



Knowing Him (Yādaʿ) and Making Him Known

In Scripture, “knowing” God is a matter of the heart and life, not just the mind. The Hebrew word yādaʿ for “know” signifies an intimate, experiential relationship – the kind of knowing that shapes who we are. biblehub.comtodayarchive.org

The Biblical Concept of “Knowing Him” (Yādaʿ)

In Hosea 6:3 we read, “Let us press on to know the LORD.” The Hebrew term for “know” here is yādaʿ, which “indicates an intimate and experiential knowledge” of God biblehub.com. This is far more than acquiring information; it’s akin to the deep personal knowing shared between close friends or even a husband and wife. In fact, the Old Testament uses yādaʿ to describe the intimacy of marriage (“Adam knew Eve”) as well as knowing God. To “*know the LORD*” means to experience Him firsthand – to recognize His voice, encounter His character, and live in a relationship where we “find out” and “learn” who He is by experience todayarchive.org.

Such knowing is personal and relational. The prophet Jeremiah declared, “*Let him who boasts boast in this, that he knows and understands Me, that I am the LORD*” radical.net. God wants to be known by us in a real way. Jeremiah also prophesied of a day when “*they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest*”, because God would forgive their sins and reveal Himself – a knowledge birthed from experiencing His grace todayarchive.org. Throughout Scripture, when people “*know*” God it often comes through encountering His actions and character: experiencing His power, mercy, justice, and faithfulness in their

lives dtodayarchive.org dtodayarchive.org. For example, after God betrothed Israel to Himself “in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and compassion,” He said “*then you will know the LORD*” dtodayarchive.org – meaning Israel would know Him by experiencing His love and covenant faithfulness. Likewise, Hosea 6:3 links knowing God with His life-giving acts: “*He will come to us like the rain... so let us press on to know the LORD.*” In short, knowing Him in the biblical sense is to encounter Him personally and grow in relationship with Him, not merely to know *about* Him.

Knowing Christ Through Word *and* Experience

How do we come to know Him today? First, God speaks through His Word. We chiefly know Christ by rightly understanding what He’s revealed in Scripture – “*the one who speaks*”, as the user put it, the King of the ages who is the God of the living. Jesus Himself said, “*Eternal life is this: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*” biblestudytools.com. This knowing begins as we hear His voice in the Word and respond in faith. But it doesn’t end with head knowledge – it must be joined by experience in the midst of life. We truly know the Giver of Life *as we walk with Him*: trusting Him in trials, obeying Him in decisions, and seeing His promises prove true. Hosea urges us to “*press on*” daily to know the Lord – implying effort and devotion radical.net. We do this by *being in His Word and prayer and then living it out*. Each day’s circumstances, even hardships, become opportunities to know Him more deeply. As one pastor observed, “*knowledge of [God] grows through suffering, trials, and challenges... it’s challenges that have led to deeper knowledge of [God]. Knowing You is our greatest need and desire*” radical.net. In other words, we come to know Him as our healer, provider, comforter, Father, friend – by experiencing His care and character in real life. He is “*the God of the living*”, actively present in our lives.

Crucially, this relational knowledge is a two-way street: God also “knows” us. Scripture says “*The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend*” (Ex. 33:11). Moses prayed to know God more, and God responded by revealing His glory and His name – His very nature – to Moses. In the New Covenant, through Jesus, this level of personal knowing is opened to all believers. “*I am the good shepherd,*” Jesus said, “*I know My sheep and My sheep know Me*” (John 10:14). This mutual knowing is the essence of our salvation relationship. It’s not that we figured God out by intellect – rather, He revealed Himself to us and invited us into fellowship. And as we walk with Christ, “*being rooted and grounded in love,*” we increasingly “*know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*” (Eph. 3:17–19) – an interesting paradox, pointing to a knowledge that is felt in the heart and soul, not just comprehended in the mind.

Love and Obedience: The Fruit of Truly Knowing Him

To know Him is to love Him – and to be transformed by that love. In the Bible, knowing God is never a cold, academic idea; it always involves a response of the heart and life. True knowledge of God carries a moral imperative. As the Baker’s Bible Dictionary explains,

“Biblically, to know God is not to know about Him in an abstract, impersonal manner, but rather to recognize and accept His claims... It is expressed in living conformity to His will. The opposite of knowledge is not ignorance, but rebellion.”biblestudytools.com In other words, if we genuinely know the Lord, it changes how we live. *“In the doing of justice and righteousness, Josiah is said to have known God”*biblestudytools.com – meaning King Josiah’s obedience to God’s commands showed his relationship with God was real. Knowing Him means our faith translates into *loving obedience*. Jesus said, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”* (John 14:15). And the Apostle John writes, *“By this we know that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments”* (1 John 2:3). We cannot divorce knowing Christ from loving Christ and doing what pleases Him. It’s been well said that *faith = obedience = action*. If we truly trust and know the Lord, we will act on His word.

