

Knowing the Real God

How can I really know God, and how do I know if I am being real or not?

Moses wanted to see God's glory (evidence of His presence) but his experience fell short of actually being allowed to see God's face. (Exodus 33: 12-23)

Job wanted to find God so that he could argue his case before Him. (Job 23: 3)

In Paul's paean of praise, in 1 Timothy 1:17, he puts his finger on the problem: *'To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only true God'* – God cannot be seen. How then can we know him, not just about? Or, as it often occurs in the Old Testament, how can we know Him and not simply know His ways?

Let's start with a more tangible example - **Knowing Me**, the Real **Mart**. How well do you really know me? Some in Brookside have known me for over 30 years, but how well you know me will depend on how much time we have spent together, how much I am prepared to disclose about myself, and how much you want to get to know me.

What is clear from the Bible is that **God wants us to know Him ... intimately**. In the Old Testament three Hebrew words are frequently used that illustrate this truth.

- **Intimacy means that you know me** (Heb. *yada*—to know deeply)

The word is used in Job 19: 14, where Job says, *'all my intimate friends detest me'*. The very people who could have helped Job feel less **alone** contributed to his isolation and misery.

More reassuringly God says, *'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you'* (Jeremiah 1: 5), and the Psalmist meditates on a God who knows our every thought, emotion and motivation. (Psalm 139: 1-4) God has always known us deeply, from our inception.

- **Intimacy means that I can know you.** (Heb. *sod*—to reveal / disclose)

More amazingly, perhaps, is that not only does God know us, He wants us to know Him: *'The Lord... takes the upright into his confidence'* (NIV) (Proverbs 3: 32), or a better translation, *'God is intimate with the upright'* (NASB). He wants to reveal Himself to us.

- **Intimacy means that you care about me.** (Heb. *sakan*—to be of use to)

Here the Bible talks of a beneficial and caring involvement – loving us enough to care for us. So in Psalm 139: 3 *'You are familiar with all my ways'* (NIV), or *'intimately acquainted with all my ways'* (NASB) the purpose, (see v.10) – in order to guide us and make us secure.

❖ **Knowing the Real God**

After finishing their Passover Meal (John 13, 14) Jesus was talking with His disciples, explaining what was about to happen. These men above all others wanted to know God better but when Jesus said, *'If you really knew me you would know my Father as well'* (John 14: 7) they were puzzled. Jesus is saying *'If you had got to know me through our on-going relationship together you will know, or will have seen, my Father as well'*. Puzzled, Phillip asked, *'Show us the Father'* (v.8). Jesus replied, *'Don't you know me, Phillip, even after such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'*.

Elsewhere Jesus told His hearers that *'no-one comes to the Father but by Me'*. If we want to know the Real God, we must experience a daily walk with Jesus, the Son of God.

Knowing the Real God

- ❖ **How we view God** will impact every aspect of our life: our Love for God, our concept of ourselves, our relationships with others, and our experience and understand of God's Word.

Our view of God will be affected by adverse circumstances in the past: so abuse; hurt; disappointment etc from family relationships or religious/church experiences; painful life events - can distort our view of God.

- ❖ **Knowing the Real God** - the evidence.

The aged apostle John wrote, *'We know that we have come to know him (i.e. Jesus) if we obey his commandments'* (1 John 2: 3). His mind would have gone back to the words of Jesus: *'If you love me, you will keep my commandments'* (John 14:15) (NASB).

How we understand these words may be influenced by our view of God: are these words a command or a promise?

Is your God an **Inspecting** God? Do you think of God as trying to catch you out, wanting to punish you for breaking the simplest of commandments or the most minor "sin"?

Is your God a **Disappointed** God? Does He look at your life at the end of each day and despair? You have failed Him again, He had such high hopes for you but you blew it today. Or perhaps you see Him as a **Distant** God, too busy looking after the universe than to have time for you and your problems: He is there but not interested in you.

Or do you know the REAL God? Forgiving, accepting, sustaining, providing, and loving.

In conclusion, meditate on where **I could benefit from experiencing more of Jesus – as:**

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| ▪ The "welcoming" Jesus | Luke 19: 5 | Zacchaeus, a despised and lonely taxman, is welcomed and accepted by Jesus. |
| ▪ The "encouraging" Jesus | Luke 22: 32 | Jesus prayed for Peter, encouraging him in his faith at a difficult time. |
| ▪ The "compassionate" Jesus | John 11: 35 | Jesus showed that God cares in times of tragedy. |
| ▪ The "embracing" Jesus | Matthew 19: 15 | Jesus' embrace is for us, His children, as it was for the children on His knee |
| ▪ The "lovingly confrontational" Jesus | John 8: 10 | Jesus does not condemn but He lovingly convicts us, to bring about change. |
| ▪ The "caring" Jesus | Matthew 17: 27 | Jesus provided the outstanding tax due: he cares about our financial need |
| ▪ The "honouring" Jesus | Matthew 15: 28 | The 'foreign' lady was publicly honoured and praised by Jesus |

A Prayer

Fill my heart, Holy Spirit, with the wonder of an embracing, celebrating Christ; may my joy and gratitude for being so loved empower my love for others. Release in me, heavenly Father, that love for others around me with the same caring initiative Make my heart especially sensitive to passing on your love to ...*(name someone God lays on your heart)*