

(A Spiritual Leader) 2. Knowing God

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of knowing God personally for effective spiritual leadership and ministry authority.

Scripture: Daniel 11:32, John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 7:23, Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Knowing God"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches about the importance of spiritual leaders knowing God personally in order to lead others along God's ways. He contrasts preachers who speak smooth words to please people with those who know God, give insight, and do great exploits for Him. Poonen emphasizes the need for leaders to break free from imitating Western trends and to have a personal knowledge of God's thoughts and ways, rather than just repeating popular teachings. He challenges Christians to seek a personal relationship with God, as true spiritual authority can only come through knowing Him intimately.

Transcript

A spiritual leader will be able to lead others along God's ways because He knows God personally.

Daniel 11:32,33 speaks of two types of preachers who will be found on earth in the last days. There will be many who speak smooth words and turn people to ungodliness. On the other hand, there will be a few who know God, who give people insight and do great exploits for God.

Today, both these types of preachers are found in Christendom. There are many who speak smooth words to please their hearers. But those who know God speak the truth, whether their hearers are pleased or offended, and whether men shower them with praises or abuses!

Human beings are like sheep. They tend to follow the crowd and are afraid of being different. But if the crowd is going in the wrong direction, everybody goes astray. This is the situation today. So, God is looking for some, who will stand true to Him and lead people along His way. But if we are to be bold enough to be different from the crowd, we must know God and His mind - His thoughts and His ways.

Most Christian "leaders" whom I've met in India during the last 30 years, do not seem to know God personally, or His thoughts. They simply repeat what they've read in some Western Christian magazine or book. Some particular emphasis is popular in every decade among American Christian leaders. In the 1980s it was one thing and today it is something else. And like the echoes that one hears in mountainous

regions, these emphases are faithfully echoed by their sycophants in India and other Third-World countries - especially when they present their "papers" at congresses on evangelism! If the American "leaders" write about "church growth", then the Indian Christian "leaders" faithfully echo "church growth". If the Americans speak about "the 10/40 window", then the Indian preachers faithfully repeat "the 10/40 window". If Western Christians teach "the pre-tribulation rapture of the church", then Indian Bible-teachers will teach only that. They never dare to question Western Christians!

But doesn't God ever speak to anybody in India directly? Does He speak only to the white races?

The reason for all this imitation is the slave-mentality that is found among almost all Third-World Christians. We Indians were ruled by the British for more than 200 years. And it is difficult for us to be free from this "slave-mentality". Almost all Indian Christians feel that the white man is superior to them and more spiritual than them - because he is assertive and domineering and has lots of money.

I met a black American brother once who told me that although the black people in U.S.A. had been legally delivered from slavery more than a century ago, the spirit of the slave was still found in most of them even now! When they look at a white man, they feel inferior to him. I find exactly the same attitude in almost every Indian Christian.

To tell you quite honestly, I've found most Western preachers who've come to India (that I've met) to be quite shallow and worldly. They don't know God. But because they have plenty of money to throw around, they become celebrities wherever they go. Look at the advertisements for Christian conferences in India. In the vast majority of cases, the main speaker is always a Western preacher. What a sad state our country's Christianity has come to? If this were true only among nominal Christians, one could understand it. But it is just the same among those who claim to be "born again" and "Spirit-baptized"!

We must break free from this slave-mentality. But if some white man is paying your salary, then of course it will be difficult for you to break free from him! Then you must decide to stop serving men and start serving the Lord. Whose servant are you in any case? The Bible tells us not to be slaves of men, because we have been bought with a price (1 Cor.7:23).

Let your passion be to know God personally. Then you won't be an "echo" of some Western "leader" - or of an Indian "leader" for that matter! You won't be anyone's slave. You'll be a man of God. Spiritual authority can come only through a personal knowledge of God.

I urge you my brothers, be men who know God. That will make your personal life glorious and your ministry authoritative. This is what our country needs today more than anything else.

It is much easier to know the Bible than it is to know God - because you don't have to pay a price to know the Bible. All you have to do is study.

You can be immoral in your personal life and impure in your thought-life and still know the Bible very well. You can be a well-known preacher and yet be a great lover of money at the same time. But you can't know God and be immoral in your life. You can't know God and be a lover of money. That's impossible. And that's why most preachers take the easier path of knowing the Bible rather than knowing God.

I want to ask you, brothers: Are you happy with just knowing the Bible or is there a desperate hunger in your hearts to know the Lord? The apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:8-10 that his greatest longing was to know the Lord better. He considered everything else as rubbish compared to knowing the Lord. Paul gave

up all his pearls for this pearl of great price. The secret of Paul's ministry is to be found not in the years that he spent studying the Bible at Gamaliel's seminary, but in his personal knowledge of the Lord.

"Eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ personally" (John 17:3). We have perhaps defined eternal life as living eternally in heaven. But that was not how Jesus defined it. Eternal life has nothing to do with going to heaven or escaping hell. It has to do with knowing the Lord. To know God intimately and personally has been the passion of my life and the burden of my heart. I know that my ministry can have Divine authority only as I know God personally. And so, in all of our churches, I have sought to lead people to a knowledge of God Himself.

There is more Bible knowledge today than ever before in history. For nearly 1500 years after the day of Pentecost, there were no printed Bibles available anywhere. Only in the last two centuries, have Bibles been so freely available. Today, we have so many versions and concordances and study-helps.

But do you think all this increased Bible knowledge has produced holier Christians? No. If Bible-knowledge could produce holiness, we should be having the godliest people in history living today. But we don't. Satan himself would have been holy if Bible-knowledge could produce holiness - for no-one knows the Bible as well as he does.

We have so many seminaries today teaching the Bible to thousands of students. But are the godliest people in the world today found in those seminaries? No. Many seminary graduates today are worse than the heathen.

Some years ago, I met a seminary graduate from one of India's top evangelical seminaries, who had stood first in his graduating class. He told me that after three years in that seminary, his spiritual condition was worse than when he first joined it. What then did that seminary teach him? It had taught him facts about the Bible and about Christianity. Satan himself could have graduated as first in the class, from such a seminary.

What was the use that young man learning Hermeneutics, and what the "higher critics" had said, and what the root-meanings of Greek words were, if he hadn't overcome anger, bitterness, lustful thoughts and the love of money? With his newly-acquired certificate, he would soon become a pastor of a church. But what would he teach the people in his church, whose biggest problems would be moral and not theological? He wouldn't be able to help them at all, in any of those areas. This is how God's work in India is being destroyed.

Only if you know God yourself, will you be able to lead your flock to know Him. If you have victory over sin in your own life, you'll be able to lead your flock also to victory over sin. Then they too will be equipped to go out and serve the Lord - with authority and power.

Do you think the devil is impressed by anyone's Bible knowledge or degree-certificates? Not at all. Satan fears only holy, humble men and women who know God.

May God help us to lead our younger brothers and sisters to know God.

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