

The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation

Lesson 10. Being Born Again Is To Know God And Experience Him (De-Hellenizing Mental Muck)

God isn't boxed *within* the Bible.

**But, through His Spirit
the Bible is His resource disclosing
how you can *know* and *experience* Him.**

In our early walk with our Lord we had a close friend and fellow follower of Jesus we'll call "Pete." Shortly after he was born again Pete heard this in his spirit: "Pete, get to *know Me*." Our friend misconstrued these words and spent the next two years studying the Bible and other Christian materials believing that through all his studies he'd know God better. One day Pete suddenly and with deep regret realized that in all his learning he got to know a lot *about* God, but never got to really *know* God.

Many in Christendom are plagued by the same misperception Pete had:

***"If I only study more about God, I will know Him better."* This just isn't true!**

English Can Make It Difficult To Know God!

Here's an insight about the English language that may be affecting your ability to *know* and *experience* our Lord in the spiritual intimacy of union with His Spirit. It has to do with the Hebraic understanding of the word "know." We may say that we "know" someone but simply mean that we're acquainted with them even if on a superficial level. But from a Hebraic perspective you can only "know" someone if you have a personal and meaningful relationship.

In Genesis 18:19 God says about Abraham that "*I know him*", meaning that He has a very close relationship with

him. And in biblical Hebrew, the word *know* refers primarily to what we acquire through experience. For example, Genesis 4:1 states that Adam "*knew Eve his wife*," implying an intimate relationship. Adam and Eve were commanded by God,

*"You must not eat from the tree of the **knowledge** of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die"* (Genesis 2:17).

In Hebrew, God's command might be better understood as, "*You must not eat from the tree of experiencing good and evil.*" God did not want Adam and Eve to *know* evil by personal experience.

We English speakers most often use the word *know* to refer to information we've acquired and stored in our brain. Yet like Hebrew, most European languages use different words for *knowledge* or to *know*.

- The first *know* is to acquire understanding of a subject through learning. This type of knowing requires no experience with the subject matter. Information is taken in and added to your memory cells.

In most Christian settings this is the way the Bible is taught, as mental acquisition. As a result, people have no experience with *knowing* God in relationship with Him nor in putting His Word into action because of obedient trust in that relationship. When God's Word is taught in a passive environment, it produces a host of people who *know about* God—and all too often are content with that.

- The second use of *know* is the understanding which comes through experience. In the Newer Testament the Greek word, *ginosko*,

refers to the experiential “know.” And, it holds a much deeper relational meaning, especially when it's used between Jesus and His Father and between followers of Jesus and Himself and His Father and the Spirit. Since this is the same “knowing” that can refer to sexual intimacy, as in Matthew 1:25, you can see that in the spiritual sense there's a profound sense of intimacy in this kind of “knowing” as well. For example, John makes clear to followers of Jesus that “*we know [deep within] that we have known [relationally experienced] Him, if we keep His commandments*” (1John 2:3).

How does this kind of personal experience of Christ set us apart from those who have yet to know Him this way? As John again states, “*the world does not know us, because it did not know Him*” (1John 3:1).

This personal responsiveness to Jesus as being IN Him and He IN us is what the Bible means as a way of life for anyone who is born again. Picture how your life is described if you're genuinely born of His Spirit: “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

The Holy Spirit within you is the source for knowing and experiencing our Lord. By the grace of our Father you come to know Him as you obey the guidance of His indwelling Spirit and make His commands your way of life (1John 3:24).

The kind of *knowing* our Lord Jesus which Scripture so patently makes clear is His heart's desire! So how greatly He is grieved by those who think they are “Christian” but have no union with Him by His Spirit. This is why He warns,

“*Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to*” (Luke 13:24).

It's not disinterested unbelievers that our Lord is speaking to, but rather those who think they can make it through the gate by *knowing about* God and biding their time complacently in a comfortable religious system.

Maybe this analogy will help you better understand the importance of *knowing* God rather than *knowing about* Him:

Knowing God

A man seeking to be married encounters a woman his heart is drawn to. He gets engaged to her and spends many meaningful conversations learning all about her. In time they get married and consummate their relationship through experiencing intercourse. Biblically the man now *knows* his wife.



As we wrote earlier, sexual intimacy is a Biblical use of the verb *know*, as in, “*Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived...*” (Genesis 4:1). To truly *know* someone represents the nature of intimate relationship our Lord wants with you as His own. And He wants you to *know* Him with firsthand experience through His indwelling Spirit!

To be born again is to enter into a way of life of experiencing our Lord in your daily life. From the day you become a new creation through spiritual rebirth until your last breath, *to know your Lord is to experience Him*. Anyone who *knows* our Lord Jesus as Lord of their life should be able to testify about His powerful and loving presence as clearly as Peter and John did: “*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20; see also 1John 1:3).

Knowing About God

Another man seeking to be married is given a picture of a woman and told a few bits of information about her. Immediately he's attracted to her and begins to tell his friends that he's married to her. Can you envision how inane this is? But this is the

effect of *knowing about* our Lord through studying the Bible, but failing to experience Him in your daily life through His Spirit.

