

## Equipped to know God

“Do you know when the next train leaves for Birmingham?”; “I think I know enough to pass my French exam”; “I used to know Michael years ago when we were at school”. Knowing about things and people is important to us. So important, in fact, that we just can’t begin to imagine a world without knowledge. But, not all knowledge lasts forever. Things we knew when we were young don’t always stay with us into adulthood. However, there is one kind of knowledge that, once we experience it, does last forever. It’s the core of eternal life and the Bible calls it the knowledge of “the only true God”.<sup>1</sup> This goes beyond merely knowing *about* God - it involves actually knowing him through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. How, then, can we know God and experience eternal life here and now?

**We know God through repentance.** Have you ever driven along a road and eventually discovered you were headed in the wrong direction? If traffic regulations allowed it, you might have been able to make a U-turn and go in the right direction. But, it’s not just when we’re driving that we sometimes have to make a U-turn. If we find our lives are going in the wrong direction morally or spiritually, it makes sense to make a U-turn then too. The bible calls this “repentance” which means changing direction with regard to any attitudes, thoughts, words or behaviour patterns that grieve the heart of God and turning to him for forgiveness. We can be sure that God will never reject anyone who comes to him in this way.<sup>2</sup>

**We know God through faith in Jesus Christ.** In order to know God, we need to make the U-turn of repentance but the bible teaches we also need to have faith in Jesus Christ. This involves believing that he is the one who can bring us into a right relationship with God where we are saved for time and eternity. Saved from what? From the penalty and power of sin, and eventually, from its presence. Is there something that is distracting you from knowing God? It might be a wrong attitude towards someone; or a sinful habit; or an inappropriate relationship. Whatever it is, you’ll never really know God until you turn from that sin and live by faith in Jesus Christ.

**We know God through spending time with him.** How difficult would it be to get to know people if we never, or hardly ever, spent any time with them? Spending meaningful time with others involves listening to them and talking to them. Our relationship with God is no different in that sense. We’ll never get to know him properly if we don’t listen to what he says to us through his word, the bible, or if we rarely talk to him in prayer. As we read or listen to the bible on a daily basis, thinking through what we’ve read or heard, and desiring to apply it to our lives in a practical way, then we’ll find that we’re getting to know God more and more. And what about talking to God? Good communication is such an important part of any relationship, and one of the signs that a relationship is in trouble is a reluctance to talk honestly and openly with each other. God has given us prayer so we can talk to him. Listening and talking to God is a great way to know him!

**We know God through living close to Jesus Christ.** In most cases, the people we know best are those we grew up with or currently live with. Living close to someone can help us get to know them. In the gospel of John<sup>3</sup>, Jesus uses the illustration of the close connection between a vine and its branches to show how necessary it is for us to live in close relationship with him. The branch depends on the vine in order to bear fruit. One of the fruits of living close to Jesus is obeying what he says.<sup>4</sup> These twin responses of dependence and obedience are important as we get to know God through living close to Jesus. Do you want to be fruitful in living for Jesus Christ? Would you like to get to know God better? Then live close to him by depending on him to help you obey his commands.

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<sup>1</sup> John 17:3

<sup>2</sup> John 6:37

<sup>3</sup> John 15:1-17

<sup>4</sup> John 15:10