

New Year Necessities 2022: Knowing God thru a C.L.O.S.E.R walk with Him

INTRODUCTION

The New Year is upon us; new resolutions are in play...new goals are in sight and new action plans are being realized. For many or most people, the New Year includes resolutions or goals or desires that have to do with health or lifestyle choices that result in healthier living.

What were we made for? To know God. What is the chief end of mankind? To know God and enjoy Him forever. What is the 'eternal life' that Jesus gives to the repentant sinner? Knowledge of God. The Bible **states**: "*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*" **John 17:3** What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God. The Bible **states**: "*Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."*

Jeremiah 9:23-24

In the book **Knowing God**, the author writes the following: "*What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance, and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?*" (Packer, **Knowing God**, p. 34)

Listen...A little knowledge *of* God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge *about* Him. So, how can we know Him better this year? **Here's a strategy for your consideration:** I picked this up earlier this year and was eager to share it with you.

Here are six principles for a **C.L.O.S.E.R** walk with Christ:

- C _____ (_____)

Someone has **said**: "*You can do more than pray after you have prayed; but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.*" Prayer was a vital part of the early church. They were devoted to the prayers (**Acts 2:42**). These brothers and sisters prayed corporately. They valued joining their hearts together in prayer - **Acts 4, 12, 14**. Sadly, this has changed in our day. **Prayer is the most-often talked about but least practiced spiritual discipline in the Christian life.** Prayerlessness is a declaration of independence from God. **We forget to our own peril that what we are on our knees in secret before God that we are and no more. Almighty, that we are and no more.** The prayer life of any church is the best barometer of its health...the prayer life of this church is the best barometer of its health. A powerful prayer life is developed through the practice of actually praying. **Prayer is not learned in a classroom. It flows from our relationship with Christ.** It is strengthened in community. We do not learn how to pray by reading books on the subject. There is only one way to cultivate an intimate, effective prayer life: Pray, pray, pray. Give priority to prayer this new year. Need help in this area? Seek help from me, other church leaders or trusted (mature) Christians.

- L _____ (_____)

- **O** _____ (_____)

Jesus Christ rightly said: *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* **John 14:15** Unfortunately, many people attend church services, sing the songs, hear a biblical message, leave the service, and return home the same way they left, with no apparent change in their lives.

Why no change? **The answer is that we fail to obey.** Unfortunately, obedience is not a priority for many professing believers today. Too many Christians have bought into the idea that Christianity is little more than reciting a prayer or making a decision to receive Jesus, in order to secure a position in heaven. Genuine, saving faith produces obedience to Christ’s commands.

Being a disciple, however, involves far more than gaining knowledge about God and the Bible. Many professing believers have read the entire Bible many times, and they have attended church and Sunday school for many years. Still, they are far from being Christ’s true disciples. They know the answers to all the questions in the Bible quiz, but they are missing the essence of following Christ. Discipleship is obedience to Christ’s commands. In his first epistle to the church, the Apostle John wrote of the qualities that are evident in the life of a genuine Christian, sometimes referred to as *“the birthmarks of the believer.”* One of these prominent birthmarks is obedience to Christ - **1 John 2:3-6.**

The word *“know”* saturates this text. In fact, John used this term thirty times in this letter alone. *This word is not speaking of mental knowledge; that is, an awareness of facts or information. It means to have a personal, experiential knowledge of something through close interaction.* This type of knowledge is not something that an individual obtains once and for all, but it is the ongoing result of a personal encounter. It is the direct, firsthand understanding of something that can only be acquired through experiencing it.

- **S** _____ (_____)

“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” **Psalm 119:11** The art of memorization is quickly becoming a thing of the past. **In the first century, however, memorization was critical.** In an age when the only way to store and transmit material was to copy it by hand, men and women had to commit information to memory. **Imagine waking up tomorrow to a world without written words.** Life as we know it would come to a screeching halt, because we depend on electronic sources for practically all of our information. Everything we know is uploaded from external memories such as hard drives, servers, and websites. Few people these days can quickly recall phone numbers of family members or friends.

Paul’s exhortation to *“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”* (**Colossians 3: 16**) is almost impossible without Scripture memorization; for God’s Word to dwell in you, you must commit to memorizing it. If you are not intentionally memorizing God’s Word, you are missing out on one of the most valuable blessings of the Christian life. I want to encourage you, motivate you, beg you— whatever it takes— to make memorizing the Word of God a top priority and regular practice in your life. Nothing will do more to help you gain victory over your spiritual enemies— the world, the flesh, and the devil— than faithfully practicing this discipline.

- **E** _____ (_____)

Many people misunderstand our Christ-given responsibility in evangelism, thinking that success is determined by how many people we personally **win** to Christ. **This is not the teaching of Scripture.** Success in evangelism is in the **sharing**, not the **saving**. Only God can save, but He commands us to share. Our responsibility begins and ends with the sharing of the gospel.

• **R** _____ (_____)

If you are going to enjoy being a disciple of Christ, you must have a daily quiet time with God. It is absolutely irreplaceable for your spiritual development. You must make it a priority in your life, setting aside time in your daily schedule for God to speak to you. **The point is simple: you must select a time of day that works best for you and set it apart for the Lord.** Choose a place where you can be alone with Him and His Word, a quiet place where you can listen to Him. If you focus your full attention on His Word, He will speak to you through His Spirit, who lives within you. If the atmosphere is noisy or congested, then you will have a difficult time hearing from God. God has extended to you, His child, an open invitation into His presence (**Heb 4:16**). **What a privilege!** Think of it: God invites you to approach Him whenever you would like. His door is always open to you. **Additionally**, He tells you not to be nervous or fearful, and not to be concerned with disturbing Him. Instead, He gestures you to approach His throne with boldness and confidence. Why would you not accept this gracious invitation, issued personally to you from the Creator of the universe, who now just happens to call Himself your Father, because of your relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ?

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this **morning**?

3 groups of people here this morning:

1. **Those who need to _____ and begin the journey of a lifetime**

2. **Those who have begun but find themselves in _____...in a rut**

3. **Those who have been _____ in their walk with Christ.**