



A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Course 5, *Real Christian Living*, Lesson 10

The Problem: To remain joyful and committed in our Christian walk, our knowledge of God must continually grow. Spiritual stagnation leads to regression, drawing us back toward a former way of life. Unlike science, mathematics, or history, knowledge of God is not merely intellectual—it is not acquired simply by reading and studying. While the Bible is a rich source of divine truth, its lessons are far more than academic. God does not measure holiness by how much doctrine we know, nor does He qualify someone for heaven based solely on head knowledge. Rather, to know God is to experience His ever-abiding, ever-increasing presence in our life.

This knowledge is relational—it is a matter of the heart, not just the mind. It means welcoming the Holy Spirit's presence as the guiding force of our thoughts, actions, and desires. It is Christ's character transforming ours so that in fulfilling our impulses, we are ultimately fulfilling His will. Spiritual growth is a living experience, requiring constant renewal and deepening.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this journey is that at every stage, through our union with Christ, we already possess the gift of eternal life. The thief on the cross had only just begun his Christian walk, yet Jesus assured him of his place in the Kingdom.

How does God impart this ever-growing experience? How does He speak to us and strengthen us spiritually? How do we ensure that we remain receptive to His voice? Keeping the heart open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit is essential for spiritual growth. But once we do this, how does Christ shape us? What methods does He use to provide knowledge and grace, equipping us for life's challenges?

The answers lie in Scripture, offered with simplicity and clarity.

Objectives:

- I. We recognize how God communicates with us through the wonders of nature, revealing His power, wisdom, and love.
- II. We observe how the Lord speaks to us through His providential leadings, guiding our lives according to His divine plan.
- III. We receive instruction and transformation through the influence of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us and deepens our understanding of God.
- IV. We listen as God speaks through His Word, providing timeless truth and wisdom for our spiritual growth.
- V. We understand that to know Christ is to know God, and as we draw closer to Jesus through these channels of communication, we enter into the knowledge of God that is the source of eternal life.

I. GOD COMMUNICATES THROUGH NATURE

While some philosophies suggest that God is inherently present in all living things, Scripture teaches otherwise. God is not merely found within creation; rather, creation itself reflects His wisdom, power, and love. As we engage with the natural world—whether admiring a breathtaking sunset or marveling at the intricate details of life—we can be drawn closer to Him. However, this experience is not automatic; it requires an open heart, receptive to the Holy Spirit's impressions. When we allow Him to shape our understanding, the beauty of creation becomes a powerful testimony of

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

God's care and majesty. Conversely, those who do not acknowledge Him miss the deeper spiritual truths embedded within the wonders of the natural world.

The Word:

1. How does nature testify to God's love? Psalm 19:1; 33:5-9.
2. How did Jesus refer to nature in illustrating God's care for His children? Matthew 6:26-30.
3. How does soil illustrate the state of the human heart? Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23.

Explanation: The sky, sea, towering trees, tranquil lakes, and majestic mountains all testify to the magnificent love of our Creator. Jesus often drew from nature to illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart and to reveal God's personal care for each of His children. Despite the presence of death, disease, calamity, and famine, God continues to provide for plants, animals, and humanity—reminding us that, if it were not for sin, there would be no death, and if it were not for God's sustaining hand, destruction would reign. Satan's kingdom brings tragedy and heartache, but God's love seeks to restore and preserve His creation in beauty and purity. Just as He cares for the natural world, He cares for each of us, knowing even the number of hairs on our heads (*Matthew 10:30*).

Jesus taught in ways that resonated deeply with the people of His time. Since farming was central to their daily lives, He used agricultural imagery to illustrate how God nurtures His truth in the hearts of believers. The parable of the sower is a striking example:

- Wayside soil – Represents those who hear the Gospel but fail to understand; Satan quickly snatches away what was sown in their hearts.
- Stony ground – Symbolizes those who receive the message joyfully but lack spiritual depth. When hardships arise, they quickly fall away.
- Thorny ground – Describes those who accept the Gospel, but worldly concerns—wealth, worries, and pleasures—choke out their faith.
- Good soil – Represents those who allow God's Word to take root, growing into strong, fruitful believers, continually nourished by His presence.

