

Knowledge of Christ rather than about Christ

John 7:14-24

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Introduction: “I have a hard time understanding the teachings of Christ.” “I wish I had a better education or ability to understand what the Bible says.” Have you ever said something like this or heard it said? Is there a key to understanding the teachings of Christ and the Bible? Jesus gives it to us in this passage this morning. It is a priceless jewel amongst many beautiful Gems of John’s gospel. Sadly....it goes largely unnoticed by the church. Let’s read the passage and look at it together.

John 7:14-24 ¹⁴ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and *began to teach*. ¹⁵ The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. ¹⁷ "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself. ¹⁸ "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. ¹⁹ "Did not Moses give you the Law, and *yet* none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" ²⁰ The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" ²¹ Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. ²² "For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on *the Sabbath* you circumcise a man. ²³ "If a man receives circumcision on *the Sabbath* so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the Sabbath*? ²⁴ "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

What if there is some predisposition of the mind and heart that would make Bible learning and your Christian Life come alive for you? Jesus helps us with this in these few verses. This knowledge can change the way you read the Bible and the expectation you have for your own understanding. It can be a game changer.

Jesus gives us three vital truths that make God experientially known to you.

- Knowledge of God comes from God and not men [14-16]
- Knowledge of Christ comes before knowledge about Christ [17-18]
- Knowledge about God, by itself, kills knowledge of God [19-24]

Knowledge of God comes from God and not men [14-16]

John 7:14-16 ¹⁴ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and *began to teach*. ¹⁵ The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

When it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach: Jesus would not go up with His brothers to keep the feast, do signs, re-gather His followers and make an attempt to become King. He said to them...

John 7:8-9 ⁸ "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." ⁹ Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.

But He did go to Jerusalem during the feast....arriving in the middle of the week for the purpose of teaching the people about God, The Gospel that is the only way to Eternal Life.

The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?": They just could not believe that someone they had never heard of and who was not a part of their inner circle could have such knowledge of God. They said the same thing when He was a boy in Jerusalem.

Luke 2:46-47 ⁴⁶ Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

When He was a boy there had been no opportunity for Him to become educated and yet He had understanding about God. Now, He is a grown man, but they know He has not pursued religion, the law and the path of their education.

Now this is not an anti-education verse. There are some really stupid people out there preaching and teaching stuff that they know nothing about. They disdain education about God and the Scripture. They look at something like this and say..."see...you don't need education to know about God!" BUT....this proves exactly the opposite! People do not know the Scripture without education. It is a book! It is written in a context and in a language that is not English and it was written over a period of 1500 years by over 40 different authors. It takes education to understand it. That is exactly why they were marveling. If anyone else could just understand God this way with no education then what Jesus says next would lose its impact entirely.

Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me: They recognized His ability and learning, but they also knew it did not come from the source they believed to be the only one available....themselves! Now remember what John has already told us about Jesus' mission in the world.

John 1:14, 18 ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth..... ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

So Christ has used His signs and wonders to astound the crowds and He has used His knowledge of God to astound the teachers of the law. Everyone is asking where He gets His power and His learning. His answer is a full out declaration of Deity. He directs everyone's attention to the Father. He has come to make The Father known....to exalt the Father to Israel. His Father has been spurned by them, rejected by His own people

whom He chose and created. But they do not believe that! They spin it another way. They say He casts out demons by the power of Satan. They say He is an illegitimate son of Joseph. They say He is a blasphemer when He explains why He can do what no man ever did.

Jesus asserts that knowledge of God comes from God. Men have never found God. God is unknowable and hidden from men. Humanity is dead to God in their sins. God revealed Himself to Adam, Job and Abraham . God sent Moses to Israel and God gave Moses the law. God spoke to the prophets and directed their writings. God is the one revealing Himself and yet...men persist in the idea that they can find God. Satan is all too anxious to help them with this pursuit. This is why there are millions of gods [small “g”] to find and none of them can take away your sins. Even people with the Scripture will miss God...because they look through, past or around the only one who makes Him fully known. If you think you can find eternal life in the Scripture you will probably miss it.

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

Knowledge of Christ comes before knowledge about Christ [17-18]

John 7:17-18 ¹⁷ "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself. ¹⁸ "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself: This really gets to the crux of the matter. Jesus starts with the will or heart and not the mind. This is the part of you that starts with the words “I want.” If someone says to you, “Hey...will you do something for me?” DO you say yes? NO! You say, “that depends.” Why, because we want to decide with our mind before we commit our will to do it. AND....this is only natural. You would be a fool to do anything someone asks without using your intellect to determine what it is. That is the way it is in the physical world and with physical life. BUT....

