

"Knowing Christ"

People say that “knowledge is power.” If you could closely and personally know someone who could give you eternal life, would you want to meet Him? Hello, I’m Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study In Search of the Lord’s Way. And today we’re going to explore the real opportunity for eternal life. So...stay tuned.

Welcome to “In Search of the Lord’s Way.” Thanks so much for spending this time with us in a study of God’s Holy Word!

Now eternal life can be yours! If we could live forever with good health, joy, peace, and love, we’d feel truly blessed! And the fact is: while this life on earth is temporary and filled with troubles, there’s an eternal life beyond filled with joy, peace, and love. You can have this eternal life and much more; it’s free! It comes by the grace of God and by knowing Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus in a prayer to His Father said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17 verse 3).

Now eternal life is not merely living forever and ever; eternal life is a quality of life built upon a relationship with God who gave us our life. We have eternal life because we know—and we have that close relationship with—God! To know God well will bring about love and devotion. To let God’s wisdom permeate our heart and our life, brings about the greatest blessings. God’s life is the best life forever, it’s true life forever, it’s love forever, peace forever, and joy forever! Eternal life can be yours, if you let it.

The inspired apostle Paul said in Romans 14 verses 7 to 9, “For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” Now eternal life means I belong to the Lord, and I belong to him now and in the life to come.

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Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church of Christ in song, we’ll read John 17:1 to 5, and then we’ll explore what it means to know Christ.

Our reading today comes from the lips of Jesus in the gospel according to John, chapter 17, verses 1 through 5. “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. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.’” That’s a reading from God’s holy word. Let’s pray together. Father we’re so grateful for Your love, and we’re thankful that Jesus has allowed us to know Your will, and to know You. Father help us to be good students of Your Word, to love You and to serve You. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Jeremiah 9:23 to 24 says: "Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD." More than wisdom, more than might, and more than riches, God wants you, each of you, to understand and know Him. In God's mind, that's the greatest blessing and the greatest need of our time. My friend, can you say honestly that you understand and know the God of Heaven and His Son Jesus?

The Lord Jesus said in John 17:3, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." There are different levels of knowing. We might say we know Tiger Woods, but most of us have never met him face to face or shook his hand. We know a little about who he is, but we don't know him personally. The next level is that of an acquaintance, someone we've met but aren't necessarily close to. Then there are colleagues, who share some part of our lives. A colleague may or may not be a friend. A friend is someone you truly care for and are interested in. You want to be around a friend; you like him. Then, there is family. Families live and work together; they know each other at a very deep level. The Lord Jesus wants us to know Him on that deep family level.

Now we cannot say that we're really close to the Lord, however, if we don't know and obey His will. You know the Bible says in 1 John 2 verses 3 to 6, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'Well I've come to know Him,' and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. And by this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He (that is Jesus) walked." Many people claim that they're close to the Lord but show by their lives that they're only deceiving themselves. Knowing God is the same as loving Him; and our love for God is perfected by keeping His commandments.

Some think they can know God by getting out into nature, but nature won't tell you all you need to know about God. One comes to know God through a study of God's Holy Word. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom didn't come to know God, but God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." It takes hearing God's word, the message preached and recorded in the Bible, to know God. The Bible helps us to understand who God is and what His will is for our lives.

The Bible says in Romans 10 verses 14 to 17, "But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they're sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." We come to trust in God by hearing what He has to say in the Word of Christ.

Scripture speaks of the noble-minded Bereans who were hungry to find out what God says. Acts 17 verse 11 says, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether those things were so." The Bible helps us distinguish what is and is not true about God. You know many articles and television programs say things about God that simply are not true. But you can always trust your Bible to tell you the truth. You should check what you hear by the Scriptures.

Now without the Scriptures we lose spiritually. There's a significant difference between people who know the Lord and people who don't.

People who don't believe in God or love God don't realize what they lose in rejecting God. They become futile in their thinking, selfish, callous, and confused. People who ignore God turn to selfishness and sin, which ruins their lives. You know it ought to be obvious to all of us. When fleshly ways control our lives, we get into in a terrible mess. The Bible says in Galatians 5 verses 19 to 21: "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, (and Paul says) in things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Now you can't have sin as the focus of your life and expect to find favor and joy with God.