This parable is just one of many where Jesus used the elements of nature to unveil spiritual truths. As Christians, we are encouraged to connect the natural world with the spiritual, discovering how God works and discerning how Satan distorts what was meant to be perfect.

Relevance: Does the sight of a vibrant lily remind you of Christ's teachings? Do the towering redwoods reveal the strength of God's presence? Does the surging ocean reflect His power, or a still lake His peace? Even simple moments—tending a garden, watching birds in flight, feeling the warmth of the sun—become lessons of divine truth when interpreted by the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught that the state of the soil reflects the state of our hearts, and just as He cares for the birds, He reassures us that His love and provision are constant (*Matthew 6:26*). If we open our hearts, nature speaks to us of God's love, wisdom, and presence.

II. GOD COMMUNICATES THROUGH HIS PROVIDENCIAL LEADING

God's providence refers to His loving, sovereign guidance over all creation. Scripture affirms that:

- God is actively involved in the lives of His children (Psalm 139:1–10).
- He works all things together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).
- He directs paths when we trust Him (Proverbs 3:5–6).
- He disciplines and refines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6–11).

Providence doesn't mean a life free of hardship—it means that even in hardship, God is present, purposeful, and redemptive.

The Reality of Suffering. The Bible never denies the suffering of the righteous. In fact:

- Job was “blameless and upright,” yet endured immense loss and pain.
- Joseph was betrayed and imprisoned, yet God used it to save nations.
- Jesus Himself, sinless and perfect, suffered rejection, injustice, and death.

Suffering is part of the broken world we live in. It may result from human choices, spiritual conflict, or simply the groaning of creation (Romans 8:22). But suffering is never wasted in God’s economy.

The Tension and the Trust: Here’s the key: Providence and suffering coexist. God does not always prevent pain, but He always redeems it. His leading is not always visible in the moment, but it is trustworthy in the long arc of grace.

- God’s providence is often retrospective—we see it more clearly looking back.
- The Holy Spirit comforts and transforms us in suffering (2 Corinthians 1:3–5).
- Suffering can deepen faith, compassion, and dependence on God (James 1:2–4).

Rather than promising ease, God invites us into a journey of trust. His providence is not a guarantee of comfort, but a promise of presence, purpose, and ultimate restoration. In every challenge and blessing, He reveals more of His character, His faithfulness, and His unwavering presence.

The Word:

4. What comforting assurances does Scripture offer that the Lord is present with us, guiding our lives with wisdom and love—even through trials and uncertainties? Isaiah 43:2, Psalm 121:1-8
5. How did the Lord overrule to bring good out of evil for Joseph? Genesis 45:4-5
6. How did providential intervention preserve the Apostles? Acts 5:17-25; 12:5-11

Explanation: Psalm 121 is part of the “Songs of Ascents,” likely sung by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. It begins with a question and unfolds into a declaration of unwavering trust in God’s care. This is a shift from fear to faith—a reminder that our help is not limited by human strength or circumstance.

Verses 3-4:

- God’s care is constant and alert—unlike human guardians, He never sleeps.
- “Not letting your foot slip” suggests stability and guidance, even on uneven paths.
- This is not a promise of ease, but of divine attentiveness.

Verses 5-6:

- These verses evoke round-the-clock protection—day and night, visible and invisible threats.
- In ancient times, sunstroke and moon-related fears (like madness or spiritual attack) were real concerns.
- God’s care encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Verses 7-8:

- “All harm” doesn’t mean immunity from suffering, but preservation of the soul.
- God guards our life’s journey—our comings and goings, our beginnings and endings.
- The phrase “now and forevermore” anchors this promise in eternity.

Psalm 121 doesn’t promise a life free of hardship—it promises a God who walks with us, who sees, who guards, and who never abandons. It’s a psalm for travelers, for those in transition, for anyone needing assurance that God’s providence is personal, present, and permanent.

This truth is beautifully illustrated in the life of Joseph. For years, his circumstances seemed hopeless—betrayed by his brothers, sold into Egyptian slavery, falsely accused and imprisoned. To the world, he was forgotten. But God had never abandoned him. Through every trial, divine providence was shaping him—molding his character, preparing him for leadership, and equipping him to rule according to God’s will. What Satan and Joseph’s brothers intended for his destruction, God transformed into the very process that made him great.

