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The Hungry Heart: Satisfy Your Desire to Know God in Deeper Ways

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Introduction

At some point in my childhood, I heard the Bible story about Elijah's asking Elisha what he could do for him before he left for heaven. Elisha's response to his predecessor and mentor was clear and certain: "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me" (2 Kings 2:9).

I don't remember how old I was the day I prayed for a double portion of the intimate relationship my mother had with God. Something about the way she trusted him fascinated me. Something about the way she engaged in conversation with him enticed me. Something about the way she really knew him intrigued me.

Mom's journey began in early fall when I was about six months old, the second of what would be a brood of eight children. Her eighteen-year-old sister, Joan, was dying of a rheumatic heart, and the family had given Joan an early Christmas and an early graduation from high school. My grandfather, Mom's dad, heard of a man who prayed for the sick and they were healed. Out of other options, my grandfather persevered through ignorance of all spiritual things and the opposition of family members. He carried Joan's swollen body into the stranger's tent revival the following Friday night. By Tuesday my aunt was completely healed. Joan lived to see not only that Christmas but more than fifty Christmases since.

As great as Joan's miracle was, the greater miracle was the conversion of my mom and dad and many extended family

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members to Christ. My mother said, “I want to know this Lord who would heal my little sister.”

Mom wasn’t content with just becoming acquainted with Christ. She wanted to know everything about him. She scoured the Bible to learn all she could. I saw her turn the pages of Scripture as she stirred pots on the stove. I heard her in our furnace room—the only place she could find to be alone, away from all her kids—crying out to the One with whom she had fallen in love.

That’s how I grew up, watching my mother get to know the Lord intimately. I realized more was available than just a perfunctory Sunday morning walk with God. I got a glimpse of a Lord who cared about everything in our lives, and he talked to my parents and showed them the way to go. God knew them, and they knew God. Somehow our problems found solutions, and our needs were met.

FROM THEIRS TO MINE

Throughout my teen years I continued to enjoy this intimate fellowship with God vicariously through my parents’ relationship with him, especially my mother’s. When I was in my early twenties, I sat beside my dad in church one Sunday morning, singing a hymn I’d never heard before:

Learning to lean.

Learning to lean.

I’m learning to lean on Jesus.

Finding more power than I ever dreamed.

I’m learning to lean on Jesus.¹

As I look back, I realize that morning signaled a new direction for me, one that would take me on a new journey. No longer would it be enough for me to lean on my mom and dad, who’d learned to

lean on the Lord. The time would come for me to learn to lean for myself.

In the years that followed, I graduated from college, took my first teaching job, got married, and had two little girls. When I was thirty-three and pregnant with my third child, I watched my dad grow ill with pancreatic cancer. Then my husband left and ended our marriage. It was in September 1985, in the midst of all those circumstances, that I tucked a Bible under my arm, walked to the field behind our home, and surrendered my hungry heart to Christ. I prayed, “I give you not just these situations. I give you my life.” My surrender that day marked the beginning of my own relationship with God.

I will never forget the years that followed and the experiences I had as I found a God who was not distant but instead came through in the middle of the night when I felt that everyone slept but me. I’ll never forget the time my children and I prayed about a bill we couldn’t pay, and that night we watched as five hundred dollars came to us out of nowhere. I’ll never forget how God warned me that one of my children would go through some hard times. She did. And God held me and guided me—and my daughter. I’ll never forget the times I dragged my finger across Bible verses that promised me safe passage through to the other side of a trial, and I always arrived safely and with a sense of victory. All these things and many, many more, I will never forget.

Through it all, I have gotten to know God as my mother did, yet differently, uniquely. My friendship with God was designed just for me. I sometimes questioned how he could love me so much, but I knew he did. I wondered how he could be so patient with me, but I knew he was. I wondered how he kept from getting aggravated with my lack of trust, but I knew he wasn’t. With gentleness he kept me going on the right track. I learned I could talk with him,

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laugh with him, rejoice with him—even brag to him, and I knew I was his delight.

FROM MINE TO YOURS

I had to write this book. I pray that I can begin to convey the depths of God that I have only begun to know. I hope that I can stir in you the longing for adventure and friendship with God that has been inside you since the day you were born. My greatest desire is to whet your appetite for the incredible, indescribable, unutterable, undeniable sweet things of God, just as the aroma of cinnamon rolls fresh from the oven whets your physical appetite.

