

Is God Close to You?

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Introduction



How close are you to God?



Does God know you? Does He know what is in your heart? Is He confident that you will do as He pleases?



As Christians, our desire to grow closer to God. But many find it difficult to develop a close relationship with our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



This Bible study is to arouse our desires to live and grow closer to Christ, to take a look at our relationship with Christ, and find ways to draw closer to Him.



The writer of Hebrews emboldened us saying:
“Let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance
of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil
conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water”
(Hebrews 10:22)



Known by Christ



Many people profess that they know Christ and that they accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior.



They consider Jesus a friend. To them, knowing Christ is just like joining a fan club. Just like idolizing a celebrity, you get to watch all his/her movies, and you know everything about him/her. Yet, your celebrity idol may not know you.



Our relationship with God is not a fan club or a social club. We may profess to know Christ but Christ may not know us.



There is a difference between us knowing Jesus, and Jesus knowing us. There is a difference between us considering Jesus a friend, and Jesus considering us as His friend.



One of the harshest, most disappointing, insensitive and hurtful words ever said is recorded in the Holy Bible. In fact, it was our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who uttered these harsh and unsympathetic words.



Jesus said in Matthew 7:23:
“I never knew you, away from Me.”



Can you imagine Jesus saying this in your face? It is as if a parent saying to his/her child: “hindi kita anak” – “you are not my son.” For a child, it is the most hurtful thing in the world – being disowned by his/her own parents. For Jesus to say “I do not know you” carries exactly the same severity and sternness.



Why Never Knew You?



Now, let us consider the account. Matthew 7:21-23.



Matthew 7:21-23

21 “**Not everyone** who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only the one who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’

23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**’



How can God ignore someone who sincerely devotes himself or herself to the Lord – preaching, performing miracles and even doing good things in His name? Why would God ignore such an individual? How can one profess and preach Christ yet be classified by Christ as a worker of iniquity? The answer is in the context of the account.



Matthew 7:13-23 (NKJV)

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.



Matthew 7:13-23 (NKJV)

14 Because narrow *is* the gate and **difficult *is* the way** which leads to life, and there are **few who find it.**



To be God's true disciples is not easy. The gate is narrow and road not easy because the road a Christian travels is not the way of this world.



People want to live a life without laws and rules. But the road that leads to the Kingdom of God is one of righteousness – led by God's laws. Thus, the gate and the path are a bit narrower and stricter. Therefore, few people want it and thus find it.



Matthew 7:13-23 (NKJV)

15 “**Beware of false prophets**, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 You will know them by **their fruits**. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?



Matthew 7:13-23 (NKJV)

17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 Therefore **by their fruits you will know them.**



What is Jesus talking about here? Jesus is talking about deeds. By their deeds – by their actions - you shall know them. Words are cheap. The character of a person is in his action!



Matthew 7:13-23 (NKJV)

21 “**Not everyone** who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he **who does the will of My Father** in heaven.



Matthew 7:13-23 (NKJV)

22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness!**'



These are people who preach about Christ but do not keep the law. They do evil in the sight of God by violating God's laws and teaching that the laws are no longer enforced today. They are workers of iniquity! Now, it is clear to us.



1 John 3:4

”Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law:
for sin is the transgression of the law.”



How Does God Know Us?



Matthew 7:24-27 (NKJV)

24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and **does them**, I will liken him to a **wise man who built his house on the rock**:

25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.



Matthew 7:24-27 (NKJV)

26 “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and **does not do them**, will be like a **foolish man** who built his house on the sand:

27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”



We are known to God by our deeds; by our actions.



Romans 2:13

13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the **doers of the law will be justified;**



It is not the hearers or the preachers of the law that are saved. Rather, the doers of the law are.



Jesus said in Luke 6:43-44:

43 “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

44 For **every tree is known by its own fruit.**

For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.



That is why Paul said in Galatians 4:9:

“But now, after that ye have known God, or **rather are known of God...**” When we belong to God, God knows us by name.



How do we get to the state that God knows us by name? We will take our lessons from three (3) men of faith whom God knows very well.



1. Abraham



God considered Him as a friend.



Isaiah 41:8

“But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of **Abraham my friend.**”



James 2:23

“And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’—and he was called a **friend of God.**”



Abraham is special. God saw in Abraham a unique quality that made him a friend of God.



Genesis 22

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied.

2 Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”



Genesis 22

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.



Genesis 22

5 He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,



Genesis 22

7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8 Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.



Genesis 22

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.



Genesis 22

11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied.

12 “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. **Now I know that you fear God,** because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”



Genesis 22

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."



Genesis 22

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time

16 and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because **you have done** this and have not withheld your son, your only son,



Genesis 22

17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, **because you have obeyed me.”**



A friend of God will do what God commands. Jesus
said in John 14:15 (KJV)

“If you love me, keep my commandments.”



Which commands were Jesus referring to? Many would immediately refer this to the twin greatest commandment, the command to love God and the command to love one another.



