

Christ in the Psalms

Knowing God

How do you know?

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Luke 24

Jesus himself gives the divine authorization for reading all of the Old Testament (including the Psalms) in reference to Him.

What is meant by 'Knowing God'?

Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:6-12

- **An Internal, Heart-Level Knowledge** (Jer. 31:33)
- **A Personal Relationship mediated through Jesus Christ** (John 14:6)
- **Obedience as a Sign of Knowledge; a Practical Test** (1 John 2:3-6)
- **Love as the Outflow of Knowing God; a Practical Test** (1 John 4:7-8)
- **The Witness of the Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:12-17)

You can know that you know the Lord when your heart has been changed by Him, when you have come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, when your life exhibits loving obedience to His commands, and when the Holy Spirit is actively at work within you. This inward transformation, evidenced in loving God and others, marks the reality of the relationship promised in Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant.

In Jeremiah 31:31–34, God promises a “new covenant” in which His law will be written on people's hearts, and as a result, “they shall all know me.” This new covenant relationship implies an intimate, personal knowledge of God rather than a merely external or secondhand acquaintance. To understand how one can know they truly “know the LORD,” it's helpful to consider several biblical principles that clarify the nature and evidence of this relationship.

1. An Internal, Heart-Level Knowledge:

Under the new covenant, God's law is not just a set of external rules; it is internalized. This indicates that truly knowing the LORD involves a changed heart—a shift from merely following religious observances to experiencing a genuine inward transformation (Jeremiah 31:33). Thus, one sign of knowing the Lord is the deep, inner desire to love, honor, and please Him, not because of external pressure, but because one's heart has been made new.

2. A Personal Relationship Through Christ:

The New Testament reveals that Jesus Christ mediates this new covenant. Through faith in Christ's death and resurrection, believers enter into a restored relationship with God (Hebrews 8:6–12, John 14:6). Knowing the Lord, then, is inseparable from knowing Christ. If you have placed your trust in Jesus, believing His sacrifice for your sins, and have become His disciple, this faith relationship is a foundational indicator that you know God.

3. Obedience as a Sign of Knowledge:

First John gives practical tests for knowing God:

1 John 2:3–6: *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

4. Love as the Outflow of Knowing God:

Another test of knowing the Lord is found in love.

1 John 4:7–12: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.*

5. The Witness of the Holy Spirit:

Under the new covenant, God's Spirit dwells within believers:

Romans 8:12–17: *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

Summary:

You can know that you know the Lord when your heart has been changed by Him, when you have come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, when your life exhibits loving obedience to His commands, and when the Holy Spirit is actively at work within you. This inward transformation, evidenced in loving God and others, marks the reality of the relationship promised in Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant.

'Knowing God' in the Psalms

Anticipating the promise of a new covenant

Key Themes in the Psalms That Resonate with the New Covenant

- Internalization of God's Law
- Intimate, Personal Knowledge of God
- Transformation and Steadfast Love

Psalms 40:8

Psalms 51:10-12

Psalms 25:4-5

Psalms 27:4-8

Psalms 63:1-8

Psalms 119:11,18,97

While the Psalms were written under the old covenant, they often express a longing that aligns with the new covenant's promises: an inward delight in God's law, personal intimacy with the Almighty, and the spiritual renewal that makes true knowledge of God possible. The psalmists foreshadow the very transformation - knowing God deeply and personally - that Jeremiah 31:31–34 prophesies.

While the Psalms were composed long before the formal promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31, many express a heartfelt longing for a deeply personal, internalized knowledge of God—something that anticipates the intimacy and heart-transformation the new covenant would bring. Although the Psalms do not use the same language as Jeremiah 31:31–34, several passages align with the spirit of that promise: knowing God personally, delighting in His law internally, and experiencing a relationship with Him that transforms from the inside out.

Key Themes in the Psalms That Resonate with the New Covenant:

- **Internalization of God's Law:** The new covenant involves God writing His law on hearts (Jer. 31:33). Similarly, certain psalms express a desire not just to follow God's commands externally, but to have them become an inward delight.
- **Intimate, Personal Knowledge of God:** The new covenant promises that people will "know the LORD" personally. The psalmists repeatedly seek God's face, presence, and guidance, reflecting a genuine relational knowledge rather than mere ritual practice.
- **Transformation and Steadfast Love:** The psalms emphasize an inner change, a heart that yearns for righteousness, forgiveness, and ongoing communion with God—echoing the inward transformation Jeremiah anticipated.

Specific Psalms

1. Psalm 40:8

I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.

- This verse closely parallels the new covenant idea of God's law being written internally. Instead of mere external observance, the psalmist rejoices in an inward embrace of God's will.

2. Psalm 51:10–12

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

- David prays for inward transformation—a cleansed heart and a steadfast spirit. While this prayer is personal, it anticipates the new covenant promise of an inner renewal that enables genuine knowledge and obedience to God.

