

And if you remember the musical "The King and I" Remember the charming little song that Anna (played by Deborah Kerr) sang to the King's children:

"Getting to know you, getting to know all about you,  
Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me"?

We have been given the amazing privilege of getting to know God.

Richard Bauckham in his little book "Knowing God Incarnate" writes about three good but incomplete ways of getting to know God.

Numbers of books have been published about Jesus as an historical figure, His life and times. Its all useful information but knowing about Him is not the same as knowing Him. We know about our politicians, sometimes more than we want to know, but we don't usually know them.

Knowing God in Jesus through a personal relationship is a precious experience but without commitment it is possible to be using Him, expecting Him to be at ones beck and call and loosing sight of the respect due to Him because He is divine.

Knowing God in Jesus by looking for His presence in all things and all people is a good way to go but without commitment it is easy to loose sight of the reality of His human life in time and of His great sacrifice for ~~us~~ our great need.

Todays Bible readings show us what knowing God looked like to different people

Ruth, a Moabite woman, married into a Hebrew family who had taken refuge in Moab from famine in their home land. The Moabites acknowledged the existence of the God of the Hebrews. They were descendants of Lot, Abraham's orphaned nephew, who grew up in Abraham's household. But they had developed their own system of gods. Ruth's father-in-law, her husband and her brother-in-law all died. Her mother-in-law Naomi decided to take her two widowed daughters-in-law and return to her home in Bethlehem.

Not long into their journey Naomi changed her mind and begged her Ruth and Orpah to go back. Reluctantly Orpah agreed and went back to her family and to her gods.

Ruth made that beautiful declaration "Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Ruth, coming from an idol worshiping background, reached a point of total commitment to God. She didn't know about Jesus but 32 generations later she was listed in His genealogy.

Psalm 146 is one of the 50 anonymous psalms. We don't know how the author came to know God but we can see total commitment in the first verse "I will praise Him as long as I live, even with my dying breath"

Why? Because human life is so brief and unpredictable than humans can't be relied on. God, on the other hand, is the almighty creator, reliable, provider, compassionate, and everlasting.

He is worthy of commitment in all circumstances  
He is worthy .... to be praised in all circumstances

So many people appear in the gospel reading, mostly well educated people who thought they knew all there was to know about God.

The majority of the religious leaders, the Pharisees, knew about Jesus and were afraid. He showed them their worst side. They had no intention of profiting from His correction. The best way to stop his reproof would have been to learn from it and mend their ways.

They knew a way that was more acceptable to them - kill Him!

Perhaps they could trick Him into saying something that would offend the Roman government and cause them to kill Him.

They sent spies to question Him about paying taxes. Jesus' wise answer baffled them. That didn't work.

The Sadducees tried to prove that the Lord didn't think clearly. He showed them they were the ones who were irrational. That didn't work either.

The teacher of religion was different. It seems he was genuinely impressed by the Lord's wisdom and that his question was sincere. He had come a long way from the pharisaical emphasis on the letter of the law. He knew the importance of loving God and loving his neighbour. Jesus commended him with a reservation "You are not far from the Kingdom of God" What was missing? Perhaps the teacher of religion had to take the scary step from knowing about God to committing his life to God.

We know of one pharisee who did take that step. His academic record was impressive - the top student of the top theological college of the day - his pedigree pure, his zeal for God overwhelming. He was called Saul but later was named Paul. He was absolutely sure the the best thing he could do for God was to stamp out this Jesus cult.

That hadn't happened after Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried. His followers were insisting that he was alive again! That idea could not be allowed to take root.

Saul was well into his cult eradication campaign when the Lord intervened, dramatically. From knowing a great deal about God he knew God incarnate in in Christ Jesus and was totally committed to Him.

Paul devoted the rest of his life to persuading people that Christ was God's only way to step from "knowing about" to "knowing" because Christ Himself has taken away the sin barrier that prevents people from taking that step. The Lord Jesus, by the sacrifice of his own blood, has taken away the sin barrier.

Read Hebrews 9:11-15

The Lord committed His life to us. The only adequate response is to commit our whole selves to Him.

Thea Yates