

How can I know God? Simon Murphy

1. **Theology.** Theology is the study / knowledge of God.

We must know if we can draw near to God! Should we be afraid or get our lives in order first? If we are Christians and have had our sins washed clean, we have confidence to draw near to God on the basis of the blood of Jesus! (Heb 10.19). It is only through God's Son that we can approach Him (John 14.6). We get our lives in order by coming to Him!

Then we must consider who we draw near to? A God who reveals himself as a perfect Father (James 1.17) and who delights in His children.

Knowing God makes us want to know Him more. And knowing Him more, makes us want to know more about him.

Two great books to help us on this journey are "Knowing God" by JI Packer, and "Desiring God" by John Piper.

2. Draw near

James 4.8: 'Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you'

Jer 33.3: 'Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known'

Matt 7.7: 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock, and it will be opened to you'.

This can't happen in 5 minutes, it needs time! We need to make time to walk with God and hear His voice in our lives. We can't schedule 5 mins in our diaries and expect massive revelation to flow from heaven. If we know God through Jesus, we will want to make the time. We can't help but want to make the time.

We draw near through the Word. God's Word is His primary means of drawing near to Him. In it we learn his nature, ways, plan etc. We see his heart. God has revealed himself and we can know Him! We need to be a people of the word! **As we think upon His word, God gives us understanding of who He is, who we are, and what His plans for us are (2 Tim 2.7)**

We draw near through prayer. This is us speaking to God, telling him what's on our heart, asking questions. Matt 6 is a great way to pray. Our prayers to God should be very real, God centered, and not pious like the Pharisees. We can take consolation from David and other great men of God who had vulnerable moments recorded for us all to see (Ps examples here). Paul encourages us to pray 'without ceasing' (1 Thess 5.17) which means that we should be also having short prayers through the day. I often pray for people as I am walking in a public place.

Prayer is conversation, not dialogue. Give time to listen to God speaking to you.

3. How does God speak to us?

- a. The heart is important. God's promise is that those who belong to Him, will hear him for sure (John 10.27). The question is if we are willing to listen to obey what we hear. God is speaking, are we listening? Do you just want to hear things that please you or do you want to hear what God really has to say to you, for your good and for your glory? The heart is important.
- b. God speaks primarily through the Bible. You need to know your bible well! Read it cover to cover, become familiar with it's contents. It's not just data, they are

God's own words to us (2 Tim 3.16). Too many Christians chase after supernatural voices from God, without first knowing God's 'already given' word to us. We open ourselves up to deception if we do that. All we hear should go through the filter of Scripture (Acts 17.11).

- c. God speaks through supernatural means. The gifts of the Holy Spirit have not ceased! They are active and relevant for us today (1 Cor 13.11, 14.1, 39, 1 Thess 5.19-20). These can take the form of prophecy, tongues interpreted, dreams, impressions, inward, audible voices in our hearts, audible voice in our ears and the divine ordering of circumstances. These are not exhaustive, God is Sovereign and can speak any way that He pleases! However, we must realize that not everything we hear is automatically of God (1 Cor 12.1-3) and therefore again we must test all things by scripture (1 Thess 5.19-20). Again, be like the Bereans who were both 'eager' but 'careful'.
- d. God speaks through Godly counsel. God speaks to us through people. Do not underestimate the power of simple counsel from another Christian. God has called us together to be a body of people. We need each other, to become holy and to hear God. He speaks through the preaching of his word, sharing during Home Group, and conversations with Christians.