

95. Knowing the Father through the Son

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You know what they say, "Everyone has a nose, and everyone has an opinion." Especially when it comes to God, it ranges from a true biblical definition of God to a totally wicked cult definition, to a definition of "You-make-it-as-you-go."

As I was preparing this study, I did a little research to see what kind of definitions several well-known cults have. Here are some examples:

- Jehovah's Witness: One-person God, called Jehovah. No trinity. Jesus is the first creation Jehovah created.
- Mormonism: God the Father was once a man, but "progressed" to godhood. He has a physical body as does his wife. No trinity. Worthy men may one day become gods themselves.
- Unification Church: God is both positive and negative. The universe is God's body. Their god does not know the future. He is suffering and he needs Moon Sun Myung to make him happy.
- Scientology: They do not define God or Supreme Being. Everyone is a "thetan," an immortal spirit with unlimited powers of its own universe, but not all are aware of this.
- Islam: Allah is God. Human attributes such as fatherhood cannot be associated with God.
- New-Age: Everything and everyone is a god. God is an impersonal force or principle, not a person. People have unlimited inner power and need to discover it.
- Pick 'N Choose Christianity Light: Many self-proclaimed people who think that they are Christians, though they've never made a commitment to accept Jesus into their hearts as the Savior and Lord, pick and choose what they want from the Bible, because what the Bible says goes against their carnal lifestyles.

No wonder the world is in chaos. Everyone runs around with his or her own idea of God and they don't have the foggiest idea who God truly is, because they choose not to know God.

Four hundred years before Christ was born, the Greek philosopher Plato wrote, "To find out the Father and Maker of all this universe is a hard task, and when we have found Him, to speak of Him to all men is impossible." What do you know, Plato was wrong again!

We don't have to wait until we enter heaven to get to know God the Father. We can know Him today and receive His spiritual resources we need to keep going when the days are difficult. Let our Savior Jesus explain it to us.

A. IF YOU HAD KNOWN ME

John 14:7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

From what the Lord Jesus said, we can see that the only way we can get to know God the Father is through knowing Jesus. Without knowing Jesus, we cannot know the Father.

The Greek word for 'know' is "ginosko". The word 'know' is used 141 times in John's Gospel, but it does not always carry the same meaning. In fact, there are four different "levels" of knowing according to John:

1) Simply knowing a fact.

Any unbeliever can read the Bible and attain what the Bible says. If the person stops there, the knowledge he had just attained from the Bible is nothing more than head knowledge.

2) Understanding the truth behind that fact. However, you can know the fact and know the truth behind it and still be lost in your sins.

When the rapture happens, there will be many pastors and self-appointed Christians left behind. They've read the Bible, heard about the rapture, and even studied and taught about it. But they have not taken the most important step in Christianity – accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord and developing the personal relationship with Him.

3) Getting into the personal relationship. "To know" means "to believe in a person and become related to him or her."

Like no other religion in the world, our God, Jesus becomes our Savior and Lord; and God the Father becomes our Father in heaven. This is the way "know" is used in John 17:3.

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

In fact, in Scripture, the Hebrew word for "to know" is "yada" and means the most intimate relationship between man and wife.

Genesis 4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord."

4) The fourth use of "know" means "to have a deeper relationship with a person, a deeper communion."

It was this level Paul was referring to when he wrote in Philippians 3.

Philippians 3:8-11 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Jesus will describe this deeper relationship in John 14:19-23, so we will save any further teachings until we deal with that section next Sunday.

B. THE ROADBLOCKS FROM KNOWING GOD

John 14:8-11 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Have you ever thought about the spiritual roadblocks that often keep us from knowing God? The devil is more than happy and willing to provide all the endless selfish

lame excuses that prevent us from knowing the one true God. Why? Because when we get to know our God, we get to realize that what sinners we are and how desperately we need Him. Consequently, the devil loses his place in our lives. He cannot have that. Though satan supplies those excuses, no one can actually make roadblocks in our hearts except ourselves.

I find a couple of roadblocks that people make keeping themselves from knowing God:

1) Our preconception about what God should be

Your IQ might be in genius level and leave the rest of us in the dust. But your IQ still remains in the three figure at the maximum. But our God is infinitely wise. It is a futile try to comprehend the incomprehensible God.

