



EXPLORE GOD | CAN I KNOW GOD PERSONALLY? | Week 7 March 3, 2019

Jeremiah 9:23-24; Luke 24:13-32; John 17:3; Revelation 3:20

Opening: Over these weeks we have been looking at some deep questions of faith. We close this series with another profound question, “Can I Know God Personally?” Can I know God anything like I know a friend? In our series conclusion we move from the theoretical to the real, from heady arguments to the inner reality that cannot be explained or taken away.

Context: We all live in a physical world. We know that because we can touch, measure, and weigh it. But we also live in a spiritual realm. It is that realm (sometimes confused with imagination) that we speak of today. Our spiritual “sense” grows with exercise and what we seek to understand today lies in that space. *How would you explain knowing God personally to a friend?*

Almighty Creator: Pastor Dan opens with, “The Holy One whose unshielded glory might vaporize us.” *How do you reconcile Pastor Dan’s statement of awesome power with personal friendship? Where does this image Pastor Dan shares originate?*

Back to God’s Story: In the Garden in Genesis Adam and Eve knew God. They walked with God in perfect relationship. Then Adam and Eve sinned and the relationship was broken. The rest of the story is God’s work of redemption—seeking to restore the relationship. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. *What are we to be proud of? We understand wise, strong and rich in our physical world, but how do you explain “boasting in the understanding” to know God? What do we understand about God in these verses?*

The Problem of Sin: “Sin is a spiritual disease that leaves us curved in upon ourselves.”

- Born with sin and don’t know what life is like without it.
- Everyone we know has the same illness.
- Sin affects our moral vision. We compare ourselves with other sick people to judge our own health.

What does this have to do with knowing God? What is the opposite of “curved in?” Why is this insidious spiritual disease so critical to understand? Do you let yourself off the hook with comparisons to other “sick people?”

God’s Redemption from What? The consequence of spiritual disease, sin, is deadened spiritual sensitivity to God. If we are deadened, blind and deaf to the spiritual realm, how can we know God personally? Pastor Dan describes an eternal Hell as “the cold of cosmic loneliness. It’s when God stops trying to draw you into a personal relationship with himself and just lets you go your own way and according to your own will, forever.” *How do you respond to this? How*



would you describe “cosmic loneliness?” What ways of “knowing” God do you desire? What has helped you to know God? What has hindered you from knowing God?

A New Kind of Life: Read Romans 6:23; Colossians 1:15; 1 Peter 3:18. Our humility, repentance and belief in God’s redeemer, Christ Jesus, atones for our sin, and opens our avenue of personal relationship with God. The death of Jesus on the cross made forgiveness possible for you. We are saved from sin which opens a whole new kind of life, a wonderful adventure with the Triune God. *What is new for you here? How does pursuing knowing God make sense to you? How would you describe it? How do you fit it together with knowing God personally?*

Shaping the Way We Live: Sharpening our awareness of the spiritual realm, knowing God, requires exercise. Pastor Dan suggested these practices: Conversational Prayer - Reading, listening, read again, listen, read again, apply to your life; Focusing on a scripture passage - See Practice of the Week; Reading or listening to chapters of scripture regularly; Participating in weekly Worship; and Small Group relationships (Matt 18:20)—God will join you. Go back to Jeremiah 9 above. The prophecy contrasts wise, strong and rich with kindness, justice and righteousness. *How do these practices get us in touch with the author of kindness, justice and righteousness? How will you grow toward opening yourself to knowing God personally next week?*

Practice of the Week: Luke 24:13-35 Lectio Divina

Take a few minutes to calm yourself and clear your mind of busyness. Thank God for His presence. Read the passage through and reflect on the men (Where had they been? What were they thinking?) and Jesus. What was their interaction. What strikes you? Read the passage again. Is there a word or phrase that stands out for you? Take a moment. Ponder that phrase—what is it saying to you? Finally, read the passage again and ask God what it means for you. Keep this with you for the week, pray through it, journal about it, soak in it as you drive to wherever, seeking to hear and know God’s presence in the process.

Family Formation: Knowing a New Friend

What can we pray about? Ask your kids who they have gotten to know lately. What did they learn about them? How did they learn it? Do they like them? Do they trust them? Try to make that connect with knowing God. What are the equivalents of prayer, scripture and worship? It’s a stretch, but use it to talk about how you walk with God personally.

Additional Resources: *Hearing God*, by Dallas Willard (start with Chap. 5; pg. 86).

We’d love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

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