

Knowing God 1 of 2

Love, Wisdom, Power

#0200

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—December 13, 1968

Let us turn to John 17. This is the prayer of our Lord, the last night that He spent on earth before His crucifixion, as He knelt there in the garden with His disciples, and committed them to the great Father. We're told by inspiration that this chapter comprehends more than any other chapter in the New Testament. We're also told that we're to make this prayer our first study.

We're gathering this evening around the table of the Lord. The night that He gave His disciples the emblems of His sacrifice was the same night that He prayed this prayer. The two are closely connected. We do well to study them together.

In preparation for the service of sacrament this evening, may we study the opening verses of our Lord's prayer.

"These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" John 17:1–3.

Jesus' desire is to give eternal life to His children. He wants us to share His life. Then in the third verse, He tells us what eternal life is—that they might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. So you see that eternal life is not just something that we're to get by and by. It's not just something we're to have when Jesus comes. It is something we are to enter into now.

In other words, He is thinking not merely of an extension of existence, but of an experience. I suppose that if we thought about it, we all understand that to merely extend existence is no blessing. I'm glad we do not believe that the wicked are going to exist eternally in hell. But there are many other things that would be about as bad. In fact, there are some other things that might be worse if that could be conceived.

It seems to me, friends, that any existence which is not satisfying, to extend it through eternity, the very thought of it would be intolerable. Is that not so? And there are millions of people living in this world a life, an existence, which, if it were to be extended a mere million years, would be a great calamity. But that's only the beginning of eternity.

I'm so glad that this eternal life that God offers you and me, I say, is not merely an extension of ordinary human existence. It is a new life altogether. And it is a life which we begin now.

In fact, I've sometimes thought of it this way: God lets us get a little taste of it here to see whether we'd like another helping. He says, I'll let you try some, and if you like it, I'll give you more and more and more.

But unless we try it, we'll never know what it is. And what is it? Well, Jesus tells us here—it's to know God. To know God is life eternal. And may I say, the person that does not know God does not understand that verse at all. The person who does not know God can read that and say, "Yes, those are some beautiful words," but this verse is understood only by those who experience what Jesus is talking about.

Those who have experienced it will agree with me that anyone who knows God would rather know Him for a year, five years, or ten years, and never live again, than to live without knowing Him through the ceaseless ages of eternity. Am I right? Ah, yes, friends.

But thank God the two go together. This eternal life that is knowing God will mean to know Him forever, and to keep knowing Him more and more through the blessed ages that lie ahead. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ.

There is another reason that I'd like to study this with you this morning, dear friends. As you all know, we're living right in the midst of tremendous changes. Things are going fast in the world. The last election showed the influence of Catholic power and the labor unions with their rising compulsive action. And recent events in other phases of the world show the coming together of so-called Protestantism with Catholicism, the rising influence of spiritualism. All these events are taking place before our eyes that we've been looking forward to through the eyes of prophecy. Now we see them with our physical eyes.

All this can only mean that very soon, we shall be in the thrilling scenes of the Loud Cry and the solemn scenes of the sifting. God's people are to be sifted as wheat is sifted in a sieve. And oh, friends, as we approach that hour, we must remember that every one of us is going to be tested somewhere all alone. Each one will be tested, and the thing that will make the difference, whether we succeed or fail, is this: Do we know God? If we really know God we'll go through. If we don't, we'll drop out. It's that simple and that certain.

So this morning, especially because of these scenes into which we're entering, may I urge that we study together what it means to know God.

To know anyone is to be acquainted with his character. So to know God is to know *His* character. If we were to choose one word that would indicate and describe the character of God, I think that we would select the word that John, by inspiration, has selected 1 John 4:8. And what is it? Love. But will you notice the wording of the text:

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”
1 John 4:8.

If we were to take the last part of this verse, God is love, and just read that, we would be presenting something which we have heard over and over again, and in which we all believe as truth. But I would like to have you notice the peculiar wording of the early part of the text: “He that loveth not knoweth not God.”

In other words, to know God means not merely to know that God is love, but it means that *we* love. And why is that? Why, my friends, because no one knows love merely by receiving it. A lot of people haven’t found that out. They think that if they could just get someone to love them enough, they’d know love. But no. There’s nobody in this universe, not even God Himself, can love you enough so that you know love, *unless* your heart responds.

That’s the mystery of love, friends. There’re many people today who are sick in body and mind because they don’t understand this question. They want people to give them attention—maybe physical or mental attention. They want somebody to love them. And it’s natural for us to want somebody to love us, friends. God put that desire in our hearts.

But oh, remember that you can never know love merely by receiving it. Never. There’s something that must happen in your heart in which you respond to the great love of God. So there is something about knowing God which requires some participation on our part.