Many unbelievers' preconceptions about God are like:

"I always pictured God like this..." or "My view of God is different than what the Bible says..." Their ideas about God and the biblical truth are a billion miles apart. As a matter of fact, they are not even in the same universe.

2) People demand inappropriate confirmation from God

Like Philip in v8, people want proof of God's faithfulness, capability, and even existence. Somehow people think that they are the ones who give God permission to do something or exist. Without their approval of God, He cannot do anything, so do they think. Really? NOT!!!

Longing to see God with our physical eyes is often an excuse for unbelief and the starting point of idolatry. Since a human has a limited mind and cannot express beyond what he or she can see, hear, and think, the descriptions of God boil down to the resemblance of God's creations. In other words, idolaters bring down God to a human level or less.

I am sure that some of you have heard about the stories regarding the face of Jesus on a burned tortilla. People made a shrine of that "Miracle Tortilla" in Lake Arthur, New Mexico. It ain't a miracle. Go get a new frying pan.

Some of you saw my drawing of Jesus in the Chapel Bookstore, you may wonder, "Were you not making an idol of Jesus by drawing Him with a baby?" No. Firstly, I don't expect anyone to fall down and worship the image of Jesus that I drew. If you do that, you are an idiot. Secondly, what I wanted to portray in the drawing was not the face of Jesus, rather His love and care for us. Nothing else. By the way, I don't get one penny out of the sale of the drawing from the Chapel Bookstore. All the proceeds go to the Church Property Improvement Fund.

In v9-11 when Jesus said that knowing Him and seeing Him was the same as knowing and seeing the Father, He was claiming to be God. From now on, the disciples would understand more and more about the Father, even though Jesus was leaving them.

Some of you might wonder, "OK, I grant that Jesus' disciples had a privilege of three years of ministry side by side with Him physically. But we don't have that luxury. How can we see and hear from God when we cannot be like His disciples?" Through your Bible, His Word. The way Jesus made known the character and reality of the Father was in His words and works. The truth of God filled Jesus' words; the power of God produced His works.

I believe that one of the strongest signs of a real child of God is person's never-ending desire to learn more about God through the Bible. Not very long after I was saved in 1987, I asked the Lord in my prayer that I wanted to know Him more. He answered me very loud and clear in my heart, "Read My Word."

C. DOING GREATER WORKS FOR JESUS

John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

This is a promise for us to claim, and the claiming of it demands faith. The fact that Jesus did return to the Father is an encouragement, because there He is interceding for us. Jesus will have more to say about this intercessory work later.

The "greater works" would apply initially to the Apostles who were given the power to perform special miracles as the credentials of their apostleship. Their miracles were not greater in quality, because Jesus' servants were not greater than their Lord, but rather in scope and quantity.

For example, according to Acts chapter 2, Peter preached one sermon and 3,000 sinners were converted in one day. That is more than what Jesus did in His entire ministry. The fact that ordinary people performed these signs made them even more wonderful and brought great glory to God.

Of course, it is not the believer himself who does these greater things. It is God who is working in and through the believer. Faith and works must always go together, because it is faith in Him that releases the power of God in our lives.

D. PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME

John 14:13-14 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

This is not a "magic formula" that God the Father cannot resist and we get to have anything we want because we attach "in the name of Jesus" at the end of our prayers. To ask anything of the Father, in the name of Jesus, means that we ask what Jesus would ask, what would please Him, and what would bring Him glory by furthering His work. It is a tremendous privilege to use Jesus' name and demands a lot of responsibility from us.

Some Bible teachers in the Charismatic denominations use these two verses as their basis to tell their congregation that they are encouraged to claim anything their hearts desire. That is far from the truth in context. God is not giving them blank checks, rather "in My name" is the controlling element.

To know God's name means to know His nature, who He is, what He is, and what He wants to do. Since God answers our prayers in order to bring honor and glory to His name, our prayers must be in His will.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

We can know the Father and Maker of the universe, because Jesus Christ revealed Him to us contrary to what Plato said. Why should our hearts be troubled when the

Creator and Owner of the universe is our own Father? Memorize these two verses, please. They will come to your rescue.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Knowing Jesus personally and intimately is the key to our Christian journey.
- 2) Knowing Jesus should be without our own preconception about Him. Let Him fill your heart today.
- 3) Knowing Jesus helps us pray properly for His glory.