

Discipleship

Part 5: Being Known by God (part 1)

PETER DEWITT
AGATHOS CHURCH
DECEMBER 20TH, 2015

Full Text (for reading on your own)

One Thing

David said *“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”* (Ps. 27:4) Also recall the two sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha was serving, trying to prepare some sandwiches or the like for her guests and her sister Mary simply chose to sit at the feet of Jesus. Jesus corrected Martha when she complained about her sister not helping her. *“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”* (Luke 10:41b-42) Likewise, Paul, perhaps the greatest discipleship story of all time, had given up all of his personal righteousness, all the standing he had as a Pharisee for one reason, for one thing . . . in his own words, “that I may know Him.” (Phil. 3:10) That’s the ONE THING - to know Him!

Being Honest with God

On one evening recently, and in the vein of “one thing,” I was quiet before the Lord and thinking to myself “I just want to know Him more.” With that thought, the practical desire that was particularly on my heart was that I wanted to hear Him more.

There have been seasons for me where it seems like I hear the Lord at the drop of a hat. In those seasons it almost seems that if there is any second that my mind is not occupied with something, I seem to instantaneously hear the voice of the Lord. In those seasons, Jer. 33:3 seems to be fulfilled so easily! *“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”* There have also been seasons for me where I am thinking “am I doing something wrong? . . . because I’m not hearing much!”

Now, Graham Cooke, a very well respected prophet, talks about “seasons of manifestation” and “seasons of hiddenness.” He shares that there are naturally going to be some seasons in your walk with God where God seems to be more vocal with you and some seasons where He seems to be quieter with you. It’s OK! If you are married, you probably have seen similar patterns. Sometimes my wife and I will talk late into the evening multiple nights in a row. Other times it seems like we have not “caught up” in a week or more. We’ve been around each other but have not had a particular conversation in a while. So, we’ll catch up at that point. All that say, if God is a little silent in your life, I’ve learned that you don’t necessarily need to feel like something is wrong. But, at

the same time, sometimes there might be an aspect of how you are relating to Him that you could change. So on that night recently, I was saying “Lord I want to know You more and God this is one of those seasons where it is not that I am not hearing you at all, but I am not hearing you lots . . . and I want to hear You lots!” So I was thinking those things in that moment.

Have you ever noticed that God doesn't respond to “a lot of words”? Jesus even said in Matt. 6:7 that the hypocrites are not heard by God “for their many words.” What does God respond to? Honest words. Have you noticed that? So, in that moment, as I was sitting there quietly it is almost as if I can turn that honesty “on” in my heart. I know the feeling and I can almost switch the switch and turn my open heart to God and say “O Lord...” And then that phrase will come from my heart that honestly captures what I am actually thinking about. In an instant then - it is usually like lightning - that's when He speaks! It wasn't through lots of words, it wasn't through lots of thoughts, but it was when I decided to be honest right before Him - and I don't even have to say it out loud because He knows my heart. He hears my heart and in an instant I hear Him.

“O Lord, I just want to hear you more” (said with deep honesty). And in the instant that I laid my heart before the Lord I hear Him reply to me with perfect clarity “Peter, my silence has been an invitation for you to speak.”

Going “Silent” Before God

Sometimes we go silent before God thinking we are doing Him some sort of favor or paying Him some sort of reverence. AND there is actually a place for that. Eccl. 5:1 is a great verse to know in this regard: “*Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.*” What's the sacrifice of fools? Running your mouth! Proverbs tells us that fools take joy in expressing their own opinions. The sacrifice of a fool is to run your mouth. So, draw near to what? To hear - rather than to run your mouth, rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools for they do not know that they do evil! My father has told me ever since I was a child “Peter you have two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion.” For some of us, we may need to realize that our mouth is actually the on/off switch of our ears!

So, God told me “Peter, my silence has been an invitation for you to speak.” But, before I dive into that message, which is about being known BY the Lord, I want to give the other end of this truth because there are two ditches that we can end up in. So, take Eccl. 5:1 as the other concurrent truth to hold in tension with this message about being known by God.

So Eccl. says that we need to be reverent before the Lord when we come before Him - slow to speak, quick to listen! If you found yourself in a fancy conference room with a foreign dignitary and some guy named Billy came in and started running his mouth in front of the foreign dignitary - not letting the dignitary get a word in edgewise, everyone in the room would be sitting on pins and needles feeling uncomfortable for Billy who's looking like an idiot! You may think “those are pretty strong words, Peter.” Well, Jesus said the same thing in Luke 14: when you go to feast ,don't take the

best seat because it's not real pleasant to have to be told to "go down there;" it's a lot better better to have to be told to "come up here!" There is a principle here that when you come before GOD be slow to speak, quick to listen. Don't offer the sacrifice of fools because unknowingly you might be doing evil so-to-speak. So, that's a principle.

