

Loving God With All Your Mind

Pursuing the Knowledge of God

I. The Urgency of Gaining the Knowledge of God

1. Jesus came on a rescue mission – not just from sin, but from darkness. Man was wandering aimlessly, unable to see where he was going or what was really going on.
John 12:46 *I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.*
2. The knowledge of God is what informs our answers to all the big questions. It shapes our perspective and thus our experience and our response. We cannot respond rightly without God opening our eyes to the truth of who He is.
A.W. Tozer *“All the problems of heaven and earth though they were to confront us together and at once, would be nothing compared with the overwhelming problem of God: That He is; what He is like; and what we as moral beings must do about Him.”*
3. The truth did not change when Jesus came – it was just revealed to blinded eyes. God's heart, man's reason for existence and man's hope for redemption had not changed from before the foundation of the world. Now it was being made known. Absent revelation, man stood condemned already for living in a way that was absolutely obscene in light of the truth.
John 3:18 *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*
4. Without God, we are blind. The Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him is the only thing that empowers us to live in a way consistent with reality.
5. The knowledge of God lets us understand our experience. *“In the beginning, God...”* is what shapes our whole existence and experience. Short of receiving from God the revelation of God, we end up defining God through the lens of our experiences rather than understanding our experiences through the revelation of God.
Colossians 1:16 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Acts 17:28* *for in Him we live and move and have our being...*
6. The knowledge of God lets us understand ourselves. We were made in His image, but the image has been shattered and distorted. The only way to restore it is to look back at the original and remove what does not belong.
Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

7. The knowledge of God lets us understand love. We were made for love, but our idea of love has been twisted by the effects of sin and of a sinful culture, and clouded by our experience which is only broken love from broken people. We learn how to love by gazing upon the One who is love. **1 John 4:8** *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

II. The Need for Revelation

1. The Spirit of revelation is central to the New Covenant. God has established it as the great equalizer. All our wisdom and understanding is nothing apart from it, and the simplest are capable of a depth of the knowledge of God that transforms lives and nations with it. God has deliberately confounded the wisdom of the wise in their inability to receive the true knowledge of God and given it to the humble.
- Isaiah 29:9** *Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. 10 For the LORD has poured out on you The spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. 11 The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." 12 Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I am not literate." 13 Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, 14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder: For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden." 15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?" 16 Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"? 17 Is it not yet a very little while Till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest? 18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. 19 The humble [meek] also shall increase their joy in the LORD, And the poor [needy] among men shall rejoice In the Holy One of Israel.*
2. God had a fundamental problem with the Old Covenant – it was taught by men and written upon stone. His intent always was to replace it with a superior covenant – taught by God Himself and written upon our hearts.
- Hebrews 8:7** *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." [Jeremiah 31:31-34] 13 In that He says, "A new covenant, " He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

3. The New Covenant has infinitely greater power than the old – not only in the presence of grace, but in the presence of truth that has the ability to deliver and to transform.
2 Corinthians 3:7 *But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious... 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

4. The superiority of the New Covenant over the Old is the Spirit of revelation, which allows us to come to Scripture not as words written on a page, but as a living testimony of the living God.
2 Corinthians 3:3 *clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

5. The work of the Spirit is to make known the deep things of God's heart that are otherwise unknowable.
1 Corinthians 2:10 *...For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

III. Understanding What We're Made For

John 17:20 *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24 “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

1. For all of eternity, this is our place: to behold the glory of God that our hearts might be overwhelmed with love for Him.
John 4:23 *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*

2. This is God's great joy and pleasure for all eternity past – delighting in Himself and the beauty of His own nature.
Proverbs 8:29 When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, 31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And My delight was with the sons of men.
3. It is the eternal joy of the living creatures surrounding His throne.
Revelation 4:8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”
4. And it is our eternal destiny. Contrary to popular imagery, eternity is not about sitting on a cloud alone playing a harp. Just stop for a moment and ponder an eternity of being bored. Nothing terrifies the human spirit more. God made us to be fascinated and overflowing with joy, praise, awe and love for all eternity. The place of the saints is in God's presence singing highest praises.
Revelation 15:2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.”
5. Our uniqueness in all of creation is the place that we do it from. God invites us not to just worship from afar but to encounter Him and worship Him from a place of nearness unparalleled in all of creation: “with Me where I am,” “in Us,” “as You, Father are in Me and I am in You.”
6. God's high calling and destiny for humanity is that we would be one with Him. When the Scriptures speak of being conformed to the image of Christ it is not an external reshaping of who we are to make us **look like Him**, it is a removing of the space between us and the One who has chosen to dwell within us to make us **one with Him**. That oneness is the end desire of God. The transformation into His image is the inevitable result and required process to reach that end.
7. This completely reorients the way we approach Scripture and prayer and all of the spiritual disciplines. What we need and want above all is a fascination with, and a relational nearness to, a Man. Not information and instruction, but revelation and encounter. The purpose of spiritual disciplines is not to make us more spiritual or more moral. It's to bring us closer to Jesus.
John 5:38 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