This brings me to one of the most important points in our study this morning, and that is that we shall find in all this experience of knowing God, there is something for man to do. There is some decision for man to make. There is some effort for man to exert. There is something that man is to do in cooperation with God that makes it possible for him to know God.

Unless we’re willing to do that, all the love of God that is poured out upon us is simply, in the end, lost and wasted as far as accomplishing anything for us. Oh, that God may help us to see that and appreciate it.

There is a teaching in the world today that filters in, even among the remnant sometimes. It comes from Babylon. It’s the idea that Christ has done everything, and that there is nothing for man to do. There’re all degrees of this teaching, but it is dangerous because it is false.

It is true, friends, that there is something that Jesus has done for us in which we have had absolutely no part. He suffered the death of the cross. And as we behold that, we see that we’ve had nothing to do with providing that gift. We’ve had nothing to do with the offering of that gift. We stand amazed at the revelation of that love, the Father’s love revealed in Christ.

But unless you and I respond to that love, unless we yield your wills to the impressions of that love, it is all in vain as far as we’re concerned. And there are

those who are waiting for the Spirit of God to do something for them in impressing that love upon their hearts that will wait in vain.

I want to read something to you from the *Mount of Blessings*, page 142:

“Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven” *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, page 142.

Think of that, friends. Have you ever had any influences working on your heart? You thought, “Oh, I wish they were stronger.” Listen: if they were a *hundred* times stronger, that wouldn’t make you a Christian. Thank God it is your privilege with the will of God that He has put right there in your forebrain, to say, “I will yield to that love. I will respond to the love of God. I will look at what He has done for me at Bethlehem, at Calvary. In the sanctuary above, I will behold His great condescension, His loving sacrifice.”

As I look, I will believe that it is for me. And as I believe it is for me, I will respond. I will love back in my poor, feeble way. Love back to the One who has loved me in such an infinite way.

And only in that way will we enter in and know the love of God. Oh, I trust that we shall see that this morning. And when we do, when we respond the best we know, when we surrender the best we can, when we try to love God with what we have, let me tell you when we do that, the more His love flows into our hearts, and the more it flows from us back to Him. And it just keeps going back and forth, back and forth.

The more He loves us, the more we see that He loves us, the more we love Him back, if we keep expressing it; for expression deepens impression.

Why not respond to the love of God, my friends? Why not at every opportunity say, “Lord, I love You”? Why not say it in a public congregation? Why not say it around the table? Why not say it at the family worship? Why not say it alone with God at the place of prayer? Why not say it as we walk along the road? Why not say, “Lord, I love you. I know you love me, I believe it, and I respond. You love me, and Lord, I love you.”

If we do that, children, parents, everyone, the love of God can become more and more real to us day by day. And thus, we shall enter into what Jesus is talking about.

“...this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God...” John 17:3.

“He that loves not, knows not God, for God is love.”
1 John 4:8

Let us this morning, this last day of the old year, say; “My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus ‘tis now.” Let’s sing a stanza right now.

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.

Now, another aspect of God’s character: Wisdom. In James 1:5, we read:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him” James 1:5.

Now, this wisdom that God has finds expression in guiding us. We can gather confidence to trust that wisdom by looking at the things that He’s made, the things He’s done, the things He’s said. When we look at the stars, we see a wisdom that’s guiding them, keeping them in their places, and bringing them to their appointed stations. When we study predictive prophecy, when we examine the wonderful chains of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation, we gather confidence that God knows the future, and that His wisdom is unsearchable.

All this is important to us as a foundation of faith, but it is introductory to the main thing—His wisdom in guiding *us* personally.

Is He doing that? Is He guiding you? Is the Hand that guides the planets guiding you? Is the Mind that keeps the stars in their places keeping you in your place? Is this really possible? Yes.

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shall go: I will guide thee with Mine eye” Psalm 32:8.

“The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” Psalm 25:9.

Here are definite promises that God will guide us. And as we read in James 1:5—if we lack wisdom, we’re to ask of God, and He will give us liberally.

Is it boasting to claim that this is so? Is it boasting to claim then that God is guiding us? It all depends upon whether we take the glory, or whether we, in the words of the first angel, “give the glory to Him.”

How are we to share God’s counsel and wisdom? There are many who would like the answer to their questions from day to day written out on a golden card and handed to them.

This is one of the reasons that Spiritualism has such an attraction. People are interested in the Ouija board or some similar method for getting specific answers to specific questions—answers that come without any thinking on their part other than

thinking up the question. As I say, many would like to get answers from God in that way.

But that is not what God is interested in. God could have made us automatons in the first place and then we would always do the right thing. But God is interested in developing our minds. He wants us to know Him, to think His thoughts after Him. In other words, instead of handing us the answer to a sum of a column of figures, God wants us to add up the figures with our own minds, guided by Him, but using our own brain cells.

