

What God Wants from You
Hosea 6:6
February 21, 2021

When we read the Bible, we find out what God wants from us. For example, “Be holy as I am holy.”¹ Or “Love one another.”² Or “In humility consider others better than yourselves.”³ Or “Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?”⁴ “Do not lie, do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery,” on and on and on. There are so many.

However, is there something God wants from us more than anything else? Yes, there is. That is to “Know God.” God wants us to know him more than anything else. Because when you truly know him, you will do all other things that God expects of you, whether that is being holy or loving one another or doing justice or walking humbly with God.

However, how can a finite human mind understand the infinite God? Can we ever say anything that is adequate to describe God? Every theological tradition has tried to do this and is still trying to do that. They all try to describe the indescribable. When you think about the word, “theology,” don’t you think that is a bit of stretch? Theology literally means “the study of God.” Can we really study God? Is God or his attributes or his activities something we can analyze and understand?

There is an ancient legend about Saint Augustine. He has been trying to understand the nature or concept of Trinity and other theological matters. In the midst of his reflections, he went out for a walk on the beach. He saw a little boy digging a hole in the sand with a seashell and then running to the ocean, filling up the shell with the sea water, and rushing back to pour it into the hole he just made. Back and forth, he kept doing that. So, Augustine asked him, “What are you doing, my friend?” “I am putting the ocean in this hole!” said the boy. For Augustine, it was a moment of revelation. He realized that he had been trying to do exactly that. He has been trying to put an infinite God into his finite mind.

When you think about it, don’t you think that’s in a way what the theological pursuit is doing? I am not diminishing the importance of theological studies. They are important, no doubt. Trying to understand different attributes of God and

¹ Leviticus 11:44.

² John 13:34.

³ Philippians 2:3.

⁴ Micah 6:8

trying to understand God more deeply are indispensable in our spiritual journey. So, theological studies are important. But what we need is not an academic knowledge of God, but rather personal and experiential knowledge of God that comes from a personal relationship with him.

God says, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” God wants us to know him more than anything else. He wants us to know him personally and experientially.

So, how can we know God, and not just about him? 1 John 2 tells us the way to know God. It says, “By this, we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”⁵ It says being obedient is the way to know God. The passage continues to say, “He who says ‘I know God but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’”⁶ John clearly states that there is one way to know God, and one true evidence of knowing God. And that is “Obedience.” Obedience is crucial to our relationship with God. It is indispensable to our spiritual health. Obedience is what brings holiness into our lives.

There is nothing that will cause you to doubt your salvation or your relationship with God more than disobedience. When you constantly disobey God, one of two things has happened. One, you have never surrendered your life to the Lord. Perhaps you wanted to do that but you never did, not in an obedient way. The other is you have surrendered your life to the Lord once, but for some reason, you have neglected your relationship with God. As a result, you find yourself disobeying God. In either way, when you disobey God often enough, then you will begin to doubt your relationship with God.

The truth of the matter is that obedience is what makes us acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And obedience is what makes us love God more. And when you love God more, you obey him more. It is a cycle.

There was a time when the British government sought to reward General Gordon for his brilliant service in China. They awarded him with a title, money, and a gold medal that inscribed with the record of his thirty-three military engagements. Gordon declined the money and the title but he accepted the gold medal.

⁵ V. 3

⁶ V. 4.

This medal became his most prized possession. But after his death his medal could not be found. Eventually it was discovered that he had sent the medal to Manchester during a severe famine, with an instruction that it should be melted down and used to buy food for the poor. On the day when he sent his medal, he wrote in his diary these words: “The last earthly thing I had in this world that I valued I have given it to the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁷

General Gordon was well respected by both friends and foes while he served in China because of his honorable character.⁸ Everyone recognized his righteous, moral, noble and honorable character. He had such character because of his daily obedience to the Lord.

There is a difference between serving God and obeying God. Serving God is doing something for God, usually doing what YOU want to do for God. Obeying God, however, is doing what GOD wants you to do, when he wants you to do it, where he wants you to do it, and the way he wants you to do it.

It is in this surrendered obedience we discover the grace, mercy and love of God. And that is how we get to know him intimately and deeply.

I want to suggest three things that may help us grow in the knowledge of God. One, Acknowledge God’s Presence. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” Be prayerful all the time.

Some people think that spending time with God means getting alone with God for a certain period of time, which is true and important. We often call it “Quiet Time.” And it is important to keep that. We should do that. But more importantly, we need to be in prayerful attitude all the time. Acknowledge God’s presence every moment of the day.

Two, Meditate on God’s Principles. The only way to grow in your knowledge of God is to not only read God’s word but ponder upon its principles. The more you know what God says, the more you will hear what God wants. The more you hear what God wants, the better you will be able to carry out his will. The better you are able to carry out his will, the closer you will be with him. The closer you will be with him, the better you will know him.

⁷ King Duncan cited this story from Stephen Olford’s *The Grace of Giving* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972) in his sermon *Staying Close*. www.esermons.com.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_George_Gordon

I am concerned that many Christians today act upon what they think is right rather than acting upon what God says. They themselves and their moral understanding are the guiding principles of their lives rather than having God's words and his principles to be their guiding precepts. Because of this there is a lot of confusion even in the church with different moral issues.

In 1 John 2:3 says that the way to know God is to keep his commandment. The word "keep" was originally a sailor's term. In the ancient days, sailors steered the ship by looking at the stars. What John is saying is that when you know God, you will steer your life by his commandment. Your life, your decision, your conviction will be guided by what God says. And the more God sees that you follow his word, the more he will reveal his will, his truth and his principles to you.

Three, Stay Close to the Lord. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." There are two things that truly define Christian life: trusting God and obeying him. And that is the way to grow in your relationship with God. The more you love God, the more you will obey God. The more you obey God, the closer you will be to God. The closer you are to God, the more you will know God. The more you know God, the more you will love God. It is a cycle.

Again, there is nothing more God wants from you than knowing him personally and intimately.