bishop, but they lack the zeal, reverence, and commitment to apply this, often because of their religious preconceptions).
- There are brothers and sisters who understand that the word Jesus used most often was "disciples," but they lack the zeal, the care, and the dedication—they have a habit of using other expressions, or even non-biblical ones, because they lack the zeal for this revelation.



- They understand that there is only one family, but they lack the zeal (reverence) to live by that understanding. Understanding without zeal creates another family that God has never authorized.

There are people who have zeal but lack understanding, and there are people who have understanding but lack zeal. The ideal is to have understanding combined with zeal (zeal, spiritual fervor, the honor of living the life of the church, fellowship, discipleship, discerning the situation, showing respect, taking things seriously).

Many preachers and theologians, such as George Knight, interpret this to mean that “zeal without knowledge is tantamount to fanaticism.”

But the general consensus is that zeal without understanding can cause harm, while understanding without zeal leads to spiritual coldness.

“For zeal for your house consumes me...” (Psalm 69:9)

Spiritual application

“Worse than zeal without understanding is understanding without zeal.”

Because zeal without understanding still reveals a lack of spiritual hunger. But understanding without zeal usually reveals spiritual complacency.

- Zeal without understanding = uncontrolled fire.
- Understanding without zeal = firewood without fire.
- Zeal combined with understanding = a fire that warms, illuminates, and transforms.

Your zeal, my zeal—it doesn’t give us the right to take the law into our own hands... Justice taken to extremes becomes vigilantism. It is the Holy Spirit who provides the balance, so that we may have the right kind of zeal.

A discerning mind knows how to distinguish between what is urgent and what is a priority.

“Not all spiritual fervor signifies spiritual maturity.”

God wants to fill the houses. The question isn’t whether He can, but whether we want to.

“As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15)

Pr. César Souza

