

“...that I May *KNOW* Him...” Phil. 3:9-10

Light on the Rock
by Philip Shields

Abstract: What is your most important life goal? Jesus calls it the very definition of eternal life (John 17:3). Paul called it his life goal. Many speak of “knowing the Lord”, and yet Jesus warned He may say He doesn’t know them. Find out more about this topic, so timely with the Passover season.

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What is your most important goal in life? Are you on target with that goal? Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ. This is Philip Shields. We’re in the Passover Season 2006 right now, and there could be no more vital topic to understand deeply than this one. I only wish I myself could definitively say I know that I know this topic, and that I’m perfectly on target with it.... but, I’m a long ways from being able to say that. But -- we’re on the way. I want to help you be sure you’re on the way too.

John 17:1-3 “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 ***And this is eternal life, that they may KNOW You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***”

So this is why we need this message, and why we need to know God: there is no eternal life without knowing God. Jesus defines *eternal life* as *knowing* God the Father *and Jesus* whom the Father sent to us. He should know. *For in Jesus is eternal life*, according to **John 1:4**. ***There could be no more important topic than this, especially with the Passover season upon us.***

Surely we’d all agree that even just knowing other humans – like your wife or husband, or your own children – is a lifelong series of discoveries. How many brides who thought they knew their fiancé, regret later that they didn’t know this or that about them when they married them? Or on the bright side, how many of us in successful and happy marriages find it so interesting to discovery something new and interesting about our loved ones – whether positive or whether not so positive traits.

How much more is that true of God, and of our Savior, of whom it is said there are *unsearchable riches* (***Ephesians 3:8***) and His way past finding out? No wonder Peter says in **2 Pet. 3:18** we are to “*GROW in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*”. We are to know Christ better today than we did yesterday. Can you and I say that?

Even in the Old Testament God Himself tells us what really excites Him when He considers where we’re putting our efforts:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:
24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”

We’re coming up to the Passover season and recognizing the Body of Christ. I hope to complete many sermons in the next few weeks that will speak on these subjects. ***Please be sure to check out our website for other pre-Passover messages in March-April 2004, 2005. Lots of material there, especially if you haven’t heard them before. But good review, even if you have.***

****Isn’t it good to “know the Lord”?** That’s a fairly common expression – and yet more important than we may initially realize. What does it mean to know God? Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:21 that we can’t come to know God by trying to figure it out, by worldly wisdom. Jesus says in John 17:25 the world does not know God. So knowing God is not a given, it is not so simple as the simple equations so some ministers glibly put out there, as I’ll show by God’s word today. ***But nothing is more important to you and me than knowing that God knows us as His.***

I pray you will give it your full attention and pray God opens your heart and mind to what you are about to hear. Jesus says in many places that in the end time, people who are waiting for him will call out to him, “Lord, Lord” – and He will say He doesn’t know them (Matt 25:13). It would be a scary thing to think you know just to find out He says He doesn’t know you – or me.

But when someone begins to come to know God and His Son, when a Seeker of God finds God, when a sinner has his or her personal one-on-one, face to face with His Savior - - and when we accept the Passover Lamb of God with all our heart -- *then that sinner’s life is truly about to change in a profound way.* There comes an indescribable joy and peace at the end of the experience, when each of us has our own encounter with the Great and Awesome God.

You can read of this joy in the story of Zaccheus in Luke 19:1-9 and the profound joy he felt.

- in the story of the blind man healed and came and worshiped Jesus.
- in the story of the Samaritan woman at the Well and how she forgot what she had come for (John 4)

Many others also heard Jesus, also witnessed miracles – but many of them left him (John 6) and some even killed Him. So this face-to-face I speak of is the personal encounter, the event in your life, when God has you come before Him and you confess Him as your King, Master and Savior.

Relationships take nurturing – or they “go south” on us. You can know someone pretty well today – but if we don’t nurture the relationship, we grow apart. Our relationship with God is no different. You can come to know God better than you do today – and it’s entirely possible that you once knew God better in years past than you do today. I’m not at all sure that all who claim to be God’s people have really had their one-on-one with God.

Would you agree that if we could say anyone “knew” their Savior, it was the apostle Paul? Paul had a very personal confrontation with Jesus on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9**). Now please be turning to **Philippians 3**. Paul saw the bright light, he heard the voice of God, he was converted and became the best known proponent of Jesus in the New Testament. Paul spread the gospel of the Kingdom and the good news of what Christ is all about, all over what is now Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Israel and Syria. He started church after church after church as he *spent his life* in the service of his Master. Paul was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, persecuted, jailed and finally beheaded for his Savior. You know what Paul said? Turn please to Philippians 3. It was more than mouthing the words, like some do, of their “sweet Jesus”. Much more.

