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Introduction

(John 17:3) Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Lesson Objective: To help believers examine the difference between acknowledging God's existence and developing a genuine, personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

Central Truth: You can believe that God exists without truly knowing Him. But when you genuinely know God, your relationship with Him begins to transform how you think, live, worship, and make decisions.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we study Your Word, open our hearts and minds. Help us move beyond simply knowing about You into a deeper personal relationship with You. Reveal anything in our lives that is keeping us from growing spiritually. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BELIEVING AND KNOWING

- Tonight, I want to ask a question that every Christian should seriously consider:
- Do you believe in God, or do you really know God?
- There are millions of people who believe that God exists. They believe He created the heavens and the earth. They believe He is powerful, loving, and able to perform miracles.

But here is the question:

- Does believing that God exists automatically mean that you have a personal relationship with Him?
- The answer is no.

Consider this example:

- You can know a great deal about the president of the United States. You may know where the president was born, where the president lives, and the decisions the president has made.
- But knowing those facts does not mean you personally know the president.
- Knowing about someone is different from having a relationship with that person.
- The same principle applies to our relationship with God.
- You can attend church every Sunday, sing in the choir, serve in ministry, quote Scripture, and participate in religious activities without necessarily developing a close relationship with God.
- The greatest danger is becoming familiar with the things of God while remaining distant from God Himself.

Opening Class Discussion:

- What is the difference between knowing about God and personally knowing God?

- Why do you think some people attend church for years without developing a deeper relationship with Him?

1. BELIEVING IN GOD IS NOT THE SAME AS KNOWING GOD

(James 2:19) You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder.

Understanding the Scripture

- James makes a powerful statement. Even demons acknowledge that God exists.

- They recognize His authority and power, but they do not have a loving, obedient relationship with Him.

- James is teaching us that intellectual belief alone is not the same as saving faith.

- There is a difference between agreeing with what the Bible says and allowing the truth of God's Word to transform your life.

A. Believing in God can involve intellectual knowledge.

A person may believe:

- God created the world.
- Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
- The Bible is the Word of God.
- Heaven and hell are real.
- God answers prayers.

These beliefs are important, but genuine Christian faith goes beyond just agreeing with biblical facts.

B. Knowing God involves a personal relationship.

Knowing God means that we are learning to:

- Trust Him even when we do not understand.
- Obey His Word even when it challenges us.

- Seek His presence beyond our Sunday worship experience.
- Depend on His wisdom when making decisions.
- Love what He loves and turn away from what displeases Him.

Teaching Point: Believing that God is real is important. But God calls us into a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

Discussion Question: Can someone believe everything the Bible says about God but still live as though God has no authority over their life? Explain.

2. GOD WANTS US TO KNOW HIM PERSONALLY

(Jeremiah 9:23–24) This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, 24 but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

- In this passage, God teaches that people should not place their confidence in wisdom, strength, or riches.
- Instead, the greatest reason for rejoicing is having the understanding to know Him.

Understanding the Scripture

- God places tremendous value on being known by His people.
- He does not want us to substitute religious knowledge, financial success, or personal accomplishments for our relationship with Him.

A. God desires more than religious activity.

We can become busy doing things for God while neglecting our time with God.

For example:

- We can prepare to teach Scripture but neglect our personal devotional life.
- We can sing worship songs without reflecting on the words.
- We can pray publicly but rarely spend time praying privately.
- We can serve in the church while failing to demonstrate Christlike character at home.

B. Knowing God means understanding His character.

As we grow in our relationship with God, we discover that He is:

- **Holy:** He calls us to live differently from the world.
- **Loving:** His love is demonstrated through Jesus Christ.
- **Merciful:** He extends forgiveness to those who repent.
- **Faithful:** He keeps His promises.
- **Righteous:** His judgments and ways are just.
- **Patient:** He continues working in us as we mature spiritually.

C. Knowing God requires spending time with Him.

- Relationships grow through communication, trust, and time together.
- Our relationship with God grows as we pray, study Scripture, worship, obey Him, and remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Teaching Point: You cannot expect to develop a deep relationship with God while consistently neglecting time with Him.

Question: Why is it possible to become so busy working for God that we neglect our relationship with God?

3. THE DANGER OF RELIGION WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP

(Matthew 7:21–23) Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!

- Jesus warns that not everyone who calls Him Lord truly belongs to Him.

In verse 23, Jesus makes the statement:

"I never knew you."

Understanding the Scripture

- This is one of the most serious warnings Jesus gives concerning spiritual authenticity.
- The people Jesus describes point to impressive religious works. However, their activities do not establish a genuine relationship with Christ.
- Their outward religious actions did not reflect hearts surrendered to Him.

A. Religious activity does not automatically equal spiritual maturity.

- A person may hold a position in the church but still struggle with surrendering to God.

We must remember:

- Church attendance is important, but attendance alone does not save us.
- Bible knowledge is valuable, but knowledge must influence our conduct.
- Ministry service is necessary, but service is not a substitute for knowing Christ.
- Spiritual gifts do not excuse a lack of godly character.

B. God examines the heart, not outward appearances.

(Matthew 15:8) These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

- It is possible to praise God with our mouths while resisting Him through our decisions.
- We may say that we love God while refusing to forgive someone.
- We may say that we trust God while consistently rejecting His guidance.
- We may say that God comes first while giving Him little attention throughout the week.

C. A genuine relationship with Christ produces spiritual fruit.

(Ephesians 2:8–10) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's

handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ

- We are saved by God's grace through faith, not because we perform enough religious works.