With God it is different. True faith is not in doctrines or teachings of men. It is not in religious works, rituals, morality or knowledge. For the crowds that day in Jerusalem it was all these things. For the Pharisees it was learning and achievement and wealth and good health, birth standing, pedigree, morality and all such things. But Jesus stands all of this on its ear. AND.....They did hear Him and realized what He was constantly saying.

Jesus is calling for a person to decide to trust God’s ownership of their lives and loving care for them first. [willing to do His will] This is how it sounds in your head. “Lord, I am willing to do your will, and embrace the life you send to me. I trust you and love you Lord.”

The simple truth is that you cannot know God by reading about Him anymore than you can fall in love by reading a description of someone. You can say...”I think I would like

to get to know that person, but you will never actually know them until you interact with them and have an experiential relationship with them. Jesus is saying exactly this. Believe the miracles and the signs and all that the prophets said would come to pass, consider the heavens and the earth and the preaching of John the Baptist.....but.....if you want to know from experience if any of it is true then you must let me have control of your life.

Let me illustrate: You are standing on the shore of a frozen lake or at the foot of a dubious looking bridge. Will it support you? Is there any way to KNOW if it will support you? You can calculate, cogitate or even, circumnavigate, but there is only one way to KNOW!! Yes...you must get out on the bridge or ice and cross.

This is your life dear ones....It is a series of such things. Your experience with God does not begin with your first difficulty or obstacle! It begins with the first one after you give your life to Christ in trust and submission. When you decide that the one who left heaven and took your place on the cross is the Sovereign God of Creation and that He loves you. If you want to know the love of God you will have to walk with Him willingly and quit seeing the events of your life as random and meaningless and difficult.

Hebrews 13:5-6 He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," ⁶ so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

James 1:2-6 ² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

James is saying...."walk through trials with God. Cross that bridge willingly not grudgingly! The testing of your faith has nothing to do with your strength. Your faith is in Christ. It is Christ who you are putting to the test. It is His strength that gives you endurance and it is Jesus who makes you complete....Yes you may ask for understanding and God will give it to you, but you have already trusted that God is good and working for your good because He says that is what He is doing. If you doubt that... you are adrift on the storm tossed sea of life.

"He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory:" So many preachers, broadcasters and theologians want something original and unique to say. They want their name on the marquee and they want to be quoted. We expect this kind of thing in politics and education, but it is rampant in religion and even the church. People will go to hear a preacher and not to hear the Word that comes from God in Scripture. Or they will go to hear a man who claims to have an inside track into God's mind. As if God had forgotten some important things in the Bible and only this man...at this time....can tell us what they are. And for a price....he will tell you...he seeks his own glory.

He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him: Jesus did set us an example of how this looks. He came seeking the Glory of the Father. It was His mission....

John 17:4 ⁴ "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

If you see a man seeking glory for himself in any venue....you can be sure of this...He is not genuine. He is not a truthful man. How can I be so sure? Because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The only way to get glory for yourself is to hide your sin and inflate your virtues. There is nothing truthful about either of those activities and they are therefore unrighteous.

When Jesus or any man seeks the glory of the Father with a whole heart that is a true and righteous effort. The same is true of us and Christ. The Father and the Son are both worthy of all glory, praise and honor. Jesus continued His prayer by saying....

John 17:5 ⁵ "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Knowledge about God, by itself, kills knowledge of God [19-24]

John 7:19-24 ¹⁹ "Did not Moses give you the Law, and *yet* none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" ²⁰ The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" ²¹ Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. ²² "For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on *the* Sabbath you circumcise a man. ²³ "If a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the* Sabbath? ²⁴ "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Did not Moses give you the Law, and *yet* none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?": Jesus goes right at the heart of their self righteousness and manmade religion. In fact, this is why Jesus healed on the Sabbath. The man by the pool of Bethesda had been there for 38 years. He could have waited one more day for Jesus to heal him right? But Christ is not just sermonizing or grandstanding...your life and mine depend on understanding this. We are all so self-righteous.

Environmentalists condemn everyone who does not change their light bulbs and recycle to their satisfaction and yet they still drive, wear leather shoes and heat their homes. They condemn the cutting of trees, but still live in houses made of wood and eat other plants that had to be killed for them. Environmentalism is secular self righteousness and hypocrisy run amuck. It is a religion with the Earth as their God!

Many Christians condemn others for their sins while ignoring that fact that they have broken every commandment themselves and if it were not for grace and mercy they would be in exactly the same state as those they so look down upon.

Jesus here makes this point with the Jews. You guys have the entire law....which you do not keep, but you are willing to kill me for breaking a rule of your own making. The crowd responds by saying.... **"You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"**

Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel: Jesus is referring now to what John recorded in chapter five.