Philippians 3:7-14 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 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, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Did we catch that? “THAT I MAY gain Christ...that I MAY be found in Him...that I MAY know Him...” Hence the title of the sermon today. Hardly sounds like the words of someone glibly saying he’s attained those goals! Now verse 12. It’s a lifelong QUEST. And as a “by the way” – he adds “and the POWER of His resurrection”. We need to also be emphasizing the meaning behind the Feast of the Wave Sheaf, it was a definite feast day, and its meaning. More on that in sermons coming up.

12 **“NOT that I have *already* attained [that goal], or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that** for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 **Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended;** but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

I hope you get what Paul’s teaching us. His lifelong passion was to *know* his Savior, and he humbly tells us all, “folks, I haven’t attained that goal yet. Can you and I admit the same?

Can we Know the Head of the Body – while shunning parts of His Body?

At this point, I want to just toss in this important concept for us to be mulling over now and as we go through this sermon. We’ll evaluate it in much more depth later in the next sermon:

Is it not true, that many Christians focus on knowing Christ, the Head of the body – but are rejecting some parts of Christ’s body? There are people of God who feel they have nowhere to go. There are people of God who have been shunned by organized groups and churches. There are denominations which are practically *at war* with other Christian denominations – sometimes even within the same overall beliefs and theology as each other!

How can that be? How will we ever come to know God and Christ, and reject His body? Do you really think that your band of few believers in your little denomination – or big denomination – is the only place God is working? Beware lest you are denying Christ unawares, by denying His body. The body of Christ is His people, the church. You can see that plainly in 1 Cor. 12 especially.

We’ll go into more depth on that later. But let that be in your subconscious at least we talk about knowing God. Jesus says in several places He takes personally how we treat even the least of these His brethren. And that’s why He asked Paul, on the way to Damascus, “Saul, why do you persecute ME?” The Head, Jesus, took personally the insults, arrests, beatings and murders Paul was committing against the body of Christ.

KNOWING CHRIST IS THE ULTIMATE IN INTIMACY

How intimately does Jesus want us to know Him? The answer is in understanding the Biblical meaning of the word “know” and also in the concept of “becoming one”. It is first used in **Genesis 4:1**, when it says Adam “knew” His wife Eve – meaning an intimate union so close that one was literally *inside* the other in marital love. This “knowing” each other resulted in children. This knowing, this union, made their two bodies once again one. Remember Eve was built from the body of Adam. She was not independently built from the dust of the ground outside the garden, as Adam had

been. No, she was now in the garden, and from the blood and bones of Adam – hence he said, “She is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.”. Adam was a type of Christ.

I’ve read in other sermons – **Ephesians 5:29-32** – that we are now members of Christ’s body, and we are to become ONE with Him, as much as a husband and wife are one in sexual union! Then Paul concludes in **verse 32** by saying he’s not really even talking about a man and wife – *but about Christ and the church! Perhaps you should pause the tape and read that passage again.*

When we know God, we become HIS – and He becomes ours. We become two – in One.

To KNOW someone, especially God, means much more than just knowing His name. To “know God” means to be intimate with God. It’s becoming totally one with Him. It means knowing what He’s like, what He is, what He stands for. What His purpose is. Where He lives and what His goals and purposes are. And since we’re talking about God, is it becoming clearer how impossible it is to be able to ever say – you have come to know all there is to know about God? Impossible. But we can *grow* in our knowing of God.

In any case, sexual *union was considered the ultimate in physical and emotional intimacy*, and the Bible – quite frankly – was very blunt about what was going on. The Bible says in sexual and marital union, that the man “*went in to*” the woman. Very literal. God’s no prude. God is not puritanical or shy about what He created to be a beautiful act to be reserved only for holy matrimony, when each would commit to each other this sacred union of oneness, which represents our oneness with God.