<p>Before Being Born Again</p> 	<p>Before you're born again the Bible is God's resource to reveal your sinfulness and your need for a Savior. After you're born again you have a personal relationship with our Lord because of His indwelling Spirit. The Bible is now His resource for a way of life that pleases Him.</p>	<p>After Being Born Again</p> 
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In this lesson and those to follow, we can't give you experience. But we can point the way for you to experience our Lord. In other words, we can point you to what it means to be born again, and what your life might look like as you know Him through experience in obedient trust. This is far different than *knowing about* our Lord through information.

Again, to know our Lord the way the Bible intends—the way our Lord Jesus has made for those born of His Spirit—you must experience Him as real in your life. Consider the Hebraic understanding of *knowing* Him in these biblically-based truths adapted from Henry Blackaby's classic, *Experiencing God*:

1. Our Lord is always at work around you.
2. Our Lord pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. Our Lord invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. Our Lord speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and other called-out followers of Jesus to reveal Him-

self, His purposes, and His ways.

5. Our Lord's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires trust-based action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join our Lord in what He is doing.
7. You come to *know* our Lord by *experience* as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

Each of these seven essential elements of a trust-grounded way of life in Christ must be part of your heartfelt motives if you're to experience our Lord, that is, to *know* Him in intimate relational union. You may want to take the time to prayerfully by His grace instill these in your innermost being to align your goals, values and purposes with His.

- If you're *not* experiencing our Lord in your daily life, can it be that you're really not born again? Or, are you hung up on one or more of the seven steps above? If so, which ones, and why?

Beginning with our Lord's description of what the life of a born-again person looks like (John 3:8) and all throughout the Newer Testament, to *know* your Lord is verified by experiencing Him as He works in and through and around you. Let's look at the trusting expectation of Peter and John that Lord Jesus would work through them as a powerful witness to others of experiencing God:

*"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. **Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus**" (Acts 4:29,30).*

Do you think those gathered with Peter and John were praying about something they'd never seen before? Or, be-

cause of their prior experience with the power of the Spirit of our Lord, could they pray with confidence that *He would act*?

- Do you have that kind of confidence because you intimately know our Lord?
- What miraculous interventions has He done in and through and around you that testify that you're born again—a new person in Jesus?

“You come to know our Lord by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.”

Many years ago a noted Christian author who had known us for some time said to us, “You guys are like gladiators in your spiritual walk.” No one had ever described our walk with our Lord as being “gladiators.” So when we asked him to explain he responded,

Gladiators are in the ring fighting, learning through each experience. Up in the seats are the scribes, those who comment on the gladiator's actions—but they don't personally experience anything. You two speak as gladiators, people who experience their Lord and speak from that experience. That's why I called you 'gladiators.'

We knew in our hearts that being “gladiators” for Christ is how we were disciplined. The followers of Jesus who disciplined us had personally seen and borne witness to the miraculous work of our Lord with total confidence in Him when they prayed. They shared testimonies from intimate knowledge of Him because they experienced our Lord Jesus.

You might say that even though he faced doubt, a “gladiator” is like Peter getting out of the boat to walk on the water with Jesus (Matthew 14:25-33). A “scribe” is more like the men who remained seated in the boat. Peter could later relate what he experienced, even

about his doubt, while the rest of the apostles could only recount what Peter did. This captures the difference between *knowing* our Lord and *knowing about* Him.

Personally, we'd rather get out of the boat at His behest even if we have to face any doubts instead of being found sitting fearfully or complacently in the craft. If you're born again, we hope this is your heart's desire too. Even though this passage is often quoted, it truly does capture the heart of one who *knows* their Lord:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5,6).

In our years of ministry we've come to recognize that the “scribe” describes individuals who've amassed a lot of Bible knowledge, knowing *about* our Lord; *but* they don't *know* our Lord through experiencing His power in and through them. In fact, they tend to live vicariously by sharing accounts about the trust-based testimony of others, accounts that start off like this: “Did you hear about...?”

Thirty-one years ago we'd just begun a teaching ministry at a retreat center. A few months after we started, a prophetic friend warned us, **“Don't let others live vicariously through your faith.”** It took a while for us to understand his warning. Then we noticed that other people were sharing indirect testimonies about the miraculous things our Lord was doing on our behalf—but they had no testimony of their own. They were feeling good about themselves by telling others what our Lord did for *us* instead of seeking by His grace to be personally used in ways that brought Him praise.

- Do you live vicariously through only telling reports about the faith of other people, even

those you've read about?

- Or, do you have personal testimonies revealing your own trust in our Lord and His faithfulness, accounts that spur others on to greater trust after they've heard you testify?

We have one last comparison that may help if you *know about* our Lord but have not come to *know* Him. Think of a passenger plane. A gladiator may be compared to the pilots who are actually flying the aircraft, experiencing the actions needed to take off and land it and control it in turbulence. The passengers are more like “scribes.” They're passively seated in a plane, but they're not flying it. The entire flight is different when you're in the cockpit!

May this be so for each of us—***knowing our Lord through grateful and lovingly obedient experience.***