

Small Group Guide

Knowing Jesus Personally: More Than Information, A Relationship



Overview

This guide is based on a sermon from the Gospel of Luke, drawing on Luke 6:12-19 and supporting passages from John 14 and 15. The central theme is the difference between knowing about Jesus and actually knowing him personally. The Gospels are not merely historical documents but a living introduction to a person with whom we can have a growing, intimate relationship.

Key Takeaways

1. God Has Not Left Us Without a Revelation Unlike philosophical frameworks that treat all religions as equally valid attempts to describe an unknowable God, Christianity is rooted in the conviction that God has actively revealed himself. Through Scripture, through the prophets, and ultimately through Jesus, God has made himself knowable.

2. The Gospels Are More Than Biography The four Gospels give us four distinct angles on the life of Jesus, written largely by people who knew him firsthand. Matthew focuses on Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish expectation. Mark, drawing on Peter's account,

emphasizes action and reaches a Roman audience. Luke gathers testimony broadly to highlight Jesus's humanity. John focuses on Jesus's divinity and fills in what the other accounts leave out. Together they offer something no ordinary biography can: a portrait of someone who is still alive and with whom a relationship can continue to grow.

3. Jesus Pursued Relationship Before He Issued a Call Before Jesus called Peter to follow him, he spent time with him. He borrowed his boat. He went fishing with him. He was present in the ordinary moments of Peter's life. Relationship mattered to Jesus, and it still does.

4. The Holy Spirit Testifies of Jesus According to John 15:26-27, one of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Jesus Christ and to empower the church to do the same. The Spirit is not only convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, but actively pointing people toward who Jesus is.

5. None of the Twelve Were Qualified on Their Own Jesus did not choose the apostles because of their credentials. Fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot. What bound them together was not competence but relationship. Even Paul, the one apostle who appeared qualified by worldly standards, had to abandon everything that made him qualified in order to follow Christ.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question Think of someone you know well enough to describe to a stranger in detail, not just what they have accomplished, but what they are like as a person. What makes you feel that you truly know them rather than just know about them?

Digging Into the Sermon

1. The message described the difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus personally. In your own life, which side of that line do you find yourself on most often? What contributes to that?
2. The beginning of the message used the example of George Washington to illustrate what we can learn from reading about historical figures. He then said that reading Scripture is on a completely different level. What do you think makes Scripture distinct from other forms of historical or biographical writing?
3. The "blind men and the elephant" analogy is commonly used to suggest that all religions are simply different perspectives on the same unknowable God. The pastor argued this analogy breaks down because God has not left us without a revelation.

Do you find that argument convincing? How would you explain it to someone who holds that view?

4. The sermon noted that Jesus spent all night in prayer before choosing the Twelve. What does that tell you about how Jesus approached important decisions? What does it tell you about his relationship with the Father?
5. Before calling Peter to follow him, Jesus went fishing with him. He was present in the ordinary, everyday work of Peter's life. Where in your own ordinary life do you sense Jesus being present with you? Where might you be missing him?
6. The message stated, "If you know the Gospels well enough, you can describe Jesus as a friend like you would anybody sitting next to you." How well do you feel you know Jesus in that way right now? What would it take to get there?
7. The pastor described the Twelve as people who would have been lost to history if Jesus had not chosen them. None of them were obviously qualified. How does that speak to your own sense of being called or used by God?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One:

- Set aside time to read one of the four Gospels straight through, not as a study exercise but the way you would read a book about someone you want to get to know. Pay attention to how Jesus interacts with individuals, what he notices, what moves him, and how he responds to different kinds of people.
- Write down a description of Jesus as if you were introducing him to someone who had never heard of him. Not a theological summary, but a personal description. What is he like? How does he treat people? What does he care about? Use what you have observed in the Gospels to answer those questions.
- Identify one area of your life where you tend to keep Jesus at a distance, treating faith as a set of beliefs or obligations rather than a relationship. Bring that specific area into your prayer time this week and ask him to make himself known to you in it.
- If your relationship with Jesus has been more congregational or inherited than personal, take an honest inventory. Ask yourself: if everything around me that connects me to church were removed, would I still pursue Jesus on my own? Bring that question to God in prayer.

Closing Reflection

The pastor closed with this statement, and it is worth sitting with as a group:

"I want us all, everyone in this room, and whoever hears this message, to have the ability to say, I know Jesus. I love Jesus. I want to know him more, and I want the world to know him as well."

As a group, take a moment to consider: Can you say that right now? What would need to change for you to say it with full confidence?

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying for each person in the group to move from knowing about Jesus to knowing him personally. Ask the Holy Spirit, whose role includes testifying of Jesus, to make Christ more real and more knowable to each member of the group in the week ahead.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Knowing Jesus Personally: More Than a Name, More Than a Story



Day 1: The God Who Revealed Himself

Reading: John 1:1-18 — The passage describes the eternal Word who existed before creation, through whom all things were made, who took on human flesh and dwelt among humanity, making the invisible God known to those who would receive him.

