

GETTING TO KNOW YOU, GOD

MIKE MAZZALONGO

TEACHER'S GUIDE

bibleTalk^{TV}



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Getting to Know You, God

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This 5-part series explores better ways to develop an intimate relationship with God.



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Overall Teaching Strategy

It is recommended that teachers use a combination of informal lecture and guided discussion to present these lessons. There are discussion questions associated with each lesson that teachers may use and/or supplement their own questions. A student note guide is also provided for each lesson.

Encourage students to read the scriptures, view the associated video and/or read the text for the lesson. This helps them come to the class ready to discuss the lesson and to formulate questions of their own. Teachers should begin the class with a review of key points from the video/text before starting the discussion.

Begin each lesson with appropriate introductory statements that help students focus on the lesson. Teachers should also provide a summary of the previous lesson and an overview of key points of the new lesson. This helps students see the ongoing narrative of scripture.

Conclude the lesson by summarizing, or having students summarize the information from their notes. It is also helpful to ask questions from the lesson to determine that students grasp the concepts. Asking questions in this manner also serves as an assessment to ensure objectives are met.

Challenge students with a call to action by applying this information to their lives in order to help them grow spiritually and help others do so as well. This can be accomplished by asking questions of students as to how this information relates to their spiritual development at this time and moving forward.

For more information on teaching adults, please visit:
<https://bibletalk.tv/101/teaching>

Lesson #1 - Is God a He, She or It?

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is to explore the essential nature of God. Of special note is how God provides us imagery to help us understand His nature.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the imagery God uses to reveal Himself to us.
- **Feel:** Develop a deeper relationship with God through understanding His nature.
- **Do:** Build upon our understanding of God to better serve and honor Him.

Support

- Series – Getting to Know You, God – Mike Mazzalongo, 2017
- Video – Lesson 1 – Is God a He, She or It?
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 1

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Is God...
 - 2.1 A He or a She
 - 2.2 An “It”
 - 2.3 A Woman
 - 2.4 A “Man”
- 3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Defend the notion that we experience a deeper and more satisfying prayer life as our knowledge of and relationship with God increases.

Look for statements from students that indicate that the more we come to know God the more we learn to trust Him. It is difficult to trust that which we don't know. The more we come to know God, the easier it is to trust Him. Furthermore, as our knowledge of and trust in God grows, so does our willingness and desire for prayer increase as well.

2. What is the error in associating God exclusively from a gender perspective?

God uses both male and female indicators in scripture at times to help us better understand His nature. The use of a male identity, "He" is a metaphor. God is neither male nor female, but is a spiritual being (John 4:24). God reveals Himself to us using terms and images taken from our frame of reference to help us better understand and identify with Him.

3. What is an associated danger in attempting to know God from what He has created?

There is a tendency to worship or value that which is created rather than the creator. At times we certainly appreciate God's creation but that is not the same as worshiping creation.

4. What are some examples of how God has appeared to man or is seen by man?

God has chosen to reveal himself to us in four ways:

- Through Jesus (Hebrews 1:2; Matthew 11:27; Colossians 1:15)
- Through scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16
- Through nature: (Exodus 3:2; Psalm 19:1-6)
- Through our consciences (Romans 2:14-16)

5. Comment on the following verses that describe God as a female.

- **Ezekiel 19:2** – God is compared to a fierce and protective lioness in giving birth to Israel. A modern-day example of this might be a comparison to a “mama bear” protecting her cubs.
- **Isaiah 66:7b** – God compared to a woman giving birth.
- **Matthew 23:37b** – God compared to a protective hen gathering Her children together. This shows the protective nature of God.

6. What is behind Peter’s words in II Peter 1:20-21?

God gave the writers of scripture information which they recorded. The images in scripture originated with God, not man.

7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Whether God is a man, woman or it is not the issue at hand. What is important is that we learn to relate to and trust God by gaining greater knowledge of a creator that loves us to the point of giving Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins in order to restore our relationship with Him.

Included in that relationship is our willingness and desire to trust Him enough to communicate with Him through prayer.

