

16 THE HIDDEN THINGS OF GOD



Receive

Daniel 2:19-23

“He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.”
(Daniel 2:22, NIV)



Reflect

What do I feel when I consider that God knows everything about me—my fears, my secrets, my heart's deepest longings?

Am I reluctant to let God reveal what's inside my heart and mind?

Am I afraid of what my dark places look like, afraid of what God really thinks of me?

It's true, God knows our darkest thoughts, anxieties, and fears; He sees what we try to keep hidden from the rest of the world, the worst parts of ourselves. But we shouldn't feel ashamed or burdened by this, because God always loves us, no matter what; He won't ever abandon us, no matter what lays festering in our darkness. The thing is, God wants access to those dark places; He wants us to let Him in. He wants us to trust Him enough to reveal our truest selves to Him. God takes those dark and ugly parts, shines His light on them and transforms everything into good.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, help me trust You so that I may reveal my truest self to You, even my very worst parts.*

Consider What's Real: As Leonard Cohen sings in *Anthem*, “There is a crack in everything ... that's how the light gets in.” We are cracked—flawed, broken sinners. But it is in those cracks, in our darkest, most desperate places, that God's light shines the brightest. It's our choice: Do we seal up those cracks and pretend they aren't there? Or acknowledge our weakness, and invite God to in to mend our fractures?

Additional Verses to Consider: Psalm 139:11-12; Isaiah 42:16

17 KNOWING GOD



Receive

John 17:1-5

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3, NIV)



Reflect

What is the key to eternal life?

So what exactly does “knowing” God and Jesus look like in everyday life?

What is one step I can take to come to know God better?

How do we get eternal life? Jesus tells us right here, and it sounds deceptively simple, doesn't it? Know God. Know Jesus. The end. But it's not quite that easy. In reality, truly knowing God and Jesus doesn't just happen—faith isn't simply something we declare and move on. Knowing God requires that we nurture a relationship with Him—a relationship that entails two-way communication, listening, sharing, trusting, and growing together ... just like any Earthly relationship we pursue. We all know relationships are work. They require give and take, reciprocity, and the same is true for our relationship with God. The beauty, of course, is that even though it's work to pursue a relationship with God, as we begin to see an inner transformation occur as the result, we will be inspired to continue, digging deeper and deeper into relationship with Him.



Respond

Ask for Change: *From this day forward, Lord, I will value my relationship with You. And like any relationship I value here on Earth, I will work at deepening it and growing it, following the direction of Your Spirit in me.*

Consider What's Real: What's one relationship-building strategy I can work on that will help me strengthen my relationship with God? Is it daily prayer? Reading Scripture four or more times a week? Slowing down as I read the Bible, so that the message is more apt to sink in? Meditating after I read my daily Scripture in order to hear God's specific message for me?

Additional Verses to Consider: Romans 6:19-23, Mark 10:17-27

18 IMITATING CHRIST'S HUMILITY



Receive

Philippians 2:1-11

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:1-3, NIV)



Reflect

Is my attitude the same as Christ's?

Do I ever consider others better than myself?

How does it feel to know that I can make Christ's joy complete by being one with Him in purpose and spirit?

It may be easy to view some other people as better than ourselves—community or business leaders, for instance, or religious clergy, or perhaps even people like movie stars, musicians, or other pop culture icons. But what about homeless people? Criminals? People we might define as morally flawed? Do we consider those people better than ourselves, too? When Jesus instructs us to be humble, to love in the same way He does, and to be one with Him “in spirit and purpose,” He expects us to consider *every-one* who crosses our path and to approach each person non-judgmentally. After all, when Jesus came down to Earth, He took on “the very nature of a servant” —*for us*. He expects us to approach others in the very same way.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, help me approach all people humbly and with humility, without judgment and with Your spirit and purpose.*

Consider What's Real: As World Vision President and CEO Richard Stearns says in his book, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, “Living out our faith privately was never meant to be an option.” Yes, faith is about experiencing a personal and transforming relationship with God, but it's also about translating that transformation into real, everyday life. One way to do this is by adopting a Christ-like attitude and carrying that attitude with you throughout the day.

Additional Verses to Consider: James 1:22, John 13:12-17

19 LIBERATING TRUTH



Receive

John 8:31-32

“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” (John 8:31, NIV)



Reflect

Is the truth setting me free?

Am I allowing myself access to this liberating truth, or have I established barriers that prohibit God from truly entering into my heart?

What might be prohibiting me from truly knowing Jesus' truth?

In this deceptively simple verse, Jesus tells us that if we follow His teachings, we will learn His truth and be liberated. Sounds great, doesn't it? The problem, though, is that sometimes it looks like we are following Jesus' teachings pretty well on the outside, but on the inside, we haven't handed over our whole hearts. Remember the story of the rich man in Matthew 19, the one who claimed he had kept all of God's commandments? When Jesus tells the rich man to hand over his possessions to the poor, the man goes away sad. Not only could the rich man not hand over his wealth, he also couldn't trust Jesus enough to hand over his heart. His inability to surrender and trust prohibited him from knowing Jesus' liberating truth.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, help me identify the barriers I've erected that keep me from loving You with my whole heart. Help me trust You so that I will be freed.*

Consider What's Real: Consider what Jesus might ask you to hand over, if He were to stand before you today. Would it be your worldly possessions like the young rich man? Would it be your career? Your ambitions? Your authority? Your health? Your family? Thinking about the one thing you might hesitate to relinquish might illuminate a spiritual barrier in your path toward truth.

Additional Verses to Consider: Matthew 19:16-22, Proverbs 3:5-6

20 CAREFUL TEACHING



Receive

2 Timothy 3:10 – 4:1-5

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:2-3, NIV)



Reflect

Do I believe the Holy Bible is God’s infallible and authoritative word? (Why, or why not?)

Do I take my responsibility of sharing God’s Word with others seriously?

Do I ever really do this—do I ever really preach the Word?

Many of us are uncomfortable with the notion of evangelism. We can’t shake the image of people ranting Scripture on street corners, shaking the Bible like a weapon over their heads. But this kind of over-the-top evangelism isn’t what Jesus had in mind at all. In fact, in these verses Timothy reminds us that while it’s important that we preach the Word, we must do it carefully and with great patience. This may mean waiting until the time is right to have a conversation about God or the Bible with a friend or acquaintance. It might mean thinking about and praying over how we will speak to someone, so that we don’t come off as judgmental or preachy. It might even mean demonstrating God’s Word with our actions more than with our words.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, give me the courage to share your Word with friends, co-workers, acquaintances and even strangers. And give me the knowledge to choose the right words and the right time to share Your message.*

Consider What’s Real: It’s hard to shake that image of the street corner evangelist, but in reality, there are lots of ways to share God’s Word with people. Consider teaching Sunday school or an adult education class at your church, for instance. Or, if you are more comfortable writing than speaking, think about ways in which you can express God’s message through writing—maybe via a simple weekly Facebook update containing a Bible verse, or in volunteering to write letters to prison inmates.

Additional Verses to Consider: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Colossians 3:16