

✓ **Growing in Knowing God**

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Open with Prayer

✓ **Luke 2:52**

<sup>52</sup> Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

Growing in wisdom & in favor with God is important. This message is called, ✓ **Growing in Knowing God.**

When we are called by God to be His children, when we are born again, we begin a lifelong relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit begins to teach us more and more about God the Father and His Son Jesus. The more we know God the more we love Him. So, growing in knowing God is so very important... or at least it should be.

Pastor Andy began our study of the Book of Romans by teaching us a little about the author of that letter, Paul. Paul was the greatest missionary of all time (as far as I am concerned).

So, what was Paul's greatest pursuit in life. Let's look at Phil. 3:1-10 to find out.

✓ **Phil. 3:1-10**

*1 Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.*

*2 Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.*

*3 For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort,*

*4 though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!*

*5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.*

*6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.*

*7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*

*8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of ✓ **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have*

*discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ*

*9 and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*

*10 ✓ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,*

This passage sums up Paul's primary pursuit in life: ✓ **To know Christ.**

Paul is writing this letter from a prison cell in Rome. Paul pens this personal letter in which he comes to terms with his past, a very accomplished past, and he comes to terms with his present situation, a confining present. After his past as a persecutor of God's people, and through his "superior" religious activities as a Pharisee, Paul came to the liberating conclusion that *all is garbage compared to knowing the Lord.* (v. 8).

Knowing Jesus had freed him from the stagnation of his past victories.

Knowing Jesus had also freed him from the emotional paralysis of his

past's mistakes. Paul knew that the only thing that ultimately counted was knowing the Lord and being obedient to his will.

Not only was his past subsumed, by this singular passion, his present imprisonment could not snatch from him the joy of knowing Christ.

Prison chains could not keep him from pursuing God, nor dull his effectiveness in ministry. Paul's desire to know Christ sprang from no other motive but to enjoy him. He wanted Christ, for Christ's sake, not his own. He was a lover of God, not a user of God. And whether he moved in Christ's resurrection power, or was stretched to his last ounce of endurance, it mattered little. For Paul, it was all part of the most fulfilling journey of all: truly knowing God.

What does that have to do with me? God used this very portion of scripture to minister to me in the past year.

I have been retired for 11 months. One of my biggest struggles when dealing with my retirement is that I have had a long full life of ministry.

Things I have done or accomplished were significant. As a music teacher

and as a principal I impacted the lives of many young people, I was successful in writing musicals that proclaimed the gospel to small & large audiences for over 40 years. My writing and producing for television and film had won me a number of awards, (I still have the trophies). My ministry as a pastor for the last 23 years allowed me to impact the lives through preaching and shepherding. My greatest trophies are those who I have discipled. In all of my ministries I got to watch people Grow in their Knowing of God better.

All of these accomplishments I would categorize as my Past Victories.

When I retired, I thought “now I will never do anything significant again.” I could look back at my past successes and acknowledge that it was always God who did His work through me, but they were still my past successes.

I saw that Paul needed Jesus to free him from the stagnation of his past victories, and I needed Jesus to free me from the stagnation of my past

victories and successes as well. I would never move forward if I was stuck looking at the past.

I am not in a prison cell in Rome like Paul, but I am not working any more. I am not earning a paycheck. It is funny how much a paycheck validated me. I am not in prison, but I am at a Retirement Community. We are far away from our family and friends. I am healthy but I am aging and along with that may come physical limitations that could feel like imprisonment. Paul did not allow his confinement to “snatch away his joy.”

What was it I just said about Paul? I said, Prison chains could not keep him from pursuing God, nor dull his effectiveness in ministry. Paul’s desire to know Christ sprang from no other motive but to enjoy him. He wanted Christ, for Christ's sake, not his own. He was a lover of God, not a user of God. And whether he moved in Christ's resurrection power, or was stretched to his last ounce of endurance, it mattered little. For

Paul, it was all part of the most fulfilling journey of all: truly knowing God.

