

A Call to Know Him

Introduction:

Two books which should be required reading for every believer are: “The Bubble Will Burst” by David M Newby, and “Snakes in the Temple” by David Orton. These books very clearly articulate the major issues (like inappropriate leadership concepts, manmade programmes, cultural nuances, short cuts to assist God, confusing the goal (of reaching maturity) with the prize (of nationwide revival and awakenings) and so on – all sorts of things we’re doing that we think are scriptural) which we engage in which actually hinder the growth of the church and the wide scale evangelisation of the world. The discussions presented in these two books are good and clear.

But if we really take time to see what the real underlying issue is, it is simply this: God wants to draw us to Himself to engage in an intimate love relationship, to commune with us, to reveal Himself to us, to manifest His presence in our midst. And through His manifest presence to bring about a mighty awakening in our land and the lands of the world. The mighty final harvest – the ingathering.

But the problem is the church is off doing its own thing – doing things our way, thinking we’re doing God a favour!

Instead of helping we’re hindering the advance of the Kingdom of God? Why? Because we are trying to do it our way, ignoring what Jesus clearly said, ...*“apart from Me you can do nothing.”* Nothing of eternal benefit.

John 15:5 ... *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*

Just because we are doing “good things” and doing it in Jesus name, does not mean it is “God things”

Matt 7:22-23 ... *“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’.”*

Knowing God

God desires to dwell in and with us, to commune with us and manifest His presence in our midst. He desires to draw all men to Himself. It’s not our works, or our programs, or our campaigns or our piety or anything like that which will manifest His presence; it’s something that is initiated and sustained by a personal love relationship leading to obedience. It all revolves around **knowing Him**.

Example: Army man doing his own thing:

Like an army person (who has been through basic training, got weapons, learned a few survival skills, map reading, tracking, etc) who races off full of enthusiasm, runs ahead of the pack, gun in hand to shoot terrorists or enemy without sticking to the Generals plan and does his own thing – it would be disaster. Yes you may snipe one or two but you could also be jeopardising the security of thousands and could be totally undermining the Generals strategy and his tactical plans.

So we need to clear our agendas and get back to sitting at the Masters feet and getting to know Him and His ways. And only act in obedience to what we have heard from Him.

That does not mean we just sit around all day doing nothing. No, we get on with life but with our ear attuned to the Holy Spirit.

We start the day in the “Generals” office, listening to His instructions, finding out His plans, His ways – get to know Him and how He is thinking. Know Him – pray – meditate in His Word – develop the habit of dialogue with Him. During the day whenever we have the opportunity we pop back into His office and chat some more. The rest of the time we’re on the radio listening for instructions from HQ.

Have your antennae attuned to Him. Know Him.

Knowing a person takes effort. Intimacy in relationships takes time. Just think about your courtship – it took time to get to know your partner. Then you responded to what you learned. You know what things make your partner tick and what makes them sad. You act on the things that bring them pleasure. That helps build the relationship.

Similarly it takes time to get to know your Lord. Not just finding out a few facts **about** Him, but **knowing** Him intimately, personally. The question we should ask of ourselves is:

- How well do I know Him? – He longs to reveal Himself ... do I long to know Him
- How much time do I devote to our relationship? – a matter of priorities.
- What do I do with the knowledge I have of Him? – a response of love and obedience.

The more you become entwined and one with Him, the more you are conformed to His image, the more He will release His glorious presence to be manifested in and through you.

By listening and knowing Him and obeying Him, let Jesus lead you in His triumph in every situation so the fragrant aroma of Him may be known.

2 Cor 2:14 ... *“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”*

Dan 11:32 ... *“the people that **know** their God shall be strong, and do exploits.”*

It’s through our intimate relationship with Jesus and walking in obedience to Him that we will get the job done. It’s not just knowing **about** Him. It’s knowing Him and responding accordingly.

If Jesus said, “I don’t do or say anything unless I have seen or heard it from the Father” (we find that statement in a number of places in John’s gospel) then how **much more** should we be doing the same – listening to our Lord, and then acting in obedience.

