

Knowing the Lord Through the Indwelling Spirit

Introduction

This paper brings together several biblical lines of reasoning to explain how a believer comes to “*know the Lord*” through the indwelling Holy Spirit under the New Covenant. The study draws from Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, John 14-16, Romans 6-8, and several other New Testament texts. It follows a simple approach: **God gives new spiritual life, places His Spirit within the believer, and creates real knowledge of Himself.**

1. The New Covenant Promise: Internal Knowledge of God (Jeremiah 31)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 promises a future covenant unlike the old one. God says He will put His law inside His people and write it on their hearts. This inner work results in direct knowledge of God. “*They will all know me*” is not about information. It is about **relationship**. God Himself makes this knowing possible by changing the human heart.

2. The Triune God and the Triune Nature of Man

Scripture shows that humans have body, soul, and spirit (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). This mirrors God’s own triune nature of Father, Son, Spirit. The human spirit is the deepest part of a person. It is the part that relates to God. When Adam fell, the law of sin and death overtook mankind and the human spirit died. For a person to know God again, God must give new life to the human spirit.

3. Spiritual Rebirth: Jesus and the New Creation

Jesus teaches that a person must be “born from above” to see God’s kingdom (John 3:3-6). “*What is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” This means the Holy Spirit brings life to the human spirit. Paul confirms this by saying that anyone in Christ is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). This new creation begins in the spirit. Without this new birth, a person cannot know God.

4. The Indwelling Spirit Gives Life (Romans 8)

Romans 8 explains how the Spirit brings new life. The “*law of the life-giving Spirit*” sets the believer free from the “*law of sin and death*” (Romans 8:2). The Spirit of God dwells inside the believer (Romans 8:9). The Spirit gives life (Romans 8:10-11). Most importantly, “*The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God’s children*” (Romans 8:16). This Spirit-to-spirit witness is personal knowledge of God.

5. God's Righteousness vs. Human Righteousness (Romans 10)

Paul says Israel tried to establish their own righteousness instead of receiving God's righteousness (Romans 10:3). Human righteousness comes from effort. God's righteousness comes from His Spirit. The Spirit awakens faith and writes God's desires on the heart. This fulfills the New Covenant promise of God placing His law within His people. Growing in God's righteousness is evidence that the believer knows God.

6. Ezekiel 36: A New Heart and a New Spirit

Ezekiel 36:26-27 expands Jeremiah's promise by describing how God will change His people. God says He will give a new heart, put a new spirit within, and place His own Spirit inside them. He also says He will cause them to walk in His ways. This is the same inner transformation Jesus calls new birth and Paul calls new creation. This is the foundation of knowing the Lord.

7. Jesus Explains the Spirit's Indwelling (John 14-16)

In John 14-16, Jesus explains how the Spirit fulfills the New Covenant. The Spirit will be "*in you*" (John 14:17). The Spirit will teach, guide, and remind the believer of Christ's words (John 14:26; 16:13). Jesus also says that the Father and the Son will "*take up residence*" with the believer (John 14:23). This is direct relationship. The Spirit makes this relationship real.

8. Paul's Detailed Explanation of New Life (Romans 6-8)

Romans 6 says that believers died with Christ and now live a new life. Romans 7 shows that human effort cannot produce righteousness. Romans 8 presents the solution: the Spirit produces life, righteousness, and relationship with God. Everything God promised in the prophets and everything Jesus taught is fulfilled here.

9. The Fruits of the Spirit as Evidence of Knowing God

Galatians 5:22-23 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These traits grow because the Spirit lives inside. They are not self-generated. They show the believer is alive in God. They are part of knowing the Lord.

10. Maintaining the Relationship: Love, Obedience, and the Fruits of the Spirit

Knowing God through the indwelling Spirit is not static. The New Covenant creates a living relationship. Scripture shows two simple ways this relationship is maintained: love and obedience. These are not ways to earn God's presence. They are ways to walk in the life He already gives.

Love as the Core Expression of the Spirit's Life

Love is the clearest sign of God's presence. *"We love because he loved us first"* (1 John 4:19). The Spirit pours God's love into the believer's heart (Romans 5:5). This love turns the heart toward God and toward others. When love grows, the believer experiences deeper awareness of God.

Obedience as the Pathway of Remaining in God

Jesus teaches that obedience is relational, not mechanical. *"If you love me, you will obey my commandments"* (John 14:15). Obedience is the response of a renewed heart. The Spirit empowers it. Walking in obedience keeps the believer open to the Spirit's leading and strengthens spiritual clarity.

