

willed, he could curse a person to death. As such, the entire village feared him and came to him to seek his healing power through witchcraft. On one occasion however, he passed by the TJC and stopped to look. As he stood there, he saw a white figure descending from heaven into the church. The next time he passed by, he saw in another vision the radiant man laying hands on the believers who were praying. There was light everywhere except the spot on which he stood. Not long later, he fell ill. He contracted a disease similar to arthritis. His whole body stiffened and it was difficult for him to move or bend his body. Almost every night, three devils came to disturb him, the very same demons whom he worshiped and depended on to practice witchcraft. They commanded him not to believe in Christianity. They would then beat him up, strangle him or take his blanket away so he could not sleep peacefully. He stayed in bed for more than two months. After this, members from the True Jesus Church visited him and told him of the truth. One night when the three devils came again, he shouted, "Hallelujah!" as he had been taught. The three devils disappeared. From this incident, he understood God's power better. Later, he was baptized. He had to be carried on a wooden stretcher, and it proved to be a difficult task baptizing a man who could not bend his body. After the baptism, he was miraculously cured of his sickness.

Question to think about:

Write about an incident or event in your life that attests to the mighty power of our Lord.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



1. *What aspect of God's divine nature have we experienced in our lives?*
2. *How much have we allowed the Creator of the heavens and earth to dwell within our hearts and be in control of our lives?*
3. *How much have we appreciated the opportunity of knowing God and His word?*

Lesson 1 1

The Gospel of John

Knowing and Believing in the Lord Jesus

Listed Scriptures

Rom 1:24-28, 10:14-17; Eph 1:15-23; 2 Thess 2:9-12; Heb 4:2; 1 Jn 2:1-6;
1 Jn 4:7-12

Lesson Aim

To enable students to learn about the importance of "knowing" the Lord as our personal Savior

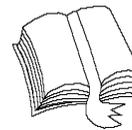
Memory Verse

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.." (1 Jn 5:20)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

John 8-14

BIBLE BACKGROUND



Please refer to the Bible Background section in Lesson 10 for additional information on the Gospel of John (Lessons 10, 11 and 12 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of John).



What does it truly mean to “know” someone? What is the difference between “knowing of” someone and “knowing” him/her personally?



Part 1

Knowing the Lord Jesus

A . The Importance of Knowing the Lord

The Gospel of John is unlike the other Gospels, which were written to present the Lord Jesus to certain cultural groups. The Gospel of John was written as a universal gospel so that people of all times “may believe that the Lord Jesus is Christ, the Son of God.” In the OT, the Lord, through the mouth of the prophets, told the people that they must strive to know Him (Ps 100:3; Hos 6:3, 6). But though He continually called, exhorted and chastened His chosen people, the Israelites failed to know and recognize God (Is 1:2-3). Therefore, in his gospel and epistles, John stresses the importance of knowing and believing in the Lord. According to John, true knowledge is a mark of believers. This knowledge refers to acknowledging Jesus Christ as God’s Son and our Savior and understanding the things of God (1 Jn 2:13,14; 5:20; 2:4; 4:7,8). Today we realize that knowledge of Jesus Christ is life (1 Jn 1:3). He is “the way the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). Only through knowing the Lord can we obtain blessings in this life as well as eternal life. However, to “know” God is not simply an intellectual exercise or discussion. It is an active, continuing trust and fellowship with God that brings eternal life. It involves living a life of obedience and love, keeping God’s word, walking in His likeness, and loving our brothers.

B . Biblical Characters Who Came to Know the Lord

The Gospel of John records certain individuals who progressed from a state of disbelief to total belief and submission in the Lord Jesus. Through their faith and expe-

riences, they came to know Jesus Christ and confessed that He is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

a. Nathanael

When Philip told Nathanael about how he found the Messiah and that He was Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael was initially skeptical. The prophets had said nothing of anyone great coming from the Galilean town of Nazareth. However, Nathanael was stunned when the Lord Jesus greeted him saying, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.” But when the Lord manifested His omniscience by revealing to Nathanael his exact location before they met (which was far out of the Lord Jesus’ sight), Nathanael immediately exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (Jn 1:43-49).

b. The Samaritan woman

The Samaritan woman, whose painful past led her to shun society, met the Lord Jesus by the well. During the course of the conversation, the Samaritan woman progressed from rejecting the Lord Jesus to believing in Him because of His knowledge of her past and her thirst for the Messiah (Jn 4:1-30, 39-42).

