

Back to Basics part 2
“Knowing, Loving and Seeking God”
Mark 12:28-31

Prayer of praise
Offering/bulletin/cards
Dino ... if you can help, indicate on your card
Fenimore

Candle Lighting
Song “back to basics” plays for 30 seconds – bring props out?
Scripture Reading

Intro

Props/Ex. Baseball. This summer I am helping to coach both of my son’s baseball teams. As an asst. coach I am finding myself reminding these young men over and over of the basics of baseball: fielding, catching, pitching, hitting... Even if some of these young men would go on to play professional baseball, these basics are something they will fall back on.

This is especially true in our relationship with God. The basics are so important. And that is why we are in a series called **Back to Basics**, where we are learning the ABCs you might say of Christianity.

Last week we looked at what it really means to be a Christian and we learned that it is ultimately a personal relationship with Jesus. We compared it to a marriage (after all the bible says that Christians are the bride of Christ) where beginning a Christian is like a **couple saying “I Do”** to one another, committing their lives to one another, and this happens the moment we repent of our sins, trust in Christ alone for our salvation, and pray to receive Him into our lives.

Once you do this, then what? Well, just like in a marriage where the couple goes off on their honeymoon and then begins to live together, for that marriage to be what it is designed to be they must spend much time together, do things together, include each other in their lives, and work (and it is work) on getting to know each other, love each other, and stay close. If they do this: know each other, love each other, grow to appreciate each other and communicate, etc. then almost everything else in that marriage will sort of fall in place. That couple must have that foundation of love and intimacy and closeness and communication, and if they do, there is nothing that marriage can’t handle.

And it is the same in our relationship with God. Once we receive Christ and enter into that relationship, then we are to grow and deepen that relationship. So our central truth today is this:

Central Truth: The most important thing in the Christian life is to know and love God.

And that is what we see in our passage today from Mk. 12

Mark 12

Jesus was asked, “of all the things written in the OT, what is the most important?” This is a very important question. Jesus is essentially being asked what is the most important thing in all of life. And I love His simple yet profound answer. Look closely with me in your bibles because I think there is something very significant that most people overlook. Jesus makes a **statement before He gives the command** to “love the Lord...”. And what is that statement: “Here O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Now listen closely because biblically and personally I think this is one of the most important things you could ever get a hold of and apply in your life. This verse is teaching that before you can love God you must know Him.

Ex. Couple: they don’t fall in love; they grow in love. It is as you get to know the person that you grow to love the person.

I want to show you a **diagram** that I really believe sort of summarizes the entire Christian life. Look closely at this because you might find on this diagram where you are not where you should be:

It is as we get to know God that we naturally grow to love God

Know God – Love God

And as we love God and grow in this love relationship that we naturally trust Him more. You cannot trust someone you don’t know.

Know God – Love God – Trust God

Ps. 9:10 says those who know your name will put their trust in you. Many struggle with faith and not trusting God, especially when things are difficult in their life. The focus should not be on trying to muster up more faith but rather on knowing God better and loving Him more and the trust will come.

Ro. 10:17 faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Ex. Couple: a couple that is in love and really knows each other and has a healthy relationship will trust one another, assuming they are trustworthy. God is trustworthy. Another important thing that comes as a result of loving God and trusting God is obeying God.

Know God – Love God – Trust God – Obey God

Jn. 14:15 says if you love me you will obey my commands. Obedience is often due to not really knowing God, and not believing that His ways are the best for us.

Ex. Couple: again that married that is in love will naturally do things for one another that show their love. God desires our obedience to be out of love for Him.

And finally, the result of this is that we bear fruit and bring God great glory.

Know God – Love God – Trust God – Obey God – Bear Fruit

Jn. 15:5 Jesus said if you abide in me and my word abides in you... you will bear much fruit. You see how this works? But it all begins with knowing God and loving God.

TS We are going to look at 3 things today along this line: Knowing God, Loving God, and seeking God. And as we tackle this first topic: knowing God, I have found that even before someone can get to know God and love God, they must understand how knowable God is, how much God longs to be known, and how much God Himself is interested in a relationship with us. So our first point today (get the *prop – turn the A around*) is this:

1. Knowing God – God wants us to know Him.

Like we said last week, this is the reason God created us, that we might know Him and have a personal relationship with Him and that this relationship be ever growing in closeness and intimate knowledge of God and experience in Him.