Devotional: There is a profound difference between knowing about someone and truly knowing them. God did not leave humanity to guess at his nature or piece together fragments of truth in the dark. He spoke. He wrote. He came. The same God who set the stars in place chose to walk on the earth he made, to eat meals, to feel exhaustion, to look people in the eye. The Gospels are not simply ancient religious literature. They are an invitation extended across centuries. The question worth sitting with today is not whether God exists, but whether you have accepted his invitation to actually know him.

Reflection: In what ways have you treated your faith as information about God rather than a living relationship with him? What would it look like to respond to his self-revelation more personally today?

Practical Application: Set aside ten minutes today not to study Scripture but simply to speak to God as you would a trusted friend. Tell him what you are carrying. Tell him what you are grateful for. Practice the relationship he made possible.

Day 2: The God Who Prays Before He Acts

Reading: Luke 6:12-16 — Before choosing the twelve apostles from among his followers, Jesus withdrew to a mountain and spent the entire night in prayer to the Father, then called his disciples and selected twelve whom he named apostles.

Devotional: Jesus, who possessed the full nature of God, spent an entire night in prayer before one of the most significant decisions of his earthly ministry. He did not simply act on divine instinct. He submitted, communed, and listened. This tells us something essential about who Jesus is. Relationship with the Father was not a formality for him. It was the foundation of everything he did. If the Son of God found it necessary to spend a night in prayer before choosing twelve ordinary men, what does that say about the decisions we make without ever consulting the Father at all?

Reflection: How often do you bring your significant decisions before God in extended, unhurried prayer? What decisions are you currently navigating that deserve more time in his presence than you have given them?

Practical Application: Identify one decision or situation in your life that you have been handling largely on your own. Before taking your next step, bring it to God in a dedicated time of prayer, even if it feels unfamiliar or uncertain.

Day 3: He Wants to Know You, Not Just Use You

Reading: John 15:12-17 — Jesus tells his disciples that he no longer calls them servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, he calls them friends, because he has made known to them everything he heard from the Father.

Devotional: Jesus called twelve people who had no obvious qualifications for the work he was asking them to do. Fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot. None of them arrived with credentials that made them suitable candidates for changing the world. What they had was time with Jesus. He hung out with them before he commissioned them. He went fishing with Peter before he called Peter to follow him. He saw Nathanael under a fig tree before Nathanael ever knew who he was. Jesus is not primarily interested in your

usefulness. He is interested in you. His call is first an invitation into friendship before it is ever a call to service.

Reflection: Do you approach your relationship with Jesus primarily as a transaction, focusing on what you owe him or what you can get from him, or do you approach it as a friendship you genuinely want to cultivate?

Practical Application: Read one Gospel account this week not as a theological study but as you would read letters from a close friend. Pay attention to how Jesus speaks, how he responds to people, what moves him. Let yourself get to know him.

Day 4: Power Flows From Presence

Reading: Luke 6:17-19 — A great crowd gathered from many regions to hear Jesus and to be healed. Those tormented by unclean spirits were set free, and the whole crowd sought to touch him because power was going out from him and healing them all.

Devotional: The crowd that gathered around Jesus came from great distances. They were desperate, broken, and searching. And Jesus did not turn a single sincere person away. The text says power went out from him and healed them all. He did not ration his compassion based on the size of the crowd or the severity of the need. This is who Jesus is. His power is not diminished by demand. His love is not exhausted by need. The same Jesus who stood on that level place and healed everyone who came to him in sincerity is the same Jesus available to you today. His presence still carries power. Draw near to it.

Reflection: Do you ever feel as though your need is too small, too repetitive, or too shameful to bring before Jesus? What does this passage say to that feeling?

Practical Application: Write down one area of your life where you have stopped asking Jesus for help because you assumed he was tired of hearing it or that it was beyond repair. Bring it to him today with the same expectation as those who traveled from Tyre and Sidon to find him.

Day 5: Know Him So Well You Can Introduce Him

Reading: John 17:3 — In his prayer to the Father before his arrest, Jesus says that eternal life consists in knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom the Father has sent. Also read 1 John 1:1-4, where John writes that he and the other witnesses are declaring what they heard, saw with their eyes, and touched with their hands concerning the Word of life, so that others may share in their fellowship.

Devotional: The apostles did not write the Gospels simply to preserve history. They wrote because they had encountered someone so real, so alive, and so transforming that they could not keep him to themselves. John says he is declaring what he personally heard, saw, and touched. This is the language of intimacy, not academic reporting. The goal of everything Scripture offers you is not that you would accumulate correct beliefs about Jesus, though right belief matters deeply. The goal is that you would know him so well, love him so genuinely, and walk with him so closely that introducing him to someone who has never met him feels as natural as introducing an old friend. That kind of faith is not inherited. It is grown, daily, in his presence.

Reflection: If someone who had never heard of Jesus asked you to describe him as a person, what would you say? Would your answer come from personal experience or from secondhand information?

Practical Application: Commit to reading through one of the four Gospels in its entirety over the next month. As you read, keep a simple journal. Each day, write down one thing you noticed about who Jesus is, not just what he did. By the end, you will have a portrait of your friend drawn from his own story.