

The Knowledge of God

by Robert Constable

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God personally and having a deep understanding of His character and nature.

Duration: 44:38

Scripture: Proverbs 2:16, Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 29:13, Daniel 3:18, Matthew 7:21, Acts 5:29, Acts 20:24

Topics: "Knowledge Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not just passively listening to sermons, but actively applying the teachings of God to our lives. The speaker encourages trust in God and obedience to His word, using the example of Abraham. The speaker also highlights the idea that God is involved in every aspect of our lives and directs everything according to His will. The sermon concludes by discussing the characteristics of people who truly know God, emphasizing their strength and ability to do great things.

Transcript

to the second chapter of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 2. I remember once, I think it was at a conference, a speaker said it would be a good idea if we would form the habit of reading through the book of Proverbs every month since there's 31 chapters and there's 31 days in so many months. Read the first chapter, the first day, the second, the second day, and so on. And I thought, that sounds like a good idea.

And for a while I did this. And then you drop off, you know, when you go on these things that you do, and then a few months or years would go by, and then I'd remember what he said, and I'd start in on Proverbs again. All my life I've done this.

Every now and then I'd tie in the Proverbs and read it through during the month. And it's a surprising thing. I can remember Wilbur Smith so often saying he's been reading the Bible all his life and he never saw that before.

Well, you know, this is the way it is. And sometimes the words just come right off the page at you. And it was just a few months ago when I was reading the book of Proverbs in the second chapter that the first five verses jumped right off the page at me.

Let's read them. My son, if thou will receive my words and hide my commandments with thee so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding, yea, if thou cryest after knowledge

and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as four hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Well, that's a tremendous statement.

That it is possible for men to find the knowledge of God. You see, when you realize who God is and all, that man could know anything about him. But this is the knowledge of God.

We can know him. But you can't know him easily. It's no casual thing.

You can't come to the knowledge of God just by wishing to have the knowledge of God. Look what it says. If thou cryest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as four hidden treasures, you know, this means going after it, being determined to find it, putting some effort into it.

The Lord expects this. And if we're going to get to know him, this is what it's going to take. And then the question, of course, comes up.

Well, why try so hard? Why? Why make all the effort? Is he worth doing? Is he worth searching for her silver and hunting down as hidden treasure? Well, you remember the experience of the man Job? He knew the Lord, and he was a righteous man. And God was well pleased with Job. And he said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job a good man? And Satan said, Well, who wouldn't be good? After all, he's got it pretty soft.

You build a hedge around him. You've given him everything his heart could desire. Anybody can be good then.

But you take away what you've given him and see what happens. And so God said, Well, take it away. And so Satan took everything away from him.

And he was left destitute. And still he was true to God. And so when Satan came back after the testing and God said, Well, how are you doing? How about my servant Job? And he said, Well, of course, you've just taken things away from him.

If you really touch him in his body, then he'd deny you. And the Lord said, Go ahead. See what you can do.

And so Satan, you know, he really went after Job. Job had a hard time with all those boils from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. And he felt so sick and he was just utterly miserable.

But he was faithful to the Lord. And his friends came, you know the story, and comforted him, question mark. They talked about the situation anyway.

And then finally the Lord came to Job and spoke to him. And Job wound up with this statement. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear.

But now mine eye sees you. And I repent in dust and ashes. Now what was the occasion for his saying that? The occasion for his saying that was that he knew God before by reputation.

But now he had learned to know God personally. And he said, Forget my complaints. Forget everything I ever said.

I'm sorry because having gotten to know you the way I know you now, nothing else matters. Nothing else matters. And he came to a great experience to the knowledge of God.

Do you feel this way? Do you feel that the knowledge of the Lord is so great and so wonderful that nothing else matters? If I was to ask you what we've been considering during the mornings of this week, some of you would say we've been considering Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses. Some of you would say we've been thinking about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses. And these are true, but they only approach the truth.

The thing I've been trying to say is how important the knowledge of God is. The knowledge of the God of Abraham, and the knowledge of the God of Isaac, and the knowledge of the God of Jacob, and the knowledge of the God of Moses. Because, you know, it's possible to know a great deal about God.

To know about the God of Abraham, to know about the God of Moses, and not know God at all. What is important is not the God of Abraham or the God of Isaac, what is important is the God of you. What about the God you know? And that brings me to the question, you know, do you know God? Now, the Apostle Paul thought it was pretty great to know God.