This is so important to “get” – and that is what is often called the “**knowability of God**” – that is how much God longs to be known for who He is; how much He loves you and wants you to know Him. The many ways He has revealed Himself to us:

Creation – Romans 1

His Word

His Son

And every day God is seeking to reveal Himself to us, if we will just open our eyes and hearts.

His greatest desire for you is that you know Him. And not just know about Him.

The Bible says:

Ps. 149:4 says God takes delight in His people.

Personal: I can relate to this as a father. I take great pleasure and delight in my kids and that shows me some of God’s father heart.

Zeph. 3:17 He rejoices over us with singing.

God created you. He knows you better than you know yourself. And He loves you more than anyone else can. And He is ever seeking to draw you to Himself. He wants you to know Him. He wants to reveal Himself to you. He wants you to be in a loving relationship with Him.

Jer. 29:11-13 I know the plans I have for you

Jn. 10:10 the thief comes to steal ... but I have come that you might have life and have it to the fullest.

Isa 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.

2 Chron. 16:9 eyes of the Lord move to and fro ... that He may strongly support those whose hearts are completely His.

Oh to really know His nature and character. This is so foundational for a solid Christian life: to know the nature of God. This is why I have a number of sermon series here on the character of God. I see this as so foundational to any vibrant and growing Christian life.

“What were we made for? To **know God**. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To **know God**. What is the ‘eternal life’ that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God.”

J. I. Packer (*Knowing God*, p. 29)

“When we realize that God delights in nothing more than revealing Himself to His creatures, then we understand why **knowing Him** is our highest calling.”

Dan DaHaan (*The God You Can Know*, p. 16)

Chall. How well do you know God?

TS From knowing God comes loving God, because you cannot help but love the God who is if you really know the God who is because when you get to know Him you realize how much He loves you: So my 2nd point today (get the *pro – turn the B around*) is this:

2. Loving God – God wants us to love Him in response to His love for us.

The sad thing is that for many people, especially those who come from a difficult background, this truth is hard to accept. If you are from a family where you did not feel very loved or had to perform to feel loved and accepted, then it can be hard for you to grasp the unconditional love of God and this concept that the perfect and holy God of the universe would love you and want you to know Him intimately. But the truth is He does. He does love you and accept you just the way you are. You don’t have to be good enough for Him to love you. You don’t have to perform for Him to accept you. God loves you because of who He is.

The bible says:

Jer. 31:3 I have loved you with an everlasting love and drawn you with my lovingkindness. It is His lovingkindness that seeks to draw us. It is His love that lures us, that draws us into this close relationship that we have seen is what the Christian life is all about.

Ex. Pastor told me he spends 90% of his counseling time trying to convince people that God loves them. He has found that if this one thing were grasped, so much falls into place.

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates His own loveIf you ever wonder if God loves you just look to the cross and Jesus says with arms outstretched: I love you this much!

Romans 8:31-39 nothing can separate us from His love

It is God’s love for us that motivates and moves us to love Him.

1 Jn. 4:19 we love because He first loved us.

Do you know the love of God? Don’t try to love Him as much as seek to grasp His love for you!!!

Some of you might respond: *“But P. David, I have done some really bad things And I have sinned against the Lord and others I have done some things that I deeply regret and know have displeased God.”* If that is the case, I can assure you that God knows it all and still loves you and wants you to receive His love.

His forgiveness extends to every and all sin. Look at how Jesus hung out with sinners and tax collectors. He reached out and offered His love and forgiveness to all people, especially to those that had been rejected and looked down on by others, even people within the religious community.

Luke 7:47f Once He forgave a prostitute and was criticized for doing so, and He told a story about 2 people who owed money; one owed 500 days’ wages and the other 50 days’ wages. The money lender forgave both. Which will be more grateful? The one who was forgiven more, and then Jesus said: He who is forgiven much loves much.

To the degree that we realize how much God loves us and has forgiven us will determine how much we love God and others. So for those of you who have sinned more in the past, you have the opportunity to realize more how much God loves you and forgives you.

You see, when you really grasp how much the God of the universe, who is perfectly holy, loves you and accepts you, and how much He has forgiven you once you have confessed your sins and brought them to the cross, then you will respond to this love and forgiveness by loving God back. You cannot help but love God when you really grasp how much He loves you and has done for you.

So now, let’s go back to **Mk. 12**: Jesus said this is the most important command: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. To love the Lord **YOUR** God. Your God, this means there is a relationship. To love Him with **all your heart, soul, mind and strength**. This means your relationship with God impacts all of your life. Not just a Sunday thing, folks. But rather a relationship with God whereby Jesus is increasingly Lord of all. Where God is involved in every area of your life.