Ruth 4:13 – “Boaz *went in to* her (Ruth) .. and she bore a son”

2 Sam 12:24-- David “*went in to* Bathsheba and lay with her and she bore a son, Solomon

Matt. 1:24-25 – Joseph did *not know* his wife until she had given birth to Jesus

I’m only saying that there is no other expression used so graphically in the Bible to demonstrate the closeness, the oneness that we are to have in Christ. **We are so close that we are actually considered a part of His body – just as Eve was a part of Adam’s body.**

With that in mind, read **1 Corinthians 12** again some time – about the body of Christ having hands, feet, eyes, and so forth. Some of us are hands, feet, ankles, knees. Some of us are what *people*, at least, consider the “uncomely parts”. I’m sure I’m one of the “uncomely parts”, perhaps the arm pit of Christ’s body, for example, if not even lower down. If so, by God’s grace I will be the best arm pit for the body of Christ that Christ can help me be. Maybe the arm pit is too high up. I don’t care what body part I am in the Body of Christ, as long as I’m part of His holy body. Sometimes we’re embarrassed by our smelly armpit, but hey – it’s still a part, is it not? If I’m the arm pit, I hope you’ll accept me.

OK, so far we’ve seen that:

- coming to know God is **what eternal life is** all about (**John 17:3**)
- its also what God tells us **He delights in** – rather than having riches or glory (**Jer. 9:23-24**)
- its going to be **a lifelong quest**. Paul himself, years after his conversion, says he had not yet attained that goal, but it was his all-consuming passion: “that I may know Him” (**Phil 3:10**).
- **We can’t come to know just the Head of the Body – but then treat certain parts of Christ’s body with disdain.** Rather it is IN CHRIST that we – different as we can possibly be from one another – can still become ONE in Christ. No more Jew, no more Gentile – but now one. I wonder if we can even come to know the Head – without knowing the Head together, as one. Selah. That means, pause. Think about it.
- *To know Someone Biblically – is the ultimate in intimacy, oneness and closeness.*

SOME STEPS TO COME TO KNOW GOD AND CHRIST

God has to first Invite us to Know Him – and we must accept the Invitation

There is a revealed sequence to knowing God and Jesus, according to scripture.
First the Father calls us to Jesus Christ, who is the door to His House, which is the Church.

John 6:65 “And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one *can* come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

John 6:44 “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...*”
And then verse 45 – then those who have learned from the Father **DO** come to Jesus.

Matthew 11:27 “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and **no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**”

So here’s the process: God the Father personally selects who will be called at this time – unlike the belief of many that if someone isn’t called and converted today, they’re lost forever. He then alerts Jesus of His picks, and then Jesus begins to work with the person by the Holy spirit. When we respond to God’s call, Jesus’ job description then includes that of introducing us to Father, our God of love.

What an honor that God in the Highest personally chose you to be allowed to come to know Him – let that sink in -- then God asks Jesus to work with us – and then Jesus in turn, as the Revelator, takes us to Father to get to know Him. *You’ve* been called to become the Bride of the King, to be kings and priests, and one proclaiming His praises (**Rev. 1:5-6**).

In **John 17:25** Jesus thanks Father in heaven for those He had sent to Him, Jesus, so that Jesus in turn can lead them to know Father. Jesus calls himself “**the WAY**” (**John 14:6**) and there is **NO** other name or means under heaven given by which we can know God except through Jesus (**Acts 4:12**).

So what do we do? Read Romans 10:9-11. We humbly acknowledge and confess with our mouths our need for a Savior. Then we ask with deep faith and belief for the risen Jesus to save us, and we bow before Him as our new Lord, who has dominion over our lives. ***We then ask King Jesus to reveal to us the Father and to take us with Him boldly before God’s mercy seat, the throne of Grace*** and help us to come know our heavenly Abba. Our wonderful big Brother will gladly do that. We can come confidently now, because we’re coming before Abba, our heavenly God and Father, in Jesus’ name; we’re coming boldly to God, for *we are now in Christ Himself*. All the promises made to Christ, now pertain also to Christ’s body, the Church: to you and to me.

I’ll say more about being “in Christ” in a future sermon. It’s rich, it’s deep, it’s moving and meaningful beyond belief.

If we do these things, we’ll have started on the path to knowing our God (**Rom. 10:9-11**). *But it’s just a start. **Knowing God becomes a lifelong quest**, as we discover a few of His unsearchable riches one at a time.*

But our hearts have to be in it! Remember Jesus’ words: “In vain do they worship me... and their heart is far from Me.” *It’s our heart that is often missing in the equation.* We go to church, we fall asleep, we’ve lost much of our passion for God. We’ve traded “religion” for really knowing God.

You’ve been invited to be the Bride of Christ; to be in the great Wedding of the King of Kings so we can work hand in hand with our Husband in restoring the world to righteousness at His return.

Will you accept the call – and now follow Christ, or will you make excuses why it’s not a convenient time for you? Remember all the excuses of those bidden to the wedding – and who rejected the call? Don’t turn your calling down! (**Matthew 22:1-14**).