A point of note to remember regarding our prayer: Whenever God promised to answer prayer, He was referring to His people, then and now. God may choose to answer the prayers of those not in the Kingdom. If He does so, praise Him for His love. However, the promise is made to His people. Therefore, to receive the benefits of this promise, one must become part of His people. In scripture we see God answering prayer initially by offering the opportunity to be added to His Kingdom (Acts 9 – Paul; Acts 10 – Cornelius). This entrance is given to those who obey the gospel by responding in faith expressed through repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). This is the manner by which God adds us to His Kingdom or church (Acts 2:47).

Lesson #2 - The Character of God: Holiness

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is what God wants from us as we get to know him intimately. Of special note is the holiness of God and why we should not fear Him as many understand the word fear.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the holiness of God.
- **Feel:** Value the loving relationship we have with God.
- **Do:** Remain separate from the worldliness around us.

Support

- Series – Getting to Know You, God – Mike Mazzalongo, 2017
- Video – Lesson 2 – The Character of God: Holiness
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 2

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Misunderstanding fear of God

2.0 Imitating God is the best way to know Him

2.1 Separation

2.2 Absolute purity

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson.

There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts.

These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. What are some reasons for the mistaken belief that God wants us to be afraid of Him and what is the true way God wishes for us to view Him?

Answers will vary but look for comments and ideas that mention the insignificance of man when compared with God. Ask students to read and comment on the meaning of the following scripture:

Job 40:4; 42:5-6 (We are insignificant as we stand before God)

Revelation 1:17 (We are overcome by the majesty and greatness of God)

Psalms 8 (Who are we that God would consider us worthy?)

Even though those that have encountered God and speak of God expressed the experience with the word, "fear", it is not the feeling of terror but rather that of awe and reverence. For those who seek God, His greatness and holiness instills a desire to serve and to be like Him.

John writes in 1 John 4:7-12 that the true character of God is love. That love is not the emotional expression commonly associated with love, but rather that of putting others above self. Again, the psalmist expresses that in Psalm 8. It is the kind of love expressed in John 3:16.

2. The writer of the associated text for this lesson states that imitating God is the best way to know Him. How is the description of God as holy used and how do we become holy as He is holy?

God is holy and wishes us to be holy. The term holy means to be separated or set apart for a special purpose. God is separated from us and the world. In a similar way, we must be separated from the worldliness around us. This does not mean we are not part of this world, but in a spiritual sense, we keep separate from the things in this world that can spoil our purity.

We cannot make ourselves holy. God makes us holy through our obedient faith in Jesus Christ. A key way for us to remain holy is to go where God is through His Word (John 1:1) in prayer, (1 John 5:14) in worship, (John 4:23) in battle against sin, (Romans 8:13) and in teaching others about Him (Matthew 28:20).

3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others enter into a relationship with Jesus?

We need not approach God in terror unless it is in judgment for impure living. When we come to Him as penitent believers and obey His commands to express our faith through baptism, He forgives our sins, fills us with His Spirit and welcomes us into a loving relationship with Himself. We become part of Him and separated from the wrath reserved for those who choose to disobey Him. This escape from His wrath is granted to us through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins. The wrath owed us for our disobedience fell on Jesus, not ourselves. This was God's plan from before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

Lesson #3 - The God Who Knows

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on God's all-knowing character. Of special note is how the intimate knowledge that God has of us works to draw us closer to Him.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the impact of God's omniscience.
- **Feel:** Value the relationship that we have with God.
- **Do:** Draw closer to God through our openness with Him.

Support

- Series – Getting to Know You, God – Mike Mazzalongo, 2017
- Video – Lesson 3 – The God Who Knows
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 3

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 The value of imitating God
- 2.0 Omniscience
- 3.0 Psalm 139
- 4.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. How does God help us relate to Him and what is the result?

God uses human and material images to reveal Himself to us in order to help us have a relationship with Him. We also see His greatness through the qualities He possess (love, compassion, forgiveness, understanding, etc.).

