

**KNOWING GOD: LESSON 3: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW GOD?**

John 17:3

**I. INTRODUCTION: I**

1. **2** In our two previous lessons we...

A. Established the importance of this study: the absolute **MOST IMPORTANT** determinant of our faithfulness, steadfastness, zeal, dedication, and happiness as Christians is directly related with the **depth of our knowledge of God**. Key scriptures:

**Jn. 17:3:** "And this is eternal life, that they may **know You, the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."; Hos. 4:6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10

B. **\*\*** Established from the book of Daniel that the people who ***know their God***:

(1) ***Have a great energy for God,***

(3) ***Show great boldness for God,***

(2) ***Have great thoughts of God,***

(4) ***Have great contentment in God.***

2. **3** There's a saying (on my desk) that goes like this: ***Attitude is everything!*** What is attitude?

A. A NASA space scientist once summed it up very simply and succinctly by saying,

**\*\**"Attitude is where you are in relation to where you ought to be."***

B. **\*\*** The attitude of the majority of people has been summed up by one writer as "a wasting disease," and this writer gives examples of two prevailing attitudes:

(1) "Life is a bad joke." (Albert Camus). (2) "Nothing tastes." (Marie Antoinette).

C. In other words, life is full of problems, disappointments, pain, suffering, and death; it's like "a bad joke"; life can be incredibly boring and unsatisfying; therefore, "nothing tastes."

3. As we consider these "attitudes"; we are all keenly aware all of us have had these feelings. All of us have had times when life seems like a "bad joke" or so boring and unsatisfying that "nothing tastes." We've all contemplated such questions as:

A. Why was I born?

C. What is the purpose of (my) life?

B. Why am I here?

D. What is the best thing in (about) life?

4. **\*\*** The answer to all these questions is the same: ***To know God!***

**Eccl. 12:13-14:** "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil."

**Phil. 3:8-10:** "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,"

5. There are other important "life" questions we also ask ourselves:

A. **\*\*** What brings me the most joy, delight, contentment, and satisfaction to life, more than anything else? ***To know God!*** **Jer. 9:23-24:** "Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,'" says the LORD."; **Phil. 1:21:** "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

- B. What is eternal life? **Knowing God! Jn. 17:3:** “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”
- C. What “state” of man most delights God? **Knowing Him! Hos. 6:6:** “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”
6. Once we become aware the answer to all of life’s really important questions is **To Know God**, then we won’t have any problem with “wasting disease.”
- A. Life will not be a bad joke; nor will life will be boring and unsatisfying.
- B. It is all a matter of attitude; where we are in relation to where we ought to be.
7. \*\* For our lives to be worthwhile, satisfying, and meaningful they must have a big enough objective. Something large (“Yuge!”) enough to catch and hold our imagination; something with enough substance to completely and permanently lay hold of our allegiance.
- A. Worldly goals and objectives are inherently unsatisfying: Eccl. 1; 3:11  
**Eccl. 5:10:** “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.”; Matt. 6:19-21
- B. Knowing God is the highest, most exalting, most compelling goal of all!  
**Phil. 1:21:** “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”; Phil. 3:8-14  
**Gal. 2:20:** “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”
8. **4** But what are we saying when we speak of **Knowing God**?
- A. Because of its overwhelming importance it is essential all of us begin to at least form a mental image of what is meant by **Knowing God**.
- B. I tell you very straight forwardly: “It is beyond my ability as a preacher to fully and adequately describe the entirety of what is involved in **Knowing God** in one sermon.”
- C. Think of what I will say in this lesson as a mere glimpse through a keyhole into what is involved in **Knowing God**.
- D. It will be up to you individually to take what is said about **Knowing God** and apply yourself to studying His word, to pray earnestly to Him, to meditate upon His word, and to apply His word to your daily life so that you may fully **Know God**.

## II. DISCUSSION:

### I. **5** What is involved in **Knowing God**?

- A. Complex business! The more complex an object is, the more complex is the knowing of it.
- (1) Knowledge of inanimate objects can be gained through personal inspection and analysis of their physical properties (e.g., automobile).
  - (2) Knowledge of the abstract (e. g., mathematics) is gained by memorization and learning (e. g., multiplication tables and long division).
  - (3) Gaining knowledge of these things is demanding and requires concentrated effort, but the process of gaining knowledge of these things is relatively straight forward.
- B. Knowing a “living thing” is much more complicated than knowledge of inanimate objects or the abstract. To know a living thing we must:
- (1) Know its history, **AND**,