We have to respond to God’s invitation. It is RSVP, if you will. *Many* are called, *few* are chosen. Don’t take lightly your personal calling from the Father.

NEXT STEP: REPENT OF WHAT YOU ARE AND OF YOUR SINS; ACCEPT GOD’S PASSOVER LAMB AND ASK FORGIVENESS OF GOD

Coming to Christ starts with accepting His forgiveness; Knowing Him as the Passover Lamb of GOD who died for us. It starts with a deep repentance, recognizing what we ARE without Christ.

Why did the Word, God in the flesh, have to die? We know innocent blood had to be shed to pay the penalty for us – but beyond that, what’s another reason?

Because we won’t value our calling as much unless we understand what it cost God to have a family. When something is expensive – we may value it more. Our forgiveness cost the life of sinless God.

When we grasp some of that, our life changes. We take that very seriously now and do not live in a way that shows a disregard for what price was paid for our forgiveness. We now become debtors to live according to The Way – the new life of a new creation in Christ.

Please do not listen to the damnable lies of false ministers who tell you that “since God could not die, God did not die, and so therefore Jesus could not have been God in the flesh when He died for us.” **It is the spirit of antichrist to preach that the son of God, who was God (John 1:1), has not come in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7) or, any version that says God did not die for us.**

If Jesus was not God on earth, then His perfect life would be worth only one other life – and He could not have died for *all* of us. And that would mean we would all still be in our sins.

If Jesus was merely a man on earth – who lived perfectly – then why couldn’t another man or woman also live perfectly? The fact is, mere man cannot live perfectly and that is why we need Jesus and His righteous life for us.

If Jesus was not God on earth, then it would have been a sin for Jesus to have allowed Himself to be worshiped, which He clearly allowed on many occasions. Only GOD can be worshiped without it being sin. One example of many – **Matt. 14:33**.

When Jesus died on earth, God in heaven was still very much alive! *So YES – in Jesus, God died for us. In the Father, we had God’s life continuing on in heaven through the Father and by the Father* Jesus was raised from the dead.

This sequence of steps in **approaching God is also shown in the Tabernacle of God** in the wilderness. First you had the one entrance – which represented Christ. Then the first article you’d see was the altar where lambs and bulls were sacrificed, depicting Christ. That brought you closer to the Holy of Holies.

After repentance comes baptism and our washing by the word pictured by the LAVER – the bronzed washing area - made of women’s mirrors – where we see ourselves and wash the dirt we see remaining in our lives. Only priests could wash in the laver, but we are in the New Covenant all priests of God.

NEXT STEP IN COMING TO KNOW GOD: We must FORGIVE OTHERS.

We cannot go further in our quest to know God, unless and until we forgive others, as Christ forgives us. I suggest you listen to my sermon on “forgiving others as Christ forgives us” (March 2004) this Passover season. It goes in –depth into what it means: “*as Christ forgives us*”. We cannot have our prayers answered, we cannot receive mercy – unless we are merciful to others we feel we have reason to despise and shun.

Those who shun and won’t forgive their brothers and sisters – do not know God. God is not in them, God will not know them, and God will not put up brothers and sisters in His family who don’t get along in unity and love.

Brothers and sisters, I hope you heard that. You can read **1 John 4:8-19** and so many passages that teach what I just said. Let me read to you a few more, and just jot down the verses, for time’s sake.

James 2:13 “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Matt 5:7 “Blessed are the merciful, For *they* shall obtain mercy.”

Matt 6:15 “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” - similar in Matthew 18:35.

God wants us to know Him as a God of mercy, lovingkindness (**Jer. 9:24**). God sees us as His children *when we act like He acts*, in kindness and forgiveness and loving mercy (**Matt. 5:46-48**).

We cannot claim to know or love God – without loving God’s children. IS THAT the state of God’s children right now?

1 John 4:8-9, 11, 20-21 “**He who does not love does not know God**, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.”

Verse 11: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

v. 20-21: “*If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar*; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: **that he who loves God must love his brother also.**”

Some people who claim to know God can’t even seem to love their own wife or husband. How can that be? We cannot claim to know God and not love our brother and sister in Christ. *Some won’t fellowship with a brother who attends with a different group.* Or someone they heard had some horrible sins many years ago. They won’t forgive and let him start over, even though those sins are not being practiced any longer. *An unforgiving person does not know God.* They just can’t!

