

Knowing God

If you have acknowledged yourself as a sinner before God, believe Jesus is Lord, that He died for your sins, and that God raised Him from the dead, you have been reborn as a child of God, credited with the righteousness of Christ and infused with eternal life in Him. But have you ever wondered why God would save you for eternity? Consider the following:

Eternal Life is about ...

- living forever and ever.
- taking an eternal vacation in heaven.
- singing praises to God for ever.
- I really don't care as long as I'm there!

Here is what Jesus says concerning Eternal Life.

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

- ❖ Underline what 'eternal life' is.
- ❖ Circle who 'You' is.

The reason God endows you with Eternal Life is to know Him and His Son, Jesus Christ! Mankind has been seeking the reason for his existence from his earliest beginnings, and the answer is simple ... to know and acknowledge his Creator. This is what God says through His prophet Jeremiah.

What is significant about what Jesus said eternal life is? _____

Thus says the LORD,
"Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom,
and let not the mighty man boast of his might,
let not a rich man boast of his riches;
but let him who boasts boast of this,
that he understands and knows Me,
that I am the LORD who exercises
lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth;
for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.
Jeremiah 9:23-24

- ❖ Circle the one thing the one who boasts ought to boast about.

How does this passage reveal how important it is for us to know God? _____

But how does one come to know God? We will consider the various means God has revealed Himself to us, starting with the general and concluding with the specific.

1. We Can Know God Through His Creation

God has revealed Himself through His handiwork.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
Psalm 19:1-3

- ❖ Circle what the heavens are telling.
- ❖ Circle what is revealed 'day to day' and night to night'.

How do the heavens tell of God's glory? _____

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?
Psalm 8:3-4

Isaiah also writes about how the heavens lead us to a knowledge of God.

Lift up your eyes on high
And see who has created these stars,
The One who leads forth their host by number,
He calls them all by name;
Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power,
Not one of them is missing.
Isaiah 40:26

Why do some sense a Creator when they view the stars while others do not?

The psalmist, King David, acknowledged that the universe is testifying of God, though not in words or speech. When one looks up the stars, one cannot help but be awed at the immensity of the universe and the insignificance of man in comparison.

In comparison to God's created Universe, man seems insignificant. One has to wonder why God is personally involved in mankind. David addresses this in Psalm 8:3-4, acknowledging the greatness of God's creation but hints at his (David's) wonderment at God's concern.

The prophet is declaring the supreme preeminence of God as the only true God who is not an idol fashioned by human hands, but is in fact the Creator of heaven and earth. His existence is evidenced by the starry host which He sustains by His mighty power.

*For since the creation of the world
His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature,
have been clearly seen,
being understood through what has been made,
so that they are without excuse.*

Romans 1:20

The evidence of God is so clear in His creation, that men will be held accountable for its testimony of the Almighty.

- ❖ Circle each quality about God that are seen in the creation.
- ❖ Circle how they have been seen.
- ❖ Circle what those who see God's creation are without.

How are God's 'invisible attributes', 'eternal power' and 'divine nature' seen in His creation? _____

An observation of creation reveals much about the Creator, just as an examination of an automobile can teach us much about its designer and builder. But there is a limit to what can be learned about the Creator in this manner. Theologians speak of creation as God's General Revelation. It is God's witness to all people concerning His existence. It's testimony concerning God is sufficient to hold every person responsible, so that every one will be 'without excuse' when they are judged for failing to believe in the Creator.

But if creation provides only a general witness of the Creator, where can we find more detail about Him? Here, we must go to what Theologians label God's Special Revelation. The next two sections will deal with two special and specific ways God has revealed Himself to us.

2. We Can Know God Through His Written Word

Scripture reveals God in greater detail than His creation can. In Scripture, we learn how God brought all things into existence, what happened when Man sinned and God's plan of salvation to restore Man and creation. We also learn more about God's nature and Person. It would be impossible to learn these things by simply observing the world around us. It took a Special Revelation of God through His chosen prophets to reveal this information. Notice how Jesus used Scripture to explain the significance of His life, death and resurrection.

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets,
He (Jesus) explained to them the things concerning Himself
in all the Scriptures.

Luke 24:27

In Acts 8:26-35, the evangelist Philip used Scripture from Isaiah to enlighten an Ethiopian eunuch about Jesus. As you have already discovered if you completed the lessons in this Guided Study, much can be learned about God in His written Word.

But that's just it. You can learn about God through His creation and written Word, but you cannot really come to know Him in a personal way ... as you can another person. For that reason, God revealed Himself in another special way when He took upon Himself human form and lived among us. The Word became incarnated in a living Person, Jesus Christ!

3. We Can Know God Through the Living Word!

1 In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
2 He was in the beginning with God.
3 All things came into being through Him,
and apart from Him nothing came into being
that has come into being.
14 And the Word became flesh,
and dwelt among us,
and we saw His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.
18 No one has seen God at any time;
the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father,
He has explained Him.

John 1:1-3, 14, 18

One of the most incredible truths is this one taught in John chapter one. That God became a man and lived among us. It is the basis of the Christmas celebration, but more, it is God's supreme effort to manifest Himself to us.