This book is about getting to know God. Many books and sermons have been devoted to this subject, and their treatment, depth, and explanations are as varied as the people who created them. The more I study what it means to know Christ, the more I'm convinced we still don't really understand all it involves. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

But between coming to Christ and going to be with him in heaven, between the eye, ear, and mind's gearing up for the incredible surprise that awaits us on the day we finally see, hear, and understand what all that means, God offers each of us the opportunity to really know him.

Divided into three parts, this book bases your growth in knowing the depths of God on three verses from the Scriptures. Part 1, "From the Outside Looking In," is based on John 14:9: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not *known* Me?" Part 2, "A View from the Inside," is based on Philippians 3:10: "That I may *know* Him." Part 3, "Taking the Inside Out," is based on Daniel 11:32: "The people who *know* their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."²

Introduction

During those early years Mom got to know God in the furnace room. Now she kneels on a little rug at the end of her couch. After more than fourteen years as a widow, Mom talked to me recently by phone about the sale of their home, about her relocation, about her struggle to feel at home, and about where she should live. “Like I have done for more than fifty years, I look in his Word before I get up in the morning,” she said, “and today, Lynda, this is what I read from Psalm 104: ‘He sends the springs into the valleys; they flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them the birds of the heavens have their home’” (vv. 10-12).

God provides for the animals, and he reminds my mom through his Word that he continues to provide for her too. Once more Mom received her daily direction and peace from the One she has gotten to know, trust, and love with all her might.

God has something in store for you that is sweet and deep and unique. So come with me. Wipe your feet and step inside to the place where really knowing the Almighty and having your own hungry heart filled is only a decision away. The decision is yours.

—Lynda Hunter Bjorklund

1

What Does It Mean to Know God?

For a long time I have had a recurring dream in which a special room is attached to my home. Filled with magnificent antiques, it's a place few people get to see because it seems too special and unique to make available to those who wouldn't appreciate its splendor. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so I invite inside only those beholders who ask to see its beauty.

I thought of that dream recently as I took a walk with a friend. She said, "My prayer every day for two years has been that I would come to know God. Really know him."

To know God. After many years in ministry and living life in general, I have probably heard women express this desire more than any other. These women I encounter possess an insatiable thirst for spiritual things. They long to see the beauty and the mystery places, such as the one in my dream.

No words more accurately sum up the essence, purpose, and meaning of life, both now and in eternity to come, than the words *to know God*. No words provide more concise direction for navigating our way through decisions. No words better guide us through life's storms. No words illustrate a greater miracle than that the all-sufficient, all-powerful, all-glorious God of the universe would offer individual people like you and me relationship with himself.

Author and theologian J. I. Packer writes, "What matters supremely . . . is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the

larger fact which underlies it—the fact that *he knows me*. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters.”¹

When we open the Bible, we read at the beginning how God walked in the cool of the day with the first man he created. They talked together. God knew him, and he knew God. We turn to the end of the Book of Life’s story, and we find that as Christians we will someday live with God forever, see him face-to-face, and even look like him.

But in between, things happen. Some pages of life’s book present joyous events, such as marriage and the births of children. We smile as we sail along on smooth waters. Then just as we’re getting accustomed to riding the crest of a wave, we plunge to the depths. We turn another page, and we hear a bad diagnosis. We bury a loved one. We suffer a financial setback.

Life seemed to be sailing along as planned for my thirty-two-year-old niece, Alice. Without any kind of belief in God, she had established herself as an attorney and married her high school sweetheart. Their then eighteen-month-old daughter had become the light of their lives. But one Wednesday changed all that. Alice learned she had cancer and only weeks to live. Suddenly, all that mattered was whether or not she had a relationship with God. She and her husband prayed to receive Christ as their Savior the week they heard the diagnosis. At the writing of this book, it’s too early to see whether God will choose to heal Alice and whether she will get the opportunity to know God in a deeper way.

Alice’s eternity is secure, but God desires so much more for us.

Knowing God, really knowing him, is an option for every Christian willing to go the extra mile with him, to dig a little deeper, to strive a little more. Just as a cake is still a cake even without the icing, a Christian can still be a Christian and ultimately go to heaven without ever experiencing deep intimacy with God. But so much more is available to us.

Nineteenth-century preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your souls.” Little saving knowledge of God can get us through the pearly gates, but great knowledge of God brings heaven to our souls right here on earth and sustains us through both the highs and the lows and brings him glory through it all: “The land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys . . . a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:11-12).