Matthew 22:36-38

36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”



The first and greatest commandment is not a new command. In fact, Jesus quoted the Jewish Shema written in Deuteronomy 6:4.



Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with
all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to
be on your heart.



It is the summation of the 10 commandments. And, the second is like it. The second command is a quote from Leviticus 19:18; which is a summation of the last 5 commandments.



Leviticus 19:18

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.



In short, the greatest commandment in the law is to keep the entirety of the 10 commandments.

Notice 1 John 5:3; “ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”



Commandment keeping is important in drawing close to God because friends share the same values, moral standard and principles.



Abraham is a principled man. He is consistent in his actuation. In God's eyes, Abraham is faithful. You can expect him to obey God's command at all times. This is how Abraham was commended in James 2.



James 2

21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

22 You see that his **faith and his actions** were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was **credited to him as righteousness,**” and he was called **God’s friend.**



Does God consider you to be His friend?

When you love God and keep His commandments
you can be sure He does!



2. Job



God knows Job. God was confident that Job would pass the test and remain faithful until the end. God knew Job well enough to use Job in a challenge and teach Satan a lesson on faith. God put His reputation on Job and Job did not disappoint God. The single most important and unique trait of Job is “integrity.”



Job 1

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

7 The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”



Job 1

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is **blameless and upright**, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

9 “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied.



Job 1

10 “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”



Job 1

12 The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

13 One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house,



Job 1

14 a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby,
15 and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”



Job 1

16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”



Job 1

17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”



Job 1

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house,

19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”



Job 1

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he **fell to the ground in worship**

21 and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the **LORD be praised.**”

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.



Job 2

1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”



Job 2

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And **he still maintains his integrity**, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”



Job 2

4 “Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life.

5 But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”



Job 2

6 The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.



Job 2

8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

9 His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your **integrity**? Curse God and die!”

10 He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all this, **Job did not sin** in what he said.



In all these Job, did not sin; he held on to his
integrity!”



What is integrity? Integrity comes from the Greek word 'integra' meaning whole. Integrity represents the wholeness or character of one's life. Integrity is an unwavering commitment to a cause, moral values or beliefs without faltering no matter the consequence.



Job is a man of integrity. God knew the outcome before the test even began because God knew that Job had integrity.

Job wrote about his integrity in Job 27:2-6:



Job 27:2-6

2 “As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice,
the Almighty, who has made my life bitter,
3 as long as I have life within me,
the breath of God in my nostrils,
4 my lips will not say anything wicked,
and my tongue will not utter lies.



Job 27:2-6

5 I will never admit you are in the right;
till I die, I will not deny **my integrity**.

6 I will maintain my innocence and never let go of it;
my conscience will not reproach me as long as I
live.



He didn't know GOD allowed Satan to test him with sufferings. All Job had and knew was his integrity – his righteousness and faithfulness to God. God distinguished him for his integrity – thus Job was known by God and was special in God's sight.



How is your integrity?

Does God know that He can count on you come hell
and high water?

When He does, He will come close to you!



3. David



God knew David. He knew David's heart. David's heart will always be right with God.



1 Samuel 16

1 The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”



1 Samuel 16

2 But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’”

3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”



1 Samuel 16

4 Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

5 Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.



1 Samuel 16

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, **but the Lord looks at the heart.**”



1 Samuel 16

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.”

9 Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the Lord chosen this one.”



1 Samuel 16

10 Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The Lord has not chosen these.”

11 So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”



1 Samuel 16

12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”



1 Samuel 16

13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.



God loved David in spite of all his failings. David's heart was always on the right place. He was obedient to God.



Acts 13:22

“After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; **he will do everything I want him to do.**”



Are you like David?

Can God say the same thing about you:?

Will you do everything He wants you to do?

When God sees an obedient heart in you, He will
come near to you!



Summation



Does God know you?
Are we known to Him?
Is He close to you?



Not many have the privilege to be known by God.
But we all have the unique opportunity to be known
by Him.



John 6:44

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.”



In order for someone to come to the knowledge of the truth, to Christ, to the true church that Jesus founded, that individual has to be chosen by the Father. Those whom God knows and calls are destined to conform to the image of His son.



Romans 8:29

“For those **God foreknew** he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”



For us to draw closer to God and for God to come near to us, we need to build on the qualities of the Bible heroes:

1. The faith of Abraham
2. The integrity of Job
3. The obedience of David



If we develop these quality with increasing measure,
we will experience the closeness of God like never
before.



Instead of the rejecting words of “I never knew you, away from me you evildoers,” we would rather hear the Lord say: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”



And, finally as Jesus said in Luke 10:20 “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that **your names are written in heaven.**”



How does God draw near to you?

God comes close to you by sending His Holy Spirit to you. Then, the Holy Spirit abides you with.



John 14:15-17

15 If you love me, keep my commands.

16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever

17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.



That is how close God will be with you!



END