Remember what Jesus taught? He said God’s children will live like God lives; will act like God acts. They will bless those who curse them. They will love those who hate them. They will forgive those who hurt them. And in so doing, prove they are God’s children (**Matthew 5:44-48**) and show they really do know God.

Another step in coming to Know God: ACCEPTING THE LIFE OF CHRIST RISEN FOR US

We are the early spiritual harvest, pictured by the early spring barley harvest, with Christ as the firstfruit. We become a new creation in Christ (I have a sermon: New Creation).

A new creation is a life that has never been before. **2 Cor 5:15-17** – We are a new creation in Christ.

The powerful picture of the Wavesheaf, cut down on Saturday at sunset, and presented – raised up to – God in heaven, picturing Christ the firstfruit of the harvest. He is risen. His righteousness is now offered to us *for* us, for we do not want to even try to stand before God in our *own* righteousness.

I love the way Paul says it:

Philippians 3:9-10 “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....”

You’ll see in a few minutes, however, that even though we do not stand before God in our own righteousness, it does not mean we are not to obey God’s way, God’s laws. It just means that we accept our efforts will always fall short of the mark, so we are now clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But we DO walk a new way – pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread.

We now continue closer into God’s presence into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle – where there is the light of the **menorah** lampstand picturing Christ the light of the world; there is the **unleavened bread** on the table picturing Christ, the Bread from heaven on which we feed; and the altar of **incense** – the prayers of the saints that are a sweet smelling perfume to God. I speak of the tabernacle – which was a type of the reality. The reality is US and CHRIST – WE are the TEMPLE of God today. *It all helps us to see Jesus and how He brings us to Father and Mercy Seat, boldly, in Jesus’ name!*

Remember the verse we read earlier – that “no one knows the Father except the Son, AND those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” When we become “in Christ” – and that is possible only through the resurrection - - we indeed now can come to know Father.

ANOTHER STEP: WE MUST A LOT OF CONSISTENT TIME WITH THE ONE WE HOPE TO KNOW; WE MUST BE SEEKERS.

Having accepted Christ as Savior, we can now continue into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies through the veil, which was the flesh of Christ (**Heb.10:20**) torn in our behalf. Christ has already entered through that veil for us (**Hebrews 6:19**) in our behalf.

Since we have such an High Priest – who is our Advocate – we now can come all the way into the very presence of God, stand on holy ground, coming boldly to the **Mercy Seat**, the throne of Grace, over which is the Shekinah glory of the Presence of God and we praise and worship (Heb. 4:15-16). Remember the covering of the ark, above the law of God, was the solid gold Mercy Seat of grace. Mercy triumphs over justice (**James 2:13**)

How can we seek God? There are many ways, but one way is through His Word, diligently. Hear my sermon on Manna – eating of God’s word every single day, especially if you are not now studying God’s word every single day. God is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently (**Heb 11:6**). David said “with my whole heart I have sought you” (**Ps. 119:10-11**) and then adds that He hides God’s word in his heart so that he wouldn’t sin.

You want to find God? He promises in Jeremiah 29:13 that we will find Him if we seek him with all our hearts! The problem with us is that too many of us are lukewarm Laodecians and the concept of doing anything spiritual with diligence is foreign to these folks!

The Ultimate Purpose of Bible study

But beware of something very crucial as we study in God’s word. The best thing is to have God’s word abiding IN us, but I want you to note the purpose of Bible study – what is it? **Write down what you think the ultimate purpose of Bible study is.**

There are many possible answers as to why we study the Word, but the ultimate purpose is only one, according to Jesus. I wonder how many of you got the right answer according to Christ:

John 5:38-40 “But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;* and these are they which **testify of Me.** 40 *But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”*

The ultimate purpose of all Bible study is to lead us to Christ! *It’s to lead us to see Jesus in everything we read of in the scriptures, so we can know HIM,* walk with Him, know His mind, know His way – and have Him inside of us by the Word. *Then Christ in turn helps us get to know – through the torn veil of His body -- God the Highest, our Father, in the Holy of Holies.*

If you get nothing else out of this sermon but this – that ***the main purpose of Bible study is to see and come to know Christ, and ultimately God the Father*** – you got something very vital from it.

In doing Bible study, we can come to know the *Book* inside and out, backwards and forwards, and yet never come to know its Author! We can get to where we understand all doctrine, but if we’re not careful, miss the POINT! In fact we can miss the Person! Bible study in the end is meaningless if it doesn’t lead us to our personal one-on-One encounter with its Holy Author.**

I’m sure Paul knew the scriptures as a leading Pharisee. But he missed the point, until Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Let’s learn from that.

