

Knowing "About" the Lord, but not "Knowing" Him

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Email Question: I have personally found (I came out of drugs in 1973 thanks to the Lord--not religion--I was raised in religion) that people raised around this wonderful truth can fall into the trap of knowing about the Lord but not really knowing Him on a personal basis.

My Response: You speak of those who know “about” the Lord, but don’t really know Him. I agree with you that is certainly a problem. Though, I’m not sure what you mean by “but not really knowing him.” I think we agree that the question is, what constitutes knowing the Lord in a saving way? Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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 perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23)

Jesus spoke to those who preached in the name of the Lord and performed great miracles, yet they were not known of the Lord. Why? I believe it was because they came to God on the basis of what THEY had done. But, we can only come to God on the basis of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus invites us to come to him as a little child – dependent and trusting. He is the mediator between God and man. He is the high priest that ever lives to make intercession for us. It is not whether I preach the name of Jesus (or believe in Jesus’ name only), or how spiritual I am that makes me “know” God. Ultimately, as Jesus says, it is not whether I know God, it is whether God knows me. The Bible says He knows us because we are in Christ (Gal. 4:9). And it teaches that we are in Christ by faith (Eph. 1:13).

To know Christ, according to Scripture, is to believe who He is and what He has done. Jesus asked his disciples to confess who he was: “Who do you say that I am ...” (Mk 8:29). Jesus also wanted them to believe on him because of his works: "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.” (Jn. 5:36). Who Jesus was and what He did for our salvation are intertwined.

What does the Bible say about what Jesus came to do? First of all, He is the Son of God: “This is my Son ...” (Matt. 3:17), who has come to take away the sins of the world. “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,” (Jn. 1:29). To know Christ is to believe in him – to truly trust in him that he is both God become man and the only Savior of the world. It is not mental ascent or mere knowledge. It is both, knowing what God tells us about him, and then truly resting the whole weight of our souls on that truth -- that God has come in Jesus to be our Savior.

John writes: “these things are written [the things written in John’s Gospel] so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have

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life in his name.” Later in 1 John 5:20 he writes: “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding. So that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” All throughout John’s writings “to know” Jesus is to believe in him as God’s Son and Savior. This is so clear and simple that it would take a very tortured interpretation of the Bible to come up with any other view.

We can see by reading John’s first epistle that to “believe” means to believe specific things about him: “... we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2) “... every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ...” (1 John 4:2) “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:8-10) “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God ...” (1 John 5:1). Faith is common denominator in all these passages. It is clear that is a faith that is based on specific revealed knowledge – revealed by Jesus Christ. And it is a faith, which trusts one’s soul, or eternity to the truthfulness of what Jesus revealed.

The one who believes in this way is born again. The UPCI teaches that one is not born of God until one obeys the steps of their Acts 2:38-is-the-New-Birth doctrine. But the Apostle John says that those who believe in Jesus are born of God. It is not whether I know “about,” “know” or even love God. These things are very important, but they do not save us. It is God who saves. It is about whether God loves me. We know that He does because He revealed it to us by sending “his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” The one who believes and trust in this is born again.