3. Psalm 25:4–5

Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.

- The psalmist longs for God's direct instruction and guidance, a personal knowing of His ways that moves beyond superficial understanding. This hunger for God's truth and guidance mirrors the relational knowing promised in Jeremiah's new covenant.

4. Psalm 27:4–8

One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."

- Here, the psalmist desires intimate fellowship with God. "Seeking God's face" symbolizes personal interaction—like knowing a friend face-to-face—foreshadowing the direct relationship God promised He would have with His people under the new covenant.

5. Psalm 63:1–8

O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

- This psalm expresses deep spiritual longing and satisfaction found only in a close relationship with God. Such heartfelt pursuit echoes the idea that under the new covenant everyone will know God personally and intimately.

6. Psalm 119 (various verses, e.g., vv. 11, 18, 97)

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. (Psa 119:11)

Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law. (Psa 119:18)

Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psa 119:97)

- Psalm 119 is essentially a love song to God's Word. The desire to internalize and cherish divine instruction anticipates the new covenant reality where God's law is truly "written" inside the believer's heart.

Summary

While the Psalms were written under the old covenant, they often express a longing that aligns with the new covenant's promises: an inward delight in God's law, personal intimacy with the Almighty, and the spiritual renewal that makes true knowledge of God possible. Through passages like Psalm 40:8, Psalm 51:10–12, and Psalm 119's meditations, the psalmists foreshadow the very transformation—knowing God deeply and personally—that Jeremiah 31:31–34 prophesies.

A quick review...

Truth, The Nature of Mankind, and Worldviews

- **Truth** is objective, knowable, and personified in Jesus of Nazareth. (John 14:6-11; John 18:37; Acts 2:22)
- The **Natural Man** recognizes God's creativity and intelligence in the created order; *but suppresses the truth in unrighteousness.* (Romans 1)
- The **Moral Man** recognizes how things ought to be; *but falls short of God's goodness revealed via his own conscience and rationality.* (Romans 2)
- The **Religious Man** recognizes that God exists, and that God has expectations; *but succumbs to selfish pride, artificial authority, arrogance, and hypocrisy.* (Romans 3)
- The **Just Man** relies upon God's promise, lives by faith; *and receives the blessing of imputed righteousness.* (Romans 4)

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God's Problem and Man's Need

1. Situation
2. Problems
3. Implications
4. Needs Analysis

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

Leveraging the Nature of Man in Evangelism - Objectives

- 1. Establish the Reality of God’s Existence and Moral Law.**
- 2. Convict the Conscience Through God’s Law.**
- 3. Illustrate the Consequence of Sin (God’s Justice).**
- 4. Present the Gospel of Grace.**
- 5. Call for Repentance, Faith, and a Covenant Relationship via Baptism.**

Topical Objectives:

1. Establish the Reality of God’s Existence and Moral Law:

The approach aims to move beyond abstract spiritual discussions and highlight that God has revealed a moral standard (the Ten Commandments) that everyone has broken.

2. Convict the Conscience Through God’s Law:

By using the Ten Commandments, the method seeks to stir a sense of guilt over personal sin, demonstrating that no one is truly “good” by God’s perfect moral standard.

3. Illustrate the Consequence of Sin (God’s Justice):

The goal is to show that sin is not trivial. It brings serious consequence—eternal separation from God—because God is just and must punish wrongdoing.

4. Present the Gospel of Grace:

After conviction comes the good news: Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, paid the penalty for sin through His death and resurrection, and offers forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift.

5. Call for Repentance, Faith, and a Covenant Relationship via Baptism

The final objective is to encourage the person to repent (turn from sin) and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, leading to a reconciled relationship with God.

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

Leveraging the Nature of Man in Evangelism - Procedure

- 1. Initiate a Friendly, Everyday Conversation**
- 2. Transition to Spiritual Topics**
- 3. Ask About Personal Goodness**
- 4. Use the Ten Commandments as a Moral Standard**
- 5. Reveal The Guilty Verdict**
- 6. Explain the Consequences of Sin**
- 7. Present Jesus Christ as the Solution**
- 8. Encourage Repentance, Faith, and Baptism**
- 9. Follow-up with Discipleship, Resources, and Encouragement**

Procedural Steps:

1. Initiate a Friendly, Everyday Conversation:

Begin with non-confrontational, casual discussion—sometimes called “icebreakers”—to establish rapport.

2. Transition to Spiritual Topics Naturally:

Gently guide the conversation toward spiritual matters. Ask questions like, “Do you believe in an afterlife?” or “What do you think happens after we die?” This segues into a deeper discussion without abruptness.

3. Ask About Personal Goodness:

Prompt the individual to consider their own moral standing: “Do you think you’re a good person?” Most people will affirm that they are “good” by their own standards.

