

"If Ye Had Known Me"

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Do we only know about the Savior, or are we increasingly coming to know Him? How do we come to know the Lord?

As the Savior concluded the Sermon on the Mount, He emphasized the eternal truth that "only by doing the will of the Father is the saving grace of the Son obtainable."¹

He declared:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."²

Our understanding of this episode is enlarged as we reflect upon an inspired revision to the text. Significantly, the Lord's phrase reported in the King James Version of the Bible, "I never knew you," was changed in the Joseph Smith Translation to "Ye never knew me."³

Consider also the parable of the ten virgins. Recall that the five foolish and unprepared virgins went to obtain oil for their lamps after hearing the cry to go and meet the bridegroom.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

"Afterward came also the [five foolish] virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."⁴

The implications of this parable for each of us are expanded by another inspired revision. Importantly, the phrase "I know you not," as reported in the King James Version of the Bible, was clarified in the Joseph Smith Translation to "Ye know me not."⁵

The phrases "Ye never knew me" and "Ye know me not" should be a cause of deep spiritual introspection for each of us. Do we only know about the Savior, or are we increasingly coming to know Him? How do we come to know the Lord? These questions of the soul are the focus of my message. I earnestly invite the assistance of the Holy Ghost as we consider together this vital subject.

Coming to Know

Jesus said:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."⁶

We come to know the Father as we come to know His Beloved Son.

A grand objective of mortality is not merely learning about the Only Begotten of the Father but also striving to know Him. Four essential steps that can help us come to know the Lord are exercising faith in Him, following Him, serving Him, and believing Him.

Exercising Faith in Him

The exercise of faith in Jesus Christ is relying upon His merits, mercy, and grace.⁷ We begin to come to know the Savior as we arouse our spiritual faculties and experiment upon His teachings, even until we can give place in our souls for a portion of His words.⁸ As our faith in the Lord increases, we trust in Him and have confidence in His power to redeem, heal, and strengthen us.

True faith is focused in and on the Lord and always leads to righteous action. "Faith [in Christ is] the first principle in revealed religion, ... the foundation of all righteousness, ... and the principle of action in all intelligent beings."⁹ Because acting in accordance with the correct principles the Redeemer proclaimed is central to receiving and exercising true faith, "faith without works is dead."¹⁰ We are to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."¹¹

Hearing God's word and receiving the spiritual gift of faith in the Savior are closely related, as "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."¹² We become acquainted with Him and His voice as we study and feast upon His word in the scriptures,¹³ pray to the Father in His name with real intent,¹⁴ and seek for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.¹⁵ Learning and applying in our lives the doctrine of Christ is a prerequisite to receiving the gift of faith in Him.¹⁶

Exercising faith in the Lord is a necessary preparation for following Him.

Following Him

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

"And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."¹⁷

Peter and Andrew are strong examples of hearing and following the Master.

The Savior likewise instructs you and me, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹⁸ To take up one's cross is to deny oneself of all ungodliness and every worldly lust and to keep the commandments of the Lord.¹⁹

The Savior has admonished us to become as He is.²⁰ Thus, following the Lord includes emulating Him. We continue to come to know the Lord as we seek through the power of His Atonement to become like Him.

In His mortal ministry, Jesus marked the path, led the way, and set the perfect example. "A correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes"²¹ provides enduring purpose and clear direction as we follow Him on the road of devoted discipleship.

Following the Savior also enables us to receive "an actual knowledge that the course of life [we are] pursuing"²² is in accordance with God's will. Such knowledge is not an unknowable mystery and is not focused primarily upon our temporal pursuits or ordinary mortal concerns. Rather, steady and sustained progress along the covenant pathway is the course of life that is pleasing to Him.

