

I Believe in God...But I Don't Really Know Him

Welcome/Prayer

Before you begin, pray for understanding of the scripture, enlightenment that the Holy Spirit may guide your understanding, discernment that you may see how this lesson applies to you, and courage to surrender those things that hinder your spiritual growth.

Preparation

Recall from the introduction sermon to our current series, "The Christian Atheist," that there exists the familiar "philosophical atheist" who is one who rationally denies the existence of a deity and does not believe in a supreme being. Then, there is the "Christian Atheist," who believes in God but lives as if God doesn't exist. For this study guide, we'll consider how our belief in God affects our everyday lives. We believe in Him, but...do we *really* know Him?

Read aloud the following scripture:

Isaiah 43:10 (CEV)

My people, you are my witnesses and my chosen servant. I want you to know me, to trust me, and understand that I alone am God....

Introduction

According to the Bible, it is God's desire that we should not only believe in Him, but we should also know Him in a personal way. Those who believe in Him yet don't know Him are the Christian Atheists we'll discuss in this message.

Scripture tells us that there are some criteria that measure the depth of our knowledge of God; however, before reviewing those key segments from the sermon, answer/discuss the following foundational questions:

1. Describe your perception of God. What do you know about Him?
2. What are some sources from which people learn about God?
3. Is there anything you thought you once knew about God but later found out to be untrue? What was it?
4. What name(s) do you commonly use when you address God in prayer?

Break it Down

"I know God when I recognize His voice and follow Him."

Read John 10:14 (NLT), "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me...." Those sheep "follow him because they know his voice...." (John 10:4 NLT) As Christians, we seek to know God's will and direction for our lives, but we have to recognize His voice in order to follow Him.

1. What are some of life's "noises" that interfere with hearing God's voice?
2. Have you ever mistaken someone's voice and did or said something embarrassing as a result? Share your story.
3. How do you distinguish God's voice from other voices?
4. Describe a time when you heard from the Lord in a clear, unmistakable way? How did/didn't you follow Him?

“I know God when I obey His commands.”

“We can be sure that we know God if we obey his commands. Anyone who says, “I know God,” but does not obey God’s commands is a [Christian Atheist]....” (1 John 2:3-4a NCV) God’s commands are not arbitrary or unpredictable. As we grow closer in our relationship with Him, we develop a desire to please Him. Obedience demonstrates our love for God. The apostle, John, declared in his first epistle that, “Here is what it means to love God. It means that we obey his commands. And his commands are not hard to obey.” (1 John 5:3 NIRV)

1. Share about a time you disobeyed someone and later regretted doing so?
2. Where do you struggle most with disobedience? (e.g., prayer time, serving others, etc.)
3. How does love for God make it easier to obey His commands?
4. What commandments do you find burdensome or difficult to follow?

“I know God when I love others.”

“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. *Anyone who loves* is a child of God and *knows God*. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8 NLT, emphasis added) Knowing God means knowing the character of God. He has a special place in His heart for every person He created. Max Lucado said it this way, “If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it.... Face it, friend. He is crazy about you!” God is love. We demonstrate that we know God when we love others.

1. We’ve all had “sandpaper people” in our lives...those people who irritate us or rub us the wrong way. Give some examples of how to show love to a sandpaper person.
2. Share about a time/experience when someone loved you in a way that made you realize that person knew God.

Conclusion

Getting to know God is a relationship-building process. It takes commitment, and it takes time. Spending time with Him is the only way to cultivate your relationship with Him and to get to know Him. Sunday worship, regular prayer time, meditation on His word, Bible studies...these are all ways not only of practicing obedience but also of creating a constant awareness of his presence. A relationship with the Lord starts in an instant, but it requires a lifetime of commitment.

Close in Prayer

Action Items for the Week Ahead

Review the main ideas and the importance of knowing God from today’s message. Read the scriptures associated with each, and select one that *really* speaks to you. In the week ahead, reflect upon that scripture, and consider the following:

1. Have you said, “I do,” to God and accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord? If not, will you?
2. How can you spend time with God in an effort to get to know Him better?
3. Specifically, what is ONE THING you will do this week to know God more deeply? Write it down, and be accountable to your relationship with Him.
4. Listen for His voice this week, and share the testimony of His love and mercy at your next gathering.