I was wrestling with God after I retired. But my journey was not over.

The journey of growing in truly knowing God would continue. In order for the growing to continue I needed to consider all of my trophies and victories as “garbage”. I needed to not look at my present retired situation as nothing more than a means to grow closer to Jesus.

What about you? Are you clinging to your past successes or your past regrets? Looking back and trusting in your past successes will bring stagnation into your life. Also, focusing on the loss of freedom or mobility because of your age or health will snatch away your joy. We cannot let those things get in the way of the biggest blessing your pursuit of God and growing in knowing Him better.

Let me share another portion of scripture that helped me remember what is important.

✓ **Jeremiah. 9. 23- 24**

*This is what the Lord says: "Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches.*

*But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone, that they truly*

✓ **know Me and understand** *that I am the Lord who demonstrates unfailing love, and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!"*

✓ **World's Standards of Success**

By the world's standards, success is usually measured by three criteria:

✓ **Wisdom, Power, and Wealth.**

The successful in our world communicate insights that influence others.

That's wisdom.

The successful in our world gain strategic advantage over others.

That's power.

The successful in our world accumulate and control resources.

That's wealth.



Yet God asserts here that these attainments hold no weight with him, and that true success is measured by our knowledge of Him (V 24). The words *Understand* and *know* contain the idea of ascertaining something through the process of seeing.

In ✓ **Job 42:5** it says,

*I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.*

To know God, is to encounter Him

✓ **2 Corinthians 3:16-18**

*But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So, all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord -who is the Spirit- makes us more and more like Him. As we are changed into His glorious image.*

To receive “revelation” from Him as, through the scriptures, He implants His thoughts into our minds.

✓ **1 Corinthians 2: 9-12**

*That is what the scriptures mean when they say,*

*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

*But it was to us that God revealed these things by His Spirit. For His Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit, (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.*

Pursue this “knowing,” cultivated in *communion* with Him as His character engulfs us with the holy wonder of a God who passionately desires intimate friendship with those whom He has created.

How do we cultivate this communion with him? By Waiting.

✓ **The Discipline of Waiting**

✓ **Psalm 25: 4-5**

*Show me the right path, oh Lord; point out the road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me. For you are the God who saves me.* ✓ ***All day long I put my hope in you.***

Cultivating the knowledge of God requires the discipline of waiting upon him. David's implication of hoping “all day long” means to “To bind together” through a process of intertwining, clearly suggesting the virtual development of the soul with God.

✓ **To wait upon the Lord is to foster a sensitivity both to his presence and his promptings**, which quiets our hearts, focuses our minds through thanksgiving and praise, and allows him to reveal any subtle attitudes or forgotten sins that would dull our sensitivity to his voice.

In ✓ **Psalm 66:18** it says,

*If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

We need to accept the New Testament call in 1 Peter 1:13. Here is the KJV

✓ **1 Peter 1:13.**

*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus.*

It means to fasten the belt of your mind. 1 Peter 1:13 in the NIV says, *Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.*

We need to accept that call if we are to grow in our knowing God. That is done by meditating on God's word, and then responding with focused worship. We need to dedicate times alone with God for waiting and for interaction with him.

A wonderful way to continue to grow is by reading His Word in some kind of organized fashion. Pastor Andy has provided an excellent way to continue to grow in knowing God by making available the Scripture Union study guides. These are really excellent. They give you bite size morsels of scripture and some commentary to challenge your heart and mind. Then once a month everyone who is using this study can meet as a group and have Pastor Andy answer any questions. It is a wonderful time of encouragement. If you want to Grow in your knowing of God this little study guide will help.

This is just the beginning of the process of Growing in Knowing God.

**Closing Prayer:**

Song: ✓ **The Greatest Thing** (verse 1)

**The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You.**

**The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You.**

**I want to know You more, I want to know You more.**

**The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You. (2X)**