c. Martha

The Lord Jesus had been a guest in Martha, Mary and Lazarus’ home in Bethany on previous occasions (Lk 10:38). As Martha came to know the Lord, her knowledge and faith grew also. However, only after the Lord told her that He was the “resurrection and the life” and resurrected her brother and Lazarus from the dead did she fully believe that the Lord was “the Christ, the Son of God, He who is coming into the world” (Jn 11:25-27).

d. Thomas

Although Thomas had been a follower of Christ, he only came to a complete realization that the Lord was the Son of God after the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to him and showed him His nail-pierced hands and side. What prevented Thomas from seeing and knowing God? Thomas lacked the faith. He needed to base his belief on concrete proof and evidence. He needed to see and touch the Lord before he believed. After the Lord Jesus showed Himself to Thomas, Thomas wholeheartedly believed, saying, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:26-28).

e. John the Baptist

John the baptist and the Lord were second cousins, so John knew who He was,

but he did not know that Jesus Christ was in fact the Messiah. Twice, in John 1:31 and 1:33, John says, "I myself did not know Him." So, although John had been sent by God to announce that the promised Savior of Israel was to appear and was called to "testify concerning that Light," it wasn't until the Lord's baptism that John truly understood that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. When the Lord Jesus came to be baptized by John, John saw the Spirit of God come down from heaven and descend on the Lord Jesus like a dove. John saw and believed and testified that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Jn 1:29-34).

f. Simon Peter

One time the Lord Jesus asked Peter who he thought the Lord was. Peter declared, "You are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:69). Peter's knowledge of Christ was real but limited. Although Peter knew who the Lord was, he did not have a complete understanding of the Lord's purpose and mission on earth. He saw the Lord from a worldly perspective, thinking that He would soon restore the Kingdom of Israel and become its earthly King. However, Peter's understanding of Christ expanded over time. As he went through the pain of denying the Lord, witnessing His death and resurrection and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter's awareness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior grew and deepened.

g. The Jews

One time the Lord was asked to go to Bethany because Lazarus had fallen sick. When He got there, Lazarus had already died and had been dead for four days. During this time, some Jews went to the house of Mary and Martha to console them. When the Lord arrived at Lazarus' tomb, He prayed and asked Lazarus to come out of the tomb. When Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, came out of the tomb, many of the Jews, who had come with Mary and saw what He had done, believed in Him. The Jews were followers of the scribes and the Pharisees, who resisted Jesus Christ and rejected Him. But now after witnessing this miracle, they came to understand and believe in the Lord Jesus (Jn 11:1-48).



Part 2

The Process of Believing and Accepting God

Believing and accepting the Lord Jesus involves a long and complex process. What are some of the usual stumbling blocks that prevent people from accepting Christ? What are the sources of faith and belief in the Lord Jesus?

A . Stumbling Blocks

a. Preconceived ideas and prejudices

Often, preconceived ideas and notions regarding Christ and Christianity are major stumbling blocks. Nathanael's attitude towards Nazareth made him think that nothing good could come from there. Some people from Far-Eastern countries would never accept Christianity because they consider it a Western religion or a religion foreign to them. In Christ's time, the Pharisees' and the scribes' preconceived thoughts prevented them from seeing the truth. In Matthew 9:17, the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees and scribes, "No one puts new wine into old wineskins, if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed." The Lord Jesus came to the world to establish a new covenant between God and His people. He came to offer forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God through faith. But this was very different from the old religious system of Judaism, with its rules and traditions that the Pharisees were used to. The Jews clung to the old traditions. The old is good, they said. And even though they heard the authoritative teachings of the Lord Jesus and saw His miracles, they rejected the truth and refused to see it, thus preventing them from believing and knowing Jesus Christ as Israel's long awaited One, the very Son of God (Is 53:1-3; Lk 24:21). Do we have any preconceived notions or prejudices that blind us to the truth or prevent us from walking out our faith?

