

GETTING TO KNOW GOD

by Vern Bennom Grimsley

Inscribed upon the temple of Apollo in ancient Greece were the chiseled words, "Know Thyself."

But far more important than "knowing yourself" is knowing your God--and knowing him within yourself.

You can know God!--not the way a scholar knows his ancient history or a scientist knows his nuclear physics, but the way a child knows his loving Father, personally. For God is a person, and so are you, and personalities are capable of knowing each other. "And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John, 4:7)

Consider: we human beings possess personality. Therefore, God must also have personality, for if He did not, we mortals would embody something God lacked. But God is our Creator. Could he who formed our eyes himself be blind? Could He who designed our ears himself be deaf? Could he who conceived our minds and personalities himself be mindless and without personality? No! Of course, God is much more than this, but he must be at least this!

Since God, the source of personality, is a person, and is therefore capable of being known, we can know him in at least three ways: by FAITH, EXPERIENCE, and CONFRONTATION.

(1) By FAITH, acknowledge that God already knows you, loves you,

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and is your spiritual Father--that He is near to you, interested in your doings and welfare, and cares for you. Believe that implicitly! Then, by faith, begin living as though you knew God. Converse and commune; discuss things with God. Don't be misled into thinking, "Oh, what I'm doing is all foolishness; nothing is really happening," for something is happening. You're learning faith.

You are not blindly deceiving yourself. Faith often begins with the illusion that faith is an illusion, but if you will put the weight of your whole life upon your faith, it will bear you up, and will soon become experience.

(2) EXPERIENCE. Who can tell the exact moment when a planted seed becomes no longer a seed, but a plant? No one could say with certainty; neither is it possible precisely to define when living faith will become living experience for you--but that moment will surely come, and then without the slightest questioning or hesitation you will know that you know God. Skeptics may have been able to shake your intellectual belief, but nobody can rob you of your inner experience.

(3) CONFRONTATION. Finally, you will sometime know God by encounter. Ages of thrilling

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spiritual preparation beyond your life on this earth will be first required in order to attain that moment, but attain it you shall, if your heart is set on eternal things, and on knowing God.

It is remarkable that the people who lament most pitifully about not knowing how to get acquainted with God are often ones who have no trouble whatever getting acquainted with their next door neighbors! And the difference is really not so great. Suppose a housewife wants to introduce herself to some new folks in the neighborhood; she "runs out of sugar," goes to borrow a cupful, knocks at the door, and has soon found a new friend.

But it is a much simpler matter to get to know God. You needn't even leave the house, for it is written, "I stand at the door and knock." God comes to you, seeks you out.

When God stands at the door, he knocks, but he doesn't knock it down. Neither will He try to get his foot in. God won't force friendship. You too must show yourself friendly.

~But once the first acquaintance is made, how do you then get to know God? Again, let us think in comparisons. How do you get to know anybody else?

By spending time with that person! There are probably

people in your home town with whom you've been politely acquainted all your life--you've nodded to them on the street time and again--and yet you could not truthfully say you know them. Similarly, too few of us have gone beyond a mere nodding acquaintance with God. Rather, we need to spend time in prayer, worship, meditation and communion with our Father, that we may live not as strangers, but as sons and daughters.

Still, people who come to know each other do more than spend time together: they do things together as well. What can you and God do together? His will. Your Father has things in mind for your life--projects to be done, plans to be executed--and if you will decide to seek and carry out His mighty purposes, you will get to know God better by undertaking to do his work. And he will strengthen you to do it.

Think of God as your Father and as your Friend. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, said that a friend is "a single soul dwelling in two bodies." Certainly, then, God is your friend, for his spirit dwells not in himself alone, but also in you. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians, 3:16).

And another aspect: if you truly know a person, you'll recognize him anywhere. Thus if you know

God, you will similarly learn to recognize him wherever you may see him in the lives of other men. For God has set the smouldering cinder of his spirit burning in your mind to illumine you, and it glows in other men as well. Therefore, getting to know God as your Father involves getting to know man as your brother. Remember--you are a child of God!

A young man born in Europe during the war had never seen his father. While he was yet a baby, both of his parents were killed in a bombing raid, and the only family memento he possessed was his father's pocket watch, which he carried with him everywhere. Years later, he took it to a jeweler for cleaning, and in the back of it was found a small picture of his parents. All this time he had been carrying it and hadn't known it! Similarly, all this time the very God you seek has dwelt within you!

You inherit your relatives, but you choose your friends. In exactly the same way, God is your Father and man is your brother by the very fact of your being born into the world, but being friends with God and man is a choice you must make. Be assured, however, that if you will learn to know man, you will come to love him; and if you will learn to love God, you will come to know him!

You've beheld a mother fondly bending over her sleeping child's crib at night; God so loves you! You've seen a father taking his youngsters to the park? God so loves you. You've seen parents labor all their lives with meager incomes to send their boy to college. God so loves you! You've seen a mother up and waiting to know how her daughter's first date went? So God loves you.

You've seen a father patiently working far into the night to show his grade-school son how to do long division? God so loves you! You've seen parents beaming to watch a son or daughter graduate from high school? So God cares for you! You've heard a mother reminding her young son to wear his golasches and earmuffs when he goes out into the snow? So God loves you! He is your divine parent, your loving Father.

Relax; be wholly at ease with God. Live as a son or daughter of God, not like a mere stranger in an unfriendly household. You're not God's house guest--you're one of the Family...the Family of God! God knows and loves you; and in love you can come to know him as well.

Such is life's supreme satisfaction; may it be yours!

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FAMILY OF GOD