

You Can Know!

Joe Slater

We recently concluded an online study of John's first letter. That apostle used some form of the word "know" thirty-five times in thirty-one different verses. A few times it refers to God knowing something. But no less than 16 times he wrote, "We know . . ." Evidently John believed people can know things!

Is it arrogant to claim to know something? Even folks who profess to be Christians have said, "You can't know for sure" relative to the existence of God, the inspiration and authority of the Bible, etc. They would have us to believe the best you can claim is a high probability, and even that is open to debate. "You can't know, you can only believe," or so we are told. They treat "faith" as a leap in the dark, a "best guess," as it were.

In the first place, it defies reason to say, "You can't know." We would ask the skeptic, "Are you sure I can't know? Do you know that it's impossible to know?" If he says, "Yes, I know that it's impossible to know," then he has just done what he says is impossible! But if he says, "No, I don't know," then he surrenders his position; he will have to admit that it just might be possible to know!

In the second place, there is no conflict between faith and knowledge! Jesus urged people to "**know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him**" (John 10:38). Paul wrote of "**those who believe and know the truth**" (1 Timothy 4:3). Did you see anything there about best guesses or probabilities?

You don't have to wonder if God exists, or if Jesus is the Son of God. It isn't a matter of opinion, best guess, supposition, or probability. And it isn't self-righteous or arrogant to say, "I know." Your knowledge is based on God and His word. Rest assured in it!

God's Presence? Scary or Soothing?

God is everywhere. His omnipresence can be either comforting or disconcerting, depending on our relationship with the Lord. In a message of judgment, the Lord spoke through Jeremiah and said, "*Am I a God who is near, and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places, so I do not see him? Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?*" (Jeremiah 23:23-24). The omnipresence of God speaks against sin. We cannot shut God out of some dark corner of our lives.

The omnipresence of God can also be quite comforting. In the Shepherd's Psalm, the comfort for the sheep was grounded in the presence of the loving Shepherd. David said, "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*" (Psalm 23).

We would do well to practice the presence of God. God is present whether we acknowledge Him or not. We have a choice of making His presence a source of help and comfort in our lives or a source of fear and apprehension. The apostle Paul spoke to some pagan idolaters in Acts chapter 17, trying to persuade them to turn to the true and living God. He spoke of the God who made the heavens and the earth — the God who gives life to all things. He spoke of the God who is in control of human history — the God we should seek because "*He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist...*" (Acts 17:27-28). Any distance between us and the God of heaven has been placed there by our

own rebellion. The Bible promises us that we will find Him if we truly seek Him (Matthew 7:7-8).

The next time the storms of life threaten to overwhelm you or you feel the loneliness of the world's darkness pressing about you, remember that God is close at hand and that, in the words of the psalmist, to Him "darkness is not dark" and "night is as bright as the day" (Psalm 139:12). Take encouragement from His abiding presence and walk hand in hand with God in the paths of righteousness.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

Jesus' Glamour Shots

Don't you love those photos that make you look better than you know you do in reality? The "touched up" photo hides the flaws we all have.

As Jesus chose His disciples, He didn't choose Nathanael the skeptic, but Nathanael the man of honesty and purity, the one who would be among the first to proclaim Jesus to be the Son of God. He had just called Peter to follow. He did not see the man who would sink, falter in his faith, break promises, and deny Him. He focused on the Peter who would live up to his name and become a rock.

In many instances Jesus looked beyond the impurity to view a child of God who needed Him and His compassion. He saw the beauty beneath the tarnished actions (much like tarnished silver).

Jesus still says to us, "I know your past, but what matters is your future. Things are not hopeless." Can we capture His vision for us and for those around us? Can we resist looking at the obvious so that we project what we and others can become by glorifying God?

Focus on the results that the Master's "touch-up" can bring!

--Anita Price (via *Power for Today*)