b. Lack of faith

When Jesus Christ was preaching, many people followed Him merely for physical food and blessings. They were caught up in the life of this world and failed to see what the Lord was offering. People without faith put their hope on things that are seen and are temporal. They cannot see the things that are eternal. Their faith exists only as long as it fits their expectations. The multitude that followed the Lord Jesus lacked faith. They "believed" in Christ only superficially and turned away when He did not offer what they expected. Their faith was not sufficient for them to abandon their own notions and submit themselves fully to God and His word (Rom 11:20; 2 Cor 1:24). The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb 11:6). Faith is therefore an indispensable factor of salvation. "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers" (Heb 4:2). A person with faith will not lose sight of eternal life for the things of the world. They have the faith to see beyond the trials and temptations of life and to accept and obey God's words fully.

c. Hardened heart

People in the Lord Jesus' time, like those in the time of Isaiah (Is 6:10), would not

believe despite evidence. As a result, God hardened their hearts. In Romans 1:24-28 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, it records how the people of the world have become futile in their thinking, their senseless minds darkened. For those whose hearts are hardened, even the most compelling reasons for faith become obstacles. The Lord Jesus performed enough miraculous signs to cause people to believe in Him. The greatest of all signs – raising Lazarus from the dead – should have been enough to elicit faith from all those who saw it or even heard about it. Yet the Jews continued in their stubbornness and refused to believe that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. Let us examine and make sure our hearts are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13).

Teaching Tip:

You may wish to create a table like the following to help organize the information.

Person	What were the obstacles to their knowing the Lord?	How were those obstacles removed?	Result

 **B . Sources of Faith**

a. Hearing God’s Word and being enlightened by the truth

Paul says, “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Faith is stimulated by hearing of the good news, the word of God. On the day of Pentecost, Peter rose up and addressed the multitude. In his speech, Peter introduced the good news and the way of salvation to them. When the people heard it, they were cut to the heart. Was it Peter’s eloquence or power of persuasiveness that caused them to say this? No indeed. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Through the word of God, “arguments,

every proud obstacle and stronghold can be destroyed to the knowledge of God, and every thought taken captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:3-5).

b. Seeing God’s power

In John 10:37-39, the Lord Jesus said to the people, “Even though you do not believe in me, believe the miracles.” The Lord recognized that the people who could not accept Him through His teachings might believe through other channels. He invited His listeners to consider His miracles if they found His words too difficult to believe. After all, it was prophesied that the Messiah would do great works (Is 35:4-6). Today, God may use miracles to help us respond to Him. God’s miracles may be spectacular public miracles or small personal ones. But in some way, God lets us know that He is speaking personally to us. Many people come to the Lord after witnessing miracles such as a sickness being healed, being delivered from an evil spirit and many others (Mk 16:17-20; 1 Sam 2:6-7). The miracles are not an end in themselves. The Lord performs them so that the people could know and understand that the “Father is in Me (Jesus), and I (Jesus) am in the Father” (cf Jn 14:10-11). In the same way, God may use miracles to convince people to believe in Him and to confirm the true message.

c. Humbling oneself

At that time the Lord declared, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes” (Mt 11:25). Why is the gospel hidden from the wise and learned? These are people who are arrogant in their own knowledge. They are already full of learning. The babes are those who humbly and openly receive the truth of God’s word.

In the Bible, there is an account of an Ethiopian eunuch, an official of the Queen, who was in charge of the treasury. He had just returned from worshiping in Jerusalem and was reading a passage from Isaiah. When asked whether he understood it, the eunuch did not let pride or status get in the way of understanding the word of God. He let down his guard, and asked Philip to sit with him and explain the passage. Although he held a powerful position, he understood that there were some areas where he needed help, and he was not afraid to ask for it. Because of his humility, the eunuch was able to understand God’s word and receive the gift of eternal life (Rom 10:9; 1 Tim 1:15; 4:8-9; Rom 4:20-21). Those with pride and arrogance, on the other hand, will be prevented from hearing or seeing the truth. It is not worldly knowledge, power or status that allows us to know the truth, but a humble attitude in learning. If we study the Scriptures with a trusting and humble spirit, we will receive many fresh insights and understanding.

d. God gives the understanding and opens our heart to accept Him

No matter how much we may try, we cannot come to understand Jesus on our own, for that of the flesh cannot expound on the mysteries of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:11). The people too, tried by their own reasoning to identify the Lord Jesus, but failed (Mt 16:13-14). The people of Nazareth, Lord Jesus' hometown, thought they knew Him, but their understanding of Him was limited to the Lord Jesus as the carpenter's son (Mt 13:55-58). The world through its wisdom cannot know God (1 Cor 1:20-21). It is only God who can reveal to man who He really is (Mt 11:27; Ac 16:14). In Luke 10:22, the Lord tells the disciples, "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Then turning to the disciples he said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.'" Indeed, it is not by our own doing that we come to know Him, but through His choosing and His saving grace (Jn 15:15-16; Eph 2:8). May the Lord grant us the Spirit of wisdom, revelation, and knowledge to know Him more fully (Eph 1:17).