Knowing God means we voluntarily embark on the journey to find intimate fellowship with the One who cares and sees all. Knowing God brings us to a place of trust in him, whether we’re experiencing the hilltop or the valley. Knowing God allows us to lift our eyes off the hardships and onto the ultimate victory that is to come. Packer writes, “What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance; and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and compelling goal can there be than to know God?”²

Once we realize that our purpose on earth is to find intimate fellowship with God—to really know him—we don’t have to concentrate so much on the obstacles we encounter. We gain faith to believe we’ll make it through and find level footing once again. Knowing God makes us certain, deep in our hearts, that he knows and cares about everything that concerns us, no matter what

happens around us. My mother calls this way of knowing God having it down inside our “knowers.” Once that knowledge is there, no circumstance can take it away.

WHAT DOES KNOWING MEAN?

Roget's thesaurus says that the word *know* means “to perceive . . . with the intellect” or “to participate in or partake of personally.” Synonyms include *apprehend*, *comprehend*, *fathom*, *grasp*, or *understand*.³

In Western thought, we say we know in one of two ways: (1) *We know things*. “I know my address and my phone number.” This knowledge consists of cognitive facts and data that we possess and file in the brain. It does not contain an emotional connection. (2) *We know people*. “I know my husband and my friend.” This kind of knowing includes emotional bonds, shared interests, common goals, similar outlooks, mutual admiration, time spent together, and interaction at many levels about all kinds of things. Eventually I know you and you know me. This kind of knowing does not take place merely through brain cells. It has an emotive connection that draws us into relationship.

Eastern thought, specifically Hebrew in this case, lends another dimension to *knowing* that connects both the cognitive—or factual—and the emotional elements of the word. It says that *to know* involves experiencing something, not just intellectualizing it. To know someone is to share an intimate relationship with that person. The Hebrew word *yada* means to encounter or experience through life-giving intimacy. A man may “know” a woman through sexual intercourse. We see an example of this kind of knowing in Genesis 4:1: “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.” A woman may “know” a man in the same sense, as in Numbers 31:17: “Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately.”

Yada involves concern, inner engagement, dedication, or attachment to a person.

We can also *yada* God. Our part in knowing God means walking faithfully in his ways and living out the terms of his covenant. It includes both the internalizing of truth and its outworkings in the affairs of life.

One day I taught the beginnings of *yada-ing* God to one of my daughters after she had said something that muddled her Christian testimony. I knew that my teenage daughter knew what was right. She had her factual knowledge of God down pat. She could recite portions of Scripture and even the theme of last week's sermon at church, but she needed more. So on our way to school I described what someone told me she'd said. "You don't need to respond or explain. I wasn't there and didn't hear the words you spoke," I continued, "but God did. You are responsible to God, now and forever, and your repentance should be directed to him too."

As my daughter was learning, going to church every Sunday and attending Christian school isn't enough. Graduating from seminary or reading the Bible from cover to cover will not of itself bring personal relationship with the Father. We can't know anyone by compiling a spreadsheet of characteristics. We can't read, study, and attend church and when we've gathered enough information, assume that we know God. If that's all it took, God would be nothing more than a mere man, and our relationship with him would be dependent on how much information we had about him. Fact gathering is not relationship.

Knowing God takes place through a day-by-day surrendering of our lives to him, talking with him, and falling in love with him. Yet knowing God is not just an emotional experience either. It doesn't magically happen after we receive a measurable answer to prayer or attend a moving church service. In *The Life God Blesses*, author Gordon MacDonald calls these occurrences "spiritual experiences"

that require little discipline of the soul. They become a matter of emotion, last for only a short while, and bring the recipient of the experiences honor or exaltation. But sooner or later, he says, “One has to come down to something that looks like normal. And when that happens, the spiritual experience is over, and the soul remains unconvinced.”⁴

Such was the case following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Every part of U.S. society was left reeling after that fateful Tuesday, and people responded. *Newsweek* reported Gallup poll findings about changing American habits. Of the people surveyed:

- 60 percent attended church
- 70 percent cried more
- 74 percent prayed more
- 82 percent displayed the American flag
- 77 percent showed more affection to others⁵

In addition, Bible sales soared by 28 percent, and liquor sales dropped by 50 percent. Radio stations played “God Bless the USA” 2,605 times the week after the attacks versus 47 times the week before. During the ten days after that dreadful Tuesday, in Houston, Texas, alone four hundred married couples withdrew their divorce applications prior to court proceedings.⁶ It appeared people had turned their attention back to God.