How Love and Obedience Produce the Fruits of the Spirit

The fruits of the Spirit grow naturally in a heart shaped by love and obedience. Love expresses God's character. Obedience aligns the believer with God's ways. Together, they create the environment where the Spirit's fruit can mature. These fruits, love, joy, peace, patience, and the rest, are signs that the believer's relationship with God is alive and active.

Remaining in the Spirit's Life

Paul says, *"walk by the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:16). This means staying responsive to the Spirit's promptings, keeping sin confessed, and continuing in prayer and Scripture. These simple practices help the believer remain aware of God and keep the heart soft.

Relational Continuity

Relationship with God grows the same way any good relationship grows: attention, trust, and shared life. The Spirit makes God's presence real. Love and obedience keep the believer in step with the Spirit. As the believer walks with God, the fruits of the Spirit appear as evidence of ongoing life.

Conclusion

Knowing the Lord is the central promise of the New Covenant. God Himself makes it possible. He gives a new heart. He renews the human spirit. He places His Spirit inside. Jesus explains this. Paul develops it. Ezekiel and Jeremiah predicted it. Romans 8 describes its inner workings. John 14-16 shows how it becomes personal.

The believer knows the Lord because the Spirit lives inside and brings real life, real righteousness, and real relationship with God.

The Promise Fulfilled

Here is a simple and direct expansion showing how **Ezekiel 36**, **John 14-16**, and **Romans 6-8** all connect to the line of reasoning developed herein:

The Spirit makes the believer's spirit alive so they can know the Lord in the New Covenant.

1. Ezekiel 36, The New Covenant promise of a new heart and Spirit

Ezekiel says what Jeremiah says, but adds *how* God will make His people able to know Him: He will change them from the inside.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

"I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you.

I will remove the heart of stone...

I will put my Spirit within you; I will take the initiative, and you will obey..."

Key ideas:

- **new heart** → inner transformation
- **new spirit** → restoration of the human spirit
- **My Spirit within you** → the indwelling Holy Spirit
- **I will cause you to obey** → God's righteousness in place of man's righteousness

This matches Jeremiah 31:

- God writes His law on the heart
- People truly "*know the Lord*"

Ezekiel explains how this happens: God puts His Spirit inside.

This is the foundation for the next two sections.

2. John 14-16, Jesus explains how the Spirit makes knowing God possible

In these chapters, Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit will do for them what Ezekiel promised.

John 14:17

"He... resides with you and will be in you."

- This is Ezekiel 36:27 in direct form.

John 14:26

"The Advocate... will teach you everything..."

- The Spirit teaches.
- Knowledge of the Lord is relational, not just information.

John 14:23

"My Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up residence with him."

- This is the heart of "they will all know me."

John 16:13-14

*"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth...
He will glorify me..."*

- The Spirit leads the believer into truth by revealing Christ.
- Knowing Christ is knowing the Lord.

So, Jesus confirms:

- The Spirit will **live inside** believers.
- The Spirit will **teach, guide, and reveal Christ**.
- Knowing God is possible because the Spirit makes the believer's spirit alive.

This matches the "*born from above*" teaching in John 3.

3. Romans 6-8, Paul explains how the Spirit produces new life, righteousness, and knowledge of God

Romans 6-8 gives the theological backbone for everything Jesus promised and Ezekiel predicted.

Romans 6, The believer dies to sin and rises to new life

Romans 6:4

"We... were buried with him... so that... we may live a new life."

- New life = new creation = new spirit
- This is spiritual resurrection.

Romans 7, Human effort cannot produce God's righteousness

Paul shows the failure of "the righteousness of man."

Romans 7:18

"I know that nothing good lives in me."

- This sets up the need for Romans 8.

Romans 8, The Spirit brings the New Covenant to life

Romans 8:2

"The law of the life-giving Spirit... set you free from the law of sin and death."

- This connects directly to Ezekiel 36:
- God removes the "heart of stone" and sets us free internally.

Romans 8:9

"the Spirit of God lives in you."

- Matches John 14:17.

Romans 8:10

"the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

- Not human righteousness.
- God's righteousness created by the Spirit.

Romans 8:14

"those who are led by the Spirit... are God's sons."

- Knowing God as Father.

Romans 8:15

"by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

- This is direct relational knowledge of God.
- It fulfills Jeremiah 31:34
 - *"They will all know me."*

Romans 8:16

"The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit..."