Look at Philippians chapter 3. Here was a man who was highly educated, and he had everything going for him in his culture and in his day. A man of wide reputation, a man of great education, a man of fine associations, and a great career. And he says this, verse 7, But what things were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, a righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. Paul is saying in this passage, there isn't anything in life that even compares with the knowledge of God. That's the greatest thing we can have.

So let's face ourselves this morning. We've been thinking about men who knew God. We've been thinking about their God.

We call ourselves Orthodox evangelicals, and so we assume that we know God because perhaps we can state the gospel clearly. Any one of us in this room could probably do that. We can produce the right formulas when they're called for.

We can say it the right way. We know the form, but where is the joy and the gaiety and the gladness of the knowledge of God? That's the question that comes. Because if we know God, we could not help but be joyful, glad, exuberant, bubbling over Christians.

And I ask you this morning to look at yourself, to face yourself and say, is this the kind of freedom of spirit that I have? Am I overwhelmed with the joy and the gladness of the knowledge of God? Is this the thing that characterizes me? And I remind you that a little knowledge about God, or a little knowledge of God, is worth a great deal of knowledge about Him. It's possible to know a great deal about God and not know Him. We may have a very real and deep and sincere interest in theology.

That is the study of God, and that's a good thing. We may dip into Christian history so that we know all about the development of the church. We might even study the creeds.

We might be able to find our way about in the scriptures quite easily with no problem at all. We might lead study groups. And we are sometimes asked questions about our views on Christian things, our opinions.

And we might act as teachers, as a matter of fact. And friends tell us how they value the contribution that we make in their knowledge of the word of God. And because our friends tell us this, we're encouraged by this, and so we work at it.

And we develop quite a reputation in this regard. We think clearly. We talk well on Christian themes.

But I tell you this morning that this has nothing to do with the knowledge of God. These are nice things. These are good things, but they don't really have anything to do with knowing God.

These are the surface things, the peripheral things. These are the little evidences or the company we keep that is not the same as knowing God. Let me turn you to a very sobering verse, a verse that has pulled me up short time and again in Matthew 7. Matthew 7. The Lord Jesus is speaking there.

Verse 21. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.

And you read this and you think, what wonderful works have we ever done? What demons have we cast out? What have we ever done that amounts to anything for God? And there will be people who have done all of these things. And then when it comes to the showdown, it'll turn out they didn't know God at all. They knew all these other things that we've been talking about.

They've been able to go through all emotions. I submit to you that we can know much about godliness and not know God. Knowing about godliness depends in part on the company we keep, the people we associate with.

We can get to know about godliness from them. It depends partly on the sermons we listen to and to which we nod our heads and say amen. You know.

It depends on our reading, the books we read, what we allow into our minds and into our hearts. You can get books on anything. We certainly found that out this week, didn't we? We can get books on how to pray, get books on how to witness, how to read our Bible, how to tithe our money, how to be a young Christian, an old Christian, a happy Christian, get consecrated.

We can read books on how to lead men to Christ, how to get the baptism of the Holy Spirit or avoid it. We can get books on how we can speak with tongues, or books that can explain away the Pentecostal manifestation. Either way.

And all of this is learning at second hand about being a Christian believer, and it has nothing to do with knowing God. And what we're talking about this week is knowing God. That's something else again.

Not are we good at theology. Not are we balanced in our approach to the Christian life. That's not what I'm asking.

These things could be true. And still, we wouldn't know God. And the reason I'm bringing this up this morning is, I hope there's nobody here, that is figuring that because these other things are true of him, it follows that he knows God.

It does not follow that we know God because these other things are true of us. And the question is, do we know God? Now, of course, if we know God in the real sense, the losses and crosses that we bear in this life will mean very little to us. That's one of the great advantages of the knowledge of God.

It lifts us above this mundane sphere, and the losses and crosses of our life down here become incidental. I would like to suggest to you that those who know God have a great energy for God. They have great energy for God.

I want to look at a few things that characterize people that know God, so that you can put these things alongside your life, as I will be doing as I speak to you. Because I am challenged by this. Look now to Daniel chapter 11.

Daniel chapter 11, and verse 32. And I'm only interested in the latter part of the verse, but I'll read the whole thing. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries.

Now, but the people that do know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits. Here's one of the criteria, by which you can determine whether you know God, and which I can use to determine whether I know God. They shall do exploits.

