

## KNOWING GOD

Some knowledge is superfluous. Here are some headlines-- "War dims hopes for peace"; "Cold wave linked to temperatures"; "Man is fatally slain"; "Something went wrong in jet crash, experts say"; "Smokers are productive, but death cuts efficiency"; Some information is puzzling--"Two sisters reunite after eighteen years at checkout counter"; "Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers"; "Enraged cow injures farmer with ax"

Other knowledge is absolutely crucial to life now and life for eternity. It is not obvious to many, however, but it may be hard to interpret. It is the knowledge of God.

I'd like to consider with you these points:

1. Knowledge About God
2. The Knowledge Of God
3. How Can I Know God Better?
4. How Do We Know That We Know God?

### 1. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD

A. Most people do NOT know about God. Matt. 7:13-14, "small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Christianity is the world's largest religion, but still only about 1/3 profess Christ, and far fewer really are born again.

John 17:25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me."

1 Cor. 2:10b "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Gal. 4:8 "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?"

Once we looked at Christ from a worldly point of view (2 Cor. 5:16)

Any knowledge of God is actually the voluntary self-disclosure of God. We think we have found God, when God has first found us, convicted us of sin, given us the gift of repentance, faith and eternal life, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:9). He is indeed the "Hound of Heaven" who "chased me down the nights and down the days, down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind, He followed me." "The Son of Man came to seek and

to save the lost." "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6).

But the fact remains that MOST human beings do NOT know God. Even though thousands come to Christ every hour, the net annual gain in converts may be only 4,400,000 per year, by one estimate, over the birth rate (MARC 1993). At that rate it will take some time before all hear the Gospel and Christ returns.

God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation--"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:18). Our major commission is the Great Commission, to go with the knowledge of God to every people, tribe, tongue and nation which has not yet heard. That God will prosper those churches that do precisely that has been my observation.

The focus of reconciliation came from the Middle East, to Europe, India and north Africa. Then it came to the New World and from England and the New World to the Coastal areas, then to the inland areas, then to the unreached smaller people groups, then to the 10/40 window of Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist cultural religions. These "unreached people groups" are the last frontier. Presently 1% of missionaries and 1.2% of funds are spent for the 1.3 billion who are "World A", who don't know God, and indeed know precious little about God.

How do people come to know about God? Through His bond-servants.

This knowledge comes also by Nature:

Rom. 1:20, "his eternal power and divine nature"

Ps. 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard."

It comes by Christ:

John 8:19 "Then they asked him, 'Where is your father?' 'you do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied. 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'"

John 14:7 "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

It comes by the Holy Spirit:

John 16:8--convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment

This knowledge comes by the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16--profitable for doctrine)

It may come through special acts of revelation, as to Naaman (2 K 5:15) or to Saul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9: 4,5).

2. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD=eternal life

It is insufficient to know about God, we must know him personally.

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3

gnoskosin, from ginosko. Vine says,

In the N.T. ginosko frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship, e.g., especially of God's knowledge, 1 Cor. 8:3, "if any man love God, the same is known of Him;" Gal. 4:9, "to be known of God;" here the knowing suggests approval and bears the meaning 'to be approved;' so in 2 Tim. 2:19; cp. John 10:14,27; Gen. 18:19..." Vine's Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words p. 638.

Vine compared the Greek word oida:

ginosko, frequently suggests inception or progress in knowledge, while oida suggests fullness of knowledge [John 8:55], p. 638

while ginosko frequently implies an active relation between the one who knows and the person or thing known. . . oida expresses the fact that the object has simply come with the scope of the knower's perception. p. 639

The same word, gnosko, is used by Jesus in Matt. 7:23:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evil-doers!

The knowledge of God is bi-directional, which is the essential dimension of a relationship. We need to know God, and God must know us, to be saved. Our actions validate (but do not establish) our knowledge of God. James wrote, "I will show you my faith by what I do. . ." Jas. 2:18b. Those actions also are an assurance of God's love, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 14:10, NIV)

After we come to know God, are born again, and enter God's Family by His will (John 1:13), this knowledge is only to be foundational. We are to GROW in our knowledge of God

2 Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." It is possible to be "unproductive" in our knowledge of God

2 Pet. 1:2-4,8 2. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he

has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can be unproductive in our knowledge of Christ. We must not stand still, but press on to know the Lord.

Eph. 5:17 "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

God says that knowing Him is legitimate ground for boasting.

Jer 9:23 "This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord."