4. Use the Ten Commandments as a Moral Standard:

Introduce specific commandments (e.g., lying, stealing, lust, using God’s name in vain) to help the person measure themselves against God’s moral law. Ask questions like, “Have you ever told a lie?” or “Have you ever taken something that didn’t belong to you?”

5. Reveal the Guilty Verdict:

Once the person acknowledges they have broken these commandments, gently point out that by their own admission, they are a lying, stealing law-breaker in God’s eyes. This aims to awaken the conscience and bring a sense of moral accountability.

6. Explain the Consequences of Sin:

Show that breaking God’s law is serious and deserves just punishment. “If God is perfectly just, would He find you innocent or guilty?” The answer reveals the need for rescue.

7. Present Jesus Christ as the Solution:

Having established guilt, now explain the gospel: God, in His love, sent Jesus to take the punishment we deserve. Jesus died and rose again, satisfying God’s justice and offering mercy.

8. Encourage Repentance, Faith, and Baptism:

Invite the person to turn away from sin and place their trust in Jesus’ finished work on the cross. Emphasize that eternal life is a gift—not earned by good deeds, but granted through faith in Christ.

9. Provide Follow-Up Discipleship, Resources, and Encouragement:

If the person seems receptive, recommend reading the Bible (e.g., starting with the Gospel of John), attending a sound, Bible-teaching church, or exploring more resources to nurture their understanding of the faith.

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

What do you believe about [...]?

How do you know?

What do you mean by [...]?

What difference does that make?

What if you are wrong?

What would you accept as evidence?

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

Questions for the “Natural Man” of Romans 1

Focus: Creation as revelation of God’s existence and attributes.

- **“When you look at the vastness of the night sky, the order of the seasons, or the complexity of life, do you ever wonder if there is a purposeful Intelligence behind it all?”**
- **“You appreciate the beauty and intricacy of nature, but have you considered why beauty and order exist at all, and what their ultimate source might be?”**
- **“Our world follows laws - of physics, chemistry, biology - that never seem to change. Wouldn’t a timeless, intelligent Lawgiver best explain the consistent reliability of these laws?”**
- **“If the universe had a beginning, what or who do you think caused it to come into being, and how might that cause be greater than the universe itself?”**

Herein are examples of questions tailored to each type of individual described in Romans 1 through 4; Natural, Moral, Religious, and Just; intended to prompt them to consider the evidence for God’s existence and His self-revelation as described in Romans. These questions aim not to coerce but to encourage honest reflection, drawing on what each category of person already perceives or values.

Each set of questions is designed to resonate with the assumptions and experiences of these four “types” of people. The idea is to lead them from their current vantage point; whether it’s an appreciation of nature, a commitment to morality, a religious intuition, or a faithful trust in God’s promises; toward recognizing that the God of the Bible has made Himself known in creation, conscience, revelation, and ultimately in Jesus Christ.

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

Questions for the “Moral Man” of Romans 2

Focus: Universal moral standards as inner testimony to God’s character.

- **“You have a sense of right and wrong; where do you think that sense originates, and why do you feel accountable to it?”**
- **“If moral standards were merely social constructs, why do you still feel guilt or shame for certain actions even if no one else finds out? Could that point to a moral Lawgiver?”**
- **“You believe justice is important. What is the ultimate source of this conviction if not a higher, objective moral authority?”**
- **“When you see injustice or cruelty, you believe it’s genuinely wrong; not just inconvenient. Could there be an absolute moral standard beyond human opinion?”**

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

Questions for the “Religious Man” of Romans 2, 3

Focus: The innate desire for God and love for others as evidence of divine revelation.

- “You are seeking a relationship with the divine. Have you considered why this longing is universal across cultures and time, and what that might suggest about a God who designed us to know Him?”
- “Your heart tells you there must be more than what you see around you. Where do you think this spiritual hunger comes from, if not from a Creator who wants to be known?”
- “You believe in loving your neighbor, but why should love be a fundamental good unless there is a God who Himself is love and made us in His image?”
- “When you pray or meditate, do you sense that you’re reaching out to someone real and personal? Could that Someone be the God who spoke through the prophets and ultimately through Jesus Christ?”

Knowing God – Encouraging Self-Reflection

Questions for the “Just Man” of Romans 4

Focus: Faith as the channel through which we are made right with God, illustrated by Abraham and fulfilled in Christ.

- “You trust that God keeps His promises, as Abraham did. Why would you believe that God is both faithful and true unless He has revealed Himself as unchanging, trustworthy, and righteous?”
- “Your faith points beyond your own goodness to something greater. If your moral efforts are never perfect, on what basis can you stand before a holy God, if not on the righteousness He provides by faith?”
- “Consider Abraham: he trusted God’s word before it was fulfilled. Has God’s faithfulness to Abraham and to countless believers since not shown that He is real and that we can be certain of His character?”
- “When you put your faith in Jesus Christ as the Just One, how does this confirm for you that God has revealed Himself in history, both through His written word and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?”