Here's another principle that bears that out in the New Testament. Jn 4:24 tells us "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" There is a reality that if we want to worship God what we need to do is basically re-play His words to Him! The truth that He gives us in His word - that's what you want to bring back before God. We are actually worshipping God when we bring back before Him the words that He has spoken. We worship Him in spirit and in truth!

Alright, the guardrail should now be in place in your thinking before we explore the rest of this message about being known by God. When there are concurrent truths in the Kingdom, you have to hold on to both of them and run with both of them or else you can end up in trouble. For instance, grace needs coupled with the fear of the Lord! He loves me unconditionally AND He's still GOD! You take one without the other and both truths get mis-applied.

So, while Eccl. 5:1 and Jn. 4:24 are both true, is it possible that God sometimes is more interested in knowing you than He is interested in hearing you say "all the right things?" And that's what this message is about: being known BY God. The last message was about knowing God. The one thing. This message is about being known BY Him ... even if you know that when He knows you that He'll know that not everything is all quite right. "My silence has been an invitation for you to speak." He's a great conversationalist. God is a great conversationalist.

What does it Mean to be Known by God?

But what does it mean to be known by God? What's the Word say about being known by God? It is quite important when you are studying a certain topic to find everywhere in the Bible God speaks about that topic, because if you spend even just 30 minutes reading all of those scriptures, they will form a picture of the different facets of that diamond in your mind. And THEN you can think well in the Lord about that topic. When you have the well-rounded or circumspect council of scripture about a topic, it enables you to think well about that topic. Those scriptures from throughout God's word become the boards which the Holy Spirit will use to build a "house of understanding" in your mind about that certain topic. Without the raw building materials, the Holy Spirit is often unable to stand that building of understanding up in our minds. So, let's now do that about "being known by God."

Let's start with Gal. 4:7-9. Here Paul says: "*Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of[a] God through Christ. But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. **But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?***" There are two points we can glean from this scripture about being known by God. Recall

that the last message was about knowing God and this one is about being known BY God. Now, look at how verse 9 actually juxtaposes those exact two realities! *“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God.”* Apparently “knowing God and being known by God” are inseparably linked. They are right next to each other! It’s like the A and the B in the alphabet. You can say your ABC’s and perhaps not get to Z, but if you even start your ABC’s you are at least going to get to A and B. And that’s “knowing God” and “being known by Him!” While separate things, they are like conjoined twins! Knowing God and being known by Him are linked!

This section of Gal. 4 also tells us something else. Let’s look back at the word “rather” from verse 9. How we tend to use the word “rather” is to say “hey let’s meet up for dinner at 5 . . . uhhh, rather, 5:30!” We use “rather” almost to denote a point of correction. But in verse 9 when Paul says *“But now after you have known God, or **rather** are known by God”* he is not correcting himself by using the word “rather.” In fact it wouldn’t have made sense for Paul to replace “knowing God” with “being known by God” because “knowing God” is obviously a scripturally pervasive reality. So there would be no basis for Paul to “delete” that concept; and he surely did not do that here. So if Paul is not correcting himself what does “rather” mean in the original Greek? When Paul says, “rather” He is not correcting Himself. He is actually using a word that means “much the more”, or “better.” So, my translation would be something like this: *“But now after you have known God, or **better yet (rather) are known by God.**”* Wow! That word “mallon” or “rather” is a comparative word and it means “better, much the more, basically better yet.” So, I am not going to off of this one scripture say that being known by God is better than knowing Him, but we do see in this scripture that being known by God is not only very closely (almost inseparably) linked to knowing Him, but we also see that it almost deserves special emphasis and recognition - even in the elite context of the ONE THING of knowing Him! It is particularly special to be known by God! There is a special emphasis on it. Better yet! Much the more!

So, we’ve learned a couple of things so far about being known by God. Not only is being known by God particularly special, but also that knowing God and being known by Him are meant to be like 2 peas in a pod. And that makes sense because every healthy relationship we’ve been a part of is in some way a 2-way relationship.

