

Knowing God I

What do we mean when we say we know God....

There is a story from the Desert Fathers about a young monk who asked one of the old men of the desert why it is that so many people came out to the desert to seek God and yet most of them gave up after a short time and returned to their lives in the city.

The old monk told him, "Last evening my dog saw a rabbit running for cover among the bushes of the desert and he began to chase the rabbit, barking loudly. Soon other dogs joined in the chase, barking and running. They ran a great distance and alerted many other dogs. Soon the wilderness was echoing the sounds of their pursuit but the chase went on into the night. After a little while, many of the dogs grew tired and dropped out. A few chased the rabbit until the night was nearly spent. By morning, only my dog continued the hunt. Do you understand," the old man said, "what I have told you?"



"No," replied the young monk, "please tell me father."

It is simple," said the desert father, "my dog saw the rabbit."

I like that tale for the way it reminds us that if you are going to be there for the long run, you have to be certain what you are chasing. If you haven't seen the reason for the goal but are relying upon the witness of someone else then there's a good chance you will eventually drop out of the race. And as that wise old Desert Father knew, so it is with the Christian Faith. We have to experience the presence of God for ourselves and not depend solely upon the testimony of other believers. All the barking in the world will not substitute for a sight of the rabbit!

Questions

Did you find that story helpful or confusing?

If someone were to ask you if you "knew God",
how would you respond?

Are there right or wrong ways of "knowing God"?

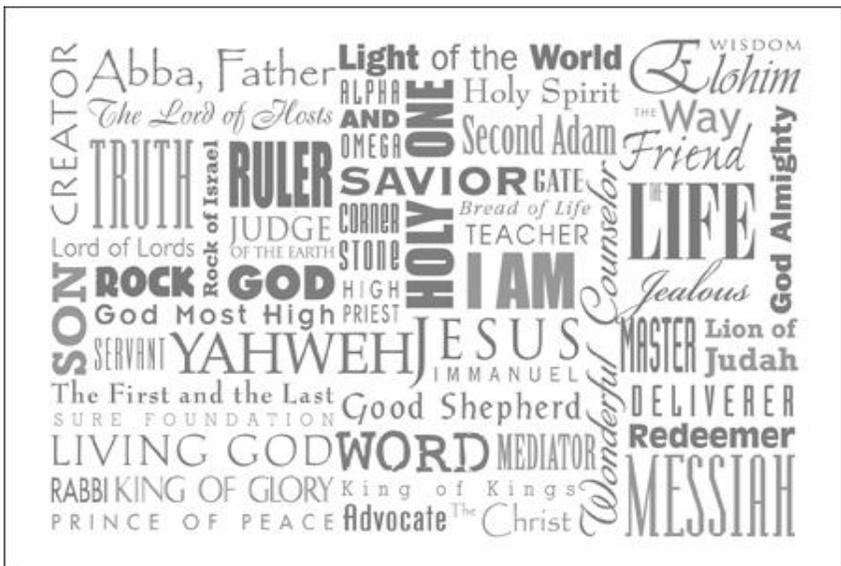
How certain are you that God exists?

How would you share that belief?

What does it mean to refer to God as HIM?

Describing God

Throughout scripture, there have been various names give to the Almighty. Which ones do you tend to use of find helpful?



There is an understanding throughout the Bible that to know the 'real' name of someone is to have some sort of authority or control over them. When Moses was confronted by God in the wilderness and given his commission to rescue his people

from slavery in Egypt, he asked God for His name so that he could say who had sent him and on whose behalf he was acting.

READ: EXODUS 3: 1-14

In what sense does this story tell us that Moses knew the one who addressed him out of the Burning Bush?

How does the Almighty make himself known?

Why do you think Moses pushed Him as to His identity?

Frequently the Bible tells us that God cannot be seen.

Here at the burning bush Moses does not want to look in that direction and when he returns to that place to receive the tablets of the Law, he alone encounters God and his face shone as a result. But normally to look at God directly brings death.

Why do you think those ancient peoples believed that seeing God was a death sentence?

Elijah too had an encounter with the Almighty at this same sacred spot

READ 1KINGS 19: 1-18

This story follows the great confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel – which ended in a convincing for the Lord God. In Chapter 19, it appears that Elijah loses his nerve when faced by threats from Queen Jezebel and he flees south to Horeb (Sinai) and there is granted a direct audience with the Almighty but even then, he is limited in what he can observe...

Describe what happened and what did Elijah believe best represented the power of the Almighty?

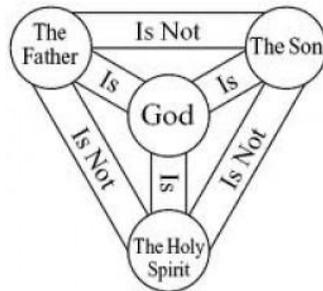
Why might this have been a problem?

How would you expect to encounter the presence of God?

However there is a difference between “knowing God” and “knowing about God”

Do you understand this distinction? Explain?

If we think that “Knowing God” is some form of intellectual activity then we should be well versed in what the Church has understood to be the Orthodox faith but the Bible has always emphasised the need for a ‘Personal Relationship’.



Deut 6:5 invites the believer to love God with one’s entire being...
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart...[Deut 6:5-6](#)

What do you understand by this basic statement of faith?

“You can see God from anywhere if your mind is set to love and obey him.”

A W TOZER

Do you agree with that statement? Why or Why not?

Is this what it means to love God? (*To be continued*)