1. The knowledge OF God comes by the same means as does the knowledge ABOUT God:

The Word of God: the Old and New Testaments

Creation: Christians see God's majesty through His creation even more clearly after salvation. We believe the biblical account that God created Man and Woman and every living thing, which involves far less drastic a faith than in evolution, or matter + time + chance= everything, as Francis Schaeffer put it, with no explanation whatsoever for how matter originated.

The Spirit:

1 John 2:20 "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. 21 I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth 27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Christ:

1 John 5:20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

Matt. 11:27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

God gives a predisposition to know Himself:

Jer. 24:7 [After the Exile] I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart."

Special deeds of revelation:

God gives eyes to understand or not to understand.

Dt. 29:5 "During the forty years that I led you through the dessert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. 6 You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God".

Deeds of goodness to know the Good God., yet blindness v. 2b "Your eyes have seen all that the Lord did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. 3 With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. 4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear."

It is here a matter of DIVINE revelation to SEE His goodness and greatness.

We must not try to box God. As C.S. Lewis said of Aslan the lion, "He is good but He is not safe". He will do whatever pleases Him. He may reveal Himself in dreams, prophets, and impressions of the Spirit, and circumstances.

### 3. HOW CAN I KNOW GOD BETTER?

#### a. INADEQUATE VIEWS

(1. Seeking a direct personal experience with God in the wrong ways. Suffi Muslims dance themselves into a frenzy, some Western American Indians use peyote mushrooms seeking God through drugs, which was promoted in the US in the 1960's.

(2. Seeking to connect with God through chanting or repeating phrases or mantras (Hare Krishna cult, other forms of Buddhism, but also repetition of the rosary or other "vain repetitions". Even the Lord's prayer or the rosary can be used in this way. The common denominator is trying to manipulate God through formulas, and is not so much seeking God for His own sake as seeking God for personal power. That is also a temptation to us Christians.

(3. Some seek God through mortification of the flesh. "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence." Col. 2:21-23.

(4. Some claim to seek God through sexual indulgence--such as Swami Maharesh Rajnish Yoga's ashram and the "Children of God" cult. Adultery is a characteristic of cult leaders (2 Peter 2:14).

(5. Many seek God through reason, which is a common thread in cults. This describes the Jehovah-Witnesses, to whom hell, the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit are not reasonable. It is the currency of false religion which thinks that people are basically good, as does Islam, and liberal Christianity, and in need only of a tune-up, instead of a radical overhaul, indeed--a new engine.

(6. Others seek God through feelings, and if we achieve an emotional high, than we have indeed connected with the Almighty. Worship can become entertainment, punctuated with people going into seizures, out of control of themselves. If we feel real good, then we have had "church". There is nothing wrong with feeling good, but that is not the aim of coming to church, and God may meet with us and the result is that we feel terrible, at least initially.

(7. There is, in general, zeal without knowledge (John 15:20-21). "In fact, (Jesus said), a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. 3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you." We can stray so far from the true knowledge of God that religious people kill His servants, thinking that they are themselves God's servants.

#### b. HOW CAN I KNOW GOD BETTER?

(1. We must really WANT to know God better. "...if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:3-5).

What will it take to force us into disciplined cultivation of the inner garden of our private worlds? Will it require an experience of severe suffering? That is what history seems to say over and over again: those under pressure seek God, because there is nothing else. Those smothered in 'blessings' tend to drift with the current. And that is why I question the word blessing sometimes. Surely something is not a blessing if it seduces us away from inward spiritual cultivation." Ordering Your Private World, p. 133

Paul considered everything as loss compared to knowing Christ. Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."

(2. Pray for God's grace--that He will reveal Himself.

Ex. 33:12 "Moses said to the Lord, 'You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

17 "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the Lord said "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Ex. 33: 12-13; 17-19).

Ps. 25:4 "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Ps. 27:11 "Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Ps. 86:11 "Teach me your way, O Lord and I will walk in your truth; We have to want to know God, and if we really don't, we need to pray that God will give us that desire.

God gives eyes to understand or not to understand.

Dt. 29:5 "During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. 6 You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God".

Deeds of goodness to know the Good God., yet blindness v. 2b "Your eyes have seen all that the Lord did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. 3 With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. 4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear."

It is hear a matter of DIVINE revelation to SEE His goodness and greatness, and even, I think, to see His goodness in our own lives.

Ps. 103:7 "He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel."

Jer. 24:7 [After the Exile] I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart." Ask God to give you a heart to know Him.

