



*You are in error because you do not know
the Scriptures or the power of God.*
Matthew 22:29

In the passage quoted above, Jesus pointed out a serious error to the religious experts of his day – an error we definitely want to avoid. So many mistakes come from either not knowing what God says or not knowing him well enough to make a difference in our lives.

Let's put that as a positive goal, one that can be the focus of every Bible study: we want to know Scripture and we want to know God better. This can be the life-long learning goal of any individual disciple of Christ, and it should be the goal of any church of Christ to provide that teaching – *from Cradle to Heaven*.

Knowing the Scriptures and Knowing God. While they are not the same thing – you can know Scriptures and not know God – Jesus had deep convictions about both. When he was being tempted after his 40 days of fasting, he quoted *Deuteronomy 8:3* to Satan: “*we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*” Let's not miss Jesus' conviction about the absolute necessity of knowing God's Word. You can see in the Gospels over 40 specific references to Old Testament stories and Scriptures in his teachings. Of course he knows the Word of God (after all he is the Word), but he also clearly wants his disciples to know it as well. At the same time, he gave a severe critique to other religious experts of his day who diligently studied the Scriptures, but would not come to him for true life (*John 5:39-40*). They knew a lot about the Scriptures, but they did not know the Lord.

Paul, who began his life as one of those religious “Bible-knowers who had totally missed Jesus”, kept his deep convictions about the importance of knowing Scriptures, while making sure that his new goal for knowing them was to know the Lord – not just the book. He reminded his listeners that the Scriptures are the sword of the Spirit that make us wise for salvation and train us to be the people of God (*Ephesians 6:17, 2 Timothy 3:14-17*, for instance). Yet, he also frequently emphasized the goal of knowing Christ and knowing God better (*Philippians 3:10; Ephesians 1:17*, for instance). He was not interested in spending any more time in his life knowing the Word but not knowing the Lord. Nor was he interested in teaching others to do that. He wanted to know Scripture and know the Lord.

I want to know Christ.
Philippians 3:10a

*If you are pleased with me, teach me
your ways so I may know you and
continue to find favor with you.*
Exodus 33:13

Many other Scriptures also remind us of the need of knowing Scripture and knowing God. You can look at *Exodus 33:13; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 119:11, 18; John 17:3; and 2 Peter 3:18* for a short but inspiring list of such teachings.

One danger we have today, especially for church people, is to lose our enthusiasm and zeal for these two goals. It's hard to keep passionate about our desire to know God better and know his Word on a personal, intimate level. But with God's help both are possible. After all, that is God's desire for us even more than it is our goal for ourselves.

So it is possible to know the Bible (at least the facts of the Bible) and not know God. But is it possible to know God and not know the Bible? Maybe; but it is certainly not our goal to try to know God without knowing his Word. The word “disciple” implies being a student – both of the Word and of the Lord. So we do not want to have anything less than the highest desires to do both: we want to know the Word and we want to know the Lord!

James 1:22 – 25 talks about not deceiving ourselves by merely reading the Book, without putting it into practice. Verse 25 talks about looking intently into God's Word (*parakupto – to bestow a close and attentive look, to look intently*). Among other things that this can mean to us, it is clear that we want to have good intentions as we look into the Bible. So ask yourself as you begin any Bible study: what are my intentions about getting to know God's Word better and getting to know God better both now and in the years to come (*from Cradle to Heaven*)?

May God bless you to know more and more about Him and His Word!

John Sullivan
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