

THE BIG IDEA

Knowledge of God and knowledge of self go hand-in-hand. Last week we focused on knowledge of self – our identity in Christ. This week we are exploring our knowledge of God, which includes examining our image of God and how we pay attention to our experience of God.

“*The single most important thing in our mind is our idea of God and the associated images.*”¹

KNOW

“I WANT YOU TO KNOW ME.”

Hosea 6:6 (NLT)

We are “in Christ”... we believe that we have been rescued “from the dominion of darkness and brought...into the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13), and therefore we are to “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). Paul (who wrote these words) also tells us that our process of sanctification (or our life of salvation) is largely a transformation by a “renewing of your mind.” (Rom 12:2)

The way we think about ourselves and the way we think about God is crucial to our path of discipleship. A dysfunctional picture of God expresses itself in a dysfunctional way of living.

In each of our hearts and minds, we have a picture of God. It has been formed over the years of our lives through our parents, teachers, churches, unintentional mis-interpretations of Scripture, and our surrounding culture. These things can distort our picture of God.



What might be some of your distorted images of God?

¹Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, p 100.

SOME FOUNDATIONAL IMAGES OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

- 1 Boundless mystery – there is no one else like Him, and we will never fully know or understand Him
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. – Isaiah 55:8
- 2 Holy – completely “other” than us
“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” – Ex 15:11
- 3 The “omnis” – omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (all present), omnipotent (all powerful), omnibenevolent (all good)
- 4 God *IS* love. 1 John 4:16



WHILE WE MIGHT
KNOW THESE THINGS
(IN OUR MINDS),
DO WE LIVE OUR
LIVES AS IF WE
TRULY BELIEVE
THESE THINGS AND
HAVE EXPERIENCED
GOD AS SUCH?

“God is Christlike and in Him is no un-Christlikeness at all.”²

“Every idea and assumption we have about God must be measured against the person of Jesus. If they are contradicted by what we have come to know about God through Jesus, they need to be relinquished.”³

²Archbishop Michael Ramsey, quoted in John V. Taylor, *The Christlike God*, p 100.

³Trevor Hudson, *Discovering Our Spiritual Identity*, p 16.

What we learn about God through Jesus Christ is that He extravagantly, sacrificially, graciously, compassionately, mercifully, forgivingly loves us. It is what God is always doing, and it never depends on us.

"GOD IS LOVE."

1 John 4:16

"The Father's love reflects the Father's character, not the children's behavior...Responsible behavior does not increase the Father's love, nor does irresponsible behavior decrease it."⁴

"At the heart of the boundless Mystery [God], there is a blazing love that has created us, searches for us every moment, and desires to bring us, along with all creation, into wholeness."⁵

BE

SILENCE + SOLITUDE

Continue your daily times of silence and solitude. How are you making this a priority? What might be getting in the way and is there a solution or compromise you can make? Is there a family member or friend who can help hold you accountable if that is what you need?



During one of your times of silence and solitude, read Psalm 145 and pray it as your prayer to God (perhaps outloud!).

⁴David Benner, *Surrender to Love*, p 24.


⁵Trevor Hudson, *Discovering Our Spiritual Identity*, p 16-17.

KNOWING GOD vs. KNOWING ABOUT GOD

We could talk all day about the attributes and character of God, and we could be “correct” in our theology about describing God...but God really desires that we know Him. In fact, when the Bible talks about “knowledge” of God, it is always experiential knowledge. Knowing him first-hand. That is Jesus’ definition of eternal life: “This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

In one of your times of silence and solitude, reflect on times when you have really gotten to know God, or when you have experienced God and his presence.

List three of those times here:



It is so important for us to remind ourselves of the times and places when we’ve really gotten to know God better.

DO

HOLY EXPERIMENT

This week we want to focusing on knowing God, not just knowing *about* Him.

Jesus said, “If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him as well.” (John 14:7)

Getting to really know Jesus helps us get to know God. This week, let us spend time with Jesus by considering the following brief scenes from gospels. Don’t study these scenes, but rather spend some time in “holy daydreaming.” Picture yourself in the situation about which you are reading. Use your imagination to note all the sensory elements of the scene. What does the setting look like? How does it feel? Is there a scent or taste involved? Notice other characters present. Mostly, pay close attention to Jesus and to your feelings. Allow the gospel story, combined with your imagination, be an experience of being deeply loved by Jesus.

- A. Matthew 19:13-15** – Observe Jesus as people bring little children to Him to be blessed. Hear the disciples as they scold the parents, telling them not to bother the Master. Then hear what Jesus says: “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them...” Now imagine yourself coming to Jesus, welcomed by Him, as one of those little children. Plop yourself by Jesus – maybe at His feet, at His side, in His arms. Do you want to say something to Him? Or do you maybe just want to be in His presence? Can you let Him bless you? Savor these moments.
- B. Matthew 22:1-14** – Read these words about the invitation to a wedding feast as if they were an invitation to you – to bring all parts of you to Him – the places in you that feel uninvited, marginalized, rough around the edges, shoddy, broken, unloved. These are the parts you might not want to invite, but Jesus wants to welcome your entire self into His presence. Allow those parts of yourself to enjoy God’s warmth, love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, empathy. Feel how honored it is to be fully welcomed by God.
- C. Mark 6:45-52** – Join the disciples in the boat as they face a mounting storm. Notice Jesus walking on the water toward you. Hear His words of comfort: “Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.” Then observe as He gets in the boat with you and the others. Notice the wind starting to subside and this is your chance to offer to Jesus any of your worries, fears, concerns, stresses. Name them. Tell Him about them as you would be telling a friend. Do this until you feel the weight of these things decrease, just as the rough, choppy sea subsides.
- D. Luke 12:22-32** – Listen to these words of Jesus as if they were spoken for the first time directly to you. Pay attention to what Jesus says about how valuable you are to Him. Hear His love for you, and notice how it feels to bask in this love. Feel yourself rest in the love of a God who promises to care for your every need and give you much more than you could ever dare to expect. *Savor this.*

EXTRA:

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians said, “Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.” (Eph 5:1) and in one of his letters to the Corinthian church, he encouraged those individuals to “...imitate me, just as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). As apprentices of Jesus, we spend time with Him, getting to know Him, and then we put into practice the things He does. We imitate Him. From one of the gospel stories above, can you choose something about Jesus that you would like to “imitate” this week?