In school, the teacher hands many problems to the students. The teacher knows the answer, or can get the answer quickly by using the processes. But the wise teacher encourages the *student* to think through the problem, to add or multiply, or divide as the case may be. Then the teacher checks over the work.

So as we think through things asking God for wisdom, and then using our minds, it's a good thing to check with God and ask Him, "Is this correct? Have I come to the right conclusion?" That's one of the great purposes of prayer—to give us the opportunity to think our problems through with God.

In the choice of lifework, in the choice of a life partner, in the choice of location where we're to live and work, in every decision we can look to God for wisdom, ask for the guidance He has promised, examine the evidence He provides through His chosen channels, study His Word, listen to whatever counsel other human beings may have.

But when all that is done, on our knees alone with God, we need to come to a decision. We need to exercise our brain cells that God has put in our head. We must act. We must use the mind that He's given us, guided by His Spirit.

And remember, all this is to give us an experience with God in knowing Him, in knowing His wisdom.

Some are afraid to make a decision for fear that they'll make a wrong decision. So they remain in indecision. But inspiration has told us that instead of indecision being a way to avoid making a wrong decision, indecision soon becomes decision in the wrong direction.

So as we meet the various problems from day to day, God wants us to exercise our minds, look to Him for wisdom, and use the judgment that He gives us.

That doesn't mean we're going to become infallible on that program. There's a man over in the Vatican who says he's infallible, but you and I don't believe he is. And we need not claim for ourselves the infallibility which we deny to him.

No, God has not promised to make us infallible. He has promised to give us light enough for the next step and wisdom enough for the next decision as we look to Him for guidance, and use our best judgment.

But suppose that we make a mistake as we do that. Is that possible? Yes, that's possible. But we have in *Christ Object Lessons* this wonderful assurance:

"If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 173.

He's right there with us to help us learn from our mistakes, to help us learn from our error of judgment. And we can learn better by exercising our judgment, and even when we make mistakes, than we could to have God make all those decisions for us and simply write them out on a golden card.

So let us not try to put God in the place where He must tell us by an audible voice, or in some way of that kind, every step to take. God will not be put into that place. He wants us to use our minds to look to Him for wisdom, to believe He's going to help us, and to let our faith find expression by coming to a decision and then carrying it out.

Now, one more aspect of God's wonderful character. Remember, we're studying what it means to know God, and if we know Him, that's life eternal, here and hereafter. We've seen that He's love, and we know He's love not merely by seeing what He is, but by entering into that love, responding to it, loving Him and loving others—sharing with Him in that love.

So with wisdom. We learn His wisdom not merely by admiring what He does in nature, and how He guides the planets, and how He has predicted future events. We learn it by experiencing in our own lives how wisely He guides us. And there's more encouragement, we are told, in the least blessing we receive from God than in all the accounts we can read of the faith and experience of others. That's *Ministry of Healing*, page 100.

So in this matter of power, we understand that God is all-powerful. We speak of Him as omnipotent, almighty. Jesus says that "all power is given unto Him in heaven and earth" Matthew 28:18. But you notice that with that, He says, "Go ye therefore, and I am with you."

In other words, our view of His power must lead us to the experience where we feel and know that that power is with us and in us, and therefore we act. Only in that way can we *know* Him in the way He wants us to know Him as an all-powerful Redeemer. Philippians 4:13. You remember that this is Paul's great exclamation of faith expressed in action:

"I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me"
Philippians 4:13.

"Paul, you say you can do all things?"

"Yes, through Christ."

"Why, I thought, Paul, you said over here in Romans 7 that I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwells no good thing."

“That’s right,” Paul says, “I did say that, and I meant it and I mean it now. In me and my flesh there dwells no good thing.”

“And yet, Paul, you say now that you can do all things?”

“Yes, through Christ who strengthens me.”

Notice that Paul doesn’t say Christ does everything for me, and I have anything to do. That is the pleasing fable that Satan would like to have us believe. As we’ve already seen, there is something that Christ has done entirely apart from us, in which we have had no part whatever.

But if we’re to know Christ, if we’re to know God, we must enter in by faith into the experience of actually doing the thing that God has required. Not apart from Him and not waiting for Him to do it apart from us.

I have a very interesting letter here from Elder W. C. White, the son of the Lord’s messenger, Ellen G. White. He was answering a question that someone had raised about the relationship between faith and works, and how to harmonize the teaching of various ministers on this subject.

In answering this question in this letter he says this:

“I highly respect both...”

Both of these ministers concerning whom questions have been asked.

