



river west church

Knowing God Through the Psalms

Psalm 1

Pastor Guy Gray

4.22.2012

One Goal Above All Others

Knowing God is the best of all goals. Nothing is more important than this! Your view of God shapes everything about you. How do you see God? What is the character of God? What is the heart of God? What is the mission of God? How does God work in our lives and in our world? Your answer to these questions has an incredible impact on how you think and how you live.

Is it enough just to know “about” God? Wouldn’t you like to move beyond this and learn to “know God” in a living relationship? Is there a connection between your view of God and your relationship with God? What’s the connection?

We’re on a quest for answers. We’re on a quest to know God.

The Book of Psalms: Guidebook for Knowing God

Today we start a new sermon series: “Knowing God through the Psalms.” But why study Psalms? Most people think of the Psalms as just a collection of prayers. They are beautiful, no doubt. They’re great for hard times too – filled with encouraging words of trust, along with honest confessions of pain, disappointment and sin. And then there are those great Psalms of worship.

What most people don’t realize is that the Psalms aren’t just about our human experience expressed in prayer. The Psalms are filled with rich theology. Theology is a word that simply means “God talk.” The Psalms talk about God, a lot! The Psalms present us with the reality of God, the character of God, the work of God, the mission of God, the heart of God, the attributes of God. It’s amazing!

In Psalms the truth about God isn’t presented as a lecture or a book of doctrines. Instead, the truth about God is always presented in the context of two things: earnest prayer and real life circumstances. That’s why the Book of Psalms is our perfect guidebook for knowing God. In the Psalms we learn a lot about God, but we also learn to know God through prayer. We learn to apply the truth we learn about God to real life in real time. We learn to know God, trust God, love God, worship God, and walk with God – right here, right now.

We also learn about Jesus and the Gospel through the Psalms. Psalms is one of the Books most often quoted in the New Testament. A huge number of Psalms are known as “Messianic Psalms”, which means they were prophecies about Jesus, written long before his birth.

The Book of Psalms promises to be powerful in each of our lives as we pursue this great quest of knowing God. But you will have to be active in this quest. You will need to engage both your mind and your heart. You will need to listen and read and reflect. You will need to pray. No one can do this for you. This is your time to truly pursue God.

Psalm 1: Gateway to the Psalms

The very first chapter in the Book of Psalms isn’t even a prayer. This gets our attention because the Book of Psalms is made up almost entirely of prayers. Psalm 1 is crucial for us, because it sets the stage for everything that is going to follow – all the theology, the prayers, and the real life circumstances.

Psalm 1 is about the Word of God. The Word of God is the context for everything in the Psalms – the theology, the prayers, and the real life circumstances. The Word of God sets the stage for all of it.

Psalm 1 reminds us that if we want to know God, we must turn to His Word. This is true if we want to know about God. It's also true if we want to know God in a living relationship. Our knowledge of God can never be based solely on our own personal experience or impressions. Our knowledge of God comes first and foremost from his Word. Our prayers should always be grounded in God's Word. In prayer we apply the Word of God to our own life circumstances, by faith. In worship, we respond to the truth of God as revealed in His Word, in the midst of our real life circumstances. This is the model we find in the Psalms. But it all starts with Psalm 1, the Psalm of the Word of God.

This week, take the time to meditate on Psalm 1. Let it work into your heart and mind. Listen to its warnings. Listen to its promises. Focus on the images. Don't you want your life to be like a tree planted by rivers of water, rooted, strong, and fruitful? Psalm 1 is the way. And this is the doorway to a life of knowing God in prayer.