

Getting to Know God

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Suppose you were driving home from work late one night and happened to come upon a terrible car accident. Suddenly, you realized that the car belonged to your wife or your husband. Imagine what thoughts would go racing through your mind at that moment. Surely, as a Christian, everything you had ever believed about God would be sorely tested.

This situation would push anyone to the edge, trying him to the ultimate degree of faith. A faith system built upon temporal things would fall apart at a moment such as this; however, an eternal value system would stand in spite of the sorrow and sadness. God is able to

bring beauty out of the ashes of tragedy, taking the believer from one degree of faith to the next, from one degree of strength to the next, and from one degree of glory to the next.

As this booklet will show, the real reason we are on earth is to enter into greater degrees of knowing God. Jesus Christ came to give us life, and life more abundantly. The whole purpose for God's people is to reveal how much they know Him and to show His glory to those who don't know Him.

Chapter One

REAL LIFE REQUIRES REAL FAITH

“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

A man’s daughter wanted to come to our Bible College, but he was concerned that she would learn nothing about the “real” world. His definition of the real world included having suc-

cess and money and a long life.

“What happens after you die?” I asked this man. “That is part of the real world, too.”

Like that man, many people are confused about what the real world actually is. It is important to live practically and honestly, to work hard and do what you can to provide for yourself and for your family. I thank God for all those who live this way. But we must also recognize God as the Creator and know that He holds all things together by the word of His power. The Bible is God’s love letter to us—a love that He expressed on the Cross. Because He is no respecter of persons, whosoever will may come to Him and be saved. When we were saved, we received by grace the sealing of the Holy Spirit, the regeneration of our spirit, baptism into the Body of Christ, and a union with Him that cannot be broken (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The man I was speaking with contended that Christians do not live in the real world. Yet, the world this man viewed as real was a world that has Satan as its god. That world is lying in darkness, ruled by the prince of the power of the air. Fortunately, this man eventually got saved. He is a great Christian who now understands what it means to live in the real world.

Understanding and Experience

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:9-12).

“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (1 John 3:19).

In 1 John 3:19, *aletheia* is the Greek word for “truth.” It speaks of progressively coming to know and understand God’s whole system of truth. We need to experience what the truth says, and the greatest truth in all the world is the commandment to love each other as God loves us.

The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The just live by faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. Faith is what pleases God and it is what He rewards. If I am not consistently placed in situations where I need to have faith, then I will stop knowing God as a Person.

There was a time in our ministry when we had no finances. We had no money coming in and the credit cards got full pretty fast.

“What are you going to do now?” God said.

“I am going to trust You with all my heart, lean not on my own understanding, and acknowledge you in all my ways,” I answered.

A short time later, a businessman offered to put up my wife and I in a hotel. God honored our faith.

Aman who doesn't please God with his faith, but who depends only upon what he can see, stops growing and stops knowing God as his provider. Whatever I am going through today, God wants me to have faith to please Him.

“Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (Psalm 51:6).

A Christian must learn that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. He has to learn how to trust God for the next thing he needs. He needs to do this if he is sick with a terminal disease, or if his marriage goes bad, or if he loses his job. He must learn how to trust God as he gets to know Him, and he gets to know God by reflecting on His Word and responding to His instructions in the inner man,

through faith (Psalm 51:6). And according to Hebrews 11:6, God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

In 1 John 3:23-24, we must get to know the nature of God and have the love of God in order to reveal the security of our salvation. Then we will learn to trust God and not remember the bad things people do to us or say about us. This is based upon Jeremiah 50:20, which states that neither Israel's iniquities nor Judah's sins can be found. We don't remember a bad thing about anyone because we have God's righteousness. We are hid with Christ in God. We are complete and seated above with the Lord.

Chapter Two

CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S IMAGE

“They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” (Psalm 84:7).

“Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11:34).

I had just come home from a basketball game one day when my first wife met me at the door crying.

“I saw the doctor today,” she sobbed and fell into my arms. “My leukemia came back and I only have one month to live.”

My first response was to cry out, “No, no, no!”

I just felt as though I would faint, and the pain got worse and worse.

It was then that God whispered to my heart,

“You had better get to know Me and the power of My resurrection. In the fellowship of My sufferings, let Me conform you to My image.”

I had to get to know God in degrees, going from faith to faith to please Him. I had to get to know Him from glory to glory in order to reflect Him. And, I had to get to know Him from strength to strength to grow to be like Him. The only thing that got me through any of my trials was faith in God. It is the same for you. God says, “Only believe.”

Only Believe

We must keep right on trusting the Master. He is the Lord over sin. He is the Lord over death. He is the Lord over disease. He is the Lord over the grave. He is Lord over Satan.

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very

works' sake" (John 14:9-11).

How many times did Jesus speak of faith? *No faith, little faith, mighty faith, great faith*—the Lord addressed these kinds of faith during His time on earth. I don't know what will happen to us, but I know we can keep right on pleasing God with our faith as we keep growing in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In the sense of God's perfect plan, all of His promises are *yea and amen* (2 Corinthians 1:20). When we really get to know Him, we will understand that in the final analysis, not one of God's promises will ever fall to the ground (1 Kings 8:56).

