



Sunday, August 2, 2020
Pastor Doug Phillips

Intro to Knowing God

J.I. Packer opens one of the chapters in his book, *Knowing God*, in this way...

“What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the ‘eternal life’ that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. ‘This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent’ (John 17:3).

“What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God. ‘This is what the LORD says, ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me’” (Jer. 9:23-24)...

“In these few sentences we have said a very great deal. Our point is one to which every Christian heart will warm, though the person whose religion is merely formal will not be moved by it. (And by this very fact his unregenerate state may be known.) What we have said provides at once a foundation, shape and goal for our lives, plus a principle of priorities and a scale of values.

“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.”

In so much of our evangelism, we talk about Christianity not being a “religion” but a “relationship.” Although there are things in that sentiment that should rightly be disputed, we betray ourselves further when we reckon that so much of our Christian life fails to engage with God in a relational way. We merely go through the forms of Christianity without experiencing the substance—knowing God and knowing Christ.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read John 17:3

“Truly Knowing the One True God”

Key Question: What does it mean to become and to be a Christian?

Key Ideas

- 1) Eternal life amounts to knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (Jer. 9:23-24).
- 2) The key distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is that all of God’s people will know Him (Jer. 31:31-34).
- 3) Knowing God by knowing Christ is an intimate, all-encompassing, on-going, covenantal, experiential relationship based on Christ’s saving work brought about by the word of God blessed by the Spirit of God.
- 4) If we are really going to know God in a life-changing way, we have to have sufficient exposure to God’s word (John 14:9; 1 John 1:1-3).
- 5) To know Him is to love Him—His attributes, ways, works.

- 6) Reasons people “get religion” or “get spirituality”
 - a. To be part of a cause (something bigger than themselves)
 - b. To serve (and receive affirmation for serving)
 - c. To build a spiritual empire (a platform, a following, a cult of personality)
 - d. To secure God’s blessing for various life goals (raising children, starting a business, etc.)
 - e. To have deep spiritual experiences (“the feels”)
- 7) If our Christianity isn’t transforming us into obedient servants who know and love God, it might not be the real thing (Matt. 7:21).
- 8) We don’t want spiritual placebo
 - a. “Concertization” of music in church
 - b. Sermons that are “TED talks with a Bible verse”
- 9) When we pursue something as “ultimate” that is not the one true God, we are pursuing broken cisterns (Jer. 2:13).

Key Quotes

“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” – Augustine

“My imagination exceeds my obedience.” – C.S. Lewis

Discuss

- 1) When did you realize that knowing God is at the heart of Christianity? How did you become aware of that?
- 2) Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. Why do you think we are so willing to boast in/settle for lesser goods (the “reasons people get religion”)?
- 3) How is your “Bible intake” (reading, listening to sermons, reading books that reflect on God’s word) going since the lockdowns started?
- 4) Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13. How closely does your relationship to God resemble what’s described here?
- 5) How can we encourage each other to keep seeking to know God more deeply?