- (2) Know how it will react and behave under specific circumstances (e.g., Button my dog).
- C. Knowing a “human being” is even more complicated than knowing a dog, because:
- (1) Unlike a dog, human beings keep secrets.
  - (2) Human beings do not always show us everything that is in their heart.
  - (3) So, the “depth” of knowledge we have of someone depends a great deal on how much they are willing to “open up” to us.
  - (4) Therefore, the quality and the extent to which we know someone else is as dependent upon them as upon us. It is related to their allowing us to know them **AND** our efforts to get to know them.
- 1 Cor. 2:11a:** *“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?”*
- D. **\*\*** Now consider getting to know a person that we perceive as “above us” (e. g., Abraham Lincoln, if he were alive).
- (1) The more conscious you are of your “inferiority” the more you would:
    - (a) Treat Abe with utmost respect.
    - (b) Allow Abe to initiate any contact, conversation, or social relationship.
  - (2) You would fully realize that it would be entirely up to Abe whether you would ever get to know him.
  - (3) If you met Abe and he confined himself to courteous formalities, you might be disappointed, but you would not feel able to complain. After all, you had no claim on his friendship to begin with.
  - (4) But what if...
    - (a) Abe immediately pulled you aside and took you into his confidence.
    - (b) Abe took you aside and talked with you frankly and intimately about things that were important to you (e.g., “What do you think about that emancipation thing?”).
    - (c) Abe invited you to join him in undertaking plans of mutual interest.
    - (d) Abe asked you to make yourself permanently available for this collaboration, to be “on call” for such purposes.
    - (e) Abe, in essence, recruited you as his “personal assistant”; his “confidant and counselor”; you became privy to his most private and cherished thoughts and plans.
  - (5) How would that make you feel? Enormously privileged? Exhilarated? Energized?
  - (6) How would that change your outlook on life?
    - (a) If your life had been dreary and boring, it wouldn’t be that way anymore!
    - (b) If your life had been filled with disappointments and problems, surely, they would fade into the background!
    - (c) You would really have something to “write home about”! A new sense of energy and “worth-fullness” would fill your life!
- E. **\*\*** This is precisely a **glimpse** of what it means to **Know God!**
- (1) **Thrilling!** Knowing God is a relationship calculated by God to thrill a person’s heart!

**Jer. 9:23-24:** “Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD,”

**Rom. 7:24-25a:** “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

**Eph. 3:17-19:** “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

**Phil. 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.”

- (2) **Awesome!** Just think of it! The Almighty Creator, the great I AM, the Sovereign of the universe: Ex. 3:14
- (a) Reveals His mind to us through the words and truths of Holy Scripture, He is actually and personally speaking to you and to me! I Cor. 2:9-13
  - (b) And, in a nutshell, what is He saying? Rom. 3:10-18; Rom. 6:23; Jn. 14:3
  - (c) God is saying,

**“I know your every thought and action. I know the depths of your degradation. I know the “twistedness” and corruption of your innermost thoughts. I know the secret and dark things in your heart of hearts; the things that you would never dare to share with ANY other human being.”**

**“Furthermore, there is nothing about you that I can come to know that will disillusion Me about you, because I know it ALL. And knowing all the bad I know about you I still love you beyond what you can comprehend.”**

**“And, knowing ALL there is to know about you I still want you to be My friend, to be My child, to be My confidant, to live with Me for all eternity.”**

**What does that do for your attitude?**

- (3) **Intimate!** God is also:

- (a) Opening His heart; He opens His complete Self to us:

**Heb. 8:10:** “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

**2 Cor. 6:16:** “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”

**Eph. 2:21-22:** “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

**We will never have the opportunity to know anyone better than we can know God! He knows everything there is to know about me! And, He allows me to know everything about Him!**

- (b) He enlists us as His friend, as His colleague:

**Jas. 2:23:** “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God.”

**1 Cor. 3:9:** “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.”

(c) Adopts us into His family:

**Rom. 8:16-17:** “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

2. **7 Knowing God is:** I submit to you that knowing God is...

A. **\*\* A matter of grace:** (A recognition of this great truth is a must for us at ALL times! Even after being baptized into Christ! Recall Matthew 23)

(1) Through sin we have completely forfeited all claim on His favor:

**Rom. 3:10, 23:** “There is none righteous, no, not one;” “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

(2) We do not make friends with God; God makes friends with us: 2 Cor. 5:18

**Col. 1:21-22:** “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight;”

**1 Jn. 4:10:** “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

(3) The message of reconciliation; the message of God’s unfathomable love for us is only made known through His grace.