Not being Known by God

Now let’s look at a very well known scripture about “being known by Him” - or in this case about not having “been known by Him.” We pick up in Matthew 7, towards the end of the sermon on the Mount. Jesus has just talked about false prophets and then in Mt. 7:21-23 we read *“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. 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?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”*

What's the take-away from that section of scripture? Being known by God is ESSENTIAL to salvation. When you get saved, YOU have to come to Him! You have to bring yourself to Him! You hear the truth of the gospel and you present yourself to Him; you cannot just assent to it mentally, you have to bring your heart to Him! These people Jesus was foreshadowing have to know something about Jesus . . . they were prophesying, casting out demons, and doing mighty works IN HIS NAME! They knew something about Him! (Remember the seven sons of Sceva (from Acts 19)? The demons knew Jesus, Paul, but not them! They were trying to do works in the Name of Jesus without knowing Him themselves. Just an example of this sort of thing.)

Being known by God is not only a beautiful component of salvation, but it is also a vital component of salvation! In fact, I can guarantee that some portion (even if it is a small portion) of professors of religion and/or theology throughout the world that may be able to beautifully teach a certain New Testament parable, but ARE NOT KNOWN BY GOD! There are people that can teach the Bible that are not known by God. It's a reality and it's a sad thing. For example, one time Reinhard Bonnke (a famous and powerful evangelist) was holding an event in a large indoor arena (perhaps 15-20K seats). At the end of speaking, Evangelist Bonnke gave an altar call and much to the dismay of the organizers of the event, a LARGE percentage of the priests and nuns in the audience (this was an event for Catholic clergy) raised their hands to receive salvation!

For us, as believers, we may tend to read Mt. 7 and get a bit worried thinking "I hope Jesus doesn't say that He didn't know me." Here's the thing . . . if you are worried about that, this scripture is not for you! But there are some people who know a lot about God, but God doesn't know anything about them. "Depart from Me; I never knew you."

Loving God by Being Known by Him

1 Cor. 8:1-3 says "*We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. **But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.***" When I look up scripture like this around a certain topic, about half of these scriptures I think "I don't know what that means" when I first see them. Be comfortable with that! Ask HIM! "Holy Spirit, what is that?" And then, as I have thoughts about what a certain scripture may mean, I run those thoughts against everything else that I know from the Word of God . . . because sometimes I have stupid thoughts! "I wonder if it means _____? Well, that violates this verse, that verse . . . OK DITCH THAT IDEA!" Often though, what happens is you have a thought and it's like "that's it!" And then you run that thought through the litmus test of the Word and it passes everything else you know from the Word and even make multiple other verse make more sense / come alive! That's the revelation right there then!

"*But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.*" What's the take away? We actually love God by being known by Him! You might think, how so?!? Consider the most loving grandma-type lady you've ever known and imagine you stopped over at her house to pay her a visit. You knock on her door, she prepares you a cup of tea, and you both sit down at the table. She says "honey, tell me how

you are.” Because she has so much love for you, she would actually be blessed by you simply telling her how YOU are! It will make her week that you came and told her how you are! That’s like God. “If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.” We love on God by letting Him know how we are. By letting Him know us.

Again, you may tend to think “why does that work for God - why does that register as a loving act?” It works because of His great love for us! This can be hard for us to grasp because for many of us there may be some people in our lives we just do not enjoy listening to sometimes! God is not like that! He wants to know how we are. But, do consider this . . . have you ever wondered why you often don’t enjoy hearing from some people? It’s because they are not humbly honest! They go around and around about a thing, but you are thinking “what is it about!?” Finally they may say “so basically, I have no idea what to do with my job” and all of a sudden the conversation has life for you again because the new-found influx of humility as allowed you to feel like you can help them or at least truly connect with them! It’s not different with God. Yes He is far more patient than us, but remember from before . . . when did God respond to me? It’s not through the “lot of words” it’s that moment. It’s that honest moment where your heart says “O Lord...” And God says “now, that’s a connection.” That’s communication. Vulnerability is a key to love.

Moses was known by God

So we are moving bit by bit through the palette of “being known by God” from the Word of God. Let’s look at Ex. 33:12 *Then Moses said to the Lord, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people.’ But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.’”* Moses reminds God of what God has said before. “I know you by name and you have also found grace in My sight.” So we can see from the life of Moses that being known by God is actually a platform on which God can release an increase of His grace in our life. Remember that Pastor Brad has spoke about the broadest sense of the word “grace.” After a year of seeking the Lord about the concept of grace, God spoke to him: “Grace is God’s willingness to use His power and His ability on our behalf.” Good, truth-filled definitions work and you can take that definition to the bank and reason with it!

Moses was known by God and that increased God’s willingness to use His power and His ability on Moses’ behalf! Jesus increased in favor with both God and man! How do you increase in favor? You have to be known! And of course, what God ends up knowing about you also matters too. For instance, God knew with Moses that he was the meekest man on the face of the earth. But he KNEW Moses!