Time must be spent with anyone we hope to get closer to, to know better, to understand – whether our own children, our spouse, our friends, our enemies, anyone we want to get to know better.

God is no different.

Often, the best times are the QUIET times before God. Even your spouse: the best times are times sometimes when nothing is said; just quiet time together watching a sunset, or a deer walk in the woods behind your home.

I’m learning to do that more with God. Read a verse, then sit quietly. No TV, no noise, no music, no conversation. Just quietly close my eyes and be with the Word. Sometimes I’m kneeling by the bed, or sitting on a stump in the woods behind our house, or watching the ducklings as I quietly sit before God, by a mountain lake a few miles away from our home. *I just let Him fill my mind with Himself.*

Most religion and most church services, in my opinion, have become too busy, too “noisy”. God revealed Himself to **Elijah** in an intimate way in a still, quiet voice. **Moses** found God in the quiet of a wilderness, as he pondered a burning bush. **Jacob** found God while meditating in the quiet of the night, and wrestled all night with God. The little boy **Samuel** – listen children – had his one-on-one with God while he was lying down quietly on his bed. **David** speaks over and over about “My soul waits in silence for God only” (**Ps. 62:1,5**) and so many psalms speak of quietness, stillness, waiting, silence.

We’re too noisy, too busy, too pushed. I am too! So at times I just say “STOP” – and make myself, discipline myself, to have peace and quiet. Sometimes it’s at 1 a.m. Whatever it takes. **We will never come to know God until we STOP, and find some quiet time with God alone. In this time alone, we invest the time with God in Bible study and prayer.** It’s something we must do consistently.

When you were courting, did you want everyone and everything else around going on? No, you wanted to focus on your sweetheart and wanted her to focus on you. Jesus is courting us – and wants us to be zealous, crazy about Him, wanting to find alone time with Him.

Jesus Himself, even as the very Son of God, often is seen rising while it is yet dark and going to a mountain top to pray, or withdrawing Himself from the crowds to be alone with His Father (**Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16**). It is so easy to put off praying, put off meditating and walking with God literally, to put off Bible study and gathering and eating our spiritual manna. We can’t keep putting it off without the casualty being the depth with which we know God. That’s been this website’s message from the start. **See also Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; John 6:15.**

SOMEONE WHO KNOWS GOD, OBEYS GOD AND GOD’S LAWS

It will be possible to claim you know the Lord, did wonderful miracles in His name, preached His name – and still not know Him. Let’s let Jesus say it:

Matthew 7:21-23 **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.** 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And **then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’** [KJV: “ye workers of iniquity”]

So please get this: Knowing Christ is more than just singing hymns together and claiming to know Him. Knowing Christ is more than just worshiping and saying “Lord, Lord” – for it was Jesus Himself who said He’ll tell those people He never knew them.

Matthew 15:7-9 “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 “These people draw near to **Me** with their *mouth*, And honor **Me** with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And *in vain they worship Me*, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

He’s not putting down GOD’S commandments - but *men’s* edicts, commands and silly rules they impose on a congregation that has no real basis in scripture.

A similar passage is found in Luke 13:23-28 where Jesus says some will claim they ate in His presence, and He’ll profess He never knew them.

Some of the most popular verses often used by people who preach coming to know Christ are the ones that say someone can’t profess Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit (**I Corinthians 12:3**), and that if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe He rose from the dead, we will be saved (**Romans 10:9**). Those verses are very real, and very meaningful, but let’s understand them.

Jesus is saying, as you bring people to Me, you are make it *clear* to them that *this union with Me will be life changing*. It will result in doing new things, *living so differently that He calls it “the Way”*. Jesus described the way to eternal life as “strait and narrow” – meaning difficult, not easy, not popular, “and few there be that find it” (**Matt 7:13-14**).

Let’s make it even bolder and plainer by more of God’s word on this:

Titus 1:16 says people can “**profess to know God, but in works they deny Him**, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

So PAUL – the one we know also champions grace – makes it *real* clear that knowing God *has* to go hand in hand with a life of obedience and good works. (**also Col. 2:6-7; Eph. 1:4-6**). Peter claimed he didn’t know Jesus – and denied Him. But we can also deny Christ by not living in a way that shows we are part of His group of people. A good sermon to hear in conjunction with this sermon is the one on “*Signs of God’s True Disciples*” I gave in May, 2004.

