



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE PRIVILEGE

KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 3:7-11 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Jeremiah 9:23-24 | Hosea 6:6
Matthew 11:28; 28:19 | John 14:6, 8-10 | Hebrews 13:5

► SUMMARY

We've all had the privilege of knowing someone who stands out above everyone else in our minds.

But the greatest privilege bestowed on any of us is the privilege of knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ. That was the passion of the apostle Paul's life, and should be the pursuit of everyone who claims Christ as Savior and Lord.

► SERMON POINTS

Paul's insatiable hunger for knowing Christ is recorded in Philippians 3:7-11. Everything he'd valued before salvation, he now considered as rubbish, saying, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ" (v. 8).

Why do so many people not know God?

It's a great tragedy that so few people want to know the God who created them. People reject Him for several reasons.

■ **Unredeemed society lives in spiritual darkness.**

Many haven't heard about God, or His Son who made it possible for them to be saved and know the Father. That's why our faithfulness to the Great Commission is so important (Matt. 28:19). We should take advantage of every opportunity to shine the light of the gospel of Christ into the darkness so people can hear and believe.

- **Many people have no interest in knowing God.** They love the world and all that it offers. The avalanche of information that confronts them daily keeps them from seeking the truth found in the Bible. This can even happen to believers if they become so distracted they stop nurturing the desire to know God more intimately.
- **Some people are unwilling to pay the price required to know God more deeply.** There are Christians who think that salvation is all there is. They're content to stay in a shallow relationship with God. They never grow spiritually because they're unwilling to give the time and effort required to learn to know Him through His Word.

Knowing God is progressive.

The Lord is infinitely beyond us, but He's revealed what He wants us to know about Himself in His Word, through His Son, and by His Spirit. At salvation we begin with very basic knowledge about Him, but that's not where we should stay. Every time we open His Word, God reveals more of His nature, attributes, and ways to us, so that little by little our understanding and love for Him will grow.

Right now we're hampered by our fallen minds and bodies, but when we finally leave our earthly flesh and enter heaven, we'll be perfect, pure, holy, and unhindered by sin. Then we'll know our Savior as we never could while on earth.

God desires that we know Him.

The Lord created us to know, love, trust, obey, and serve Him. He is not at all impressed by the world's value system or even by our religious activities, but

only by our knowledge and understanding of Him and His glorious ways.

- **Jeremiah 9:23-24**, “Let no wise man boast of his wisdom, nor let the mighty man boast of his might, nor a rich man boast of his riches; but let the one who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me.”
- **Hosea 6:6**, “For I desire loyalty rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
- **John 14:9**, Jesus said to him, “The one who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

What does it mean to know God?

Knowing facts about the Lord is not the same as knowing Him personally. Even seminary professors whose minds are filled with information may not know God personally. Thrilling feelings, mystical experiences, vivid dreams, or a sense of emotional closeness are also deceptive because they have nothing at all to do with truly knowing God.

■ Who is responsible for whether or not we're known?

In a human relationship, we are, because no one can know us unless we open up to that person. But this is not the case with God because He has complete and perfect knowledge of every person, whether they're open to Him or not.

- **To know God, we have to open up.** He's revealed Himself to us in His Word, but the only way we can perceive it is by opening ourselves in complete dependence to receive it. Every time we read what God says about Himself in His Word and believe and apply it, our understanding of Him deepens.
- **It's in brokenness that we discover truths about God that we wouldn't know in any other way.** In the trials, difficulties, and heartaches, we're helpless and must fling ourselves on the Lord for support. We should never shun the hardships of life because God uses them to reveal Himself to us in a very personal way.
- **What's involved in knowing God other than reading the Bible?**
 - **Receive Jesus Christ as Savior.** His death on the cross is the only thing that spans the gap between

sinners and a relationship with holy God.

- **Be interested in God's interests.** His concerns and desires should be ours as well.

How can we know God?

The Lord is the One who takes the initiative by revealing Himself to us through His Word. It's by His grace that we're saved, and it's also by grace that we learn to know Him in response to His self-revelation.

- **We must read and listen to God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to interpret and apply it to our lives.** This requires meditation as we read and talk to the Lord about the passage.
- **Observe the character and ways of God.** As you read, look for His characteristics and actions.
- **Be willing to accept His invitation and follow His commands.** For example, “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened” (Matt. 11:28) is an invitation, but “Go, therefore, and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19) is a command.
- **Recognize God's love for you and rejoice.** The praise and worship that follow will open your heart to Him even more.

► RESPONSE

- How would you describe God? Does your description match the Bible's revelation of Him, or have you added or subtracted from what He says about Himself? If you're not sure, what do you need to do to make sure your view aligns with Scripture?
- Is there anything more important in life than knowing God? Do you have a desire to know the Lord more deeply, or are you satisfied with knowing some facts about Him without having an intimate, relational knowledge of Him? What can you do to feed a desire to know Him more accurately and intimately?
- How would reading Scripture with a mindset of seeing God in the passage change your perspective and love for Him?

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