

## How well do you know Him?

A few days ago I addressed the youth at their weekly home group, and even though the focus was on leadership, an undeniable truth came to the surface. To be a good leader, we must love Jesus first. However, to love Jesus, we must know Him. And to know Him, we must be in relationship with Him. Therefore, the focus of Christian leadership should not be on accumulating power and exercising authority but on developing strong relationships (founded on unconditional love).

**Philippians 3:10**, *"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."* The Greek word translated "know" means to '*understand completely*'. It frequently reveals a **relationship** between the person "knowing" and that which is being "known." As a result, that which is being "known" must have significant value or importance to the one who "knows" (who has knowledge). Can you see something? We must know (completely understand) Christ, before we know (completely understand) the power of His resurrection! But there is another aspect of "knowing Christ" referred to in the Bible, and that is, *seeing* or *recognising* Him.

Jesus Himself operated in this spiritual principle. In **John 7:29** He says, *"But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me."* The Greek word translated "know" is the word '*hitha*' which literally means, *"to see"* or *"recognise."* Therefore, there is a 'knowledge' that involves seeing, and in the context of this verse, "knowing" (seeing or recognising) has to do with a personal **relationship**. Listen to Jesus' own words again, *"I recognise Him because I am from Him, and He has sent Me."* The knowledge of God that Jesus reveals to His followers reflects an intimate relationship between Father and Son. In **John 8:28** He confirms this, *"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things."*

Note, knowledge borne out of an intimate relationship is very personal. It has to do with sharing private experiences. Therefore, we can safely assume that any knowledge we acquire within an intimate relationship is "experiential" (it has to do with shared experiences). There is a subtle tendency among many of us to be more interested in an intellectual knowledge about God, than in a personal (first hand) knowledge of Him. The former is valuable, but God wants us to love Him with our hearts and our souls, as well as our minds (**Matthew 22:37**). Above all else, we must purpose to **know** Christ with our whole being – to know Him completely. Philippians 3 affirms that true spirituality is not concerned with rules, regulations and rituals, but with the person of Jesus Christ. The focus of Scripture is never on religion but on a personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Again, we cannot know God the Father unless we **know** Jesus Christ! The one question we should all ask ourselves is this, *"How well do I know Him?"* Jesus said that His sheep **know** His voice! Do you know the Lord's voice? **John 10:4-5**, *"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."* Once more, the Greek word here (translated "know") means '*to recognise*.' Do you really "recognise" the Lord's voice, or are you often confused? According to Jesus, if you do not recognise His voice you put yourself in danger because you are unable to flee from the voice of the devil. Therefore, the devil can take advantage of you.

In **John 10:14-15** Jesus goes on to say, *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own."*

*As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep.”* On the authority of Jesus, our “knowledge of God” is holistic in nature. That is, our “knowing God” is characterised by something that is intimately interconnected and explainable only by reference to the whole. This is true unity - true relationship! In fact, this is true spirituality! Most of us think we are spiritual, yet we do not **know** Jesus on a personal, daily, intimate basis. We know what we have read and been told about Him, but this is an intellectual knowledge that lacks spiritual experience. Therefore, we don’t ever “act” like we really believe in Him. He doesn’t come across as the most important person in our lives.

So how do we get to **know** Jesus more intimately? How do we get to **recognise** His voice in the clamour of our daily lives? Is this even possible? Well, the Bible tells us it is, and that it is necessary... **Isaiah 5:13** states that God’s people will “*go into captivity*” if they don’t **know** God intimately. And Hosea 4:6 warns us that if there is no intimacy with God among His people, “**they will be destroyed.**” Captivity simply means bondage. It means that the worldly things we’re involved in are preventing us from fully experiencing the all-embracing union with Christ that God desires. And because of it, we cannot experience the liberty of His love.

God doesn’t want us to be in captivity. Rather, He has a hope and a dream for each and every one of us. **Jeremiah 29:11**, “*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*” Above all else, God wants to engage with us through a personal and intimate relationship. Note, this is the most natural relationship we can have. Why? Because God created us for this very thing! As we grow in spiritual maturity, we hunger for an intimate relationship with Jesus, but at the same time we may feel confused over how to go about it. How do we get closer to the invisible Almighty God? How do we hold a conversation with someone who is unlikely to talk back audibly?

Our confusion begins with the word “intimate,” which has been cheapened because of modern society’s obsession with sex. The essence of an intimate relationship, especially with Jesus, requires sharing. When you are intimate with someone else, you trust them enough to share your secrets with them. As God, Jesus already knows everything about you anyway, so when you choose to tell Him what’s hidden deep within you, it proves you trust Him. For many, trust is hard. We’ve all been betrayed by someone (at sometime), and when that happened, maybe we swore we’d never trust again. But Jesus loved you and trusted you first. He laid down His life for you. That sacrifice has earned Him your trust. There is no greater love than this!

Many of our secrets are sad. So it hurts to dig them out and give them to Jesus. But that is the ‘path’ to intimacy. If you want the closest of relationships with Jesus, you have to risk exposing your heart to Him. There’s no other way. It’s like standing in front of a fire. You may risk getting burnt, but the only way you can get the benefit of it’s warmth is to get closer. The only difference is that the fire of God’s love can never damage you. When you **share** yourself in relationship with Jesus, He will honour you by giving you more of Himself (more of the fire of His Spirit). Yes, stepping out takes courage, and it takes commitment. But the rewards are worth it.

When you start sharing everything with Jesus, at first you may not notice much change in your life. But over weeks and months, His presence will be felt more and more, and His Word will take on new meaning for you. The bond between you will grow stronger. Your life will begin to make more sense. Gradually you will sense that Jesus is

right there, listening to your prayers and the promptings in your heart. A sureness will come upon you that something wonderful is taking place.

Remember, Jesus never turns away anyone who seeks Him. By His Spirit, He will give you every help you need to build an intense, intimate relationship with Him. Jesus loves to share! And to **share**, is to use, occupy or enjoy something jointly with another person. This is why **Romans 8:17** declares that we are joint-heirs with Christ! He has given us all things to richly enjoy (**1 Timothy 6:17**), but to enjoy with Him!

When two people are intimate, they don't need words. Husbands and wives, as well as best friends, know the pleasure of simply being together. They can enjoy each other's company, even in silence. Therefore, it's not blasphemous to think that you can enjoy the same kind of relationship with the Lord Jesus. We glorify God by loving and serving Him, and we can do that even better when we have an **intimate relationship** with Jesus Christ, His only Son. As an adopted member of this family, you possess the right to enjoy Jesus. You were meant for intimacy with Him. It is your most important calling, now and for eternity. The truth is, you will be unable to fulfil your calling unless you are prepared to share everything with the Lord Jesus.

Remember, it all starts with getting to **know** Him!

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