1 John 2:3-6 “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. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we **are in Him**. 6 **He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**”

To be fair to many other scriptures, *I want you to listen carefully to this: NEITHER IS JOHN teaching that knowing Christ will automatically happen if we practice a life of legalism!* And yet what John says is so clear – that IF WE KNOW CHRIST, WE WILL BE OBEDIENT, we will walk as He walked, as a way of life going forward, even if imperfectly.

BUT NEITHER WILL WE COME TO KNOW CHRIST THROUGH LEGALISM. David *does* say in **Psalms 119:172** “all your commandments are righteousness”, or as other translations put it, “all your commands are righteous”. So some conclude we are considered righteous by God if we could keep the commands of God. If we perfectly keep the letter of the law, we may indeed be righteous, but it’s called “the righteousness that is from the law”, rather than “the righteousness that is a free gift from God” (**Philippians 3:9**).

Remember Paul could brag – before knowing Christ – that he kept the law as well as anyone in his day and age. Here are Paul’s own words:

Philippians 3:5-6 “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**”

So even being blameless in the law will not by itself lead you into knowing Christ.

Please, please, listen carefully to what comes next. Can we stand before God in our own righteousness? Can we know God through our own righteousness? Let’s continue with what Paul says:

Philippians 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....”

Now notice that Paul wants to “be found IN HIM” – not with his own righteousness from keeping God’s law, but be found in Him by righteousness *from God* by faith.

But neither is Paul saying we don’t have to keep God’s law! There are just too many verses from Paul, Jesus, James, John and all through the Bible that say as we know Christ we MUST obey Him, we MUST obey God’s Laws. Paul said God forbid, that He should do away with the law (**Rom. 6:1, 13-19**) and then added that we are bound now to be slaves to righteousness and obedience. Read it. Paul also said that those who as a way of life break the commandments – unrepentant sinners – will not inherit the kingdom of God. (**I Cor. 6:9-11**). Paul also said the Law was holy, just and good (**Romans 7:12, 14**).

But keeping God’s laws is not what makes us initially be able to say we know God – and yet one who knows God does keep God’s laws.

Am I contradicting myself? Not at all. And the answer is crucial to really coming to know God.

Didn’t John just say in **1 John 2:3** that we know that we know God when we keep His commandments? **It’s a matter of sequence, what comes first, what comes second and so on** in the process of coming to know Jesus.

Paul is inspired to give us the sequence perfectly in Ephesians 2, and it also shows us how to know Christ and be found IN HIM. It’s a well known passage, but let’s re-read it carefully:

Ephesians 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.** 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand *that we should walk in them.*”

Did you get that?

What does he teach us here?

- we can’t save ourselves. If we could, we wouldn’t all need a savior.
- We’ve *been* saved by grace, as a GIFT of God (that’s what it says)
- We are not saved by our own works, lest we boast.

But *now notice*: once we have been granted grace, and once the righteousness of Christ is offered to us so we can stand before God blameless (**Jude 24**), we must now live, Paul says in **Eph 2:10** - a life of good works, which God “prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (good works).”

So *salvation* is by grace, and that comes first, and then it results in a life of *obedience*. We obey, listen carefully – as *evidence* of the grace and salvation we have already accepted.

And don’t forget, Paul adds in **Phil. 3:9** – we also received the righteousness of God by faith, and not our own righteousness. I want you to really study what I’m saying – fresh, with a clear mind, reading all the scriptures, regardless of how you viewed grace and the law before.

OBEDIENCE to God’s law is the *evidence* of having received grace. If someone continues to live a sinful, reckless life as their way of life, they are not God’s children. Obedience to God’s law does not give us grace or salvation. *But obedience is the way we live after we’ve been offered, and have accepted, salvation.* First we repent because we failed to keep God’s laws, then we’re offered grace and – as Paul says, the righteousness of Christ is offered to us, and Paul even says he did not want his own righteousness which was from the law. Remember Phil. 3:9?

For that matter much of the book of Romans and Galatians is all about that also.

Now here’s a problem. And the problem is 2 fold:

Too many legalists want to attain righteousness by keeping God’s law, instead of looking to the righteousness of Christ offered to us. You cannot attain salvation by keeping the law on your own. You cannot stand before God in your own filthy rags of self-righteousness.

On the other hand, **too many of those who love grace, don’t accept the fact that scripture teaches over and over that we MUST, after being offered grace, OBEY GOD**, and we must keep the commandments, as John says in 1 John 2 as evidence we really know Christ.. For now we walk as He walked..