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 According to John, what does "knowing" God mean?
- 2 What are the obstacles that hinder a person from believing in God?
- 3 What are sources of faith and belief in God?
- 4 From our study of certain characters that came to believe in the Lord, is there one that you can identify with?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Take a Step Closer to Following Jesus Christ

We live in a world where most people do not believe that something is true simply because we tell them. This is especially true when it comes to believing in God. People need to see and experience God Himself. People come to a belief and understanding of the Lord Jesus through var-

ious ways. There are times when God sends thunder to stir us. There are times when God sends grace and blessings to let us see His presence. We may have experienced God through healing, through receiving the Holy Spirit, through simple faith in His words or through the love of those around us. God will use different ways to enable us to know Him, but we need to open our hearts and be sensitive to His divine calling.

Read the following excerpt from a letter written by a sister to a good friend whom she has known since junior high school. Through the letter, we can journey with her as she begins to know God and experience a transformation in her life.

Dear Friend,

I thank God for you and our friendship all these years. I also thank God that you took time out of your busy schedule to attend the Saturday evening service of our biannual Spiritual Convocation at Garden Grove.

I understand how you felt that night because I felt the same way the first time I saw people pray in tongues at a family service that I attended with my parents and younger brother (he was about nine years old, and I was about ten). The prayer wasn't 30 minutes, but about 10 minutes long. Even so, I felt a little startled and uncomfortable. I thought it was such a weird way to pray. My brother and I even laughed, not out of malice, but out of nervousness, as we looked around during the prayer. Later on, when I attended a spiritual convocation at Garden Grove, I felt that the long 30 minute prayers were unbearable because I didn't know what to pray about, and my knees remained sore even long after I got up.

I remember the first time I went to the True Jesus Church in El Monte. I wandered around the premises and found an empty room across the hall from the main chapel. As I sat on one of the wooden chairs, I felt as if I had arrived "home." It was a distinctly warm, peaceful feeling (which, as you know, were not the feelings that I felt at my actual home).

I also remember the day I received water baptism. (The river was freezing cold!) I simply did what the preacher instructed me to do in accordance with the Bible. I knelt in the water, bowed my head, clasped my hands, closed my eyes and repented (I sincerely apologized to God for all the bad things that I had done and asked for forgiveness) while he baptized me in the name of Jesus Christ. After I dried up and changed clothes, we headed back to El Monte for foot washing and Holy Communion. As I sat in the back seat to the left of my brother in the burgundy-colored car and looked out the window, I suddenly felt as if a huge and extremely heavy burden had been lifted off my shoulders. I was only ten years old.

What “burden” could I possibly have had?

I praise God that the person I am today is very different from the pitiful little girl I am about to describe to you. The “burden” that was lifted off my shoulders was the burden of countless sins I had committed.

I had a very bad temper and was easily angered. I took out my anger and frustrations in a violent, physical manner similar to my dad’s. Like my dad, I justified my actions and my right to be angry. I couldn’t control my temper. I often ruthlessly punched and kicked my poor, helpless brother whenever he irked me. As if that wasn’t bad enough, I was so mad at him one time that I scratched the entire length of his forearm and made him bleed. I knew I had a bad temper, but I couldn’t correct myself. I became immensely aggravated, steaming mad, and at times I even threw tantrum whenever my mom or other relatives told me what a bad temper I had. I just couldn’t handle the truth about myself and was too proud to admit my shortcomings.

I had a filthy mouth (I picked up the habit from neighborhood kids). I casually and frequently used the “F-word,” “s-word,” “a-word” in my speech as well as in my school assignments.

I was extremely stingy and self-centered. I didn’t like to share my belongings – I hoarded them. With regard to food or other material things, I always took the better portion for myself and didn’t care about or consider other people’s needs and wants.