I had launched my national radio talk show just three months earlier. During subsequent programs I offered listeners the opportunity to discuss their feelings about the attacks. What I discovered, however, was that they didn’t want to talk as much about the terrorist attacks as about the “attacks” in their own lives: divorce, disappointment, disillusionment. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 had exposed the vulnerabilities of individual people throughout the country and forced them to rethink their lives, to reassess their priorities, and to make a stand for what they really believed.

But as the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks approached, additional surveys revealed that the new-and-improved way of thinking in America had not continued. Poll after poll indicated that citizens seemed to have returned to the mediocre, complacent, and inactive mind-set of the days before the attacks. By the time we rang in the new year of 2003 fifteen months later, the press had published a list of the twenty events that had affected our society the most that year. Of those events, only one religious event made the list, and it wasn't the fact that people had come to really know God and were sharing their experience with the world. It was the sex scandal involving Catholic priests.

Among other things, 9/11 revealed that many Christians have little experience when it comes to really knowing God. Sure, we have the outer trappings, but these lose their value when life gets turbulent and we find ourselves heading into the valley of difficulties. Author Calvin Miller emphasized this when he wrote, "Things dermal and outward lose their importance when things visceral and inward go wrong. Down where creams and oils cannot penetrate, the body must sometimes reckon with strong judgments. Then the deep issues of life hold final sway over all things surface."⁷

Whether we're dealing with a personal tragedy, such as Alice's cancer diagnosis, or with a global crisis, like terrorist threats, the answer to those difficulties lies in really knowing God.

KNOWING GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament refers many times to knowing God, but it does so in a somewhat indirect sense. In those days, when God's children wanted to communicate with him, they had to go through the high priest, who offered sacrifices and prayed to God on their behalf. God also used prophets, who went about the countryside telling people about him and performing miracles. When the prophet Elisha sent his servant to ask the Shunammite woman if things were well with

her and her family, the woman replied, “It is well,” even though her only son had just died and she had come seeking Elisha to raise the child from the dead (see 2 Kings 4:8-37). Despite not having “direct access” to God, this woman had come to know deep down about his faithfulness through what his prophet had taught and the miracles he had performed. Knowing God through Elisha gave her the confidence that all was well, even when things didn’t look good.

In Moses’ day God proved himself to his people corporately through miracles. He let the Israelites know *about* him through his deeds: “You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who . . .”

- brought you “out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exodus 6:7)
- struck the water of the Nile, “and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood” (Exodus 7:20)
- got rid of the frogs “from your houses, from your servants, and from your people” (Exodus 8:10-11)
- sent “swarms of flies on [Pharaoh] and [his] servants, on [his] people and into [his] houses” (Exodus 8:21)
- sent the full force of “all My plagues to [Pharaoh’s] very heart, and on [his] servants and on [his] people” (Exodus 9:14)
- stopped the thunder and hail (Exodus 9:29)
- “dealt harshly with the Egyptians and . . . performed my signs among them” (Exodus 10:2, NIV)

God used these immediately discernible glimpses into the supernatural as the Israelites’ beginning steps in getting to know him. His purpose was to teach those who observed these signs *about* himself: “To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God” (Deuteronomy 4:35).

The Israelites saw, and they believed, at least for the time being. It was the thing to do. If you had asked any of the Israelites then if

God was God, they would probably have said yes. But so would people of other nations who worshiped other gods:

- “The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.” (Exodus 7:5, NIV)
- “I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” (Exodus 14:4, NIV)
- “The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.” (Exodus 14:18, NIV)
- “The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord.” (Isaiah 19:21, NIV)
- “Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God.” (Isaiah 37:20, NIV)

Most of the Israelites never got past the level of merely knowing *about* God. That’s why in the days after those miracles, when they faced new challenges, they doubted and complained and wondered whether God would ever be faithful to them again.

As a child I watched the movie *The Ten Commandments*, starring Charlton Heston, which depicted the Israelites’ doubts following such giant miracles, and I couldn’t believe it. How could they wonder about God’s sufficiency and wander from his truths after all they had seen? During a recent Easter season, I watched a rerun of that movie classic and again saw the Israelites questioning and doubting God’s faithfulness after experiencing his miracles. I see the same scenario played out in the body of Christ. When God’s miracles are measurable or we’re in a hard place and need him for our very existence, we recognize God as God as we learn *about* him. But

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how many of us have grown beyond merely knowing *about* God to knowing him personally?