You see it’s not through our fancy church growth programs and conferences or our street evangelism plans, or by running out doing stuff for Jesus like the over keen soldier who did his own thing, that the church will be built. These things may bring some small apparent success but as David Newby says, “the bubble will burst”.

Jesus made it very clear - Jesus is building His church, not us. Jesus made this very clear in Matt 16:18. Our part is not to try to do what only He can do.

Ps 127:1 ... *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it."*

So if He is doing the building of His church, what are we to do? He gave us the answer; Jesus said, draw near to Me, learn of Me. Know Him – that's our immediate task.

John 17:3 ... *"This is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

Listen to Paul's prayers in Eph 1:15-23, Eph 3:14-19 and Col 1:9-12 **Know Him** is the heart cry.

Jas 4:8 ... *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."*

And if He pitches up on the scene – get ready for action! Things will happen! He will do what only He can do!

Practical Matters

You may say, that's all well and good but how do we get down to this practically? So let's look at the practical side.

The way to the knowledge of God is through **obedience**. Listen to Him, learn of Him and obey – do what He says. Step at a time. Whether it has to do with the conformity of your life with His or whether it has to do with actions towards others - listen and obey. He will speak through His word.

Ps 119:105 ... *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

As we take steps of obedience He lights up the next step; He shows more of Himself.

Example: Jesus:

Luke 2:52 ... *"And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."*

Heb 5:8-9 ... *"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."*

Jesus, the sinless and perfect One, grew in stature and wisdom – until He reached maturity – a fully fledged Son, a man, and was recognised as such by His Father. It was only after reaching maturity that His transfiguration took place (Matt 17:1-8). Where Divinity shone through His humanity. And just as Jesus manifested the fullness of the Father individually, so the church is destined to manifest it corporately.

- Eph 1:23 .. *"the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*
- Eph 3:19 ... *"to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."*

- Eph 4:13 ... *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”*

But for this to happen we must **“learn Christ”**. We do this through obedience to Him. Hear the Fathers words said on the mount of transfiguration: ... **“Listen to Him”** – hear what He has to say and obey – so that you can grow to full stature in Christ.

If Jesus had to grow in wisdom and stature – don’t we also need to do so? This is why Peter exhorts us to (2 Pet 3:18) ... **“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”**

Jesus “grew” and matured for 30 years before commencing His brief 3 years of ministry. We want the reverse - 3 years training for 30 years ministry!

No. All we are required to do is to do whatever it takes to get to **know** Him.

David Orton in his book, “Snakes in the Temple”, brought this matter of confusion of the “goal” with the “prize” so clearly; the goal is reaching maturity in Christ, the prize is the ingathering of the nations in the grand harvest. But we don’t want to run the full race and get to the goal in order to receive the prize – we want to take a short cut across the field and grab the prize (or we think we will get the prize, but actually will find we’re disqualified).

Just listen to some of what Paul wrote for us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

1 Cor 2:2 ... *“for I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”*

1 Cor 2:9-16 ... *“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”*

This is a call to put on the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 3:16, 23 ... *“Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” ... “and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.”*

2 Cor 3:16-18 ... *“but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

Spend time in His presence and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Be transformed from glory to glory.

Some Traps we fall into:

Repetition: God tells us to do something and then we think we have to do the same thing over and over again just because it was successful first time. Not so. Not necessarily. The important thing is to listen and obey. God calls us to one step at a time.

Example – Ananias: (Ananias the devout disciple – not Ananias and Saphira and not High Priest Ananias) who was sent to pray for Saul the marauder to regain his sight and pray for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Never hear of him again – but what a significant task. There was no repetition. A single task requiring obedience. (Imagine if God told you to go pray for the leader of ISIS because God has his number!). Ananias was attuned to God and used in this significant way. End of story. For us – all that is important is that we know Christ and are attuned to Him and ready for the service command.

Example – Jonah:

God speaks directly to Jonah – tells him to go to Nineveh and speak out against their sin. Jonah runs away. God sends a fish to swallow him, and while in the darkness of the “dungeon” readjusts Jonah’s thinking to realign with that of Gods. He then has compassion and obeys.

But who is this disobedient prophet?

2 kings 14:25 ... “He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.”

He had been a powerful and successful prophet. What he had declared came to pass.