Whether a person truly loves God matters. One who loves will not live like one who doesn't love. When someone doesn't love and respect God, he becomes selfish and apathetic. But someone who knows the love of God becomes caring and generous. One lets sin enslave him, while the other finds freedom in Christ. One lets his selfish desires rule his life, while the other lets Christ be Lord of his life. Our society is morally confused because it has set God aside. People ignore God to their own destruction.

God spoke through the prophet Hosea to Israel, who had forgotten Him and had followed the pagan nations. They no longer knew God, and their apathy toward God ruined them. God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4 verse 6). When people reject God, they rob their children of an opportunity to know the truth about God and about the life that God gives.

A recent survey said that eighty percent of American adults recall attending church regularly as children, but many have wandered away from their spiritual roots. They've been lured by the worldliness of our culture that has pushed God out and brought in an anti-God, anti-church mindset. This mindset confuses children morally and spiritually. We constantly teach our children that moral truth is relative and not to judge anything as right or wrong. And what happens? We have more immorality than we've ever had, and we have more confusion than we've ever had. In a world without God, people do unspeakable things. Without God reigning in their hearts, you can be sure that sinful, destructive things will control their lives.

The Bible says in Romans 1 verses 18 to 26: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they didn't honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man or of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

Again the Bible says in Romans 8 verses 5 to 8: "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it doesn't subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

God loves us so much, however, that He wants to win our hearts and our minds away from what will destroy us to what will bless us. God wants to bring you back to Himself. And that's why He sent Jesus into the world. Romans 5 verses 6 to 8 says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God was willing to go to that extent so that you might have a better life on earth and live with Him in joy and in love forever.

Now we can know God by looking to Jesus. The Lord Jesus told his disciples in John 14:7, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Again John 1:18 says that Jesus explains God to us. We know a better way of life because of the love and the goodness of Jesus Christ. He is the example of what righteousness and goodness is. He teaches us by his life what real life is all about.

Jesus can make such a meaningful difference in our lives if we are willing to let Him. The Bible says in Titus 3 verses 3 to 7, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we've done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life."

You see God wants something better for us, lives full of hope and love, not sin and apathy. He wants to free us from the enslavement of sin, so we can live righteous and productive lives. God knows how sin destroys our lives and homes and how it separates us from everything that's good. Through Jesus Christ, God opens a door to life that rises above what the world offers. The Bible says in Galatians 5 verses 22 to 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." The most beautiful, wonderful people I know have Christ in their lives. The Lord Jesus said in John 10 and verse 10, "I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly." And I've seen what Christ can do in the lives of believers, and I know what He can do in your life. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for the Word that You have given us so that we might know You, and might know Your son Jesus. And for the joy and the peace and the love that You've given us through Him. Father we're so grateful. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

If you let Him, Christ can transform your life here on earth and can give you eternal life with Him in heaven. When I think of heaven, I think of Ephesians 2 verses 4 to 7: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you've been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

God wants to lavish the kindness of His grace and love on you forever. He starts that process on this earth by giving us the gospel, a message of good news about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died for your sins, so that you might be forgiven; and God raised Jesus up from the dead, so that you might be justified and have hope of eternal life. Now you can have this life when you put your trust in the Lord Jesus.

“Without faith,” the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, “it’s impossible to please God.” Now out of this faith and love for God, you must turn away from sin in repentance and turn to the Lord. And when you confess the name of Jesus as your Lord and Christ, you are ready to be baptized—that is immersed in water—for the forgiveness of your sins. God will forgive your sins, add you to the church, His family, and call you His son or daughter. It’ll be the beginning of a new life that can last forever. I hope you’ll be baptized this very day.

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We do ask that you please visit one of the churches of Christ in the area that’s served by this station. They’re so kind to be our partners and they support this ministry, that’s how we’re able to come to you. And they are our brethren, so we ask that you get to know them. And they’d love for you to worship with them, and so would we. Well we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you tune in and tell a friend about this program. And as always, we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.