This is why the greatest commandment is to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength”* (Mark 12:30). God doesn’t want mere lip service or religious performance – He wants our wholehearted love. Without love, religious works are empty. Jesus highlighted this in a sobering warning: *“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name...and do many mighty works in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness’”* (Matthew 7:22–23). Note that Jesus does not deny that they did religious works; instead He says, *“I never knew you.”* Our omniscient Lord obviously knows *about* every person, but here “knew” is used in the relational sensecompellingtruth.org. He is saying, in effect, *“You were never in real relationship with Me – you are not Mine.”* Despite all their *activities*, these people lacked the one thing needful: a true love for Jesus evidenced by obedience. They called Him “Lord” but didn’t do what He says (Luke 6:46). Jesus calls them *“workers of lawlessness”*, meaning that behind the religious facade their hearts were self-willed – they did not love Him. In the final analysis, all our “Christian” service amounts to nothing if we do not actually know and love Christ. As Scripture says, *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 John 4:8).

Those chilling words “I never knew you” are the exact opposite of what we want to hear. How can we be sure we do know Him? The answer is simple: love. *“When we love God, we are known by Him”* (1 Corinthians 8:3), and we will never hear Him say, “I never knew you.” Jesus assured us that *those who love Him* – truly, from the heart – *and obey Him* are His true family (John 14:21, Matthew 12:50). Loving the Lord means knowing and obeying Him in genuine relationshipcompellingtruth.org. This kind of relationship is what God has always desired. *“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,”* God says in Hosea, *“and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings”*biblehub.com. In other words, God prefers our loving devotion over empty ritual. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had plenty of religious programing, but their hearts were far from God (Matthew 15:8). The same danger exists today: we can be busy with church activities and yet not know Jesus personally or love others deeply.

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of humble, loving service by washing His disciples’ feet. In doing so, He showed that knowing Him leads to imitating Him – loving others with

no thought of return. True knowledge of Christ expresses itself in such self-giving love.

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Indeed, the evidence of knowing Christ is love in action. Jesus said the world will know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35). When we know Him, we will begin to reflect His heart. We'll find ourselves forgiving as He forgave us, serving as He served us, and *"washing one another's feet"* as He modeled (John 13:14-15). In John 13, on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus – the Master – took up a towel and basin to perform a servant's task, washing the grime off His disciples' feet. He told them, *"I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you"* (John 13:15). This was more than a lesson in manners; it was a call to embody His love. If we truly know Jesus in His humility and compassion, we will stoop to love the lowest and the least. We will love those who can give nothing in return, just as Christ loved us when we had nothing to offer Him. *"Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did"* (1 John 2:6). Thus knowing Him inevitably produces a life of humble love and obedient action – whether that's feeding the hungry, embracing the outcast, forgiving an offender, or any act of Christlike charity. Faith is made complete by our works of love (James 2:22). It's by this active love that we experience His presence more deeply (*"If we love one another, God lives in us"* – 1 John 4:12) and also reveal His presence to others.

From "Knowing Him" to Making Him Known

When we truly know Jesus, making Him known is the natural byproduct. Think of the early disciples: they spent time *knowing* Jesus, and then they went out and *made Him known*, turning the world upside down. The same principle applies to us. As we grow in knowing His heart, the world will take notice. Christ's life within us cannot be hidden; His light shines through. Our love and Christlike character become a testimony. When we *yāda'* Christ, we will by default make Him known, because those around us will see *His heart in us*. That is our aim in HY – that we so imitate Christ in word and deed that others "see" Jesus. As David Platt prayed, *"God, help us to know You more... and at the same time, oh God, help us to make You known. ...We pray that people around us would come to know You through us."*radical.net. In other words, when we're living in authentic relationship with Jesus, evangelism is not just a program or event – it happens organically as *Christ is displayed in our life*. The joy, love, and holiness that flow from knowing Him become a magnet that draws others. A believer who genuinely loves and obeys Jesus stands out in a culture of self-focus. Jesus said, *"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). By our gracious words and selfless deeds done in His name, we make Him known. We become, as Paul wrote, *"letters from Christ... known and read by everyone"* (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

Importantly, "making Him known" is not about promoting ourselves or our church – it's about pointing people to Jesus. And here we must mention the vital role of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's Role: Pointing to Jesus and Empowering Us

We cannot truly know Christ or make Him known by our own ability; it is the Holy Spirit who enables both. Jesus promised that when the Spirit came, He would guide us into all truth and *“glorify Me (Jesus), for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you”* (John 16:14). In fact, the Holy Spirit's delight is to shine the spotlight on Jesus. *“The Holy Spirit points to Christ. He does not seek to exalt Himself; instead, He continually points us back to Jesus. His guiding us into the truth glorifies the Lord.”*williamstricklandblog.com Whenever you sense your heart being drawn to Jesus – to understand His Word, to exalt Him – that's the Holy Spirit at work. The Spirit “opens the eyes of our hearts” (Eph. 1:17-18) so that we can know Jesus better. He takes the words of Scripture and makes them come alive in us, revealing the beauty of Christ. Jesus said the Spirit would *“teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you”* (John 14:26), acting as the internal teacher who brings us into a deeper knowledge of Christ. Even our ability to cry out to God as “Abba, Father” comes from the Spirit of God in us (Romans 8:15-16). In short, we know Him because His Spirit opens our hearts and speaks His truth to us.

