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Anchors for the storm #1

Knowing God

Anchors for the storm: Key truths that anchor us to Christ, help us navigate life and enable us to glorify the Lord.

Good morning! Welcome to Harvest! We are very glad that you are here with us for worship. I welcome you with the greeting of the apostle John from his Gospel account of the life of Jesus, in John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Let’s pray!

Introduction: J. I. Packer writes in his pivotal book, “Knowing God” four things that rock my world: 1) “Those who know God have great energy for God.” 2) “Those who know God have great thoughts about God.” 3) “Those who know God show great boldness for God.” 4) “Those who know God have great contentment in God.”¹ I want to know God in this way, I want to be with people who seek to know God in this way. **I don’t want just facts about God, but to know God, to be known by God and to make God known to others!** Why is this so important to me?

I believe that knowing God is an anchor for my life, for dealing with the storms of life. Knowing God helps me to navigate through the good and the bad, the easy and the hard, the painful and the joyfulness of life. Knowing God and not just knowing about God, keeps me anchored to Jesus.

Not knowing God may still have a measure of pleasure, power and earthly things, but none of these things satisfy like knowing God. Not knowing God means a life - filled with alienation (Eph 2:11), hopelessness (Eph 2:11), hostility (Eph 2:14) and no peace (Eph 2:17). Not knowing God leads to a life filled with loneliness, and no purpose. A life of filled with self, fear, guilt, shame. Not knowing God is a life filled with deadness-numbness, chaos, deception and its paved by the devil and spirit of disobedience; it’s a life of twisted thinking, believing evil is good and good is evil. (Col 2:13; Eph 2:1; 2 Thess 2:11-12).

¹ J.I. Packer, “Knowing God,” Downers Grove: IVP, 1973, p. 23-26

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV) 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Knowing God changes everything, our goals, our desires, and our view of our accomplishments.

Philippians 3:7-11 (ESV) says, 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may **know** him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

It seems to me that the apostle Paul puts knowing Christ, knowing God, on a pretty high level. So much so that **he was willing to give up everything just to know God.**

“...Larry Sanger, the man who started Wikipedia in 2001, published a lengthy essay laying out his journey from skepticism to Christianity. For most of his adult life, Sanger was a committed skeptic, trained in analytic philosophy—a field dominated by atheists and agnostics. Though he spent 35 years as a nonbeliever, he never saw himself as hostile to faith, only unconvinced, and his testimony is geared toward those who share that rational, open-minded skepticism.”

In order to be a Christian [Acts 11:26;26:28;1 Peter 4:16] (which means being “Follower of Christ²”) **one must “know God.”** (John 8:19,55; 14:7; 16:3; 1 John 2:13-14). Not simple know things about God, but actually know him. I am going to make a large assumption, that for most of you who are listening to my voice that your goal is - “to know God and to know him more deeply.” I am also going to assume that you not only want to know God but that you want to be “known by God.” Meaning you desire for to hear the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit say

² Kevin DeYoung, “Do not lose the term Christian” TGC:July 12, 2013, “...they had a reputation for believing, teaching, and heralding that this man Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the Anointed One, the long awaited Messiah and King. There new name carried with it theological freight.

of you, “He or She is mine. He or She is my people and I am their God.” (Ex 29:45; 25:8; Lev. 26:12; Zech. 2:10; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3) I want to let you in on a little secret, God desires for you to know him, and for you to be known by him. In fact, He makes himself known to all people (Rom 1) and those who truly know him will be people who “...know their God,” (Dan 11:32) and God will say of them “I am the Lord their God.” (Ex 29:46)

I am also assuming that 5 Things³ will occur in our study of God, we will learn and understand that:

- 1) **God has spoken** and is speaking to humanity through his word, **the Bible**, in order to we know that salvation is only through him.
- 2) **God is Lord and King over all of creation**, the world, people, the universe, for his glory and that we may worship and glorify him
- 3) **God is Savior**, who rescues his people **through Jesus Christ** from guilt, sin, and adopts them into his family and seeks his very best for them continually
- 4) **God is Triune**: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Three, yet One - they act in total unity, salvation is the result of their united work: The Father purposing salvation, the Son securing salvation, and the Spirit applying salvation to the people of God.
- 5) **Our response to God’s revelation is trust**, obedience, faith, worship, praise, prayer, and devoted service. We live this life in the light of God’s holy word.

