Life in Christ: Session One

It’s a Relationship

**OVERVIEW:** A life with God requires having some knowledge of God. What then, according to the Word of God, does it mean to know God? How does a person acquire knowledge of God? Why must our knowledge of God depend upon His self-revelation and not on the opinions and reason of humans? What is God’s Word in its must primary and fundamental sense? Why is Christ called the “Word?”

**Knowing God Gives Life**

Ephesians 2:4-22

The Apostle Paul, the inspired author of this letter to a church that existed in modern-day Turkey, is describing what “living in Christ” is like.

1. How does he describe them and their “life status” before they knew God?
2. How were they brought to God?
3. What does the blood of Christ accomplish?



1. What did Christ fix for us?
2. What paradigm does Christ change?
3. What is the metaphor Paul uses for our relationship with God?

**Knowing God is different than Knowing about God**

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,****2****since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.****3****And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*  John 17:1-3

Throughout the history of God’s people, they have often been confused. Many times the Jews seemed to think that as long as they did their religious duty: went to the Temple, offered the required sacrifices, had their sons circumcised, conducted religious rites and ceremonies, gave some money to the Temple and the poor; then they were right with God.

Again and again, God sent prophets who told them:

*And Samuel said,*

*“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
    as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
    and to listen than the fat of rams.****23****For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
    and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
    he has also rejected you from being king.”* (1st Samuel 15:22-23)



*What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
    What shall I do with you, O Judah?*  *Your love is like a morning cloud,
    like the dew that goes early away.****5****Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;
    I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
    and my judgment goes forth as the light.****6****For I desire steadfast love[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hosea+6&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22174a)*] and not sacrifice,
    the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* (Hosea 6:4-6)

*We have all become like one who is unclean,
    and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
    and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*  (Isaiah 64:6)

Unfortunately, the Christian Church has often done the same thing. We often think that simply knowing information about God is enough, or doing religious activities makes me okay with God. We think that if we know enough doctrine, memorize some verses, attend church on occasion, do some good things for others…. But a vital thing Jesus came to tell us was that life comes not from simply knowing about God and meeting a set of expectations, it comes from being in an honest, intimate relationship with Him.

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.****22****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?’****23****And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* (Matthew 7:22-23)

Lutherans tend to be good at the “head” part or the gaining of knowledge about Christ and Christianity. We know lots of stuff, but have sometimes struggled to connect the heart with the head. Knowing God is about love and trust, not intelligence or knowing a series of facts. It’s a relationship! It is comprised of intimacy, companionship, and a desire to know the Lord Jesus Christ, not just of Him or about Him. So, what exactly does God require of us?

*Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”****28****Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”****29****Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*  (John 6:27-28)

Imagine for a moment that you had kids who know all kinds of things about you: your general characteristics, birth place, towns and schools you grew up in, favorite shows – books – sports – foods – etc., your vocation, places you want to vacation, and so forth and so on. But they didn’t know you. What if they even knew: your values, your dreams, and your beliefs? But they did not have a real relationship with you. They never sought to spend time with you. They never said they loved you.

Now imagine you had kids who knew nothing about your history, nothing about your values, nothing about the things that are important to you but they say, “I love you.” But the times you would like to do something with them, share an experience together; they just want $40 for their gas tank or the latest video game.

Neither of these scenarios are what God has in mind with regard to a relationship with us. He wants all of us. He wants us to want Him in return. God loves us and has pursued us; He desires for us to respond with love for Him.

*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1st John 4:10)

“*For God so loved the world,[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+3&version=ESV" \l "fen-ESV-26126i" \o "See footnote i)] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.****17****For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*  (John 3:16)

Life is therefore described as knowing God. Death is being separated from God – a broken relationship. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans:

*What then? Are we Jews[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+3&version=ESV#fen-ESV-27985a)*] any better off?[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+3&version=ESV" \l "fen-ESV-27985b" \o "See footnote b)] No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,****10****as it is written:*

*“None is righteous, no, not one;****11****no one understands;
    no one seeks for God.****12****All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
    no one does good, not even one.”*  (Romans 3:10-12)

*Now from the sixth hour[*[*f*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+27&version=ESV#fen-ESV-24171f)*] there was darkness over all the land[*[*g*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+27&version=ESV#fen-ESV-24171g)*] until the ninth hour.[*[*h*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+27&version=ESV#fen-ESV-24171h)*]****46****And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*  (Matthew 27:45-46)

**Knowing God: How do we do it?**

There is logically only 1 of 2 ways to know God. Either He comes to us and reveals Himself to us. Or, we come up with some idea of who He is, how He can be approached, and then try to find a way to Him. This second way would mean that people have to trust in their own powers of reason to know God.

Reason is actually a poor guide, ironically, our own reasoning abilities will confirm that reason and intellect are poor means for knowing God.

* God, by definition is infinite and therefore far to great and awesome for us to be able to grasp with our limited and finite abilities.
* The more fundamental problem is that every human being and all human reason have been corrupted by the fall of mankind. We struggle with brokenness in the forms of: pride, greed, deceit, malice, hatred, envy, and etc. – in short, broken by sin.

**God Reveals Himself in His Word**

There are 3 primary ways in which God reveals Himself in His Word:

1. **The Creative Power of God**

Matthew 8:5-9

Hebrews 1:3

Hebrews 11:3

Genesis 1:3

Psalm 19:1-4

Is the Creative Power of God enough?

Romans 1:18-23

*Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”****19****And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.****20****But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”****21****And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,****22****and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.****23****Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”* (Exodus 33:18-23)

1. **Christ is the Word of God**

Ultimately, God reveals Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ!

John 1:1-14

Now we are gaining a better understanding of God. Not only do we see Him as the omnipotent and omniscient creator of all that is visible and invisible, we also know Him as an intimate, loving and gracious God who cares for His creation. He chose to come to us and make a “personal introduction” so that all may know Him.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* And again in 1st Corinthians we receive confirmation that reason will not save us nor will it lead us to God. Rather, it is through faith in Christ.

*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.****19****For it is written,*

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
    and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”*

***20****Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?****21****For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+corinthians+1&version=ESV#fen-ESV-28368b)*] to save those who believe.****22****For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,****23****but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,****24****but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.****25****For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* (1st Corinthians 1:18-25)

1. **The Holy Scriptures**

Come back next week as we explore the Scriptures as the revealed Word of God.

**For Further Study and Discussion**

Ephesians 2:1-3

* Paul makes a very bold statement about people. Do you agree?
* What is the cause of death?
* Who is exempt?

Ephesians 2:4-10

* What does the word “grace” actually mean?
* What is necessary to gain God’s love?
* Are we required to climb a heavenly ladder or hike a spiritual trail up to God? Can we?
* What status have we been elevated to?
* Why did God create you?