John 5:6-9 ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" ⁷ The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." ⁹ Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

"For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on *the* Sabbath you circumcise a man: God had given them circumcision before Moses wrote it down in the Law. The knowledge of God did not begin with the Law....and it will go on long after the Law is fulfilled.

Genesis 17:10 ¹⁰ "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

"If a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the* Sabbath?: So...you guys feel free to work on the Sabbath to do a circumcision which is a religious ceremony that could have waited for the next day....BUT....you condemn me to the point of murder for healing a man who has spent 4 decades on his back without hope.

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.": This is another use of the word "judgment." There are two main ones. The one that Jesus forbids means "condemnation." Condemnation is forbidden because you too are worthy of condemnation and if you are guilty of sin and you make it a purpose in life to point out and condemn the sin of others then you are calling attention to your own sin and calling for judgment on yourself.

Matthew 7:2 ² "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

The meaning of judgment that Jesus calls for here is "discernment." Don't base your thoughts on outward appearances...ie. "He is doing something on the Sabbath so it must be a sin!" Righteous judgment is based on what is right and good and true. It trumps the rule.... Jesus illustrated it in another place this way....

Matthew 12:11-12 ¹¹ And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² "How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

CONCLUSION: Jesus knew everything that could be known. When He offered a morsel of His omniscience to the crowd in His day they were completely awed by it. They assumed that the body of knowledge they had was complete. Most people do! "If I have never heard it or of it, it must be untrue." It is very easy to fall into this trap because nobody knows what they don't know. The crowds believed that all teaching from God came from their religious, holy men. Jesus was in serious conflict with them and was teaching with authority; He did not just repeat the things of other men.

Matthew 7:28-29 ²⁸ When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

As a result the Jews [religious big shots] began to seriously wonder how He had such amazing things to say since He was not a graduate of their special and approved religious school .

Jesus explains that a man...ANY MAN...needs to trust His teacher if he wants to know and understand the teaching. If you do not trust your teacher then you will not trust or do what he teaches you. Jesus was teaching men the one and only way back to God in this life and the one to come. Until they trusted Christ they would never find either.

Finally Jesus warns of the snare of religious legalism. It is a greater menace to the soul than sin....YES!!! That is what I said! Religious legalism establishes its own righteousness before God by the things it does or does not do or approve of. It is entirely unable to remove your sin and guilt and cannot in any way show you who God is, but men believe themselves justified by it. So dangerous! Jesus illustrated it this way:

Matthew 21:28-31 ²⁸ A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' ²⁹ "And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. ³⁰ "The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I will, sir'; *but he did not go.* ³¹ "Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

Don't pretend to be righteous. Head straight for the Cross and experience Christ's righteousness on your behalf. Give your life to Christ and He will give His to you.

This truth comes directly from God and not religion. Christ who is the truth, came bringing the knowledge of God. It never came from any man or religion. Furthermore....

The knowledge of Christ cannot be reduced to words or religious rules. You must trust Him with your life. Walk across that bridge and through this life with Him. Test Him and find Him faithful to His Word. This knowledge comes after trust and submission.

You need to decide if you can trust Christ with your precious life. Can you trust what He says about how to have your sins forgiven and fulfillment in this life? Jesus said you can never know the truth of what He says until you trust Him.

Matthew 16:25 ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

For those who trust Christ fully this verse makes perfect sense. Our lives are precious because we only get one. We have desires for it and seek joy, happiness and fulfillment through it. BUT...in the end we lose it to death and along the path we find few of the things we hoped for. But the one who gives his life to Christ will receive Eternal life in exchange, that can never be lost. The nature of this present life suddenly changes. Sure...we have given our precious life to Christ, but we have found what we had searched for all along. Life finally makes sense and takes on fulfillment and meaning. It is like trading an ounce of silver for an ounce of gold. Christ is trustworthy and able to do it!!!

Finally....stop considering the outward. What you do or don't do or approve of. These are double edge swords that slice you both ways. One edge reveals that religious or moral virtue does nothing to help you with your sin and guilt. Jesus said that we are all unfit to judge anyone for their sin.

Matthew 7:3-4 ³ "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?"

John 5:21-22 ²¹ "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

With the other edge of legalism...we call for our own judgment, because we are not good enough for God and will never, ever be good enough. Christ however is....and He has become sin for you and also righteousness for you. Why would you condemn in your heart or with your mouth someone who is just as hopeless as you were apart from Christ. Why would you not rather pray for them, love them, keep them in your life and seek to show the love of Jesus to them?

Ultimately....Jesus is the center of your hope. Not your morality or your religion or even your Bible. The Bible brings you to Christ alone....who alone can bring you into the presence of The Father in Heaven.

Jude 1:20-25 ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. ²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.