Look again at what this verse says. This is radical stuff. Love God with all your heart and soul: what is our **heart**? It is the core of who we are. It is the depth of our life. It is what often no one knows but God and us. It has to do with our true selves. We are to love God at the depth of our being. Not easy. Because God has loved me at the heart level, I want to love Him at the heart level.

The **soul** would include the will and the emotions. Because He has touched me at the will and emotional level, I want to love Him with all my emotions and will.

Love Him with all our **mind**. Because He has forgiven me of all my sinful thoughts, I want to love Him with all my mind and keep my mind pure. Here is our thought life and what we take in and what we read and watch on TV. That God would be first here.

And then to love him with all our **strength**. Because this body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, I want all that I do physically to honor God and show Him love. The physical part of our lives. Our bodies. Our sexuality. Our physical activities. To love Him with all of this.

God gave all for us in Jesus and He wants all of us but not in some legalistic, earn points with God manner but rather in response to His great love for us.

Application: I think the Lord would have us pause right now, go to prayer, and ask God to reveal His love to you *Pray Eph. 3 ... time for silence and see what happens.*

TS The final point has to do with what we can do to facilitate this relationship with God that we have seen He desires for us. And that has to do with seeking God.

Prop: turn the C around

3. Seeking God – We must spend quality time with God in order to know Him and love Him.

I want to go back to the diagram we looked at earlier:

Know God – Love God – Trust God – Obey God – Bear Fruit

There is one more part of this that I intentionally left out. What do we need to do in order to know God?

Ex. Couple: What does a married couple need to do in order to get to know each other better and better? Spend time together. Communicate. Talk and listen and be together. So now look at this diagram:

Seek God -- Know God – Love God – Trust God – Obey God – Bear Fruit

The most important thing you can do once you come into a personal relationship with God is to get to know God. And you cannot get to know God without spending quality time with God in the Word and prayer. The Bible calls this “seeking God” – going hard after God!

One of my favorite passages dealing with this is in Luke 10 where Jesus tells the story ... **Luke 10:38-42** Martha and Mary.....Martha is busy with all of her activities, even that of serving Jesus, while Mary is seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His Word. Jesus praises Mary for spending time with Him and corrects Martha for being too busy and not having her priorities right. So many of us are busy with all kinds of things and thus neglect our time with God. If we are too busy to spend time with God then we are busier than God intends us to be. Spending quality time alone with God is the most important thing we can do in the Christian life, because from this comes our getting to know God, and from getting to know God grows our love for God and from that we grow in our trust and obedience and fruit.

Be aware my friend that this is a spiritual battle. Satan does not want you to seek after God, and I believe busyness and activity is one of the greatest tools of the enemy today.

Bob Sorge hit it right on the head when he said:

“Our enemy will do anything to get us to curtail the amount of time we devote to the secret place with God. He will push, distract, harass, incite, oppress, entice, weary, lie, intimidate-whatever it takes. Make no mistake, when you devote yourself to knowing God, all of hell seems to resurrect against you. The full potential of the secret place with God requires one great overarching element: time. Lots of it.”

Bob Sorge (*Secrets of the Secret Place*, p. 61)

So, here is the bottom line: I believe so much in our relationship with God is determined by the quality and consistency of our time with God. We are talking back to basics and spending time with God every day is so basic to a growing and intimate relationship with God.

Spending time with God is called seeking God. Are you a seeker after God? Do a study sometime of the word “seek” and see how often we are admonished to **seek the Lord**:

Jer. 29:11-13 ... you will seek Me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

Jer. 33:3 call upon me and I will show you great and mighty things which you do not know.

Ps 14:2

2 The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who **seek** God.

Ps 24:6

6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who **seek** your face, O God of Jacob.

Ps 27:8

8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.

Ps 34:10

but those who **seek** the LORD lack no good thing.

Ps 119:10

I **seek** you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

Isa 55:6

6 **Seek** the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

My tract on Time Alone With God

Chall. Seek the Lord my friend. This is the greatest adventure anyone could go on and that is the adventure of seeking God, to know Him deeply, to walk with Him closely, and to develop the closest relationship with Him possible. Will you endeavor to seek Him???

I want to conclude by quickly giving you some practical suggestions for developing intimacy with God:

Practical Suggestions for developing intimacy with God:

1. Ask God to give you a hunger but in the meantime eat.

Pray for God to increase your desire to spend time with Him. But don't wait until you feel like it. Pray for a greater appetite but in the meantime, EAT because it is often as we eat that we develop a greater appetite.