Just as God provided for Joseph, He protected and guided the apostles, overruling the plots of those who violently opposed His truth. Though suffering and death originated in Satan's rebellion, God has redeemed even these hardships, using them to encourage and save. His providence remains the most powerful force at work in the world today, ensuring that His plans are never thwarted.

Relevance: The Lord lovingly directs our path as we learn to trust Him—often gradually, often imperfectly. His providence is not reserved for the flawless, but is active in the lives of those who turn to Him, again and again, seeking His wisdom and presence. Even when we falter, He remains faithful, gently guiding us toward what is best for us and those we influence. When we try to untangle life's struggles apart from Christ, we often deepen the confusion. Yet over time, He weaves even our missteps and hardships into a greater purpose, leading us exactly where we need to be. We live in continual need of His merciful providence—and He never tires of meeting us there.

III. GOD COMMUNICATES THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's providence is not distant or impersonal—it is deeply relational. One of the most intimate ways He leads us is through the quiet influence of the Holy Spirit. While His voice may not always be unmistakably clear, He gently impresses truth upon our hearts, often through Scripture, prayer, and the counsel of others. His guidance may unfold gradually, and sometimes through trial and waiting, but He is faithful to walk with us.

The Spirit doesn't always reveal our calling in a single moment. For many, discovering vocation or purpose is a journey—shaped by experience, growth, and surrender. Yet even in seasons of uncertainty, the Spirit nurtures within us the character of Christ, forming us for whatever path He opens. This transformation is not a one-time event, but a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus in how we think, love, and live.

How has the Spirit's guidance unfolded in your life

The Word:

7. What enlightenment does the Holy Spirit provide for the humble student of God's will? John 14:26; 16:13-15; 1 John 2:27
8. How does the Holy Spirit direct the work of believers? Acts 10:19-20; 16:6
9. What special qualities does the Holy Spirit bring to us? Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9-10

Explanation: As the divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit possesses the three fundamental attributes of personality: intellect, will, and emotion. His omniscient intellect allows Him to illuminate truth, guiding believers into a deeper understanding of God's Word (John 16:13; 14:26). He exercises His will in distributing spiritual gifts to believers (1 Corinthians 12:11) and directing them in God's work (Acts 16:6-7). His nature also reflects emotion—He can be pleased (Acts 15:28), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), and even resisted (Isaiah 63:10).

The Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead, fully equal in power and authority with the Father and the Son (Acts 5:3-4). His presence within our hearts is the presence of God Himself, bringing both power and righteousness into our lives. Through the Spirit, we receive the character of Christ, transforming us into His likeness as we surrender to His guidance.

Relevance: It is impossible to truly know God apart from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Divine knowledge is not simply intellectual—it is a living experience of having Christ, the Father, and the Spirit within. Paul captured this truth when he described the mystery of faith as "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" Colossians 1:27. Through the Holy Spirit, God dwells within us, shaping our hearts, renewing our minds, and leading us into a deeper relationship with Him.

IV. GOD COMMUNICATES THROUGH HIS WORD

Knowing God is not merely a personal or subjective experience—Scripture presents a unified, divine revelation accessible to all. The Bible provides a consistent and trustworthy foundation for understanding God, ensuring that knowledge of Him is rooted in truth rather than personal interpretation alone. Any claim to know God must remain anchored in what He has revealed through Scripture. When we go beyond or against God's revealed Word, we risk stepping outside the boundaries of divine truth. Yet within those boundaries, the Holy Spirit continues to illuminate, apply, and deepen our understanding—always in harmony with the character and Word of God. Jesus affirmed this principle when He said, *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."* —John 16:13. God has provided His Word as the ultimate guide, ensuring that every believer can grow in authentic understanding, grounded in His revelation rather than human speculation.

The Word:

10. How does studying God's Word transform our lives? 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 15:4

11. How does the Bible testify of Christ? John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44

12. How do we partake of Christ's spiritual life? John 6:53, 63

Explanation: The entire Bible reveals the story of redemption centered in Christ. Both the Old and New Testaments testify to His mission and character—sometimes directly, sometimes through symbols, prophecies, or patterns of grace and judgment. Jesus Himself affirmed this truth, explaining that the Scriptures point to Him (John 5:39; Luke 24:27). When we discover Christ in the Old Testament, we uncover its deeper purpose—laying the foundation for His redemptive work. The New Testament then illuminates His life, teachings, sacrifice, and victory, bringing the full picture of salvation into focus.

