

Knowing God Intimately

Over and over throughout God's Word one hears the Father's heart cry that people would know Him and draw near to Him. He has done everything from His side of things to make this possible, now it's up to us to do our part and walk in fellowship with Him. Time is running out, soon Christ will return – for those who know Him it will be a day of great rejoicing, for all others it will be a very sad day.

Matt 24:3-14 ... *"As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.'"*

Russian troops flexing their muscle on the borders of Ukraine, devastation caused by Tsunami in Tonga, monsoon floods in India, continual friction between Israelis and Palestinians, friction between China and Australia, Covid 19 pandemic responsible for over 5.6 million deaths worldwide so far, the adverse effects of climate change, promulgation of laws that violate God's moral code, persecution of Christians in many nations, and on and on.

In short, we are living in troubled times, and according to our Lord things will get worse as we approach the time of His return. Luke 17:26 ... *"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man."*

Now let's take a closer look at some of the things Jesus said in this Matthew 24 passage. We won't elaborate on them right now, but we just need to take a moment and let these statements sink in.

V 4-5, 11 ... *"See to it (something we must do) that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." ... "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many."*

V 10 ... *"At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another."*

V 12 ... *"Because lawlessness (anything contrary to God's moral code) is increased, most people's love will grow cold."*

But just when you think it's all bad news, there are some words of encouragement

V 6 ... *"See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place."*

V 13 ... *"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."*

Now where are we going with all of this?

Well, there's one underlying key to all of this, and that is what we want to focus upon. It's the theme of this study – **knowing God**. I cannot over emphasise the importance of knowing God. Intimately, personally, knowing Him. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This is about relationship. Not rituals, places, messages or programs. Personal relationship and fellowship, learning Christ.

1 John 1:3 ... *"indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."*

Why? Why is knowing, loving and enjoying fellowship with God so important?

First and foremost, Calvary shows how much He wants your love and fellowship. Jesus took all our sin and shame upon Himself and faced the death penalty for our sin in our place, all because he loved us with an unconditional love. Now if He loved us that much, so that we could be forgiven and restored in relationship to God, don't you think we should want to enter a close relationship of love and fellowship with Him? Our deepest desire should be to intimately know Him and allow Him to transform our minds and wills to reflect Him in all our thoughts, words and actions.

Also, if we really walk in a personal and intimate relationship with our Lord and come to know our Lord we will know the truth and will not be led astray. We will be able to discern error from the truth, the false prophets from the true prophets, and we will follow the one and only true Christ. We'll be able to walk in truth and bring glory to God in all we do – living the Christ life. But only if we know Him, trust and obey Him.

Example: Bank tellers in training are *only* given genuine money to handle. In their test a few counterfeit notes are inserted, and they can immediately pick them out because they have learned to know the 'feel' and 'look' of the genuine ones.

You will be able to discern error from truth **only** if you intimately know the One who is the Truth. Our Lord warned us that through a lack of knowing Him we may well be misled, fall away, betray others, and our love for Him grow cold. We will do well to heed His warning.

Don't just suck in everything you hear without searching the scriptures, be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who ... *"received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."* Remember Jesus said (Matt 24:4) ... **"See to it that no one misleads you."**

Good preaching and teaching is valuable, but don't be satisfied to be "spoon fed" by listening only to preachers, but dig into the Word (the Truth) for yourself, learn to hear the voice of the Spirit of Truth as He opens His word to you and reveals more and more of Himself and His will and purpose to you. Get to Know His voice. Jesus said, *"My sheep know my voice"*. Do you know His voice? Whose voice are you listening to? Do you know the difference between other voices and His?

Just before His crucifixion Christ prayed the most important prayer ever. It is recorded in John 17.

John 17:1-3 ... *"Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; **glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You**, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

He goes on later in that prayer to talk about how that ‘knowing’ Him is all about becoming one with Him. The eternal life, the God-given life, the indestructible, holy, pure, glorious life of Christ birthed in us when we are born again, is centred in, or focused on, knowing God and living out of, and consistent with, that revelation of Him, His will, His desires and His eternal plan and purpose. It’s about becoming so entwined with Him that it is Him seen in and through you in all you think, do and say, and all **for His glory**.

God our loving heavenly Father, Creator of this world, rules His world for His glory. He does not exist for our sake, but we for His. His purpose in sending Christ to redeem us from sin and shame is to restore His glory in the all the earth.

Listen to Paul’s words from Ephesians:

Eph 1:3-6, 11-14 ... *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **to the praise of the glory of His grace**” ... “In Him also we were made a heritage, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory**. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, **to the praise of His glory**.”*

Pauls goes on from there in the prayer he prays for us (which is a prayer we should pray for ourselves and others every day).

Eph 1:17-19 ... *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Father of glory**, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the **knowledge of Him**. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of **the glory of His inheritance in the saints**, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”*

Listen to John’s words from Revelation:

Rev 19:7 ... *“Let us rejoice and be glad and **give the glory to Him**, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”*

Know Him, be transformed, and conformed to Him, be prepared as His beautiful bride!