Moses did. He realized that we are made to really know God, and he went beyond a surface relationship with him. He knew that God's people could know a lot *about* the Almighty without having much knowledge *of* him, much like some people who never really get to know their spouse's likes and dislikes, even after years of marriage. Moses realized that God's people could even live outwardly godly lives without an inner knowledge of who God really was. He intentionally expanded his knowledge *about* God to a knowledge *of* God, and he prayed, "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you.' . . . And the Lord said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name'"(Exodus 33:13, 17, NIV).

In *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer writes, "A little knowledge *of* God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge *about* Him."⁸ Moses realized this, and God revealed himself to Moses and used him for mighty things in delivering the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, establishing them as a nation, and preparing them for entrance into Canaan.

God gave his people the chance to get to know *about* him through the observable so that they would want to know him in deeper ways through a heart relationship with him, and he promised to bring them to that heart relationship: "I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

To know God with all our hearts. That is God's desire for his people, to make the cry of their hearts, *Lord I want to know you. Teach me your ways so I may know You and continue to find favor with you.* When that becomes our desire, God demonstrates his pleasure

with us and gives us the things our hearts cry for: he teaches us his ways and deepens our knowledge of him. After all, he knows each of us by name. That's why author J. I. Packer could write, "What matters supremely . . . is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that *he knows me*."⁹

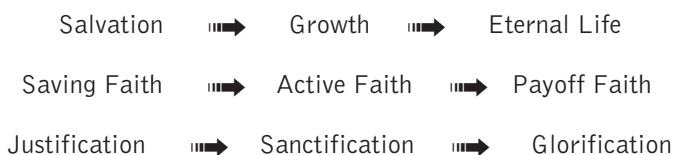
Knowing God—the purpose of life. He knows us, and we can grow to know him. He wanted it then, and he wants it now.

KNOWING GOD NOW

Fast-forward to the time when God sent his Son. Four hundred years of "silence" passed between the Old and the New Testaments. No writing of Scripture. No prophets. No miracles. Imagine the panic of people who lived during those centuries and knew only *about* God. They no longer saw immediately observable miracles to sustain their faith. Then along came Jesus, who redefined what it meant to *really know* God intimately.

Depending on the version of the Bible we may be looking at, the book of 1 John uses the word *know* anywhere from twenty to forty times. In 1 John 3:2, we read, "Now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Our journey to knowing Christ is just that: a journey. We might picture the progression in the following ways:



Meeting Christ → Getting to Know Christ → Living with Christ

Coming to Christ begins our journey with him, and in the end we will exist for eternity with him. But between that first step and the

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final one, it's time to grow, and it's only in the *growing* that we gain the *knowing*. All that is required to get into heaven is to take Christ as your Savior, and that's why Jesus could tell the thief crucified beside him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43, NIV).

God wants us to get to know him through relationship. And just as in Moses' day, the people who are willing to do that are few. Most either do not know they have the opportunity to be in that special place, or they have no desire to see it. And the difference between those who do and those who don't lies in the level of satisfaction we settle into. Are we *satisfied* to sit in the same pew every Sunday, do the same things we've always done, and stay at the same level of relationship with Christ we were at five years ago? Or will we *never* be satisfied until we experience 1 John 3:2 and are finally like him? Do we long to look and talk and think and pray and respond a little more like Christ every day of our lives? And will we not be completely satisfied until that day comes?

When we can pray from our hearts the words of Psalm 17:15, "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness," we will grow in the active faith and sanctification that God wants for us.

THE CHALLENGE

In John 14:9, Jesus challenged his disciple Philip to examine his level of satisfaction with where he was in relationship with the Savior.

Like many Christians, Philip was not without godly attributes and achievements. He heard Jesus' teaching and saw his miracles. He brought Nathanael to Christ (John 1:45). He served as a contact man for the Greeks and is known for bringing Gentiles to Jesus (John 12:20-23). In John 6 we read how Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and went up on a mountain with his disciples. But the

multitudes followed, those who knew *about* Jesus through his miracles. Jesus looked at the five thousand men, plus women and children, and then challenged Philip about whether he really knew Christ or, like the multitude, merely knew *about* him. He asked Philip a rhetorical question: “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” (v. 5, NIV).