Through Bible study, we are drawn into deeper communion with Him. If we pray for divine guidance, the Holy Spirit imparts Christ's own interpretation of His Word, bringing:

- Conviction of sin—leading us to repentance.
- Spiritual strength—nurturing faith and character.
- Doctrinal understanding—shaping our beliefs.
- Prophetic insight—revealing God's unfolding plans.
- A deeper union with Christ—transforming us from within.

The Word of God is Christ's very life, offered to us as spiritual nourishment. As we study and pray, we partake in His presence, His truth, and His sustaining grace.

Relevance: To know God, we must receive His Word, allowing the Holy Spirit to illuminate its truth in our hearts. What a blessing this is! The Psalmist beautifully expressed its power: *"I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you"* Psalm 119:11. When we treasure Scripture, we draw closer to the heart of God, allowing His truth to shape our lives and strengthen our walk with Him. How does seeing Christ in both Testaments deepen your understanding of God's character?

V. TO KNOW CHRIST IS TO KNOW GOD

Jesus Christ came into the world as the perfect revelation of God's love and character. To know Him as our Friend and Savior is to know God Himself. When we speak to Jesus, we are communing with God, and when we listen to His voice—through the Holy Spirit—we hear the very heart of God guiding us in truth and grace.

The Word:

13. Who do we come to know when we truly know Jesus? John 14:6-11

14. What did Jesus reveal as the key to eternal life? John 17:3

15. What character is imparted to the believer through faith? Revelation 7:1-3; 3:12; 14:1

Explanation: The mercy and forgiveness of Jesus perfectly reflect the love of God. It is a grave misunderstanding to portray the God of the Old Testament as merely a harsh judge, lacking the compassion of Christ. In reality, Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament. He accompanied Israel in their journey (1 Corinthians 10:4), manifested His presence in the Most Holy Place above the mercy seat, and spoke the law from Mount Sinai. There is no division in character between the Father and the Son—to know one is to know the other.

John the Revelator foretold that before the close of human probation, just prior to Christ's return, those who fully trust in God's Word will receive His seal (Revelation 7:1-3). This seal is described as God's name upon the forehead (Revelation 3:12; 14:1)—a symbol of His character written upon the minds of His faithful people. As we allow Christ's presence to work within us, the Holy Spirit gradually shapes our character to reflect God's righteousness. Though we will never be divine, we can grow in His likeness—embracing His love, purity, and truth—as He renews our hearts and minds day by day.

To be among God's sealed saints, we are invited into a deep and growing relationship with Christ—embracing His messages in nature, submitting to His providence, listening to His Spirit, and partaking daily of His Word. Yet this is not a task we accomplish by our own strength. Rather, it is God's grace that transforms us, step by step, as we surrender to Him. Even when growth feels slow or imperfect, He is faithful to refine us. As we walk with Him daily, He shapes our character, sealing us as His own, ensuring that nothing—neither Satan nor the forces of evil—can separate us from His eternal embrace.

To know Christ is to know salvation.

Relevance: True knowledge of God comes from seeking Him daily, allowing His presence to dwell within us. No human wisdom can compare to the experience of knowing Him personally. Satan and his forces constantly work to draw us toward sin, seeking to fill our hearts with distractions so there is no room for Christ. Through the grace of Jesus, we are invited to study, pray, and listen, allowing His will to illuminate our path and transform our hearts.

Are you ready to seek Him, learn from Him, and walk with Him—until He returns to take you home?

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. Nature teaches us about God because His presence is within all created things..
 - b. We know God when we know ourselves; we are all little gods.
 - c. To know Christ is to know God.
 - d. The Holy Spirit bestows the righteousness of God upon us.
2. Discuss: Since knowing God is primarily a spiritual experience rather than an intellectual pursuit, salvation is accessible to all—regardless of education or knowledge. Christ's love reaches both scholars and the simplest of believers who genuinely respond to His grace. While intelligence, memory, and learning are valuable, they are not prerequisites for redemption. Do you agree? Can you think of biblical or historical examples that demonstrate how God has saved and used individuals with little formal education for His glory?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, Chapter 10.