

Knowing God

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"Do you know God?" Toss this question around in casual conversation and you will be amazed and astonished at the varied and often strange responses you will hear. Some will begin to tell you things "about" God, while others will tell you forthrightly that they do not know Him. Some will describe experiences they have had with God while others will simply tell you that they have known Him all their lives. Some will tell you things they have deduced about God (good or bad, right or wrong) by observing the world around them, while others will tell you that it is impossible to know Him. Why such varied and even contradictory responses to such a simple question? Because men often answer spiritual questions based upon their own opinions about the subject being discussed. But what does God have to say about knowing Him?

In Matthew 7:22-23 Jesus says "On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" There are many levels of knowing someone in our Western mentality. If I were asked "Do you know Joe?" my response might be "Sure! I would recognize him if I saw him." If someone were to ask me "Do you know Jim?" I would respond "Sure, we work together and spend quite a few hours a week in conversation." But if someone were to ask me if I know my wife I would tell them that we have been married for over twenty years and that I not only know what she likes and does not like but I sometimes know what she is thinking before she ever verbalizes it. Each of these responses describes a different level of "knowing" someone. But, as we look at Scripture, we often find that knowing someone has a much deeper and intimate meaning; "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived and bare Cain" (Gen 4:1) Men often spend their lives trying to know God on their own terms and based upon their own understanding, but we are living in an hour when we "must" come before Him and ask "What does it mean to know You and to be known by You?" The passage in Matthew 7 makes it very clear that knowing Him and being known by Him has nothing to do with what we know about Him (did we not prophesy in Your name), nor with how strongly we have resisted the devil, nor with how many wonderful things we have done for Him. The call to know God and to be known by Him is a call to intimacy with Him. While men may themselves describe many levels of knowing God based upon their own opinions and concepts of what that means, in contrast, God has His own standards and criteria for what knowing Him means. It has been said that God lives in a three room house. The tabernacle in the Old Testament, which the book of Hebrews describes as a picture of the heavenly tabernacle, consisted of three distinct rooms; the outer court (the place of sacrifice), the inner court (the place of illumination and intercession), and the most holy place (the throne room / the place of His Presence). While each of these rooms picture aspects of the progressive journey of coming to know Him, the outer court (atonement for and forgiveness of sin), inner court (place of the revelation of Holy Spirit and personal ministry), it is the third room to which we are being beckoned in this hour. It is not enough to be forgiven of our sins. It is not enough to even see great and wondrous truths about God and to be involved in ministry to, and for, Him. The purpose of the finished work of Calvary is to give us personal access to God Himself. In Matthew 27:51 we see that at the time of the death of Jesus on the cross the veil of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. God Himself took the initiative to remove everything that stood in the way of our personal and intimate knowledge of Him. Jesus did not lay down His life at Calvary just so we could know about God, or so that we could simply be involved in working for Him. He laid down His life so that we could hear and respond to the call coming from the third room; the loving room; "Come past the sacrifice, and the work you do for Me, and let us know one another."