Philip’s knowing-about-Jesus mentality caused him to answer, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” (v. 7, NIV). He offered a natural answer to a supernatural question. Verse 6 explains that Jesus intended this question as a test for Philip because Jesus already knew what he was going to do about the situation. It’s at this point that Jesus performed another miracle and turned a boy’s lunch of five barley loaves and two fish into enough food to feed everyone there and still have twelve baskets of food left over. And yet later, Philip, having seen Jesus’ miracles and power asked for still more: “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8, NIV). It was here that Jesus expressed his frustration with Philip: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?” (John 14:9, NIV).

But in John’s Gospel, Jesus gave his early disciples and us hope and offered ways for moving past a head knowledge *about* him to a heart knowledge *of* him:

Look back; don’t worry. As the people saw what was happening around them, it would have been easy to lose heart and wonder whether God was really aware of what was happening and was involved in it. But Jesus reminded them to “look back,” that is, to recall the things they had already experienced with Jesus in the past and remember what they already believed. As they did, they would find comfort in the knowledge of God’s power, which was greater than anything they saw happening in the world. “Let not your heart be troubled,” Jesus reminded them. “You believe in

God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). Remembering that we belong to the One who created and rules the universe gives us peace and eases worry.

Look forward; hope. We are tempted to forget that this world is not all there is, especially when we’re going through hard times. So Jesus reminds his disciples to look forward and find hope as they focus on the life to come and on the new home he would be building for his people while he was away from them: “In My Father’s house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Look around you; know and do. While Jesus is gone, preparing our eternal home, he has given us work to do, and he has equipped us to do it through his power. He explains what a “knowing life” looks like: “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:12-13, NIV).

Philip must have thought to himself, *Greater things than Jesus did? Healing? Casting out demons? Raising the dead? How can this be?* Philip lived beneath what Jesus desired for him. He had low expectations and became satisfied with a so-so life. He reduced the “greater things” to only what people could see with their eyes. Though Philip had come to know the Son of the living God, he had not yet found an intimate relationship with him.

That’s when the topic of really knowing God came up. The way to know God is to know Jesus: “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (John 14:7). And knowing Jesus comes through the Holy Spirit: “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither

sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).

The Greek word translated “another” in this passage means “one besides, another of the same kind.” So Jesus is saying, “one besides me and in addition to me, but one just like me. He will do in my absence what I would do if I were physically present with you.” This Helper would continue what Jesus did and taught, and in nine simple words Jesus described his work through this Helper in a person who knows and loves him: “I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

To manifest something means to reveal, exhibit, or make something visible. It means to present oneself or reveal oneself to another. In this case, Jesus said that he would reveal himself to those who believe in him. In other words, Jesus would allow those who believe in him to “know” him.

God has brought humanity full circle: from the first man and woman’s knowing God in the purest sense of the word in the Garden of Eden, to their loss of that intimacy through sin and rebellion, to God’s invitation to rediscover him through his Son, Jesus, to the Spirit’s coming as the vehicle through which God reveals himself to us.



As we journey toward really knowing Christ, on the hilltops as well as in the valleys, let’s stop and ponder what Jesus’ words to Philip mean to us today: “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me?”

Look back; don’t worry. Don’t be overly concerned about what’s happening around you. Remember what you have already experienced and believe about Christ (John 14:1).

THE HUNGRY HEART

Look forward; hope. Jesus is busy preparing a mansion for us, and someday we will get to move in (John 14:2-3).

Look around you; know and do. In the meantime, he wants us doing even greater works than he did. Whatever we ask in his name—that is, according to his will—he will do (John 14:12-13).

These are great promises, and they are as real to us today as they were to the original disciples. But like the first disciples, we must really know God if we are to lay hold of these promises. And really knowing him takes wanting to go into that special place of intimacy that offers a beauty only the eyes of the beholder can see.

LORD, as I begin to discover what really knowing you can mean, I realize that it doesn't describe the relationship I have had with you until now. I have more knowledge about you than knowledge of you. I've been satisfied with where I am, despite the fact that I say I want to know you more. If I had been one of your twelve disciples, you might have asked me why I didn't really know you. As I make this journey to discover what really knowing you can mean, please open my mind and heart to your beauty, your power, and your majesty. By your Holy Spirit, reveal yourself to me in fresh ways, and cause me to hunger for a deep and intimate relationship with you. Amen.



NOTES

Introduction

1. John Stallings, "Learning to Lean," copyright © 1976 (Bridge Building Music, Inc. [BMI], a division of Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc., 1976).
2. Emphasis was added in all three verses.

Chapter 1

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5. David Gates, "Living a New Normal," *Newsweek*, 8 October 2001, 54–59.
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11. Packer, *Knowing God*, 19.

Chapter 3

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