The Holy Spirit not only helps us know Jesus; He empowers us to make Jesus known to others. Before ascending, Jesus told the disciples, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses...”* (Acts 1:8). It is only by the Spirit's power that we can effectively testify of Christ. Human efforts, programs, and eloquence can't change hearts – but the Spirit can. He convicts people of sin and points them to the Savior (John 16:8). He works through us as we share the gospel. One writer put it this way: *“The Holy Spirit is the power behind our Great Commission. Telling others the good news about Jesus... is only effectively done by the life-giving power of the Spirit.”*williamstricklandblog.com. All effective witness for Christ is Spirit-empowered. Furthermore, the Spirit produces in us the *fruit* that reflects Christ's character (Galatians 5:22-23 – love, joy, peace, etc.), which in turn draws others to Jesus. The Spirit also pours God's love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) – enabling us to love in supernatural ways that get the world's attention. In every way, the Holy Spirit operates to point people to Jesus, whether by illuminating Christ to a believer or magnifying Christ through a believer. We rely on Him completely in our mission to know Christ and make Him known.

Beyond Programs: Relationship Over Religion in Today's Youth Culture

In much of modern student ministry, it's easy to get caught up in program-driven culture – the big events, the hype, the cool music, the next conference or project. While programs have their place, they are not the substance of knowing Christ. You can attend youth group every week, go to all the retreats, and post Bible verses on Instagram yet still miss the point. The real depth of knowing Christ is not found in outward activities alone. It's possible to be *“busy here and there”* in church life and yet have a shallow relationship with Jesus. Sadly, many youth programs focus on fun and attendance more than discipleship, resulting in

teens who know how to *act* Christian but don't truly *know* Christ. Statistics often show young people leaving church because they never personally encountered Jesus amid all the programming medium.com/medium.com. Jesus' warning about "*I never knew you*" reminds us that no amount of religious activity can substitute for a genuine relationship. God is not impressed by a packed calendar of spiritual events; He is looking at our hearts.

The remedy is to go "back to the drawing board" and focus on the one thing needful: knowing Him personally. Programs should serve the relationship, not replace it. We must teach and model for our youth what it means to seek God sincerely – to open the Bible expecting to meet Him, to pray honestly, to worship from the heart, and to serve others out of love. Micah 6:8 gives a timeless contrast to empty religion: "*He has told you, O man, what is good – and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*" compellingtruth.org. Israel had plenty of rituals, but God wanted *relationship* – a humble walk with Him characterized by love and justice. Their *****"rituals meant nothing because they weren't following the spirit of the law."**** compellingtruth.org That speaks volumes to us today. Likewise, Jesus told the Pharisees, "*Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'*" (Matthew 9:13). We don't want a youth ministry that's all sacrifice (events, rules, duties) with no mercy (love, compassion). We don't want *form* without *substance*.

In His Youth (HY), our defining vision is "Knowing Him and Making Him Known." This means that everything we do – every Bible study, every service project, every worship night – is geared toward deepening our relationship with Jesus and sharing Him with others. If a program doesn't serve those goals, its value is questionable. By calling it "His" Youth, we recognize that this ministry belongs to Jesus; it's literally *His* youth group, and we are *His* young people. Thus, our highest priority is to connect with *Him*, to belong to *Him*. If we truly center on knowing Him, the *making Him known* will happen naturally. But if we center on mere entertainment or social activities devoid of spiritual depth, we might produce fans of a youth group but not followers of Christ. Jesus is calling us deeper: "*These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me*" (Matthew 15:8) must not be true of us. Instead, our heart's cry is like Paul's: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

In conclusion, let's remember that knowing Him is a lifelong pursuit and the core of our identity as believers. It's personal (you and Jesus), scriptural (rooted in His Word), experiential (lived out in real life), and evidential (shown in love and obedience). From that rich relationship flows the mission of making Him known – through our words, our service, and our very lives as living testimonies. This is not a burdensome duty, but a joyful overflow of a heart that has been with Jesus. As we truly know Him, we can't help but speak of Him and reflect Him.

So let's not settle for a PG-rated, program-driven Christianity that only skims the surface. Let's go for the *Rated-R* Christianity – *Real* and *Radical* relationship with Jesus. When we know the King of Kings intimately and imitate Christ authentically, a watching world will take

notice. They will know that there is a God who lives, because they see His life in *His Youth*. That is our prayer and our purpose: knowing Him, and making Him known.

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