Our church and its members are united together in this understanding about God:

God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

This statement makes clear several (but not all) **truths we believe about God** as a result of his general (Creation)/special revelation (the Bible), and as a result of personally knowing God and personally being known by God. **In many ways we can say, people who know God believe these things about God:**

- 1) **God is creator of all things** (Dt. 6:4; Mk. 12:29)
- 2) **God is holy** (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 11:3)
- 3) **God is infinitely perfect** (Dt. 32:4; Job 1:7-10; Ps. 18:30; 50:2; 90:2; 145:3; Matt. 5:48),
- 4) **God eternally exists** (Ps. 33:11; 102:25-27; 115:3; Dan. 4:34-35; Jn. 5:26; Acts 17:24-25)

³ J.I. Packer, “Knowing God,” Downers Grove: IVP, 1973, p. 15-16

- 5) **God eternally exists in a loving unity** (Jn. 3:35; 17:24; 1 Jn. 4:8,16)
- 6) **God eternally exists in a loving unity of three equally divine persons:** (Jn. 17:11; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2) (known as **“The Trinity,”** as a description of what is seen in scripture)
 - A. **Father** - (Dt. 32:6; Mt. 6:6; Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 8:6)
 - B. **Son** - (Matt.3:17; Jn. 1:14; 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:5),
 - C. **Holy Spirit** - Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Rom. 8:9, 26; Gal. 4:6).
- 7) **God is limitless in his knowledge** (Ps. 139:1-16; 147:5; Isa. 46:10; Jn. 21:17)
- 8) **God is sovereign in his power** - (Jer. 32:17; Eph. 1:11; Rm. 8:28; 2 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 3:20; Rev. 1:8)
- 9) **God graciously purposed from eternity to redeem people for himself-** (1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:11; 3:10,11; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8)
- 10) **God will make all things new for his own glory** - (Ps. 19:1-2; Isa. 43:7; Jer. 13:11; Col. 1:15-23; Rev. 4:11; 5:9-14).

These truths anchor us to the solid ground of God and his nature, to his character, his purposes. The EFCA and Harvest Community Church Litchfield together declare this truth, without reservation. We also believe this is part of God’s gospel, which comes straight from God and not from any human source. In many ways **the gospel is simple.**

The Gospel = the Good News

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (ESV)

But the **gospel is also complex**, in that, God who is behind the gospel is complex.

This Good News points us to anchors that we believe will help us not only survive storms, but thrive despite the storms of this life.

When we share the Good News (the Gospel), we’re saying far more than just a simple declaration.

Christian flourishing is the result of the Christian Gospel joyfully declared and joyfully accepted. Christian flourishing means coming to know the God who is behind the gospel more fully, more deeply and more personally.

The ground of this world is constantly shifting. Geologist tells us that the earth's tectonic plates literally move. This movement is the cause of destructive and deadly, "earthquakes and Tsunamis."

This world's moral ground is constantly shifting: same sex marriage, confusion about gender identities, how to handle wealth and privilege, often destroying families, friends and community lives in the wake of these things. How are we to live when everything is constantly shifting? Our world is filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, and internal conflict.

God is not like this, at all. He is unchanging, the same yesterday, today and forever
(Hebrews 13:8; John 8:58; Revelation. 1:4; 2 Corinthians 1:19)

I own a small fishing boat that's about 14 feet long and 5 feet wide. It's a fun boat to have, but standing up in it can be a bit tricky. It's not exactly the most stable boat, so I'm thinking I need to get a bigger, better one if I want to move around in it safely. I also have an anchor in that boat that I use to keep me in one place, safe from crashing into the rocks or getting stuck in the weeds/reeds.

My children needed a dad who kept his promises, unfortunately that didn't always happen. Too often I said I'd do one thing and did something else, or I said I'd show up at a certain time, and I didn't. As I grew in my knowledge of God I saw in God a steady reliability and God's call for me to be like him. I need God in that way the same as my children needed me in that way. Learning about God and then knowing God as faithful, he helped me become more like him.

Do you have an anchor that keeps you secure to unchanging, unmoving ground?

J.I. Packer offers 4 necessary parts for knowing God⁴:

- 1) **Listening** to God's word, receiving it as the Holy Spirit interprets it and applying it to our lives
- 2) **Looking** at the nature of God, his character, how his word and works reveal it
- 3) **Accepting** his invitations, doing what God commands
- 4) **Recognizing** and rejoicing in the love that he shows as he draws us to himself.

Listening, looking, accepting and recognizing are all ways in which we come to know God. For some, this will be a first time encounter and these basic and necessary parts will thrill the

⁴ J.I. Packer, "Knowing God," Downers Grove: IVP, 1973, p. 32

heart. For others, who've walked with God for several seasons these necessary parts will be routinely understood and enable a deeper dive into the character of God. The learner and the mature in Christ both discover that knowing God is one anchor that keeps their boat from tipping over.

GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW HIM!

Like getting to know a new friend, that person must let us in, they must open up to us in order for us to know them. We cannot force our way in to knowing anyone who doesn't want to be known. This is true of God too. However, in God's case he wants to be known and he opens himself up to being known through his Word the Bible. In essence he is saying, not only will you know me, but by knowing me you will also have life.

Jesus said in prayer to the Heavenly Father, about those who would follow his apostles, in **John 17:20-26** (ESV), 20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

God wants you to know him, God knows those who trust in Christ and He calls them his own, and God wants you to make him known to others. What a beautiful thing it is to know God, be known by God and to make him known!

He is the anchor that holds you secure when the storms of life rage against you!