Abraham was known by God

Now let’s look at Gen. 18:19 (from the life of Abraham). We see here that a pre-requisite of being a Godly leader that can leave a Godly legacy is being known by God! In this passage from Genesis 18, God says *“For I have known him (Abraham), in order that he may command his children*

and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” God is making a covenant with Abraham and He is saying “I’ve known Abraham.” Why? “So that covenant can happen.” God wants to give a legacy to Abraham and He wants him to lead His family lineage . . . and what’s one of the prerequisites to God being able to do that through Abraham? God knowing Abraham!

David and God

Let’s look at 2 Samuel 7 to catch a glimpse into the relationship that David had with God. We’re going to look at verses 20-22, but let’s first get the backdrop to those verses. In the beginning of the chapter we see David goes and tells Nathan, the prophet, “I want to build a house for the Lord.” To that Nathan says “go, do all that’s in your heart, the Lord is with you!” What a powerful verse! Then, God speaks to Nathan and gives him a follow up prophetic word for David - a promise of a covenant that God is going to make with David.

David’s response to that promise is what we are going to see starting in verse 20: “*Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord God, know Your servant.*” I know that many of us have had the experience where we’ve had a friendship or relationship in which it seems like there is nothing more you can say because they know everything about you at that moment. This is profound. David is sitting in the presence of God and he says to God “what more can I say to you? You know me perfectly.” That’s the relationship David had with God! “You know me perfectly and completely, what more can I say?” There was absolutely nothing left unsaid there.

And continuing on in verses 21 and 22, we see a 2-way street that develops because David says “*For Your word’s sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know (them).*” Take note that the word “them” at the end of that verse is not in the original Hebrew and actually in my opinion is misleading in this case. So, David is completely known by God and the 2-way-street result of that is God has been doing great things in and through David’s life so that David could know something as well! Not so David could know the great things (them), but so that David could know about God! Just like it says in verse 22 (the verse that provides the object of the knowing talked about in verse 21. Here’s what God’s work in David’s life was causing him to know: “*Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*” How beautiful that is! God knows David perfectly and then, as a result of that knowing, God is using all of His power and all of His ability on David’s behalf to establish His covenant with David - to show Himself good with David!

David is saying “God you know everything about me” and God is saying “I am doing all these great things so you know how good I am!” That’s the exchange. That’s the relationship they have. Why is God pouring all of that into David? God knew David was “*a man after His own heart.*” How did God know that David was “*a man after His own heart?*” Because God knew David’s heart! David was truly known by God!

A Follower of Christ

So Abraham, Moses, and David were all known by God and the results were profound. Being known by God is essential for salvation. And we actually love God BY letting Him know us! Knowing God and being known by Him are absolutely linked and there is a particular emphasis on the wonderful nature of being known by Him. That is some of the council from the Bible on what it means to be known by God.

One more scripture though. Jn 10:27 is simply too good to leave out of this conversation! *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* When I see a scripture like this, it looks like math to me! This is a two part addition equation. So ...

(They hear My voice) + (I know them) = They are a follower of Christ

Who's speaking here? Jesus is! He's saying "if they hear my voice and I know them, they follow me!" There are many Christians that don't like to introduce themselves as a Christian because it can mean lots of different things and sometimes not much. Because of that, some believers prefer to introduce themselves as a "follower of Christ." Here, in Jn. 10:27, is the equation for being a follower of Christ! You hear His voice, He knows you, you are following Him.

Being known by God is the other half, the cooperating partner to knowing Him! May we know Him and be known by Him!

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

David said *“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”* (Ps. 27:4) Likewise, Paul, perhaps the greatest discipleship story of all time, had given up all of his personal righteousness, all the standing he had as a Pharisee for one reason, for one thing . . . in his own words, “that I may know Him.” (Phil. 3:10) That’s the ONE THING - to know Him!

There have been seasons for me where it seems like I hear the Lord at the drop of a hat. In those seasons it almost seems that if there is any second that my mind is not occupied with something, I seem to instantaneously hear the voice of the Lord. In those seasons, Jer. 33:3 seems to be fulfilled so easily! *“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”* There have also been seasons for me where I am thinking “am I doing something wrong? . . . because I’m not hearing much!” That said, there are naturally going to be some seasons in your walk with God where God seems to be more vocal with you and some seasons where He seems to be quieter with you. It’s OK!

God doesn’t respond to “a lot of words”. God respond to honest words. Recently, Peter very honestly told the Lord “O Lord, I just want to hear you more.” And in the instant he laid his heart before the Lord he heard “my silence has been an invitation for *you* to speak.”

