

GROWING DEEP IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Returning to Our Roots

STUDY FIVE

Knowing God: Life's Major Pursuit

Isaiah 6:1–5; Jeremiah 9:23–24; Daniel 4:33–35

Those who get serious about knowing God find that it alters their lifestyle and changes their whole reason for living.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MANY people know God only as a caricature, not the real God. In his book, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll draws a sketch of the God you may picture.

Isn't it true, more often than not, that the God you picture in your mind is old, has a long beard—and maybe leans on a cane? Isn't that true? You picture Him standing in the North with His cheeks pushing out as He blows real hard, right? Sure you do. He wears a robe, has big toes, sandals. He's not too sure about modern things like nuclear physics . . . laser beams, and electronic computers. He's more of a kind old grandfather that is gonna be there when you need him But He's sort of losing touch.¹

Does this grandfather image of God flash through your mind sometimes? Usually, it does when we go through hard times and we wonder whether God is really able to handle our problems. Maybe He is a little out of touch, or maybe He's preoccupied with other things.

Certainly, we know facts about God. We may even be able to recall reading Bible verses that describe God as all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise. But when push comes to shove, do we know Him well enough to trust Him? Maybe not.

What would it be like to know God . . . really *know* Him? What benefits come from knowing Him? Knowing God truly can change your life, and in this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll learn how.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin by asking the Lord to reveal Himself. Perhaps this prayer captures your heart's desire.

Father, I believe that You are with me even though I can't see or hear You. "You hold my right hand," the psalmist said (Psalm 73:23). I believe that's true, but I don't always feel connected to You. I long to know You on a deeper, personal level, like I know the people closest to me, only more so. Reveal the depths of Your character and nature to me through this study. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Following the Lord was the central focus of the Israelites when they entered the promised land. Over time, however, they strayed. Through Jeremiah, God pinpointed the root cause of their waywardness: "They do not know me" (Jeremiah 9:3). The Lord confronted their misplaced priorities through Jeremiah:

*This is what the LORD says:
"Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom,
or the powerful boast in their power,
or the rich boast in their riches.
But those who boast
should boast in this alone:
that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD
who demonstrates unfailing love
and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth,
and that I delight in these things.
I, the LORD, have spoken." (Jeremiah 9:23–24)*

How can knowing God be more valuable than acquiring wisdom, power, and riches? We could list many reasons, but five stand out.



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Observation: Five Reasons for Knowing God

Read the verses under each point below more than once, linger over each key word, and ask the Lord for insight. Listening for God's voice in His Book helps you know Him more personally.

Knowing God Gives Me the Desire to Be Like Him

Read *Jeremiah 9:23–24* again in different versions. Pick your favorite version and try memorizing the verses. Reviewing this passage throughout your day will remind you what's truly important. What did the Lord say we should know about Him in 9:24? What virtues does He delight in?

How does His delight motivate you to emulate Him, like children wanting to please their father?



Searching the Scriptures Biblical Insight

The attributes of God that, to a lesser degree, we can possess as humans are called “communicable” attributes. These include qualities such as love, creativity, goodness, mercy, justice, grace, mercy, and truthfulness. Through the Spirit's sanctifying power, expressing these virtues comes more naturally to us as we are transformed into Christlikeness.



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The more I get to know God, the more I am equipped to be like Him. I discover He's holy, and I want to be holy. I discover He's in control, and I don't panic. I can calmly move through life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Knowing God Reveals the Truth about Myself

In a vision, Isaiah saw the Lord in all His splendor. What was Isaiah's immediate response, according to *Isaiah 6:1–5*?

God's glory and transcendence sets Him apart from His creation. While we delight "in the Lord's perfections" (Psalm 27:4), our imperfections cry out, "I am doomed" (Isaiah 6:5). Seeing God's glory reveals our true condition. Why was this important for Isaiah?



