

## “Knowing God” versus “Knowing About God”

A few weeks ago I wrote in the corner of our calendar ***“Do not be content to know about Him.”*** I do not remember the circumstances that led to my “note to self.” I may have been talking to my oldest daughter, but I am not sure about that. I do know that the concept of “knowing God” has been bouncing around in my head ever since.

I grew up in a religious culture that emphasized knowing **about** God. Bible studies, church attendance, and scripture memorization were promoted as the cornerstones of spiritual growth. Godly standards were taught and sins were denounced. The Bible was our playbook and we all had to know what was in the playbook. These were all good things. The trouble was that I had read the whole playbook.

It is true that my Bible spoke of righteousness and sanctification. But the Bible also taught about the peace, joy, and power that were characteristics of the Spirit-filled believer. Jesus had taken away my sin, but I possessed no peace, no joy, and no power. My Christian existence was characterized by strife, doubt, and weakness. Unfortunately, so were the lives of everyone around me. The Christian experience seemed to be an exercise in rule keeping with constant cycles of sin and confession.

My leaders, teachers, and friends knew wonderful things about God. They knew the ways we were supposed to act. They knew the way we were supposed to look. But I saw little of the promised spiritual fruit in our lives. That was a huge “disconnect” for me. The fruit of the Spirit which I desired seemed forever elusive. The believers around me were unable to tell me how to obtain my true heritage and even seemed unaware that anything was missing. I spent a long time looking at the wide gulf between the victorious Christian life of the New Testament and the reality of my life.

That gulf between *what is* and *what should be* is still very apparent to me. The experiences of life have revealed that the inability to find peace is the normal state of most believers. I now understand that while we can be delivered from death we still often live below our Christ purchased heritage. We are called to live a life of wonder and indescribable spiritual richness. We are called to a life of faith characterized by unshakeable trust in our Father. We are to know peace and joy that cannot be affected by circumstance. Instead, we live in an epidemic of mediocrity that sees the royal children of the King living in our spiritual cardboard boxes eating this world’s garbage.

It is against this backdrop that the note *“Don’t be content to know about Him”* has stuck with me. After decades of striving to leap my own gulf of spiritual dysfunction, I gave up. Despite being a born-again believer, I could not find my own victory. With despair at the waste of my life, I turned to Jesus in complete surrender. I basically told Him that I had failed in my efforts to find significance. I was ready for Him to lead. I told the Lord that I would follow any path that He chose for me. (And I assumed the worst including mission work in sub-Saharan Africa.) The path He chose for me surprises and thrills me still. And I now understand **it is the path He desires for every one of His children.** He has chosen the path of an intimate relationship between God and Jeff. He has chosen to quietly pull me to Himself, love me, heal me, and reveal more of Himself to

me. Our trust grows. My faith grows. With time and God's grace freely pouring into my life, our relationship is moving into friendship. He has slowly moved me along a path in which I am becoming saturated in His Spirit. To be sure, it is a difficult relationship to capture in words. He is the King and Creator of the Universe. He does hold all things together by the power of His word. Yet, I call Him "Daddy" and Daddy calls me "son" (and many other precious terms of endearment). We have moved into intimate and infinite communion.

In this ongoing walk with My Abba Father a most amazing thing happened. The peace, joy, and power appeared. The things that striving in my own strength had not brought were now mine. The peace, joy, and power that I thought were important turned out to be a byproduct of the most important thing: knowing God in an intimate relationship. I had tasted of God and found Him to be very good. Even when I have spiritually stubbed my toe, God continues to be very good. He truly is good all the time.

The Lord has taught me that my relationship with Him is the most important thing in my life. It is more important than any service I can do for Him. It is more important than any praise I can give Him. Of course, acts of service and praise are also byproducts of "knowing God". They flow out of this dependence like the peace, joy, power, favor, wonder, significance, gifts, fulfillment and community. The fullness of the Christian experience has its foundation in the believer's relationship with the Lord.

God's revelation of Himself to me has been the difference between a life of constant spiritual frustration and a life lived in constant amazement at the wondrous nature of my Savior. If you find yourself looking at that gulf between what could be and what is, then take rest in the fact that He wants to wrap you in His arms. In those arms you will find all the promises of victory that belong to the Christian and so very much more. Tell Him you are ready to taste and see if He is good. Tell Him that you are done with the striving to do and please. Then trust Him to lead you to Himself. He will and it is a breathtaking process. **"Do not be content to know about Him."**

It is God's will that all His children know Him personally. Taste and see. He is very good! If I can encourage you or pray with you to truly experience Him, please contact me at [jeffdean@iggm.org](mailto:jeffdean@iggm.org)