Now to think of the context of this verse. Daniel has been taken away from home in Jerusalem. He's been carried away across the wilderness by the invading forces, and he's been set up in Babylonia, in a foreign court where the knowledge of God does not exist.

And he is among a lot of people who are saying, when you're in Rome, do as the Romans do, and don't make any waves while you're here. Just fit in. And so he is in an environment of disloyalty to the covenant of God.

All around him is the wickedness and idolatry of the heathen, and the disloyalty of those who go by the name of God. All around him this. And his whole life is a reaction against this.

It is a reaction against all this anti-God that he finds around him. It started right out. You remember when Daniel first arrived at the palace, and they began to serve him a meal from the king's table.

And he purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat. Right off. First thing.

And he said to Ariok, the man who had charge of him, I can't eat this stuff. This has denied me in the law of God. And Ariok said, well, look, you're going to get me into trouble, son.

I'm supposed to see to it that, you know, you are kept well and healthy, and that you develop and grow and all. And if you're going to go off on a fast like this, it's not going to do me any good. And Daniel said, let's give it a try, shall we, for a week? And let's see how it goes.

And Ariok was a reasonable man, apparently, and he said, all right. But I warn you, you start losing weight, and you're going to start eating. And Daniel said, all right.

And so he ate the pulse, or whatever that is. I don't know whether he ate bread and milk or mashed vegetables or what. But anyway, what he ate was according to the law of his God.

And at the end of the testing period, he was better off than all the others were. But the point is, really, that he stood up for what he knew to be true and what he knew to be right in an anti-God environment. Another thing about him, you remember when there was a law passed and nobody was to ask anything of any god except the king.

And Daniel heard about it. Daniel had been a big man in Babylonia for a long time, in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, in the reign of Belshazzar. Now, Darius was the king, Darius the Mede.

And the people in the establishment didn't like Daniel and the way he seemed to hang in there all the time and have all the good jobs. And so they fixed this up. They couldn't get him anyway except by his religion.

So they had the king sign this decree which couldn't be changed. Then they had Daniel. And so the word came to him, the king has signed this decree and it can't be changed.

Well, this shouldn't bother Daniel. He went home and it says, just like he always did, he knelt down in the front window where everybody could see him and he prayed three times a day the way he'd always prayed. The law of a king made no difference to him.

It was his relationship with God that was the important thing with Daniel. And so he carried on as he was and he just faced the situation. And God honored him for it.

And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. Another indication of the naturalness of Daniel's life to prayer. This will characterize us if we know God.

We will find prayer as natural as breathing. It's one of the things that will come in our lives. We will do great things and we will pray to God.

We'll keep in touch with him. Now, there's another thing. Those who know God have got great thoughts about God.

They never take God casually. Let me stop here for a moment just to say that this bothers me some. I think I notice it more among the younger men perhaps than others.

And that is the disposition to stand and pray to God with your hands in your pockets or to slouch down in a chair and pray to God, you know, this kind of thing. One of the things that we need to remember is that God is God. And if we were invited to, well, being an American, let me say we were invited to the White House to meet the President.

You know, we'd put on our best clothes. We'd stand up straight. We'd see to it that we spoke clearly.

We wouldn't be sloppy about it. And I think we've lost something. We're getting away from the sense of the knowledge of God that makes us realize that when we come into his presence it calls for respect.

We should remember who he is. And if we don't, it's an indication that our knowledge of God is faulty. Because those who know God have great thoughts of God.

Now, Daniel. Let's think about him some more. He's brought over from little Jerusalem.

Now, Jerusalem had been smashed up by Nebuchadnezzar and the prisoners had been taken away to Babylon. The people in Babylonia had no high thoughts about Jerusalem ever anyway. But Babylonia, oh brother, this was something else again.

This was the great world empire of the day. Is not this great Babylon which I have built? Nebuchadnezzar said, ooh, this is some place. And this little Jewish boy that came from Jerusalem had the temerity now to tell Nebuchadnezzar about the God of heaven who sets up kings and brings kings down.

And you better watch what you're doing. You know, he could have been slapped to the wall like a fly. And many men were for less than that in those days.

But it didn't bother Daniel. Daniel was associated with the God whose throne is so much higher than Nebuchadnezzar's throne it couldn't be compared. And so, Nebuchadnezzar, he'd say what he wanted to Nebuchadnezzar.

He'd be very careful what he said to God. He had great thoughts of God. A little Judah and great Babylon.

