

Experiencing God

The Problems We Face Today

The challenge that many face today is the feeling that something is missing in our lives, even though things may be going well, at times we sense that a piece of the puzzle of life is missing.

The missing piece is the rightful place of the Creator in our lives. We may have an inward desire to know the Creator, but we are at a loss as to how to find Him.

- We may have learned about God as a child, but we do not really know Him.
- We have heard about Jesus Christ, but we don't really understand who He is.
- We are trying to live a good, honest life, but we are harassed by problems, situations, and questions for which there seem to be no answers.
- We may go to church, be involved in good causes, have a good job and a variety of interests, but we do not understand how it all fits together.
- We may experience frustration, disappointment, discouragement, and guilt because of our seeming inability to live the kind of life we think we should be living.
- We are often dominated by fear, doubt, worry, and stress and we want to be free from these things.
- There are so many religions, philosophies, and beliefs and we do not know which one is right.

These problems are common to most people; you are by no means alone in the struggle.

Lesson Truth

Man's innermost being seeks after God. This truth is evidenced by the many religions there are today. God has shown us how we can know Him and that He desires a close personal intimate relationship with His creation.

Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to realize that you can personally know the God of all creation; to know that God wants to have a personal relationship with you because He loves you; and for you to begin seeking Him out.

Lesson Discussion

Why Man Seeks God

All over the world you can find groups of people who are seeking after God. Even remote tribes in Africa and South America worship and believe in powers or beings greater than themselves. There is a universal desire to know God.

Some religions worship physical things as their god, such as the moon, the sun, the earth, or animals. Other religions worship invisible gods represented by such man-made items as statues or artifacts.

What is it within man that seeks God? The desire to seek God is something that God imparted to man when he was created. It is part of the whole makeup of man



Psalm 63:1 ESV "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

Those who deny the existence of God have no answer for this inward seeking of God within each of us; yet even they themselves have an unconscious awareness of a power or force greater than man.

The evidence that God exists is all around us. There are at least four specific things that affirm the existence of God:

- Creation
- The Bible
- Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit



Romans 1:18-20 ESV “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth. For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

The first witness to God is creation itself. Creation witnesses to the fact that God exists. Just look at the universe and the millions of galaxies, all in perfect balanced order.

On the opposite end consider the smallest identifiable particles of life such as cells and atoms. Even atoms are made up of an unknown number of smaller parts and each of those parts could consist of things that we do not even have the technology to discover yet. The human body itself, especially the brain, is still a mystery.



Psalm 139:13-14 ESV “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”

When you see the beauty of a sunset or the stars on a clear night, they witness to the existence of God. The Bible says that man is without excuse because the evidence that God exists is all around us.

The second witness to the existence of God is the Bible because it reveals who God is, the characteristics of God; His dealings with

mankind; how to find and experience God; and God’s plan for man.

It is amazing that anyone, after having studied the order of nature, the beauty of a sunrise, and the Bible itself could say there is no God.



Psalm 14:1 ESV “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

The Bible says we are foolish if we say there is no God. Therefore it is wise to proceed with the assumption that God does exist and we should focus on discovering and knowing the Creator of all things.

The third and fourth witnesses to the existence of God are Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Later we will learn who they are and how they reveal the existence of God to us.

Characteristics of God

The Bible identifies or alludes to many characteristics of God.

- His mercy
- His grace
- His love
- His kindness
- His goodness
- His caring nature
- His justice
- His wrath
- His anger
- His wisdom
- His patience
- His promises
- His provision for man
- His salvation for man
- His desire for fellowship with man
- His power
- His kingdom
- His sovereignty over all things

The God of the Bible and His dealings with man are fascinating, awesome, and wonderful. No

other religion has a God like the God of the Bible Who is deeply concerned with His creation and desires close fellowship with man.

God's primary characteristic is love. He loves us, and because the nature of love is to always want the best for the beloved, God always wants the best for us.



1 John 4:8-10 ESV "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

It is because of this great love that God has for us that He desires a personal relationship with each of us.

How Can We Know God?

If God truly exists and He desires a close relationship with His creation, there must be a way for us to know and experience Him.

The Bible itself teaches us how we can experience God. It is not a secret that is only available to a privileged few.

The first requirement is to seek Him, and since we already have it in our nature to seek God, it is simply a matter of making it a priority in our life.