I stole money from my parents and enlisted my brother as my accomplice so that we could play arcade games at the donut shop next to our parents’ seafood restaurant. One time, my brother got caught and was severely punished by my parents while I remained silent.

On top of all that, I had very low self-esteem. It was so low that I hated myself. Actually, “hate” does not fully convey how much I loathed and despised everything about myself. At school, I always felt left out – I didn’t fit in anywhere. I was always one of the last to be picked on a team. My schoolmates mocked me because of my ethnic features and the unfashionable clothes I wore. Some boys even went so far as to trip me, cuss me out, throw stones at me, insult me, shove me. They cruelly beat me up without mercy and gave me cuts, bruises, and a bloody nose. At home, I was often brutally whacked on the face, beaten and punished by my father whenever he had to vent his anger and frustrations. I felt that I was a worthless reject

and a loner; whenever I looked at myself in the mirror, all I could see was an ugly, stupid, unlovable child who couldn’t do anything right or good. Therefore, I often walked with my eyes riveted on the ground and head hung low. I felt that I did not deserve anything good. I even thought that my mom, of all people, hated me. Although I was miserable and felt that life was not worth living, I was too chicken to run away from home or to take my own life.

I rarely smiled. In fact, one day, my classmate candidly asked, “How come you never smile?” I pathetically answered, “because I have nothing to smile about.”

What a contrast from the way I am today, huh? You and other people who know me would probably describe me as a fairly cheerful person. In fact, quite a few people have even given me the nickname, “sunshine girl.”

Of course, I didn’t change overnight nor by accident – it took many years. To this day, I still have many things to improve upon. As I grew up in the Lord, I discovered my depression, self-pity and self-hatred stemmed from the way I viewed everything. My ability to rejoice now (no matter what situation I’m in) is not due to positive thinking, nor is it due to optimism, but because of God’s words contained in the Bible. I didn’t merely listen to and read God’s words – I took them to heart and applied them to my life. I have never sought the help of a psychotherapist before, but I have some friends who have. Two of them told me that they actually got worse, while the other two remain either troubled or depressed. Why is it that they do not have genuine, lasting joy and peace in their hearts, while I do?

All I know is that God has provided me with the best therapy through His word, which is “living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow” (Heb 4:12). God’s words have molded me and shaped me over the years and will continue to do so until the day I die. Although the scars from my childhood will always remain, they don’t keep me from rejoicing in the Lord because I have a purpose in life and hope of eternal salvation. Moreover, I have experienced the love of God and the fulfillment of His promises to me as recorded in the Bible. The Bible is not an ordinary piece of literature full of historical accounts, stories and theories. God’s words are neither irrelevant nor outdated. They contain truth and life; I know from personal experience.

I have so much more to share with you, but I don’t want to overwhelm you or make you feel like I’m trying to convert you. I merely want to share this treasure that I have found. I wish I could have shared all this with you years ago, but I was too worried about what you would think, especially in this politically correct era of ours.

It goes without saying that I love and care about you. It would mean a lot to me if you could trust me enough to come to my church again to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8). You’re always welcome to come with me any time.

(Take A Step Closer To Following Jesus, Higher Ground, Spring 1998)

Questions to think about:

1. How did you come to believe in the Lord?
2. How did you first “see” God?
3. What is the level of your faith in God?
4. What are the things or events that convinced you that Jesus Christ is your Lord and personal Savior?
5. Were there any obstacles or doubts that you struggled with in your search for God? How did you overcome them?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Through trials and suffering, Job was able to advance from “hearing about God” to “seeing” God. Today, have we merely heard about God or have we truly seen God in our lives? Let us press on to know and fully experience our Lord (Hos 6:3).

Lesson 12

The Gospel of John

Jesus Christ, the Answer to Everything

Listed Scriptures

Jn 6; 8:1-12; 10:1-18; 11:1-44; 14:1-7; 16:33; Eph 1-2:8; Ps 103:1-5; 13

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to know that Jesus Christ is the almighty God who can solve the problems in our daily lives
- 2) To enable students to learn to trust and turn to the Lord regardless of what we face in life

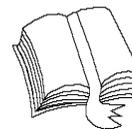
Memory Verse

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Mt 11:28-29)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

John 15-21

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Please refer to the Bible Background in Lesson 10 for additional information on the Gospel of John (Lessons 10, 11 and 12 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of John).