But listen to these words of Daniel, chapter 4, verse 26. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, Daniel is telling the king about his dream. Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

He says to the greatest king on earth, your throne will be established once you learn that the heavens rule. There is a God above you. You're not the top man.

Nebuchadnezzar thought he was. And so, Daniel taught Nebuchadnezzar in chapters 2 and in chapter 4 about God. He taught Belshazzar about God in chapter 5. In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged what Daniel said was so.

And in chapter 6, Darius confessed that Daniel's God was over all. Isn't that tremendous? The one man in a foreign, idolatrous court like that, because of his knowledge of God, should be able to communicate the fact of God to everybody, including the top men? Well, those that know God can do this. And it was the knowledge of God that was the basis of Daniel's prayers in chapter 2 and in chapter 9. And of his confidence in chapter 1 and chapter 6. And of his friend's confidence in chapter 1 and chapter 3. These people knew God.

And to read the book is to be challenged in your own heart, if you are reading it carefully, as to whether or not you really know God the way they knew God. Daniel said God knew what was going on. He foreknew what was going on.

And he would have the last word about what was going on in history, and in the destiny of every single man. That's the kind of God Daniel had. Let me read to you out of the 9th chapter of Daniel, one of the great chapters of the Bible.

Verse 4, And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him and to them that keep his commandments. Verse 7, O Lord, righteousness belongs unto thee, but unto us confusion of faith, as at this day to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and unto all Israel that are near and that

are far off, to all the countries whither thou hast driven them because of their trespass, that they have trespassed against thee. Verse 9, To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.

Verse 14, Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth, for we obeyed not his voice. This is the way we think about God. God involved in all the circumstances of our lives.

God directing everything according to the counsels of his own will. God in charge. Those who know God will think of God this way.

And those who know God will show great boldness for God. And we couldn't have a better book before us in that regard, could we? Than the book of Daniel. Daniel and his friends, who stood up for God in a foreign idolatrous court.

And all the things they faced, but they knew God. They stuck their necks out, if you will. But they were not foolhardy men.

They were men who knew God. And so they were willing to take any risk upon God. This carries over into the New Testament too.

You remember when those men who were so frightened of the Jews, that they'd sneak away and have their meetings in private, said to the leaders of Israel, we ought to obey God rather than men. You remember when it was said, neither count I my life dear to myself that I might finish my course with joy. The apostle Paul, you see, was a bold man.

And he was bold because he knew God. And Peter became bold because he knew God. Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego were bold before Nebuchadnezzar because they knew God.

Imagine standing up before Nebuchadnezzar in those circumstances and saying to him, our God is able to deliver us from thy hand, and if not, we're still not going to worship your image. And into the furnace they went, and out of the furnace they came. Why? Because they knew God.

That was the important thing. Absolutely nothing would get in the way of their confidence in Him. And that's true of those who know God.

They are unafraid. They can face all the problems. They can face the difficulties.

They can face the circumstances of life. They can face all kinds of opposition. Why? Because they know God.

And if a man knows God, he goes through life above all these things. And those who know God have great contentment in God. In Romans 5, 1, the apostle Paul said, being justified by faith, we have peace.

We have peace. The peace of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Wouldn't you say they had peace? They could face anything with their knowledge of God.

Now, the thing that comes to my mind is, what could I face in view of my knowledge of God? And I am shaken by this idea, you know. When I think of the things that make me afraid, and the things that make me nervous, and the things I wonder about and all, and then I have to say, hold it. What does this have to

say to you about your knowledge of God? Who are you depending on here? You know, it makes me kind of frightened myself.

Do I know God? Do you know God? Do we? Wouldn't you like to know God the way Shadrach knew him? Wouldn't you like to know God the way Daniel knew him? The way Abraham knew him, and Isaac and Jacob and Moses knew him? Well, you have to begin someplace, so let's begin with an admission right now, this morning, of how little we know him. Shall we? Could we begin there? Could everybody in the room here, including me, start out by saying, well, I guess in the light of the things you've been saying, I don't know him very well after all. That's the way I feel.

That's where you have to begin. Well, how are we going to get to know him? Well, he has come out to us in wonderful grace. And he has revealed himself to us in his Son, in the Lord Jesus.

And when the Lord Jesus was here on earth, he invited men to accompany him wherever he went. They came to him and they said, where do you live? And he said, come and see. Stick around.

Come. He said to men, come, follow me. And they came and they followed him.