2. Seek His face more than His hands.

By this I mean to seek Him more for who He is than what He can do for you. Go into your times with God saying "God, I am here because I just want to get to know you better. Reveal Yourself to me."

So many come to God just asking for things, seeking His hands, but I have found that if I seek His face, His hands will be active. Along with this, seeking His face also means that you take time just to praise and worship Him. Like a couple that just takes time to tell each other how much they mean to each other. Praise and worship enhances your intimacy with God. I will often use the book of Psalms to do this: pray Psalms back to God.

3. Have a regular plan; yet be creative.

What I mean here is that we all need a regular plan to spend time with God. A regular time and place and plan.....

Ex. Couple: like a married couple that has a date night: that is the night each week they are going to do something together, but they don't always do the same thing and that is where the "be creative part" comes in.

Do different things with the Lord. Don't get caught in a rut. Just like a couple doesn't do the same thing every time on their dates. They do different things together. Same with us and God. I love to take prayer walks. We have a prayer trail out here on our church land. I have a spot outside at my house that I will go to when it is a beautiful day. Once a month I take an entire day and get away to some place and just spend it in extended time in prayer and reading and journaling. This week I served myself communion in my quiet time.

The only thing that needs to be consistent is time in the Word and prayer but how you do this can vary a lot.

TS speaking of the Word, the 4th suggestion is:

4. Don't just read the Word; meditate on it.

What it means to meditate on the word is that you take time to really chew on scripture, go slow and really think about what you read, read it over many times, pray it, let God really apply it to your life.

Give an example?

TS And speaking of prayer, don't just do all the talking:

5. Listen and receive from God.

So often our prayer times are filled with us talking to God, and there is a place for this. The Lord says to bring our requests to Him and to ask that we may receive. In addition, I have really found the joy of being quiet in prayer and just listening to God. Now I have never heard an audible voice but I have experienced God bringing things to my mind that I truly believe are from Him.

I have started journaling "Listening time" where I just get quiet and say "God, anything you want to say to me?" and then I write what I sense from Him. Obviously you need to filter your impressions through scripture because God will never say something that is not consistent with His Word.

Personal: this week Call from Dino's ministry and not sure how to handle it ... prayed, asked God for wisdom (Jas. 1:5) and just listened ... I felt that God brought Luke 8:40 to mind where Jesus is asked to come to the home of a man with a 12 year old girl who is dying and on the way Jesus is interrupted with another situation that he took time to deal with.... I felt the Lord say "this is a divine interruption – don't let it pass by"

I'm so glad God still speaks to us today.

Jn. 10:27 my sheep hear my voice

Mt. 13:9 he who has ears to hear, let him hear

"There is nothing more glorious in all of life than hearing His voice! God has always longed to have the kind of intimate relationship with His people wherein they hear His voice and respond accordingly...Hearing God's voice has become the singular quest of my heart, the sole pursuit that alone satisfies the greatest longings of my heart. For this reason, I strongly advocate for a prayer life that is comprised mostly of silence. It's a great delight to talk to God, but it's even more thrilling when He talks to us. I've discovered that He has more important things to say than I do."

Bob Sorge (*Secrets of the Secret Place*, p. 10-11)

6. Read good books.

Books that will really help your intimacy with God. I have some of my favorites on the bottom of your sermon notes. This one "Secrets of the Secret Place" is outstanding.

Conclusion

So, what have we learned today? We have learned that what God wants for us most is a living and growing and intimate relationship with Him. That once we receive Christ and become a child of His, nothing is more important than maintaining a close relationship with Him. This comes before anything we would do for Him. Our obedience and service for Him must flow out of an intimate relationship with Him. And

how does this come about? By understanding who He is and how much He loves us and by seeking Him with all our heart.

The memory verse today is **Jeremiah 29:11-13**: look at that

Will you be a seeker after God? Will you seek hard after God? He awaits to reveal Himself to you!!!

“Jesus doesn’t respond to all believers alike. He responds differently to those who seek more diligently. We see this in the way He handled the Twelve. Peter, James, and John were invited into some of Jesus’ most intimate and awesome moments, while the others disciples were not included. The difference, I believe, is that the others held back somewhat in their hearts toward the Lord, while Peter, James, and John pursued Jesus harder.”

Bob Sorge (*Secrets of the Secret Place*, p. 43)

Pray (include some listening time

Response: as we go into our response time Ministry team ... prophetic words.....kneeling pads....