Sometimes we go silent before God thinking we are doing Him some sort of favor or paying Him some sort of reverence. AND there is actually a place for that. Eccl. 5:1 says that we need to be reverent before the Lord when we come before Him - slow to speak, quick to listen! Similarly Jn 4:24 tells us *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* The truth that He gives us in His word - that’s what you want to bring back before God. We are actually worshipping God when we bring back before Him the words that He has spoken. That said, is it possible that God sometimes is more interested in knowing you than He is interested in hearing you say “all the right things?” And that’s what this message is about: being known BY God. The last message was about knowing God. The one thing. This message is about being known BY Him . . . even if you know that when He knows you that He’ll know that not everything is all quite right. “My silence has been an invitation for you to speak.” God is a great conversationalist.

But what does it mean to be known by God? What’s the Word say about being known by God? Having a well-rounded or circumspect council of scripture about a topic, enables you to think well about that topic. Let’s start with Gal. 4:9. Here Paul says: ***But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God . . .*** There are two points we can glean from this scripture about being known by God. First we see that “knowing God” and “being known by Him” while separate things, they are like conjoined twins - “cut from the same cloth” and inseparably linked! In looking at the Greek of this verse, we also see that “rather” more accurately means “better or much the more.” Applying that, the translation would be something like this: ***But now after you have known God, or better yet (rather) are known by God.*** Wow! Not only is being known by God very closely

(almost inseparably) linked to knowing Him, but we also see that it almost deserves special emphasis and recognition - even in the elite context of the ONE THING of knowing Him! It is particularly special to be known by God!

In Mt. 7:21-23 we read that *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, In fact, Jesus will tell some of them “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”* Being known by God is ESSENTIAL to salvation. These people Jesus spoke of were prophesying, casting out demons, and doing mighty works IN HIS NAME! They knew something about Him! For us, as believers, we may tend to read Mt. 7 and get a bit worried thinking “I hope Jesus doesn’t say that He didn’t know me.” Here’s the thing . . . if you are worried about that, this scripture is not for you! But there are some people who know a lot about God, but God doesn’t know anything about them. “Depart from Me; I never knew you.”

1 Cor. 8:3 says ***“But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.”*** We actually love God by being known by Him! He wants to know how we are. But, do consider this . . . God responds particularly to vulnerability. It’s humility that’s the key to connection!

We can see from the life of Moses that being known by God is actually a platform on which God can release an increase of His grace in our life. Remember that Pastor Brad has shared that “grace is God’s willingness to use His power and His ability on our behalf.” Moses was known by God and that increased God’s willingness to use His power and His ability on Moses’ behalf! Jesus increased in favor with both God and man! How do you increase in favor? Step one is you have to be known! Similarly in Genesis 18:19 we see that God is making a covenant with Abraham and He is saying “I’ve known Abraham.” Why? “So that covenant can happen.” God wants to give a legacy to and what’s one of the pre-requisites to God being able to do that through Abraham? God knowing Abraham!

In 2 Samuel 7 we see David essentially tell the Lord “You know me perfectly and completely, what more can I say?” There was absolutely nothing left unsaid there. God knows David perfectly and then, as a result of that knowing, God is using all of His power and all of His ability on David’s behalf to establish His covenant with David - to show Himself good with David!

So Abraham, Moses, and David were all known by God and the results were profound. Being known by God is essential for salvation. And we actually love God BY letting Him know us! Knowing God and being known by Him are absolutely linked and there is a particular emphasis on the wonderful nature of being known by Him. That is some of the council from the Bible on what it means to be known by God.

Finally, Jesus says in Jn 10:27 *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* So . . . (They hear My voice) + (I know them) = They are a follower of Christ. This is the equation for being a follower of Christ! You hear His voice, He knows you, you are following Him. Being known by God is the other half, the cooperating partner to knowing Him! May we know Him and be known by Him!

Points to Ponder . . .

- Which scripture from this message most spoke to you or most touched your life?
- What are some scriptures that show us the “concurrent truths” of being both reverent and honest with God?
- What do Gal. 4:7-9 and Jn. 10:27 show us about the relationship between knowing God and being known by Him?
- How would you describe Mt. 7:21-23 to someone who asked you about it - what was Jesus “getting at”?
- What are some lessons that stand out to you from the lives of Moses, Abraham, and David as shown in Ex. 33, Gen. 17, 2 Sam. 7?
- What are you looking forward to knowing more about or experiencing more of concerning being known by God?