**Jn. 1:14:** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

☛ Paul preached “the word of His grace” (Acts 14:3; 20:32)

**Eph 1:4-6:** “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to **the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace**, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

(4) It is only through revelation (i.e., God’s Word) that we can come to **Know God!**

**Matt. 16:17:** “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”

**Rom. 11:33-35:** “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 ‘For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?’ 35 ‘Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?’”; 1 Cor. 2:9-13

**If we are going to know anything concerning God’s character, nature, attributes, etc.; or His plan for us; there is only ONE place we can find that knowledge...His word! We must let God define Himself!**

**1 Cor. 2:11:** “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

B. **\*\* A matter of personal dealing:**

(1) Knowing God is more than knowing about Him; it is a matter of dealing with Him as He opens up to us and allowing Him to deal with us as He takes knowledge of us.

**We must deal with God through faith:**

**Heb. 11:6:** “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

**Eph. 2:8-10:** “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

(2) Matters of our personal dealing with God:

(a) We must deal with our condition:

**Rom. 3:10, 23:** “There is none righteous, no, not one;” “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

**Rom. 6:23a:** “For the wages of sin is death;” Isa. 59:1-2; Rev. 20:14-15

(b) We must deal with God’s desire for each of us:

**Jn. 3:16:** “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

**Acts 17:30-31:** “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

**2 Pet. 3:9-10:** “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

(c) We must deal with God’s plan:

**Eph 1:4-6:** “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”; Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6

**Eph. 3:10-11:** “to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord;” 1:22-23; 4:1-6

(d) We must deal with God’s call: Rom. 1:16-17

**2 Thess. 2:13-14:** “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**1 Cor. 1:18-21:** “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”; 2 Cor. 2:16

(e) We must deal with God’s ability: **Jn. 10:27-29:** “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 ‘And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;

neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 'My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.'"; Rom. 8:31ff

**Matt. 10:28:** "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."; Heb. 10:31; 12:29; Rom. 11:22; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 11:6

**Heb. 2:1-3:** "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,"

### C. **7 A matter of personal involvement:**

- (1) To get to know another person we must commit ourselves to their company, to their interests, and identify with their concerns. Of primary importance in this regard is committing ourselves to Jesus Christ.
- (a) To know God, to love Him, to be pleasing to Him and inherit eternal life we must obey His word! **Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Jn. 2:3-4:** "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

**1 Jn. 2:5:** "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."

**Jn. 14:15:** "If you love Me, keep My commandments."; 15:14

**Matt. 28:18, 20:** "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ... 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you'"

**Col. 3:17:** "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."; 1 Cor. 2:9-10

#### **What is one of the highest forms of betraying a friend?**

- ☛ Telling others they said something they didn't say.
- ☛ Telling others they didn't say something they said.

**Deut. 4:2:** "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

**Prov. 30:6:** "Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."; 1 Pet. 4:11

- (b) Obedience to God's word must be from the heart! As we stated last time; following the Divine pattern is not the **ONLY** requirement God places upon us.

**Matt. 15:8:** "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."

**Rom. 6:17-18:** "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."; Matt. 23:23

**Eph. 6:6b:** "...doing the will of God from the heart,"

**2 Tim. 2:22b:** "...those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

(2) Obedience involves our mind, our will, our feelings, and our actions: Rom. 12:1-2

**Jn. 10:27:** "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."; Rom. 8:29; 6:1-13

(3) We must reshape our priorities to coincide with His: Lk. 9:23-24; Matt. 5:6; 6:33

(4) We must realize how close God wants to get to us and respond!

**Rom. 8:14:** "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."; Gal. 3:26

**1 Pet. 2:9-10:** "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

**Rom. 8:16-17:** "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,"

**We must reciprocate in love: 1 Jn. 2:5:** "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."

### III. CONCLUSION: 8

1. Do you know God? **Jn. 17:3:** "And this is eternal life, that they may **know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
2. To know God you must love God, to love God you must obey His word! **1 Jn. 2:3-4:** "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."
3. What does God say?
  - ☛ Hear: Rom. 10:17
  - ☛ Believe: Heb. 11:6
  - ☛ Repent: Acts 17:30
  - ☛ Confess: Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37
  - ☛ Baptized: Acts 2:21; 22:16
  - ☛ Remain faithful: **Col. 1:21-23:** "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight; 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel..."
4. Do you claim Jesus as Lord? Are you obeying His word? **Lk. 6:46:** "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

Some of the material in this sermon is from Knowing God, J. I. Packer