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What did the Lord do for Isaiah that He does for us through Christ, according to *Isaiah 6:6–7*? What did Isaiah want his readers to know about their relationship with God?



Searching the Scriptures Biblical Insight

The attributes of God that are His alone are called “incommunicable” attributes, such as glory, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, immutability, sovereignty, and transcendence. These attributes set God apart as God and cannot be shared.

When you study the Lord, you discover He's holy and you're unholy. Something occurs in the contrast that causes His character to overshadow your need. The knowledge of the Holy One equips you to change. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Knowing God Enables Me to Interpret My World

Nebuchadnezzar was king of an immense empire. His lofty position inflated his ego, and he declared his kingdom to be “a display of [his] majestic splendor” (*Daniel 4:30*). How did God humble Nebuchadnezzar in *Daniel 4:31–33*? What did God want the king to know?



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When Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses, what knowledge about God did he confess in *Daniel 4:34–35*?

When you get ahold of the knowledge of God and see that He is in charge, you don't panic every time you read the newspaper. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Knowing God Makes Me Strong and Secure

Later in his book, Daniel painted a grim picture of end times when a future world leader would rage against God's people. And yet, what did Daniel say about those “who know their God” in *Daniel 11:32*?

God is the sovereign of the universe and He's never once lost control. See the value of knowing God? See what it does to your perspective? You are calmer because the world isn't out of hand. He can take care of it. His kingdom will not fail! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Knowing God Introduces Me to the Eternal Dimension of My Existence

We arrive at the pinnacle of our list with this statement from Jesus:

And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you have sent. (John 17:3)



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“Eternal life” is more than life in heaven. *It is life with God under His rule in His kingdom—now and forevermore.* What did Jesus teach about accepting His message and believing God in *John 5:24*? When does passing from “death to life” happen?

Sum up what you’ve observed about God in these Bible passages. What do you now *know* about God’s character and how to relate to Him?



Interpretation: What Knowing God Means and Doesn't Mean

The word for “know” in the Old Testament is *yada* in Hebrew, and in the New Testament, it is *ginosko* in Greek. Both words imply relational knowledge or knowing by personal experience in addition to knowing facts.

What’s missing when we know theology but don’t know God in this richer, biblical sense?



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Recall the Lord's complaint about His people through Jeremiah, "They do not know me" (Jeremiah 9:3). What did the Lord mean?

Knowing God intellectually should lead to knowing Him relationally. Consider Paul, a top-notch theologian whose intellect deepened his relationship with God. The more truths Paul learned about God, the more mysteries he realized he couldn't fully know—the trinity, God's sovereignty, His glory, and His majesty. He exclaimed,

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! (Romans 11:33)

How does knowing God intellectually and knowing God relationally work together to help you develop a deeper personal relationship with God?



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Application: Putting Knowledge into Life

It is possible to trust God easily and naturally, just as you trust your spouse or closest friend, but we have to discard the caricatures of God and really *know* Him. Which of the five points about knowing God strikes you as most valuable? How can you orient your walk with God using this principle as a guide?

What is one attribute of God that you know by personal experience? How did you come to know God in this way?

With one voice, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, and Jesus Himself urge us to know God. If they were speaking today, what encouragement might they give you in your current circumstance?



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Let's add one more voice to the chorus. The prophet Hosea also urges you to know the Lord as your life's major pursuit. Personalize Hosea 6:3 by reading the "we/us" as "I/me" and make it your concluding prayer.

*"Oh, that [I] might know the LORD!
Let [me] press on to know him.
He will respond to [me] as surely as the arrival of dawn
or the coming of rains in early spring." (Hosea 6:3)*



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for shining Your light through my darkness and blessing my life with Your refreshing presence. I pledge myself to knowing You intimately so that trusting You becomes second nature. Help me not to depend upon my own smarts and resources, but to completely depend on Your wisdom and faithfulness. I make knowing You my major pursuit today and always. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Returning to Our Roots* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 99.