Jeremiah 29:11-14 ESV "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares

the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

God wants us to look for Him and if we seek Him with all of our heart we will find Him. This is a promise He has given us in the Bible and is the first step we must take in order to know Him.

Developing a personal relationship with the God of all creation is not something that happens instantaneously. Like developing any other relationship, it takes time and commitment.

As we learn the characteristics of God and His dealings with mankind by reading the Bible, we begin to develop an intellectual understanding of who God is and what He is like.

In the Bible we learn things about God, such as His love for us and how He hates evil. *But knowing things about God is not the same as knowing God.*



John 17:3 ESV "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

You can tell me some information about yourself and I can say I know about you, but does that mean I really know you personally?

We will personally experience God when we spend time seeking Him, when we have a true desire to experience Him, and when we come to Him according to the way He has provided for us.

Seeking God

The Bible says that if we seek God with all of our heart, we will find Him and He will show us the door by which we can enter to experience the life He wants to give us.

The key dynamic here is that we must look for Him with "all of our heart," which simply means to seek Him *wholeheartedly*.



Isaiah 55:6 ESV “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.”

When we do something wholeheartedly we give it all our effort and we stick with it until we accomplish our goal. We cannot know and experience God if we seek Him half-heartedly.

Think of something in your life that you are passionate about and how diligently you work at it. That is how you must approach seeking God.

The problem in our world today is that we want things right now and we don't want to have to expend a lot of effort to get them. Your attitude may be “Let God come to me if He wants a relationship with me.”



Deuteronomy 4:29 ESV “But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

We may want to experience God—and we sense deep down that we need to—but the problem is all the other things in life that consume our time, leaving us little or no time to seek Him.

When things are going well in our lives, we feel we have no need for God and so we will not take time to seek Him. We become self-sufficient and ignore God.

What is it that will truly make us want to seek God? Often we turn to God when things are not going well. When we are experiencing a crisis or our life is falling apart is usually the time we cry out to God. We begin looking for answers to our problems or for help to get out of a crisis situation.

Even when we are faced with a crisis or problems, we often turn to other humans instead of to God. Humans do not have the

answers to the deepest issues of life, but God does.

Yet, as difficult as it is to experience a crisis, the crisis can be good if it is causing you to seek God. He has the answers to the *root* problems in your life and He is the only one who does.

Unfortunately, after the crisis is over, we tend to go back to life as usual and since we do not feel we need God right now, we quit seeking Him and begin ignoring Him again.



Acts 17:26-27 ESV “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,”

God would not tell us to seek Him if He did not want to be found or if He did not want to have anything to do with us.

Think for a moment about that special person in your life that you have a close love relationship with. What would that relationship be like if you did not think about that person often and spend quality time with them?

It is no different having a personal relationship with God. When you seek God and find Him, you must then build and develop that bond just as you would with any other relationship you value in your life.

What is so special about knowing God? Here are a few things to consider:

- God knows the end from the beginning and this can be very helpful in our lives.
- God is all powerful and is willing to use His power to assist us.
- God knows you better than you know yourself and He knows better what is best for your life and the lives of others who are important to you.

- He wants you to be with Him forever and if you come to Him He will freely give you eternal life.
- He has the solution to every problem man will ever encounter.
- He has a wonderful plan for your life and you cannot know or follow His plan apart from a right relationship with Him.

These are only a few of the benefits God wants for you. The journey of seeking, finding, and becoming God's leads to the most wonderful and satisfying life possible.



One Step for Living This Truth

The purpose of this lesson is to help you to know God and to live His truth one step at a time. Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to help you live out the truth taught in this lesson.

You only have to do this one step to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do the one step as directed.

The goal of this lesson is for you to believe you can know God and to begin seeking Him and to understand that God wants to have a personal relationship with you because He loves you.

ACTION STEP

Take at least ten minutes a day to just stop everything you are doing, stop everything you are thinking, and seek God and concentrate on Him.

Review this lesson frequently and focus on the Scripture passages. You might also read a Psalm or Proverb during your quiet time alone with God.

Remember, this time is for concentrating on God and God alone. If you are not willing to spend at least ten minutes every day to seek God you can never know Him or develop a relationship with Him.