IV. Our Approach to the Scriptures

1. God made us to be fascinated with His beauty. By design, we have been gifted with an imagination. By design, images and narrative powerfully impact our spirits. By design, our mind's eye is the gateway to our hearts. What we're beholding in our minds is where our heart is sure to go.
Matthew 6:22 *The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*
2. Our unfortunate tendency with Scripture is to turn off the part of our mind that craves fascination – the story, the images, the narrative – and turn on only the analytical side that wants application. We need to approach Scripture not just as the handbook for life, but as the greatest story ever told.
3. We should tremble before God's Word, recognizing that His story is truth and the defining revelation of a Holy God and what He desires. But we must also open our hearts to its rich imagery and glorious story because it is our source of worship for all of eternity. We are to delight in God's Word, as well as learn from it.
Psalms 1:1 *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.*
4. God knows the power of the story and the image. It's why He wrote a story rather than just dictating a set of rules. It's stories and images that touch our spirits. We identify emotionally more with TV characters that we know to be fake and distant than we do with God who we know to be real and close at hand. Why? Because that part of our mind that is the gate to our hearts is engaged when watching TV, but then we turn it off when reading the Word.
5. The stories in the Bible are not illustrations. The point is not just to find the moral of the story, the events themselves are of immense consequence because in them is the revelation of God.

V. The One Thing Needed

1. We know of no one with a greater love for God's Word than David. He absolutely set his heart on 100% obedience, but more than that, he made his life about gaining the knowledge of God. And God endorses his priorities, calling him “a man after My own heart” (*Acts 13:22*).
Psalms 27:4 *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.*
2. Jesus gives a similar endorsement to Mary's priority: sitting at His feet and gazing in His face as she listens to His Words.
Luke 10:39 *...Mary ...sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word... 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”*

3. They're both speaking to the same reality. It's more specific than just spending time in God's Word. It's about a deliberate pursuit of encountering God concerning the subject of God. It's God revealing God that causes the heart to burn.

***Luke 24:15** So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them... 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... 32 And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”*

4. Both the subject of revelation and the means of revelation are critical. It's the knowledge of God that causes our hearts to worship Him, but it's God revealing it that causes our hearts to grow near to Him in love.

VI. Material for Meditation

1. The subject we most need to meditate upon is God Himself: who He is and what He has done. All of Scripture is God's story. It's the story of God revealing Himself to men and interacting with men. He is both the Author and the main character.
***Psalms 145:5** I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works.*
2. His works: The story of redemption from beginning to end is about revealing the glory of God in the way that He relates with men. The creation, the Exodus, His covenant with Israel, His faithfulness to Israel, His longsuffering with Israel, the Incarnation, the Cross, the resurrection and ascension, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, the coming kingdom.
3. God the Father: His glory from everlasting to everlasting. ***Genesis 1:1, Exodus 19:16-25;33:18-34:7, Job 38-41, Psalm 29, Isaiah 40, Daniel 7, Revelation 4, Ezekiel 1***
4. The Holy Spirit: the glory of the new covenant – God dwells within us. ***1 Corinthians 2, John 14-16, Acts, Galatians 5***
5. The Man Christ Jesus: the Word become flesh. ***Psalms 45, Isaiah 42,49,52:13-53:12, the Gospels, Philippians 2, Colossians 1, Revelation 1,5***

Loving God With All Your Mind

Beholding the Face of Christ

2 Corinthians 4:6 *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

I. The Word Become Flesh

1. God had forever longed to reveal Himself to man. Not to be revealed by a preacher or a prophet, but that He should be able to personally reveal Himself to each and every one, and He went to extraordinary lengths to do it. Becoming flesh and dwelling among us, then sending His Spirit to dwell in us.