- This is the core New Covenant experience.
- Spirit-to-spirit testimony that we belong to God.
- Paul is describing "knowing the Lord" at the deepest level.

4. Putting it all together

Here's how these passages reinforce the same truth:

Ezekiel 36:

God will give a **new heart**, a **renewed spirit**, and **put His Spirit inside**.

This makes obedience and knowledge of God possible.

John 14-16:

Jesus says this promise is fulfilled when the Spirit comes to **live in believers**, **teach them**, **lead them**, and **reveal Christ**.

Romans 6-8:

Paul explains the inner mechanics:

- The believer is **made alive** in the spirit.
- The Spirit **breaks the power of sin**.
- The Spirit produces **God's righteousness**.
- The Spirit **bears witness** that we are God's children.
- This inner witness is **actual knowledge of God**.

This is exactly what Jeremiah 31 promised, and Jesus fulfilled at Pentecost.

5. In simple words

- The **Spirit** makes your **spirit** alive.
- Because of that, **you can know God personally**.
- This is the **heart of the New Covenant**.

- Via Jeremiah, **God foretold it**.
- Through Ezekiel, **God promised it**.
- **Jesus fulfilled it and explained it**.
- **God's Spirit accomplishes it**.
- Paul showed **how it works**.

Scripture quotations from the New English Translation (NET).

The Assurance

How a believer can be assured of “knowing the Lord” and of the Spirit’s indwelling

The Bible gives several clear markers. They are not emotional signs. They are covenant signs. The New Covenant creates a new kind of knowing: God lives in His people, and they know Him because He gives His Spirit.

Below are the main ways Scripture grounds this assurance.

1. The promise itself is the first assurance

- Jeremiah 31 says the new covenant gives internal knowledge of God:
 - **Jer 31:33–34**
 - *“I will put my law within them... I will write it on their hearts...*
 - *They will all know me.”*
- The point is simple:
 - If God makes a covenant, God keeps the covenant.
 - Knowing Him is not something we achieve. It is something He gives.
- So, the believer’s first assurance is this:
 - **God promised that His people will know Him.**

2. Pentecost shows the promise arrived

- Peter says the Spirit poured out is “the promise”:
 - **Acts 2:38–39**
 - *“You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
 - *For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*
- This means every believer called by God receives the same Spirit.
 - Not a lesser version.
 - Not for a select group.
 - For all.
- So, the second assurance:
 - **If you belong to Christ, the promised Spirit is given to you.**

3. John gives a direct test: the Spirit Himself is the witness

- **1 John 4:13**
 - *“By this we know that we reside in God and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit.”*
- John’s point is not mystical. It is simple:
 - God gives His Spirit → that is how you know you belong to Him.
 - John doesn’t say: “By your feelings...”
 - He says: “By His Spirit given to you.”

4. The Spirit produces certain signs in a believer's life

- Not flashy signs.
- Not dramatic experiences.
- Simple and steady things the Spirit does.

a. The Spirit creates confession of Jesus as Lord

- **1 Corinthians 12:3**
 - *"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."*
- A real confession of Jesus as Lord is already evidence of His Spirit.

b. The Spirit creates new desires

- **Galatians 5:17** describes a new struggle against sin that didn't exist before.
- This tug-of-war is not a failure.
- It is a sign of life.

c. The Spirit leads toward love

- **1 John 4:7–8**
 - *"Everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God."*
- Love is not the cause of knowing God.
- But it is evidence that the Spirit is at work inside.

d. The Spirit gives confidence in Christ

- **Romans 8:16**
 - *"The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children."*
- This is an inner clarity or quiet conviction formed over time.

5. The believer grows in knowing God by walking with Him

- The New Covenant gives guaranteed knowledge of God.
- But the experience of that knowledge grows as the believer:
 - Listens to the Word (the Spirit speaks through Scripture).
 - Turns from sin (the Spirit exposes and redirects).
 - Prays with honesty (the Spirit helps our weakness, Rom 8:26).
 - Stays in fellowship with other believers (the Spirit works in the body).
- This is not earning the Spirit...
- It is letting the Spirit shape daily life.

Summary: how a believer can be assured

Assurance is not built on emotion. It rests on God's promise, God's Spirit, and the fruits He creates.

