



## Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Sermon on the Mount - Part 2 • Knowing God • Psalm 27:1-14 • 09/16/2018

### Main Point

Knowing God should be the primary pursuit of our lives.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**If you had to pick one thing, what would you say is your highest priority in life?**

**What are the priorities of people living in our culture today?**

People dedicate their lives to their jobs, raising children, amassing wealth, gaining power, and a number of other pursuits. However, we see from the examples of the psalmist David and the apostle Paul that the chief aim of the Christian life is to know God and grow in our relationship with Him.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer Read Psalm 27.

**Which section of David's psalm resonates with you the most, and why?**

**What do you learn about God from this psalm?**

David described God as his light, salvation, and stronghold (v. 1). Light is parallel to salvation, which in this context refers to rescue from danger. Darkness represents danger, but light dispels darkness, eliminating the immediate danger. "Stronghold" refers to God's protection; with God's protection, there is no need to be afraid regardless of the danger. As the psalm progresses, David also affirms God's protection (v. 5), help (v. 9), compassion (v. 10) and goodness (v. 13). Because David knew God to be all of these things, he was able to face his fears and the threats on his life with confidence that God would be with him.

**Read verses 4, 7, and 8 again. From these verses, we learn that David had a single desire that rose above all others, and that was to “dwell in the house of the Lord” forever. Do you know someone who truly has that desire? What does his/her life look like, based on that goal?**

This refers to worship, and can be more general in referring to living one’s life in God’s presence. David desired constant fellowship with God throughout his life, which comes only from knowing Him. To seek God’s face is to petition God, most often in the context of worship. It involves complete devotion to God in the same sense as turning toward Him. If you desire to know God, it begins with worshiping Him and seeking to be in His presence.

**Can you honestly say that, like David, your greatest desire is to be in fellowship with God? If not, what are some of the things that compete for your attention and affection?**

As believers today, our personal relationship with God is made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Book of Philippians, the apostle Paul also talks about his desire to know God and grow in relationship with Him, which he describes as “the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). The things of the world—all human accomplishments—are viewed as rubbish or garbage in comparison to gaining Christ.

| Have a volunteer read philippianS 3:7-9.

**What most surprises you about Paul’s statement in this passage?**

**Prior to his conversion experience, how did Paul define success in life (see verses 5-6)? How did he define it after knowing Christ?**

At one time, Paul considered the factors he listed in 3:5-6 to be religious assets or pluses (gains, profits). When he met Christ, however, he considered these elements as loss—minuses to be discarded as one package (v. 7). Why such single-minded devotion to Christ? Because He is the only source of righteousness—that is, of right relationship with God. Righteousness comes as a gift from God by faith in Christ, the true way to God in contrast to human merit or works. This is Paul’s doctrine of salvation and philosophy of life.

**What things do you consider a “loss” because of Christ? Of those things, which was the hardest for you to give up?**

| Have a volunteer read philippianS 3:10-11.

Paul wanted to know Christ in the sense of experiencing an ever-deepening relationship with Him (v. 10). In that intimate relationship, Paul wanted his life and service infused with the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Resurrection power would enable him (and all believers) to be victorious over sin, to grow spiritually, and to minister effectively.

**What things do you do in your day-to-day life to get to know Christ better? What do you wish you did differently?**

As we read in Psalm 27, David equated knowing God with worshiping Him. Worshiping God with our lives, through obedience, prayer, Bible study, Christian community, and a variety of other practices, is the best way for us to deepen our relationship with God. Consequently, as we get to know God better, our worship of Him grows and strengthens, too.

**Paul also describes suffering with Christ as a way he grows in knowledge of Him. What does it look like for you to share in the suffering of Christ in your daily life? What does this perspective from Paul teach you about the pursuit of knowing God?**

**If you were to join Paul in striving to know God and grow in Christlikeness above all else, what current pursuit of your life would be the most difficult for you to sacrifice?**

In union with Christ, Paul wanted to experience the fellowship of His sufferings. Scripture indicates that Christians will experience difficulties and struggles in their lives because they are followers of Christ, and this is what the fellowship of His sufferings is all about. Paul viewed his hardships as Christ's emissary to be an extension of Christ's sufferings; he readily shared those sufferings, albeit to a lesser degree than his Lord. Part of Paul's goal was to be conformed to Christ's death. As did Jesus, Paul wanted to pour himself out in service to others. Paul wanted to live with the same kind of obedience, selflessness, and self-sacrifice Christ demonstrated. This attitude involved Paul's death to sin and self in order to live for God and others.

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can you determine whether or not you value knowing God?**

**How can you continually get to know God better and have greater fellowship with Him? How can you support someone else in our group in this pursuit?**

**What things have distracted you from focusing solely on knowing Christ and becoming more like Him this past week? Spend time in prayer, asking God to remove those things and to make Christ the focus of your life.**

## Pray

Pray that, like Paul, you will rest in God's righteousness, seek to know Christ and share in His sufferings, and live for the hope of the resurrection this week.

## Commentary

## Psalm 27:1-14

27:1. Light is parallel to salvation, which in this context refers to rescue from danger. Darkness represents danger (23:4), but light dispels darkness, eliminating the immediate danger (18:28). With God's protection, there is no need to be afraid regardless of the danger (v. 3; Rom. 8:31).

27:2. Devouring flesh is probably related to the imagery of wild animals as seen elsewhere in relation to enemies.

27:4. To dwell in the house of the Lord may mean continually returning to the sanctuary for worship. It can also be more general in referring to living one's life in God's presence. In either case, the point is that there is constant fellowship with Yahweh throughout one's life.

27:5. The words conceal and hide mean protection when it is Yahweh hiding His people. Often the image is connected with a mother bird hiding her young under her wings.

27:6. Lifting one's head... above his enemies is another way of expressing triumph over those who are defeated (3:3).

27:8-12. Face is a key word in these verses, appearing three times. To seek God's face is to petition Yahweh, most often in the context of worship (2 Chron. 11:16). It involves complete devotion to God in the same sense as turning toward Him (Deut. 4:29; Ps. 24:6).

27:13. The land of the living is in contrast to Sheol, the realm of the dead (Ezek. 32:27). Being cut off from the land of the living is another way to express being killed (Jer. 11:19). The psalmist anticipated receiving Yahweh's blessings (goodness) while he was still alive.

27:14. Waiting for the Lord is an abbreviated way to express waiting for an answer to prayer. Rather than taking matters into their own hands, the people of God should wait patiently for Yahweh's response (37:7; 40:1; Prov. 20:22).