You have 1,440 minutes each day. Would God be asking too much from you to spend ten of those minutes He has given you to concentrate on Him?

It is best to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and where you can be free from distractions. Consider earplugs if you cannot find a quiet place.

Begin reading one chapter in the Gospels every day – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You can start in any of the Gospels. This will help you learn for yourself what Jesus taught and what He expects from you.

It is best to have your 10 minutes of quiet time with God before you read your chapter in the Gospels to help quiet your mind and focus your concentration.

If you do this one simple step each day, you will soon be living the truth in this lesson.

You must believe that God wants a personal relationship with you. You live that belief by spending time each day with God, seeking Him alone.

As you spend time with God, talk to Him as you would a friend for whom you have a lot of respect and reverence.

The key to mastering this step is to be persistent and not let anything rob you of this time with God. God loves you and desires to have time with you each day so He can show you how much He wants to be a part of your life.

If you suddenly remember something you need to do later in the day, have pen and paper handy to write it down. Then immediately let it go and get back to concentrating on God.

Even if it takes several weeks to get this truth integrated into your life, keep it as your primary focus until you feel you are living this truth.

The step in this lesson may not seem like much from a human standpoint, but spiritually it is a giant step. Learning to live this truth is the first move in a wonderful journey. Step by step you will learn how to know God and how to build a satisfying, life-changing relationship with Him.

Bumper Sticker Summary

We seek God so that we may know Him personally. We find Him when we seek Him with all our heart. It is God's desire for us seek Him and know Him, not just to know things about Him. Through prayer and God's Word we can know Him personally.



Illustrations for Living the Truth

Martin worked in an automobile assembly plant and earned a good living for himself and his family. He was a decent father and husband. His wife and children did not lack any necessities and had enough left over to go on vacation once a year. Yet deep inside, Martin felt that something was missing in his life. He got involved in a community program to build houses for the poor. This gave him a greater sense of belonging to the community. But the feeling that something was missing still persisted. His parents were atheists, and so Martin had no exposure to God as a child or a teenager.

At times Martin would overhear some of his coworkers talking about God as if they knew Him personally. This prompted him to go to a local bookstore to look at books about God. He found one entitled *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer. Martin was amazed by the description and characteristics of God that he found in this book. He began to discuss the topic with some of his Christian coworkers and developed a sincere desire to know God personally. He was

amazed when he learned from the Bible that God wants to have a personal relationship with His creation. His Christian coworkers helped Martin come to the place in his life where he was able to know God and develop a personal relationship with Him.

Carrie was a troubled teenager. She was very popular with the boys and had strong friendships with some girls in school who were wild and radical in their thinking and behavior. She seemed to always be in trouble with her parents or teachers and she was involved with drugs and alcohol on a regular basis.

One night she drank heavily with her girl friends and then tried to drive home. She lost control of her car and hit a tree. Carrie had not fastened her seatbelt, was thrown from the car, and was paralyzed from the waist down. As she recovered in the hospital she began to reflect on her life and began to realize her lifestyle had been empty and unfulfilling. Her friends soon stopped visiting her because as a paralytic, she could no longer do the things with them she had done before.

Carrie became lonely and discouraged. Although she and her family did not attend church, she had attended a back-yard bible study 10 years earlier at age six. Lying in the hospital bed Carrie began to recall the experience and remembered how much joy and peace the Bible teacher had. She even remembered some of the Bible verses and songs they had learned.

It was not long before she developed a desire to seek God. She asked her parents to bring her a Bible and she started reading it to learn more about God. Carrie soon realized the God of all creation wanted to have a personal relationship with her.

After she got out of the hospital Carrie asked her parents to take her to church on Sunday. It was not long before her attitude toward life changed significantly. She came into a personal relationship with God and focused her life on building her relationship with Him.



Other Scripture Verses

1 Chronicles 16:10-11 “Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.”

Psalm 9:10 ESV “And those who know your name put their trust in you for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.”

Psalm 34:10 ESV “The lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.”

Psalm 40:16 ESV “But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the Lord!”

Hosea 10:12 ESV “Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.”

Matthew 6:31-34 ESV “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 7:7-8 ESV “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

Hebrews 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Psalm 27:8 ESV “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’”

Psalm 63:1 ESV “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Psalm 27:4 ESV “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquireⁱⁿ in his temple.