Hebrews 1:1 *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...*

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 16:13 *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

2. This was the great mission of God in the Incarnation – that men might know Him.

John 17:1 *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*

3. In Jesus are hidden all the mysteries of God, all wisdom and all knowledge. There is not a single thing lacking in His revelation of the Father.

Colossians 2:2 *...attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

4. Christ reveals not only in word, but in tangible flesh and blood, life and deed what God is like
- John 17:6** *“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

5. God inherently knows that love must be seen not just spoken of. Time and again He spoke through the prophets, but He was looking, from time of Israel's very first rejection of face-to-face encounter with God, toward the Incarnation. To give them a Prophet from within their midst to Whom they could relate and Who would be approachable.

Deuteronomy 18:15 *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’*

6. But He was to be a superior Prophet in Whom they would not just hear *of* God but would see God Himself.
John 14:8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”
7. As long as God remains a “Being” more than a Person, we will struggle to love Him. It's beholding the face of Christ that allows us to really love Him and know His love.
John 17:25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

II. Encountering Jesus by Meditating on the Gospels

The key: SLOW DOWN! The basic goal of meditating on Scripture is to take the time to actually encounter Jesus: to get into the story and look Him in the eye as though we were actually there, and to actually hold a conversation with Him. That is the one thing needed: to behold His beauty and inquire in His temple (*Psalms 27:4*); to sit at His feet and hear His Words (*Luke 10:38-42*).

1. Select a passage. We're looking for a story, not a verse or a chapter but a single scene in the life of Jesus (much of this also applies to Old Testament stories with a little tweaking).
2. Ask for the Spirit of revelation. We want not just to engage with the Word, but to engage with God through His Word – we want to meet with the Living Word. The Spirit loves to reveal Jesus. Pray from *John 16:13-14* below (or *Ephesians 1:17-19*, *Psalms 119:18*, *Jeremiah 33:3*, *Luke 24:15,27,32*, etc).
John 16:13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.
3. Set the stage. Our goal is to actually sit at Jesus' feet and hear His Word. We want to be there with Him, not just reading about it. Read the story through once, just to get the setting: the place, the characters and the context (it may help to skim the passages just before and after).
4. See the story. Read it again, but slowly and this time actually picture the events unfolding and set yourself into the story as an observer. What is actually taking place? Not just the summary or the main event, but actually let it unfold over normal space and time (because it did).
5. Retell the story. The gospel accounts are, for the most part, written from a detached historical perspective. We want a more personal perspective. This is where we start inquiring, knowing that we are speaking with the One who was actually there in Israel 2000 years ago.
 1. An observer's perspective – Beyond the historical fact of it, what would it have been like to be there and see it for yourself? How would you have reacted?
 2. Jesus' perspective – Getting beyond what He did, now we get to ask “why?” What was He thinking/feeling. Seeing God's thoughts and emotions are what stir ours.
 3. The people's perspective – What was it like to interact with Jesus? We can learn a tremendous amount about what Jesus was like by how people reacted to Him. Through them we get to look Him in the eye.

6. Recognize God in the story. The power of the Incarnation is we now get to pause and realize that the Man we've just seen on earth in a human frame interacting with human beings is in fact God. **Philippians 2:5** *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Hans Urs Von Balthasar – *Anyone contemplating the life of Jesus needs to be newly and more deeply aware every day that something impossible, something scandalous has occurred: that God, in His absolute Being, has resolved to manifest Himself in a human life (and is in a position to make this resolve effective!) He must be scandalized by this, he must feel his mind reeling, the very ground giving way beneath his feet; he must at least experience that “ecstasy” of non-comprehension which transported Jesus’ contemporaries.*

1. How does it change the story realizing that Jesus is Genesis 1 and Isaiah 6?
 2. What is Jesus doing that becomes more remarkable knowing that He is God?
 3. What is Jesus doing that I can't imagine God doing?
 4. What does it tell me about God's nature?
 5. What does it tell me about how God relates to men?
7. Consider that same God dwells within You. The end application, because the Spirit of God dwells within us, is it changes our relationship with the indwelling Spirit of Christ. **Colossians 1:27** *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*
1. What wrong thoughts about God just got challenged?
 2. How does this change the way I relate to God?
 3. How do I worship God in light of this truth?
 4. What does it look like to walk in this revelation?
8. The result of meeting Jesus who is fully human: personable, approachable, relational... who knows and understands us, yet knowing that He is fully God: clothed in glory from everlasting, is that our hearts tremble before His glory and grow tender before His nearness. We gain both a love and a respect for the One who has joined Himself to us.