

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE

Growing in Knowing God

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:17; Philipians 3:7-10

SYNOPSIS

There's nothing that compares with really knowing God.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Growing in Knowing God

Ephesians 1:15-17

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, 16 I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so **that you might grow in your knowledge of God.**

We've been talking about **A Heart After God, A Thirsty Heart** and **Yearning For God**. The main thought in all of these is the pursuit of God. We want to get closer and closer to him and to know him better and better.

This is the Apostle Paul's prayer for us as well. In fact, he is emphatic about it: ever since he learned about their faith in Jesus, he hasn't stopped thanking God and praying constantly for them. And, his prayer is focused on knowing God. He wants us to grow in our knowledge of God.

This interest in knowing God more and more is fundamental to all of the New Testament writers. They taught about godly living and sound doctrine, but they were very concerned that believers would keep on getting to know the Lord more. The writer of Hebrews talks several times about drawing near to God. John is very focused on knowing and especially loving the Lord more and more. Several times in his letters, Peter encourages us to keep on growing in our knowledge of the Lord. And, Paul writes numerous times about knowing the Lord more and more.

Now, Paul had a significant encounter with the Lord on his way to Damascus. In Acts 9, he saw a bright light from heaven which flashed around him. He heard an audible voice and actually had a ☞ conversation with the Lord in the spiritual realm. That **one encounter radically changed his life.** Formerly, he was opposed to Christianity and he persecuted believers, mistakenly thinking he was doing God's will. But after that encounter he was changed and became one of the most influential followers of Christ to have ever lived.

He went on to experience a miraculous healing from the Lord. As well, he was supernaturally led by the Spirit to various parts of the world, and he performed healings and miracles himself as the Spirit enabled him. This man knew the Lord, he experienced the power of God, and he heard the audible voice of Jesus. Yet, he still wanted to know the Lord more.

How often do people today have that strong desire to know God? Typically, people are satisfied with a tiny little dose of God on Sunday morning and then little to nothing of the Lord until next Sunday. Have you had an encounter with the Lord that radically changed your life? Have you experienced his presence in such a way that nothing else compares? That's what we're after here!

The scripture is filled with commentary about the importance of knowing God. **Proverbs 2:1-5** talks about finding **the knowledge of God through diligence of pursuing him and praying earnestly for insight and understanding.**

Jeremiah 9:23-24 reminds us that knowing God is far more important than wisdom, strength, or wealth. John warns that not knowing God can lead to hatred and persecution of believers. (John 16:3) Romans



chapter 1 is all about how utterly depraved people can become when they don't know the Lord, especially if they *deliberately* choose to reject him. And, **2 Peter 1:3** clarifies that godliness comes from our knowledge of God. You can't really be a godly person without growing in knowing God.

Knowing God is supremely important! To be clear, the knowledge of God we're talking about is not just a book-smarts knowledge. It's not knowing facts and figures. It's knowing him in a very personal way. **It's not all about religion or ritual, it's about relationship.** Listen to what Paul writes in Philippians chapter 3.

☞ **Philippians 3:7-10**

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 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 9 and be found in him... 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,

Paul makes a critical distinction in these verses. **We need more than to know about God - we need to know Him.** Paul says that he knows all about God. He was a Jew - one of God's chosen, one of the keepers of the true knowledge of God. He was of the tribe of Benjamin; he came from the tribe that gave the first king to Israel; the tribe that never wavered in its support of David. He was a Hebrew - not only Jewish - his family had preserved its heritage. He spoke the Hebrew language and kept its customs. He was a Jew by birth, a Hebrew by education, and a Pharisee by choice - of the strictest of Jewish sects in knowing and obeying the law of Moses.

From his earliest moments to his lifelong training, he knew about God. But he says all this stuff - all he knew - was just loss "compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus." This idea of knowing Christ more and more is of the utmost importance. It far exceeds everything else in life. v. 10 says, "I want to know Christ."

--David Guzik... *To know Jesus is not the same as knowing His historical life; it is not the same as knowing correct doctrines; it is not the same as knowing His moral example, and it is not the same as knowing His great work on our behalf.*

- *We can say that we know someone because we recognize him.*
- *We can say that we know someone because we are acquainted with what he does.*
- *We can say that we know someone because we actually converse with him.*
- *We can say that we know someone because we spend time in his house.*
- *Yet, there is a way of knowing Jesus that includes all of these yet goes beyond them.*

To know Christ is *ginosko* in the Greek. It means to know, but also includes a deep understanding of the object; it includes the idea of knowing by feel. This same word is used of physical relations between a husband and wife. It's far more than a mental knowledge. It's a true understanding and an **intimate, experiential knowledge of the Lord.**

God wants us to know him personally, by experience. You may have some understanding of who God is, but do you know him personally? Can you honestly say that you are God's friend? That's how God referred to Abraham - as his dear friend in **Isaiah 41:8**. In **Exodus 33:11**, God said he spoke to Moses



as one friend speaks to another friend. Even Jesus indicated the prospect of being personal friends in **John 15:15**. This is the kind of knowing that God is talking about.

Paul talks about his garbage, and it was actually some pretty impressive stuff – his heritage, his training, his studies, his lifestyle. But, when he thinks about knowing Jesus more, those things, in comparison ☞ are junk – they're rubbish (poop)! **What really matters is your personal relationship with Jesus.**

So often we give up what is most important for that which will never last. When our schedules get too hectic or our lives too demanding what do we cut out first? Not the sports, not the recreation, not the TV - it's our Church activities, our service for Christ, and our quiet time that suffers.

Paul says that he has suffered the loss of all things for Christ - but man, was it worth it. **You will never find true contentment in your rubbish, but only in a relationship, a deeper walk with Christ.**

There are many scriptures which encourage us to know God better. **Colossians 1:10** speaks of growing in the knowledge of God so that we may be strengthened with endurance and patience. **Colossians 2:2** wants us to know the mystery of God to keep us from being deceived by false doctrine. **2 Peter 3:18** reminds us to grow in our knowledge of God so that we don't fall away.

I think that most true Christians desire to live a godly life; to do the right thing; to be more Christlike. Well, those things come through our knowledge of God. As I said, **2 Peter 1:3** tells us that he has given ☞ everything we need for a godly life – *through our knowledge of him*. **Everything in this Christian walk hinges upon knowing the Lord.**

- J.I. Packer... *"Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord."*

I don't just want you to know a little bit about God. I want you to really know him. I want you to grow in your relationship with him so that he refers to you as his friend. In Philippians 3, it seems obvious that growing in knowing God happens when you make it your high priority. Paul shows an attitude which puts this growing in knowing far above all other interests. It's not an afterthought; it's not just an ☞ addition to everything else; it's number one, pursued strenuously and **sacrificing other pursuits in order to put God first.**

In Ephesians 1, Paul prays for spiritual wisdom and insight, or revelation, so that we may know the Lord more. We need to make that our prayer as well. We need the Spirit to direct us; without him guiding us, we will quickly run out of juice in our pursuit of the Lord. We can really know God by diligently seeking him, but we need the Holy Spirit to lead us. Apply your heart and mind to getting to ☞ know God better. **Ask for spiritual wisdom and insight.** Ask him to help you know the Lord more and more and more. Ask him to even strengthen your desire for God. You won't regret it.

You can know the Lord in such a way that radically changes you. There's nothing that compares with really knowing God.

Holy Spirit