1 John 2:3-6

“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. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we **are in Him**. 6 *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*”

But I want you who strive to attain Godliness by the law, to carefully ponder these verses:

Rom 9:30-33 “What shall we say then? That **Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the *righteousness of faith***; 31 but **Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness**. 32 **Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.** For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.”

Rom 10:3 “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”

Are you getting it? We *are* saved by faith in Christ, and accepting His grace *as well as HIS righteousness for us* – and then as Eph 2:10 says, we are to *walk in good works*. Or as John says, we are to keep the commandments, or we can’t say we know Christ.

So though I’m clearly preaching GRACE and faith in the righteousness of Christ to save us, I also am preaching this life of *grace results in a changed life*, a NEW creation, a new way of living, with moral conduct, obedient living - - or we can’t say we know Christ!

PREACHERS, please hear me: the preaching of JESUS resulted in some discomfort. I hear preachers on TV and on the radio who often preach a message of “feel good” – and at the end of the sermon, those particular preachers have not sounded any warning, have not blown any trumpet to declare the sins of the nation that has to change, and have not made the people uncomfortable with their present situation!

When **Stephen** preached, his message challenged people – and he was stoned to death **BECAUSE** he didn’t exactly make them feel good about themselves. (**ACTS 7:56-58**) but condemned their wickedness.

When **Peter** preached on Pentecost, those people were also “pricked in their hearts” and asked what they could do and Peter told them to **REPENT!** (**ACTS 2:38**).

When **PAUL** preached, there were riots! He ended up being thrown in jail, there were assassination plots and attempts, he was stoned and left for dead, and so forth. He wasn’t preaching just nicey-nice stuff and feel-good psychological baby food.

Jesus also caused a stir when He spoke: the Sermon on the Mount is not just a series of “I’m OK, You’re OK” platitudes full of kumbaya and how beautiful are all of God’s creatures! Not at all! They were amazed, for “He spoke as one having authority”. Imagine that! Jesus taught that if we even just hate a brother, we have committed murder. If we lust, we have committed adultery. We are not to worry, fret or stew. We are to loan, without hoping we ever get it back. We are to rejoice when persecuted. Jesus preached a tough message. It wasn’t about “the goodness we all have within us”.

Jesus said those who know Him will do what He says, will teach people to observe the things He taught, and so on. In another place He said “If you’re my friends, you will do whatever I command you” (**John 15:14**)

Truly knowing Christ will change us; has to change us. Knowing God means we die to the self, the old way – and commit now to obey and live to God, for *His* purpose, for His will.

Jesus became “the author of eternal salvation to all who *obey* Him” – **Hebrews 5:9**

So here’s the wrap up:

- **Knowing God is what eternal life is all about, according to Jesus**
- **The ultimate in intimacy is to know God**
- **knowing God and His unsearchable riches must become our lifelong goal**
- **“knowing God” is more than using His name, or claiming to worship Him**

- We can’t claim to know the Head of the Body while shunning parts of His body – we keep in touch, we call, write, love, pray for brethren not part of the group you attend with. We’ll talk a **WHOLE** lot more about that next time.
- There are definite steps toward knowing God – including:
 - accepting His invitation to know Him; telling God we **WANT** to know Him and we accept Jesus as Lord
 - accepting the Passover Lamb of God;
 - forgiving one another so we can in turn be forgiven;
 - committing to a life of seeking Him and spending time with God
 - To know God we must accept the risen Christ, victorious in our lives
 - to know God we must spend quiet time daily with Him in prayer, study and just waiting quietly in meditative peace as we read from His word
 - Knowing God is committing to a life where Jesus has dominion as Lord over our lives – and so we obey Him and His laws. But neither can we come to know Christ by legalism.

We’ll conclude this topic with the very next sermon on: How can we know God without knowing God’s people and loving them... and all that means. What the “body of Christ” is; where the church of God is and who they are and how they should be functioning. It should be interesting.

In the meantime, I hope all of us can be fired up to go on a mission to find God, to seek Him earnestly, and then to come to **deeply know God and His Son Jesus**. *It should be our LIFELONG goal and mission. It’s the essence of eternity.* When we really start to grasp how wonderful, how positive, how loving, how awesome is this Being who has invited us to get to know Him – we surely would put a lot more diligence into it than perhaps we have so far. It is a mission that will – in the end – give us great joy and peace. Why don’t we embark on that mission together?

Please pray for me too, that I can understand more of God’s word, so I can continue to share all this with God’s children. Spread the word of the website if you find it helpful. Be preparing your heart and mind for Passover and the Spring holydays of God. God bless you all Until next time, Philip Shields saying good-bye brothers and sisters. I