Trust God

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Psalm 62:5).

As a young believer, God impressed my heart with a vision of what He was going to do in our ministry. I wasn't a pastor—I wasn't even a Sunday school teacher. But I believed God when He said I would be part of a ministry that would go into all the world to preach the Gospel, a ministry that would pioneer in radio and television ministry.

I told my pastor what God had shown me,

and he just stayed very quiet. He never answered me—never even looked at me. He just kept driving the car. Then, he preached a sermon to our little church of sixteen members, saying, “There are people who get crazy over thinking what they are going to do for God.”

Well, I was just crazy enough to believe God. I didn’t know enough not to trust God. That’s just the way I was and that is the way I am today. When I was in sales, my superintendent told me this: “You are a good salesman because you don’t know any better! You don’t know enough to be afraid to knock on the next door. You just go and do it anyway. You don’t know enough to fail.”

There are so many areas in which I may not please God. I am not the strongest Christian in the world, but I can please Him with my faith in what He says, in who He is, and in what He has promised. Every time I love an enemy by praying for him to succeed and by really loving him in spite of what He has done against me, I please God. Every time I can forgive and forget something someone has done to hurt me and I really care about his soul, I please God.

If I can please God with my faith, then I can also, by the grace of God, grow in the midst of

pressures and trials. I can grow and serve others with a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6).

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF CORPORATE FAITH

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).

Corporate faith does such great things for us. When we become members in particular of a local assembly, we care for others and not just ourselves. We love each other; we pray for each other. We lay down our lives for each other. It helps us to get to know Jesus Christ by degrees of faith, degrees of glory, and degrees of divine strength—His strength that grows in the midst of our weakness.

We have learned obedience. We do things for

truth's sake (1 John 2:3). We forgive for Christ's sake (Ephesians 4:32). We do things for the sake of the Word and for the sake of love. The motive behind everything we do is the love of the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Word of God. Through God's grace and the Holy Spirit's power, we forgive for Christ's sake and we obey God for truth's sake.

Being There for the Body's Sake

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

As Christians, we also learn to do things for the Body's sake. Even if it means suffering, we suffer for the Body's sake. Each of us enters into the corporate body of Christ as a member in particular.

As an international ministry, we schedule conferences and seminars in several countries every year. Many of our friends live in countries where the economy prevents them from being able to travel to the United States. So, when we go to their home churches, everyone plans weeks in advance to be there. They come to every service and rap session, and they do not

take those times for granted. They come for the Body's sake, for the Word's sake, for love's sake.

For the Body's sake and for the sake of obedience, take a stand to assemble yourselves together often. Years ago, some family members visited me on a Sunday afternoon. They did not want to attend church, and I had to tell them, "I am glad to see you, but I am going to church. Right after the service is over, we'll be back to take you out to dinner."

"Fine," they said, and we had a wonderful time together.

What is more, I was a testimony of obedience to Jesus Christ instead of being sentimental.

The Victory of Obedience

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:

but I will maintain mine own ways before him” (Job 13:15).

The apostles left all to follow Jesus in obedience. If they left all, I think you and I can leave our family for an hour and a half to attend church. Don't be held back by sentimentality and ignorance. Think on the Scriptures and be obedient to God.

Men have given their lives to preserve the Word of God. Many have died to protect our individual freedom so we can read the Bible, study it, and hear it preached. Great men had such a quality of faith that they trusted Christ while they faced death. The apostle Paul could say to Nero (who blamed him and Christians for the burning of Rome), “I wish I had another life to give.” Thomas, as he was put to death in India, declared, “I cannot believe He would let me die for His sake.” This came from the man who, though he walked with Him, had doubted Jesus' resurrection.

When we begin to grow in faith, God gives a vision, and we trust Him for that vision. We grow and grow, pray and pray. We trust God and see Him honor our faith. He may make us wait a while, but we will see God honoring our faith (Hebrews 10:35).

“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

“For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith” (Mark 11:22-23).

Sometimes we have need of patience to receive His promise. Still, He will bring us to the place where we can completely trust Him for everything. It does take time and there will be moments when we will need to rebound.

Ultimately, we will grow to the place where corporately and individually we just have faith in God and trust Him for whatever we go through.

CONCLUSION

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest wage a good warfare;

“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

Don't ever let Satan make a shipwreck of your faith. Don't let the devil cause your faith to sink in your marriage. Don't let him destroy your faith as you serve God. Don't let him disrupt your faith to be a godly friend to people.

Walk in obedience, one little step at a time. Obey God about soul winning by just passing out that tract or by knocking on one door in an inner city neighborhood. Obey God as a member in particular by attending all the church services. Go whenever you can get there. Do these things and then watch as God develops the degrees of your faith.

The Lord conforms us to the image of Christ as we grow in degrees of knowing Him by faith. In suffering and in obedience, in His nature and in His truth, in relationships and in conflicts, just get to know God. That is what counts.

I thank God for the strength I have seen in so many believers. I thank God for their believing and obedient hearts. Keep it up! Go from faith to faith, and allow God's righteousness to be revealed through you.