- However, genuine faith should produce a growing desire to live in obedience to God.

Teaching Point: Religious activity may reveal what a person does, but spiritual fruit helps reveal the direction of the person's heart.

Question: What are some signs that a person may be practicing religion without developing a genuine relationship with God?

4. HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU ARE GROWING IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

(1 John 2:3) We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

Five signs of a growing relationship with God

1. You develop a desire to obey God's Word.

- Your attitude begins to change from asking, "What can I get away with?" to asking, "What would please God?"

- Obedience does not mean we become perfect. It means we increasingly desire to follow Christ.

2. You become more sensitive to sin.

- Things that once seemed acceptable begin to trouble your conscience as you learn what Scripture teaches.

- Instead of continually justifying wrongdoing, you become more willing to repent and seek forgiveness.

3. You begin to trust God during difficult seasons.

- Knowing God does not eliminate struggles.

- But your confidence in His character grows, even when you cannot understand His timing or His ways.

4. Your love for others begins to increase.

(1 John 4:7–8) Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

- Love is an essential characteristic of those who know God.

- Our relationship with God should change how we treat our families, church members, neighbors, and even those who disagree with us.

5. Your spiritual priorities begin to change.

- You begin to value prayer, worship, biblical understanding, and spiritual growth more deeply.

- You become less interested in just receiving things from God and more interested in knowing God Himself.

Important Reminder: These are signs of spiritual growth, not requirements for earning God's love or salvation. Every believer is still growing in grace.

Question: Which of these five areas do you believe Christian's struggle with the most today, and why?

5. HOW DO WE DEVELOP A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

(James 4:8) Come near to God and he will come near to you.

(Philippians 3:10) I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Practical steps toward knowing God better

1. Make prayer a daily priority.

- Prayer is more than asking God for things. Prayer is communicating with our Heavenly Father.

- Spend time praising Him, confessing sin, expressing gratitude, and bringing your concerns before Him.

2. Develop a consistent relationship with God's Word.

- We cannot understand God's character and ways without learning what He has revealed through Scripture.

- Do not simply read the Bible for information. Read it with a desire to apply its truth.

3. Practice obedience.

- When God reveals an area of your life that needs correction, respond in faith rather than making excuses.

- Spiritual growth requires allowing God's Word to influence our choices.

4. Learn to recognize God's guidance.

(John 10:27) My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

- God guides His people through His Word and by the Holy Spirit.

- Learning to recognize His guidance requires biblical understanding, prayer, and discernment.

- Personal impressions should always be tested against Scripture.

5. Maintain fellowship with other believers.

- God uses the church to strengthen, encourage, teach, and correct His people.

- We need spiritual relationships that encourage us to grow in Christ.

6. Seek God for who He is, not only for what He can give.

- This may be one of the most important lessons we learn.
- Some people seek God only when they need something.
- When finances become difficult, they pray.
- When sickness comes, they pray.
- When relationships fall apart, they pray.
- There is nothing wrong with bringing our needs to God. He invites us to do so.
- But a mature relationship with God involves loving Him even when we are not receiving the answers or blessings we desire.

Question: What is the difference between seeking God for His blessings and seeking God because you love Him?

6. PERSONAL SPIRITUAL EXAMINATION

Before concluding tonight's lesson, I want everyone to personally consider these questions.

Personal Reflection

Private self-assessment

Choose the response that best reflects your current spiritual life. This is a tool for reflection, not a spiritual score.

1. Do I spend personal time with God outside of church services?

Often

Sometimes

Needs growth

2. Do I seek God's will before making important decisions?

Often

Sometimes

Needs growth

3. Am I willing to obey Scripture when it challenges my desires?

Often

Sometimes

Needs growth

4. Is my character becoming more like Christ?

Often

Sometimes

Needs growth

5. Do I seek God when life is going well, not only in difficult times?

Often

Sometimes

Needs growth

6. Is my relationship with God stronger today than it was a year ago?

Often

Sometimes

Needs growth

7. Examine Your Priorities

- Spiritual maturity cannot be measured by counting minutes alone. but how we use our time can reveal our priorities.

Challenge: I want you to commit to a daily period of prayer and Scripture reading for the next seven days, asking God to help you know Him more deeply.

CONCLUSION

“I DON'T JUST WANT TO BELIEVE IN GOD—I WANT TO KNOW GOD!”

As we close tonight, I want to leave you with a powerful truth.

- There is a difference between knowing God's name and knowing His character.

- There is a difference between talking about God and walking with God.
- There is a difference between attending worship and living a life of worship.
- And there is a difference between knowing what the Bible says and allowing the Bible to shape how we live.

❖ The Apostle Paul had tremendous biblical knowledge. He had religious training and experience.

(Philippians 3:10), Paul expressed the desire to know Christ more deeply.

❖ In other words, Paul understood that there was always more to learn about the Lord he served.

❖ We should never become so comfortable with what we know about God that we stop seeking to grow in our relationship with Him.

❖ The evidence of knowing God should be reflected in the way we live!

Final Thought

The greatest accomplishment of the Christian life is not how much we know about God, but how deeply we grow in knowing Him through Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us tonight that You desire a personal relationship with each of us. Forgive us for the times we have allowed religious routines to take the place of genuine fellowship with You. Give us a greater hunger for Your Word, a stronger desire to pray, and a willing heart to obey Your instructions. Help our lives reflect Your love, holiness, mercy, and truth. We do not want to simply know about You; we want to grow in knowing You every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.