

JANUARY 2005—*Knowing God*

In the gospel of John, Jesus says, “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). This is the nearest we have to a definition of eternal life in the gospels. Have you ever wondered what it means to “know” God and Jesus Christ? The Greek word for “know” in this passage is *ginosko*, which means personal knowledge. This kind of knowledge is different from simply “knowing about” God and Jesus; rather it is personal, relational intimacy, as in the intimate knowing between a husband and wife or two best friends.

We begin to know God personally when he draws us to Jesus Christ, and we turn toward him in repentance and faith shines the light of eternal truth into our souls. But this is only the beginning of a relationship which is meant to grow deeper with each passing day. C.S. Lewis offers a helpful insight on this growth:

When you come to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him. And, in fact, He shows much more of Himself to some people than to others—not because He has favourites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition. Just as sunlight, though it has no favourites, cannot be reflected in a dusty mirror as clearly as a clean one.

You can put this another way by saying that while in other sciences the instruments you use are things external to yourself (things like microscopes and telescopes), the instrument through which you see God is your whole self. And if a man’s self is not kept clean and bright, his glimpse of God will be blurred—like the Moon seen through a dirty telescope. That is why horrible nations have horrible religions: they have been looking at God through a dirty lens.

Lewis points out what the Bible everywhere tells us, namely, that we must keep walking into that Light in order to be transformed by it and to grow to better know Him who is its source. We must, in other words, put away sin and works of darkness from our lives and embrace with obedience the light and truth of God’s word. This requires settled determination and serious effort on our part. But it is worth all that is required, for as Jesus said:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Matthew 5:8 NIV

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 144.