(3. Keep a journal of prayer requests to see how God intervenes in our life, which will teach you about Him.

George Mueller of Bristol, England, [circa 1834] faithfully did this and could say that he witnessed God answer over 5,000 of his prayers the very day he prayed them. Mueller's

record of God's provision has inspired probably a multitude of Christians who have read his journals.

We should know God better the longer we walk with Him. Job said: 42:5 "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you."

(4. The Word of God will reveal who God is, best of all.

Dr. Paul Meier found in a study of seminary students, that those who were the most mentally healthy and spiritual, according to two diagnostic instruments, were those who meditated daily in the Bible. Those next most mature had meditated less than three years. The number of years a person had been a Christian was not correlated with spiritual maturity. (Meditating for Success).

(5. Take time for God. Give adequate time for prayer, such as in prayer retreats, observing the Sabbath (Ex. 31:12,13), not as a legalistic ordinance for today as much as a time to focus upon God. We take time for work, leisure, TV, videos, cleanliness, health, eating, investments, family, study, etc. How much time do we take for God?

(6. Walk humbly before God. Ps. 25:8 "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. 9 He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way."

(7. We place ourselves in situations where we must trust God, without crossing the line of putting God to the test. We stay within scriptural parameters. Here are some ideas to get out of our comfort zones--

1. Cut up your credit cards if you are not paying off your monthly balance, and pay-as-you-go.

2. Go on a short-term missions trip for at least two weeks. Aaron Sims and Bertha Lloyd went to Uganda. The highlight of her trip was at the lowpoint of comfort in a mud hut, with sugar cane leaves and a thin mat between her and the mud floor.

3. Attempt to build a relationship across ethnic lines. Or with a Muslim or Buddhist. Even more challenging, attempt to build a relationship across economic lines.

4. Ask God to give you people to whom to witness. Knock on a strange door with the purpose of giving a Bible and sharing your faith in Christ if the people are receptive.

5. Invite God to expose and destroy all the idols in our life.

6. Spend enough time before God to expose our sin to us, as much as we are able to handle.

7. Describe the strongholds Satan has in our life, if any, and renounce them one by one.

8. Ask God not to let you graduate for the "course" He's giving you until you "pass".
9. Tithe, if you are not.
10. Take a day to pray.
11. Mike West, a Chattanooga businessman, made God the Lord of his life and has been 2,000 people profess Christ in 6 months, as he teamed up with RA Sharpe of Central Baptist, in Hixson. He has been to Israel 3 times, and developed a burden for the Jews.

4. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW GOD? This is the experiential knowledge of God.

a. We have a thankful spirit. 1 Thess. 5:16 "Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. "Gaiety of spirit"

"We need frankly to face ourselves at this point. We are, perhaps, orthodox evangelicals. We can state the gospel clearly, and can smell unsound doctrine a mile away. If anyone asks us how men may know God, we can at once produce the right formulae--that we come to know God through Jesus Christ the Lord, in virtue of His cross and mediation, on the basis of His word of promise, by the power of the Holy Spirit, via a personal exercise of faith. Yet the gaiety, goodness, and unfetteredness of spirit which are the marks of those who have known God are rare among us--rarer, perhaps, than they are in some other Christian circles where, by comparison, evangelical truth is less clearly and fully known. Here, too, it would seem that the last may prove to be first, and the first last. A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about Him." p. 21, Knowing God, JI Packer, 1973 ed.

2. We see that God is good. Ps. 34:8 "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him."  
We have indeed tasted.

3. We will stand up for the truth  
Dan. 11:31 His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. 32 "With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him." F. Schaeffer stood up for the unborn. He knew God.

Jer. 22:16 "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the Lord."

Knowing God is not simply a private affair. It will take us out of our comfort zones and involve us in fighting for what God wants. Racial reconciliation, justice, help for the genuinely needy poor, care for widows and AIDS patients.

4. We trust God.

Ps. 9:10 "Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord have never forsaken those who seek you."

Jer.9:24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord." One who knows God will also exercise kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, because they delight God, and because God lives in him or her.

5. We pray

Men who know their God are before anything else men who pray, and the first point where their zeal and energy for God's glory come to expression is in their prayers.", p. 24, 1973

ed. Knowing God

"Come near to God and He will come near to you." Jas 4:8

6. Which brings us to the acid test of those who know God. They will be GODLY. That is, they will resemble God. The preeminent likeness is that of love. This is how all will know that we are His disciples, that we have love one for the other (John 13:35). We know God by demonstrating the fruits of that knowledge.

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