“...and believe they are both teaching the truth. I find harmony in their teaching by the consideration of Philippians 2:12–13. This was a favorite text of my mother who taught, I believe, a well-balanced exposition of faith and works. I fancy that I can hear her now as she rang it out from the pulpit, ‘Salvation is by faith. God works it in, and we work it out.’”

So in humility, sensing our weakness, we can kneel down and say, “Lord, I know that I can do nothing without You. But Lord, I want You to do something for me. And I want You to not only do something for me, but I want You to do something in me, with me, through me.”

And then, on our knees, as we claim the promises of God, we can say with Paul, I can do it. I will do it. I will cooperate with God. I will choose with God. I will work with God.

That’s the experience God wants us to have, and remember, we will never know Him as He is in His all power until by faith we have entered into that experience of accepting that power and acting on it.

Notice this clear statement on this point:

“Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing’ (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God...”
Selected Messages, Book 1, page 381

The very first step then, we cannot take it without God, but we take it with God. The last step, the same is true, and all in between. From first to last, man is to be a laborer with God.

“...the power and grace with which we can do this comes from God, and all the while we are to trust in Him, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. Never leave the impression on the mind that there is little or nothing to do on the part of man; but rather teach man to cooperate with God, that he may be successful in overcoming” *Ibid.*

Isn't that wonderful? Here's the way of victory. We cannot do it apart from God, and God will not do it for us apart from the human decision, the human will, the human effort cooperating with God.

From the *Review and Herald* of April 1, 1890, I read:

“The pleasing fable that all there is to do is to believe has destroyed thousands and tens of thousands...” *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

What is this called? A pleasing fable. What is the pleasing fable? That all there is to do is to believe, and yet is not that on many occasions presented as righteousness by faith? Ah, there is something about this that we need to look twice at to be sure that we're getting the genuine article. Let me read again:

“The pleasing fable that all there is to do is to believe has destroyed thousands and tens of thousands because many have called that faith which is not faith, but simply a dogma. Man is an intelligent, accountable being. He is not to be carried by a passive burden by the Lord, but is to work in harmony with Christ. Man is to take up his appointed work in striving for glory, honor, and immortality. God calls upon men for the use of every talent He has lent them, the exercise of every power He has given them. For man can never be saved in disobedience and indolence”
Ibid.

That's clear, isn't it? Then with this, another fine statement from the *Review and Herald*, this sums it all up in one sentence.

“The plan of salvation is that through which divine power is brought to man in order that his human effort may be wholly successful” *Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890.

There it is. Our human effort may be, can be, will be wholly successful *if* divine power is brought to us, and we accept it and act upon it.

Without that divine power, our human effort is entirely a failure. But no matter how much divine power is brought to us, unless we accept it, unless we choose to act upon it, it is for us in vain.

In the book, *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 518, we read, and this is from the last message that Sister White wrote:

“Peace comes with dependence on divine power. As fast as the soul resolves to act in accordance with the light given, the Holy Spirit gives more light and strength” *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 518.

When do we get more power? When we act on that which the Spirit has given us. “As fast as the soul resolves to act in accordance with the light given, the Holy Spirit gives *more* light and strength.”

“The grace of the Spirit is supplied to cooperate with the soul’s resolve, but it is not a substitute for the individual exercise of faith” *Ibid*.

And so this morning, let our faith take hold of these wonderful truths—that God is love and we can experience that love by responding to it and loving back. That God is wisdom, and we can know that wisdom as never before by accepting His guidance in our lives, asking for the counsel that He has promised, and then entering into the choices of following His way as He gives us light, *believing* that He will guide us. And third: Accepting His power knowing that He is Almighty, not merely by looking at nature, not merely by seeing His great power in the stars and in the world about us, and not merely by thinking of His power in lifting the cannibals in the South Sea islands, and the wicked who have down through the ages yielded their lives to Him and become saints. But to know His power in our own lives, to see in our own experience that He is giving us victory.

Shall we bow our heads? Our Father in Heaven, we thank Thee, that to know Thee is life eternal. We thank Thee that Jesus has revealed Thee in Thy love, Thy wisdom, and Thy power. And that it is our privilege to know Thee and Thy love, and Thy wisdom, and Thy power. The best we know how this morning, we choose to cooperate with Thee; that these may all be a part of a bright, living, active experience, not just a theory. We choose to take the little love in our hearts and love Thee back with all we have. We choose to take the wisdom Thou hast given us, and decide to walk in the path of Thy guidance. We choose to take the power which we know we have in Christ and act to *do* all that Thou hast commanded us.

Our faith lays hold of the mighty fact this morning that we *can* do all things through Christ Who strengthens us. Write these precious truths upon tablets of our hearts, and may we so know Thee, as the result that we shall stand when all the world gives way. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

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