

Christ - Submitted to the Father (Self-Control)

Friday, May 1, 2026

My name is Gladys DeBruyne. I am a member of the River Church along with my husband who is the pastor of visitation. I am a retired educator, having worked over 25 years, primarily in kindergarten and first grade. We are natives of West Michigan living there for 35 years before we moved to California in 1991. We have two grown children, 5 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.

Scripture: I Peter 1:9

*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Experiential knowledge of Christ

How do we really know God? How do we know about life - through experience. You can't really know about birthing a child until you have experienced it. When you have, as you think about it, you can almost feel the pain of labor and the joy when you first meet that child. You can tell someone all about labor and delivery, but their knowledge will not be complete until they have experienced it. On the other spectrum, how do we know about death - only by walking along side someone who goes through death. We cannot really know unless we experience it.

How do we know God - we experience Him in our lives. All of us have listened to someone communicate an experience in their lives and we didn't quite connect with the story. Why - because we didn't experience it ourselves. There is that old saying - you just had to be there.

With God, you must be there - to be totally present. We must be in the relationship totally and fully - with our whole being. The only way to grow deeper in relationship with God is to make it our goal, our prayer to open ourselves up to his presence. Another part of that relationship is to submerge yourself in His Word and seek His guidance for each moment of your life. It takes a commitment to Him; it takes a lifetime of seeking Him in every part of your being. Are you up to that kind of relationship with your maker, your Savior?

Remember those six levels that we addressed yesterday in attaining knowledge? Let's apply them to our knowledge of God. There is also a taxonomy, a spectrum of spiritual knowledge. There are all different levels of our knowledge of God, and we experience Him in different ways all throughout our lives. As with the levels of educational knowledge that we discussed yesterday build to a deeper understanding of what we know about a particular subject, so does our knowledge of God develop. There is a foundation that we build on throughout our life, with the goal of knowing God more, understanding His thoughts, His will for our lives. It is a forward, deepening process, whereby we grow in the Knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let's look at our own lives. Many of us grew up in church and learned about God through Bible stories. Those stories gave us pictures of who God is and what He can do. As we grow, we can recall those stories and retell them to others. Then as we grow in our knowledge of God, we begin to realize that those aren't just stories about God, those are stories that we can directly relate to our lives. God is showing Himself to us through His Word. At some point in our lives, we begin to understand that God is talking to

us through those words in the Bible. At this point, we have a decision to make. When I read those words in the Bible, those words are directed at me, God is talking to me and changing my life through those words. Do I believe what God says and what He wants to do in my life - do I accept what He is saying to me?

The deepest knowledge of God is to experience Him working in your life, wooing you and molding you into His perfect image. If you let Him, the spirit of God takes over your life, and you make it your goal to know God more. This is the process of transformation; God is transforming you into His will. When He does that, He shows Himself to you and there is growth, a much more intimate relationship with Him, where He walks along side of you and becomes your best friend. This is love, love for your Redeemer and Savior. You trust Him. You know He is right there with you, filling you with his joy. This relationship, this knowing God is so deep, words are hard to describe it.

As I write this, I recall my own experience with God this morning. I listened to the devotional online from the River. The writer captured me in my heart; God spoke to me through the words of the writer. I experienced God and I was in complete worship and awe. Does God's word impact you? Can you recall God touching you, speaking to you, communicating with your spirit so that your spirit communes with His Spirit. It is a very deep and intimate time with your Maker and Redeemer. It is restoration of your soul. God be praised!

As you grow in God's love - don't you want to express it? It bubbles out of you - joy - that deep abiding faith in the one true God, the maker of the universe and the lover of your soul. You can only grow into the knowledge of God by yearning to know Him more, opening yourself up to His Spirit within your being. Trust Him today to speak to you.