Rev 21:1-11 ... *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. And He who*

*sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **having the glory of God.**"*

These are the overcomers, the ones who endured to the end, because they intimately knew and trusted their Lord, lived by His life and in accordance with His will, and brought glory to Him. And this is the answer to Christ's prayer in John 17 ... **"glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You."**

Col 1:27 ... **"Christ in you, the hope of glory."**

Through His first and second comings Christ restores the glory of God in throughout creation for all eternity.

Jer 9:23-24 (NKJV) ... **"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.**

If we don't intimately, personally, know our Lord and trust him implicitly we will succumb to the pressures and most likely fall away when the going gets very tough. That is a given.

The going is getting tougher, and we may not understand what is coming or why, but Almighty God who is the Alpha and Omega knows the end from the beginning and He is ultimately in control. For those who may think that the tribulations we face are not anything to do with God, let me remind you that if it were possible for something to occur in the world apart from the direct agency or permission of God, then that something would be independent of God and He would cease to be God. God is completely in charge of this world. His hand may be hidden, but His rule is absolute.

Isa 46:9-10 ... **"Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure."**

Rom 8:28-29 ... **"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."**

Now, while we are encouraged to get to know God, our heavenly Father doesn't just want to be the object of our study, but the object of our love and fellowship. It's a relationship of love and trust that He wants us to be engaged in with Him. Jesus gave us the first and foremost commandment:

Matt 22:37-38 ... *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

I love the words of the prayer of Richard of Chichester 1197-1253:

Day by day, dear Lord, of Thee three things I pray:

*to see Thee more clearly,
to love Thee more dearly,
to follow Thee more nearly.*

I will end with a couple of examples which hopefully will bring both direction and encouragement.

If you read Genesis 37-50 you'll see how Joseph went for years and years facing rejection, false accusation, imprisonment not knowing why, or what the final outcome would be, but he knew and trusted God all along. So, providentially, the outcome was that he ended up as prime minister and saved his family and nation from peril.

When the famine struck and his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain and finally understood that this was their brother Joseph who was in charge, Joseph, understanding God's hand in all that had occurred, addressed them with these words:

Gen 45:5, 7-8 ... *"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life ... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God."*

Gen 50:20 ... *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."*

Will you and I intimately know and trust God implicitly as Joseph did when the going gets tough and we don't understand why it's happening to us, or what the outcome may be?

Then, we read in Daniel chapter 3 of the three young Hebrew men who faced a fiery furnace if they did not compromise their faith. They didn't compromise and they were thrown into the furnace. They knew and trusted their God to the degree that they could confidently declare to king Nebuchadnezzar:

Dan 3:17-18 ... *"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

Do you and I know God, and are we so in love with our Lord that we would be prepared to face death rather than compromise our faith and trust in Him? That's quite a serious thought. One we must face. Many around the world have had to make this choice, and many have been martyred for their faith. It's happening today in many nations, and it may happen to you and me tomorrow.

Jesus made a very clear statement in Matt 24:9-10. He said:

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

May I also remind you of the words of 2 Tim 2:11-12 ... *"For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us"*

Do you and I intimately know and Love the Lord? If anyone faced unreal hardship over and over it was the Apostle Paul. But listen to Paul, one who was beaten times over, stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked, bitten by poisonous viper, often imprisoned, falsely accused, faced hunger, and hardships, and yet see how he, who truly knew and loved his Lord, sees it all.

2 Cor 4:16-18 ... *"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Final word of encouragement.

Like in any thriving relationship, God can be known and enjoyed only as we devote time to Him. God has saved us, placed His life in us, so that we may fellowship with Him and enjoy relationship with Him. To neglect fellowship with God and getting to know Him is to hurt ourselves where we cannot afford it. So my encouragement is, let's get to know Him and love Him with every fibre of our being.

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.**"*

2 Pet 3:18 ... *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity."*

Amen!

Practical Self-Test:

If you want to see the depth to which you intimately know and trust God, just look at your response to the next crisis that hits you! Your response will reveal what's in your heart. If it's not peace and a quiet confidence that God has everything under His control, then learn from your response that there is a need to draw closer to God, to walk in intimate and personal fellowship with Him, to know Him and to learn to trust Him, no matter what you're facing.

Recommended Reading (Books that will stimulate your hunger to know God more):

The Bible.

Brian A Russell, "I AM", Christian Focus Publications, Grace Publications Trust, 2019.

John Bevere, "Drawing Near", A life of intimacy with God, Nelson Ignite, 2004.

Dutch Sheets, "The Pleasure of His Company", a journey to intimate friendship with God, Bethany House Publishers, 2014.

Joy Dawson, "Forever Ruined for the Ordinary", the adventure of hearing and obeying God's voice, YWAM Publishing, 2001.

J.I. Packer, "Knowing God", Hodder and Soughton, 1973.

A.W. Tozer, "The Pursuit of God", the human thirst for the Divine, Wing Spread Publishers, 1982.

A.W.Tozer, "The Knowledge of God", Authentic Media, 1989.

A.W.Tozer, "Delighting in God", Bethany House Publishers, 2015.

William D Watkins, "The Busy Christians Guide to Experiencing God More", 12 weeks to drawing closer to the Lord, Vine Books, 1997. (This is a very practical and useful book whether you're busy or not)

John Owen, "Communion With God", abridged and made easy to read by RJK Law, Banner of Truth Trust, 1991.