The greek word translated 'explained' in verse 18 is transliterated in our word 'exegesis'. It means to 'reveal or declare'. Jesus, the Living Word, exegetes, or reveals, who God is. Therefore, if you want to know what God is like, take a good look at Christ. And if you what to know God in a personal way, get to know Jesus!

- ❖ Circle where and who the Word was.
- ❖ Circle what came into being through the Word.
- ❖ Circle what did not come into being apart from the Word.
- ❖ Circle what the Word became.
- ❖ Underline what the 'only begotten' did.

How does the gospel writer make it clear in this passage that the Word is God?

How does John identify Jesus in this passage? _____

Jesus identified Himself as Deity in the following passage. Study it carefully.

7 "If you had known Me,
you would have known My Father also;
from now on you know Him,
and have seen Him."
8 Philip *said to Him,
"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."
9 Jesus *said to him,
"Have I been so long with you,
and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip?
He who has seen Me has seen the Father;
how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
John 14:7-9

- ❖ Circle who Jesus says they would know if they knew Him.
- ❖ Underline what Jesus said the disciples had done. (verse 7)
- ❖ Underline whom they had seen if they had seen Jesus. (verse 9)

What do you think Jesus meant when He said about the Father, 'from now on you ... have seen Him.'? _____

What is Jesus' point in verse 9? _____

Other New Testament writers confirm Jesus' identity:

(Jesus) is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.
For in Him
all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
Colossians 1:15; 2:9
And (Jesus) is the radiance of (God's) glory
and the exact representation of His nature,
and upholds all things by the word of His power.
Hebrews 1:3a

- ❖ Underline who Jesus is according to the above passages.

How do the above verses confirm Jesus as God? _____

A careful examination of this text reveals an incredible truth. Jesus first makes an amazing statement in verse 7. He says that His disciples, on the basis of their coming to know Him, have not only come to know the Father but have 'seen Him' as well!

Jesus' statement is then followed by a question from Philip, a question that has often been ridiculed. But I'm glad Jesus' disciples weren't the sharpest people in the world, because they force Jesus to clarify His teachings and remove all doubt as to their meaning.

But I want you to carefully examine Jesus' answer, introduced seemingly with a sigh but having the weight of a knock out punch. Remember, Jesus is responding to Philip's request that they be shown the Father. By responding with the personal pronouns 'I' and 'Me', Jesus is making His follow up statement emphatic. 'He who has seen Me has seen the Father'. Can it be any clearer than that? By using the personal pronouns, Jesus is saying when you see Him you are actually seeing the Father Himself! As Jesus says immediately following this passage, He and the Father are One, explaining His exasperated question "how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

In John 1:18, we were told that 'no one has seen God at any time'. Now, Jesus is telling His disciples that through their relationship with him, they have 'seen' God cloaked in human form.

4. We Can Know God by a Life of Faith

As **children of God**, we have the privilege and opportunity to know God through our relationship with him and His personal involvement in our lives. Paul reveals how this personal knowledge of God is obtained, and how it grows.

For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*,
we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask
that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will
in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,
to please *Him* in all respects,
bearing fruit in every good work
and increasing in the knowledge of God;
Colossians 1:9-10

- ❖ Underline what Paul prayed for the Colossians to be filled with.
- ❖ Underline specifically why he prayed for this.
- ❖ Circle how they were to please God.
- ❖ Circle what they would bear.
- ❖ Underline what they would then increase in.

What does it mean to be 'filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and understanding'? _____

The sequence included in this passage has been labeled the '*Colossian Cycle*', and describes a chain of events that culminate in an ever increasing knowledge of God. It begins with being filled with, or understanding, the will of God for our lives. This understanding must result in a 'walk' of faith and obedience, evidenced by a life lived 'in a manner worthy of the Lord'. This kind of life bears 'fruit' in the good work done for the Lord.

The ultimate consequence is an increase in our knowledge of God. Why? Because through this sequence of events, we gain a personal knowledge of God as He works in and through our lives. It is one thing to learn about God from a book or a sermon, but quite another when you experience it first hand!

For example, I knew that God was all powerful and ever present in my life, and that He could protect me from harm. After all, that's what you learn in Theology class! But when the leadership of Campus Crusade for Christ asked my wife and I to go to Papua New Guinea to start the ministry there, the only thought I had was, 'Isn't that where they eat people?'. All my theology went out the window! But we went, trusting in God's sovereign protection, and saw Him protect us from danger (even mortal) time and again during the six years we lived there.

Now, what I want to know is, where do you think I really learned that God is able to protect my family and me? From the classroom, the Bible or my walk of faith in Him? I learned *about* God's protection from my teachers and the Bible, but I learned *of* His protection when I had to trust and obey Him. I *know* He is able to protect me, because I have experienced Him do it in response to my faith in Him. *My knowledge of God has increased through my walk of faith in Him.*

Knowing God begins with His written Word, from where we learn about Him and His will for our lives. It is enlarged through a knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Living Word, Who embodies all that God is and Who becomes the model for what God desires us to be. But when we receive that knowledge with 'spiritual wisdom and understanding', and prove it by faith, God personally reveals Himself to us as the God of His Word!

*'but grow in the grace and knowledge of our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'*

2 Peter 3:18