Lehi's dream in the Book of Mormon identifies the path we should follow, the challenges we will encounter, and the spiritual resources available to assist us in following and coming unto the Savior. Pressing forward on the strait and narrow path is what He would have us do. Tasting the fruit of the tree and becoming deeply "converted unto the Lord"²³ are the blessings He yearns for us to receive. Hence, He beckons us, "Come, follow me."²⁴

Both exercising faith in and following Jesus Christ are necessary preparations for serving Him.

Serving Him

"For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?"²⁵

We more fully come to know the Lord as we serve Him and labor in His kingdom. As we do so, He generously blesses us with heavenly help, spiritual gifts, and increased capacity. We are never left alone as we work in His vineyard.

He declared: "For I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."²⁶

We come to know the Savior as we do our best to go where He wants us to go, as we strive to say what He wants us to say, and as we become what He wants us to become.²⁷ As we submissively acknowledge our total dependence upon Him, He enlarges our capacity to serve ever more effectively. Gradually, our desires align more completely with His desires, and His purposes become our purposes, such that we would "not ask that which is contrary to [His] will."²⁸

Serving Him requires all of our heart, might, mind, and strength.²⁹ Consequently, selflessly serving others counteracts the self-centered and selfish tendencies of the natural man. We grow to love those whom we serve. And because serving others is serving God, we grow to love Him and our brothers and sisters more deeply. Such love is a manifestation of the spiritual gift of charity, even the pure love of Christ.³⁰

"Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure."³¹

We come to know the Lord as we are filled with His love.

Believing Him

Is it possible to exercise faith in Him, follow Him, serve Him, but not believe Him?

I am acquainted with Church members who accept as true the doctrine and principles contained in the scriptures and proclaimed from this pulpit. And yet they have a hard time believing those gospel truths apply specifically in their lives and to their circumstances. They seem to have faith in the Savior, but they do not believe His promised blessings are available to them or can operate in their lives. I also encounter brothers and sisters who fulfill their callings dutifully but for whom the restored gospel has not yet become a living and transforming reality in their lives. We come to know the Lord as we not only believe in Him but also believe Him and His assurances.

In the New Testament, a father asked the Savior to heal his child. Jesus answered:

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."³²

I have reflected many times on this father's request: "Help thou mine unbelief." I wonder if the intent of the man's pleading was not primarily to help him believe in Jesus as our Redeemer and in His healing power. He already may have acknowledged Christ as the Son of God. But perhaps he needed help to believe the Master's healing power indeed could be so individual and so personalized as to bless his own beloved son. He may have believed in Christ generally but not believed Christ specifically and personally.

We often testify of what we know to be true, but perhaps the more relevant question for each of us is whether we believe what we know.

Sacred ordinances performed by proper priesthood authority are essential to believing the Savior, coming to know Him, and ultimately, believing what we know.

"And [the Melchizedek] priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even *the key of the knowledge of God*.

"Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest."³³

We believe and come to know the Lord as the key of the knowledge of God administered through the Melchizedek Priesthood unlocks the door and makes it possible for each of us to receive the power of godliness in our lives. We believe and come to know the Savior as we follow Him by receiving and faithfully honoring holy ordinances and increasingly have His image in our countenances.³⁴ We believe and come to know Christ as we experience personally the transforming, healing, strengthening, and sanctifying power of His Atonement. We believe and come to know the Master as "the power of his word [takes root] in us"³⁵ and is written in our minds and hearts³⁶ and as we "give away all [our] sins to know [Him]."³⁷

Believing Him is trusting that His bounteous blessings are available and applicable in our individual lives and families. Believing Him with our whole soul³⁸ comes as we press forward along the covenant pathway, surrender our will to His, and submit to His priorities and timing for us. Believing Him—accepting as true His power and promises—invites perspective, peace, and joy into our lives.

Promise and Testimony

On a future day, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess"³⁹ that Jesus is the Christ. On that blessed day, we will know He knows each of us by name. And I witness and promise we can not only know about the Lord but also come to know Him as we exercise faith in, follow, serve, and believe Him. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.



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