And as they followed in his company, they came to know him. And in coming to know him, they came to know God. One of them said to him one day, Lord, show us the Father and we'll be satisfied.

And he said, Philip, he that has seen me has seen the Father. Why do you say, show us the Father? He said to his father in the prayer in John 17, I think it was, I have declared unto them thy name. That was his whole purpose here, was to reveal the heart of God to men, so men could come to know God.

Because men did not know God. He talked all the time about his Father, his Father, his Father. I remember a man once saying that the Lord Jesus referred to his Father in the Gospel of John.

I think he said it was 121 times, and I couldn't believe it. So I went home and I counted them. And I found out the man did know what he was talking about.

That's one of the problems we who speak face, is that people might check us out. But he was always talking about his Father. He was always seeking to reveal God.

And if we really want to learn to know about God, we must get to know the Lord Jesus. Because he declares his Father. But this is not easy.

Now, he's not here. One thing for Philip and Nathaniel and John and Andrew to get to know him, because they got to walk around, you know, all over the place with him. Down into Galilee, up into Judea, around the lake, and every place.

They were with him all the time. And he isn't here now. Well, what difference does that make? Well, that doesn't make any difference, because he's not here physically.

He is here in his spirit. He is here, and the Spirit of God is here with the explicit purpose of making him known to our hearts. We can get to know him just, I was going to say, just as well as his disciples.

We can get to know him better. Because they might forget what he said. And apparently they did.

You know, he'd say things to them, and then they'd ask some dumb question the next day, as though he hadn't said anything. If you feel that way, you can go back to the Word that reveals him, and you can find out what he said again. You can make real sure, and it'll always be there, the same way it was last time you saw it.

And if you really are interested in getting to know God, this is the way to get to know him. To get to know the Savior. To know his Word.

To know his Spirit. But this isn't easy. Let me read you a verse from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah chapter 29. He's talking there about knowing God. Verse 11.

For thus saith the Lord, it says in verse 10, I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

You see, God isn't in part-time business with us. He's willing to meet us if we're willing to meet him, but we go all the way or don't start. That's what he's saying.

But if you really mean business, then I will respond and I will answer you and I will meet you. How do we do this? That's what we've been trying to say all week is how we do this. We do it by trusting him.

This is the lesson that we learned from the life of Abraham. God wants us to trust him. To obey what he says.

To believe it. To take our Bibles and read it and make application of that to our lives. Not just read it, but make application of it to our lives.

That's what trusting is. That's what believing is. It's taking hold of it and saying, if the world falls apart, I'm going to believe this and go on it.

To listen to his words. This is what Abraham did. Back there in Ur of the Chaldees, in the holy idolatry in which he lived, he listened and he heard the voice of God come to him.

And he responded to this. And then we learned from the God of Isaac that he wants us to appropriate his gifts. When he wants to do something for us, let him do it.

And say, thank you, Lord. One of the things that's very encouraging here in the ministry, we hear the men say, thank you, Lord. You know, it's a great thing to have a spirit.

And this is what we need if we're going to get to know God. We have to be able to receive from him all that he wants to give us. And then we learned in thinking about the God of Jacob, didn't we, that we don't meddle.

We let God do his work with us and work out his will in our lives, and we don't try to beat him to the punch all the time. We don't get nervous about whether God can do his job or whether he can't. We let him do it.

That's the way you get to know God. Let God do it. And so this week we have thought about the God of Abraham, the God who wants to be trusted, the God of Isaac, the God who wants to give, the God of

Jacob who wants to train us and teach us to know about him and will undertake for our lives, the God of Moses who longs to do great things through us, the God revealed by his activities, by his word, by his provision, and by his readiness to come in and to dwell with us and be our friend and companion.

This is God. This is what God is like. The God of Daniel this morning, they that know their God shall do exploits.

And the career of Daniel is an unthinkable career. But it says to you and me, God is prepared to do these things for all those who put their trust in him and let him do it. And this is the God that will be your God.

He has told us all these things, not just to inform us, not to give us a lot of information. It's great to have the information. But he hasn't given it to us for that reason.

He's given it to us to appropriate it and to believe it and to take it into our own situations and to cut out this business of listening to sermons and saying that was a nice sermon and throwing it over our shoulders saying I hope... We are sorry this message ends so abruptly. But the original tape ran out before the conclusion. This is the fifth and final message delivered at the Guelph Conference on Abraham's life.

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