1. **God promised** that His people will know Him (Jer 31:33–34).
2. **Jesus poured out the Spirit** at Pentecost, and the promise is for all believers (Acts 2:38–39).
3. **The Spirit is given**, and this gift is the direct proof that we belong to God (1 John 4:13).
4. **The Spirit works in us**, creating faith, love, new desires, and confidence in Christ.
5. **Our experience of "knowing the Lord" grows** as we walk with Him.

The Evidence

The Fruits of the Spirit as Evidence of the Indwelling Spirit

Paul gives the list in **Galatians 5:22–23**:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

These “fruits” are not personality traits. They are signs of the Spirit’s work in a believer. They grow over time, like fruit on a tree.

Below is how each fruit serves as evidence that the Spirit lives in a person.

1. Love

- Love is the main marker.
- **1 John 4:7–8**
 - *“Everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God.”*
- This love is not sentimental.
- It is shown in actions: care, forgiveness, and seeking good for others.
- When a believer finds themselves growing in love—even slowly—it is evidence of the Spirit.

2. Joy

- This is not constant happiness.
- It is a deeper gladness rooted in Christ.
- **Romans 14:17**
 - *“For the kingdom of God... is... joy in the Holy Spirit.”*
- This joy can exist even in hard situations.
- It is quiet and steady.
- When a believer finds hope rising where despair once ruled, the Spirit is at work.

3. Peace

- Peace comes from God’s presence, not from calm circumstances.
- **Romans 8:6**
 - *“The outlook of the Spirit is life and peace.”*
- A believer may still feel pressure.
- But the Spirit helps the heart rest in God.
- When inner peace appears in places where anxiety used to rule, it is evidence of the Spirit.

4. Patience

- Patience means endurance and long-suffering.
- **Colossians 1:11**
 - *“...being strengthened with all power... for the display of all patience and steadfastness.”*

- Patience with people and situations shows the Spirit is producing strength.
- This kind of patience rarely comes from natural temperament.
- It is a sign of God's work inside.

5. Kindness

- Kindness is a soft heart toward others.
- **Ephesians 4:32**
 - *"Be kind to one another, compassionate..."*
- This is more than politeness.
- Kindness grows when the Spirit makes us aware of how God has treated us.
- When a believer finds themselves caring more for others, that is fruit of the Spirit.

6. Goodness

- Goodness is moral clarity and honest action.
- **Ephesians 5:9**
 - *"The fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth."*
- Goodness is not perfection.
- It is a growing desire to do what is right before God.
- This desire itself is evidence of the Spirit.

7. Faithfulness

- Faithfulness means reliability and trust in God.
- **1 Corinthians 1:8–9**
 - *"God is faithful... He will also strengthen you..."*
- As the Spirit works, a believer becomes more steady, more committed, and less double-minded.
- This steadying effect is a spiritual sign.

8. Gentleness

- Gentleness is strength under control.
- **Philippians 4:5**
 - *"Let your gentleness be seen by all. The Lord is near!"*
- The Spirit makes a believer less harsh and more mild in tone and action.
- Jesus described Himself as gentle (Matt 11:29).
- Growing gentleness reflects His life in us.

9. Self-control

- This is the Spirit enabling mastery over impulses and desires.
- **Titus 2:11–12**
 - *"The grace of God... trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires..."*
- Self-control is not self-powered.
- It is God's grace training the heart.
- When a believer finds growing stability, restraint, and clarity, it is the Spirit's fruit.

Why the Fruits Provide Evidence

1. Fruit is the natural result of the Spirit's presence

- Jesus said:
- **Matthew 7:17**
 - *"In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit."*
- The Spirit is the life inside the tree.
- The fruit proves the tree is alive.

2. The fruits reflect God's own character

- They show that God's nature is shaping the heart from within.

3. The fruits grow over time

- Growth may be slow...
- But as long as there is *movement*, there is life.
- This slow growth is itself proof of the Spirit.

4. The fruits show that the believer knows the Lord

- Jeremiah said all God's people will "know the Lord" (Jer 31:34).
- The fruits are the outward signs of that inward knowledge.
- God writes His law on the heart, and the fruits show the writing.

In short

A believer may be assured of knowing the Lord and having His Spirit because:

1. God **promised** it in the New Covenant.
2. Christ poured out the Spirit on all who **belong** to Him.
3. The Spirit Himself **witnesses** within.
4. **The Spirit produces visible fruit** - love, joy, peace, and the rest.

These fruits don't create salvation. They reveal it as evidence of His Spirit working.