

Do You Know God?

Every Grace believer would like to answer yes to that. Many, however, would reluctantly admit, “No.” or at least, not nearly as well as they would like. Some even respond that it would be presumptuous to answer, “Yes.” Many believers know about God. They can list God’s attributes, and characteristics of His nature but this should not be confused with knowing God. A believer should know these things but this is not knowing God. A believer can and should know God. God intends for believers to know Him.

The New Testament writers employed three key terms to express knowledge. *Eidos* [εἶδος] is that knowledge which is objective. It comes by sight or observation. *Eidos* is a form of the word *horao* [ὁραω] to see. *Ginosko* [γινωσκω] and its various forms express knowledge which is part of experience or derived from experience. *Epiginosko* [ἐπιγινωσκω] as can be seen by comparison is built on the *ginosko* root. The preposition *epi* is perfective adding the idea of fullness and the resulting definition would be “full experiential knowledge.” These three words will be important to understanding the believer’s privilege of knowing God.

Knowing God begins with knowing about God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. Without this truth the believer has no objective basis for knowing God. Many believers think they know God because they have subjectively identified God’s “work” in their lives and in others but because they do not know God’s objective revelation concerning Himself in Scripture, they have wrongly identified God’s “work”. Many pentecostal people believe they have identified a work of God when people are “slain in the Spirit”, a phrase which is not used in Scripture. The work which they have wrongly attributed to God is attributed to demons in Scripture (cp Luke 4:35; 9:42). God is not glorified by people being thrown upon the ground and convulsing. Many attribute the provision of food or material blessings, to God’s love. The Scriptures attribute such material blessings to God’s goodness not His love (Deuteronomy 28:12; Acts 14:17). Then, the Scriptures surprise many believers by connecting God’s love with His disciplining His sons (Hebrews 12:6) or with believers meeting the needs of other believers (2 Corinthians 9:7). Each of the above illustrate why it is important for the believer to learn what God has revealed **about** Himself. Such knowledge provides an objective standard for knowing God.

As has been stated, this knowledge is objective and is described by the term *eidos*. The Scriptures reveal that unsaved men do not even objectively know God (Galatians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:5). Neither does the believer objectively know God or what God is doing apart from that which He has revealed (1 Corinthians 2:11). Therefore, God’s present work, which is Paul’s topic in 1 Corinthians 2, can not be identified by observation. It is known only by means of God’s Word through the work of the Holy Spirit revealing truth through the writers and apostles of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:9, 12).

When God shines the light consisting of knowledge about His opinion of the person of Jesus Christ, specifically that Jesus Christ is God and is the Savior, an individual believes the gospel for salvation and is saved (2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This knowledge is not merely objective. Paul use a form of *ginosko* for such knowledge concerning Jesus Christ is more than a set of facts but facts which are known personally. This act is described as coming to know God. Paul does use this expression in Galatians 4:9 but then quickly turns to point out that it is even better to state that we are known by God. Since God knows all things, this knowledge is not His omniscience. It is experiential. When one is saved, He is known experientially by God. He is part of God’s family and has the privilege of being intimately known by God. God does not know about the believer but knows him. God knows him as one might know a friend versus an acquaintance or someone about whom he has read or heard.

The believer also has the potential to know God experientially. While there are many good Scriptures regarding knowing God, there are a few which demonstrate how this is possible. The key Scripture is John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they might know you the true God and Jesus Christ, Whom you have sent." Many believers miss this privilege because they do not understand eternal life. Eternal life is not "everlasting life" though it is often mistranslated as such. Everlasting life, which is not mentioned in Scripture, describes length of life. Eternal life describes quality of life or content of life (John 10:10). The believer has eternal life because God the Son indwells Him (1 John 5:11-12). Eternal life is God's kind of life and Christ is that life for the believer (Colossians 3:3, 4). Christ stated that the purpose of eternal life for the believer was that he might experientially know God the Father and the Son.

Since, eternal life is God's kind of life, when the believer uses this life, he is knowing God. The believer is intended to use eternal life. Paul wrote Timothy to lay hold of eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12, 19). When John wrote his first letter, he began with the revelation of eternal life in the person of the Son (1 John 1:1-4). As he precedes through the letter, he address the issue of love for this divine quality of love is a real manifestation of eternal life. "We know objectively, that we have passed out of death into **life**, because we love the brothers," (1 John 3:14). In 4:7 John writes, "everyone loving, has been begotten from God and he knows God." The word begotten is in the Perfect tense, which emphasizes a past act which has an abiding result. The one loving has already been begotten from God with the continuing result that he is a born one [child] of God. However, the word "knows" is in the Present tense which stresses an ongoing state or action. The combination of these two tenses affirms security while also laying stress on the believer's present experience. The one loving isn't born because he loves. He loves because he was already born. The present experience is different. The one loving, while he is loving, knows God. The act of using this divine kind of love is an opportunity to know God.

John points out that the one not loving does not know God (1 John 4:8). John is not stating that such are unsaved but that in their experience, they have not experientially known God. Sadly many believers live this way most of their lives.

This love is God's kind of love, which the Father and Son demonstrated for us by the Father sending the Son and the Son laying down His life (1 John 4:9, 10; 3:16). When the believer exercises this love, he is directing the love which has been divinely provided for his use (Galatians 5:22). Since this is God's kind of love, the believer who is using it is knowing God. He knows God experientially not as the recipient of love but as the one exercising this love in the same kind of manner which the Father and Son exercised this love toward him. This isn't an academic appraisal of love. This is an experiential use of love. The believer knows objectively what God's kind of love is like because God has revealed its nature in Scripture. When the believer lives out this love he is able to identify it and then know that this is the way God loves. This is knowing God. That love is empowered by and an expression of God's kind of life. When the believer lays hold of eternal life and loves by means of that life, he knows the Father and Jesus Christ.

Does this just happen? Can a believer just lay hold of eternal life and love? First, the believer has to have this love. It is divinely produced by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the believer needs to learn how to be spiritual or filled by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Being spiritual or filled by the Spirit is not difficult. One lets the word concerning the Christ dwell richly in him (Colossians 3:16). He allows the word which explains his relationship in Christ, knit together with all other grace believers and Jesus Christ being the head of that one new man (Ephesians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). When the believer lets that truth frame his mind, he is filled and can

then direct this love to the needs of other believers. When he loves in this manner, he is knowing God!