But now he’s disobeyed and run away from God. So we learn that past success does not guarantee repeated success. Just because you were used of God mightily in the past does not mean you will not and cannot fail today. And it does not mean that what God did through you yesterday He will automatically do through you today. It’s walking attuned to Him and in obedience every day that counts. Don’t try and establish “formulas”. Don’t assume. Just trust and obey.

Don’t try and “help” God – Abraham did and an Ishmael resulted. Just obey Him. Always.

Jesus only did what He saw and heard from the Father. He carried out different ways of healing ... sometimes He waited (Lazarus death) ... sometimes did not heal (i.e. man at gate who was healed later by Peter and John).

Back To Jonah

Jonah disobeyed. If we do this God will have a “big fish” ready – and in its belly we will be set aside to reconsider things from God’s perspective!

The restoration of Jonah brought about the awakening and repentance of Nineveh. He needed to be broken, melted, moulded and filled with the love of God for the lost sinners before he could be useful to God. We have a choice – listen and obey – or undergo some discipline and learn the hard way.

Like Johan in the belly of the fish – when we are brought before God’s holiness we will have our sin and shortcomings revealed – exposed – and we have opportunity to repent - take barriers away. Holiness is the very foundation of who God is – the foundation of His nature, character and attributes – Holiness. Everything else of who God is emanates from His holiness. He will not tolerate sin in any form in His presence.

Just think about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit – we more often than not see this as a source of magical power and gifts. Power we can obtain so we can go out and perform miraculous things - of course In Jesus name! But hold on, is this not primarily a baptism into HOLINESS. Is that not the real power from which all other “power” comes. As we submit to Him and His holiness permeates our very being, His glory presence will then enter the scene – and then there will be real POWER like you just can’t imagine. Then things happen – God’s way. Seas part, blind eyes open, barren wombs conceive, seas are calmed, food is multiplied, ...

Look at some of the Minor Prophets:

Joel: (See Joel 2:11-29) The prelude and condition of the outpouring of the Spirit and great awakening (v28 -32) is the solemn assembly and returning to the Lord (v12).

Amos: (see Amos 7:8). The prelude and condition to the raising up of the fallen Booth of David and the ruins and the possession of the nations (9:11-12) is the “plumb line” of judgement against sin in the midst of God’s people (7:8-9). A call to repentance and return to the Lord.

Heb 12:10 ... *“He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.”*

The Word can only come with power to our hearers when He has come with Power to our own hearts.

God had to do a work in Jonah so that He could do a work through Jonah.

Only when the sign of Jonah is seen in the church will the true power of God be manifested and seen in the world.

Like Jonah we battle principalities and powers and spiritual forces of darkness. When we are used as instruments of God to bring light to others – the devil will attack – he will manoeuvre within the rubble of sin which is in our flesh and do his utmost to cause doubt and despair within us. He will use any means (racism, hatred, unforgiveness, indifference, piousness, religious stuff, even good works that keep us from obedient works, etc).

Like Jonah, do we care more about seeing justice come to our enemies, or do we care more about “things” and our own comforts than the lost people around us? There is no end to the story of Jonah ... you and I get to write it!

John 1:11 ... *“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”*

Church, let's not let this be true of us. The Fathers heart cry today is for us to draw near and know Him.

Thermometer vs Thermostat.

Thermometers tell you what the temperature is; thermostats set the temperature.

The question is: Are we rising and falling in sympathy with the spiritual degree of those around us, or are we setting the standard for the spiritual climate we live in?

Thermostats are change agents.

Let us allow the Lord to first bring about change in us – draw near to Him – Know Him – put on Christ – and as His presence is manifest in us, change will occur around us to His glory.

Let Paul's words be a reality in us:

Phil 3:8-10 ... *"More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing Christ Jesus** my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may **gain Christ**, and may be **found in Him** ... oh that I may **know Him** ...*

Acts 17: 28 ... *"For in Him we live, and move, and have our being."*

The question facing us today is: will we draw near to Him? Will we know Him? Will we allow Him to make us agents of change?

Finally, let us be assured and encouraged by the word of God:

2 Chr 16:9 ... *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."*