Many have observed that a husband and wife that have been married for many years seem to begin to favor one another physically. This is similar our relationship with God. As we mature in Christ, we also take on the characteristics of God, thus drawing us closer to Him (See Galatians 5:22-25).

2. What does imitating God's holiness require of us and what is the reward?

We go where God is (prayer, service, worship, etc.)

We act in ways He acts – in purity.

The reward is getting to know God. The use of “know” in this example signifies we have a closer relationship with Him through shared understanding.

3. What does God's quality of omniscience mean and how does this impact on our relationship with Him?

It means God is all knowing, seeing our exposed life every day. As we accept God's increased presence in our life, we become fully open and accepting of Him. He knows our strengths and weaknesses, and most of all, our needs. God doesn't condemn us because of our weaknesses. In truth, because of His intimate knowledge of us, He better understands, loves deeper and forgives His children much in the same way we understand, love and forgive our children (1 John 1:5-10), despite their weaknesses.

4. How does God search and know us?

He searches through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27). He knows us because of the revelation of who we are from the searching of the Holy Spirit.

5. From the associated text for this lesson, what are the stages David goes through in his understanding of the omniscience of God (see Psalm 139)?

There are four stages David expresses:

- Discomfort at having someone's knowledge surround him
- Appreciation of that knowledge
- Praise for such knowledge
- Prayer and confidence based on that knowledge

6. Discuss your growth in awareness and appreciation from God's knowledge of your life and how this impacts your relationship with Him.

Be prepared to begin this discussion by answering it from your perspective. As students respond, look for responses that express the idea that our relationship with God is strengthened as we develop a deeper trust in the fact that He knows and provides for our needs, especially for our greatest needs - forgiveness and salvation.

7. What is David asking of God in Psalm 139:23-24?

David is asking God to search him and remove from him anything that would harm his salvation. In doing so, God will lead him into the everlasting way (eternity with God). This prayer represents full surrender to God, which is an excellent expression of faith.

8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Our surrender to God begins with our initial repentance and baptism. As we continue to grow in knowledge of Him, we then grow in trust. Together, these increase our desire to know and trust Him more. Greater knowledge then leads to greater willingness to trust. The end result of this process is an ever growing spiritual maturity.

Lesson #4 - The God Who Listens

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on God's answer to prayers. Of special note is how God listens to our needs and the importance of submitting our will to His purpose.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the relationship between our prayer requests and God's purpose.
- **Feel:** Recognize the need to submit our will to God's purpose.
- **Do:** Seek to do God's will in all elements of our life.

Support

- Series – Getting to Know You, God – Mike Mazzalongo, 2017
- Video – Lesson 4 – The God Who Listens
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 4

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 James 5:16
- 2.0 God's Purpose
- 3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered "right or wrong" responses.

1. How do you understand James 5:16b, “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” and what makes one righteous?

Being righteous means to be right in a moral way. In the context of our relationship with God, being righteous means being in a right relationship with God (acceptable to Him). Being righteous does not mean being perfect. A righteous person not only strives to do right, but also follows our Lord’s will in all things. Another view of righteousness is faithfulness to God. We are made righteous before God through our faith in the blood of Jesus Christ to save us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

2. How would you respond to a person who asks you why God doesn't seem to care, no matter how much they pray?

This is a difficult question to answer and sadly, is one often asked. First, understand that there is a likelihood that the person asking this question is hurting and may be seeking understanding and relief. Explain that God always hears our prayers. This is not intended as a stock or simple answer but needs further explanation.

In the text for this lesson, the author uses Jeremiah and his thoughts from Lamentations. It is pointed out that the faithful and righteous Jeremiah was experiencing incredible sorrow along with and on behalf of the people of Israel as they suffered under Babylonian attacks. However, God continued to let Israel be punished by this pagan nation. The writer goes on to explain that God is sometimes silent for various reasons.

Explain also that we must continue to pray because God does care for us (1 Peter 5:6-7). However, God answers prayers according to His time and in His way, not ours.

As you are discussing this issue with someone, show how one can grow spiritually through suffering as we learn to rely more on God. Offer to pray with and for the person, not just in a future context, but in that moment with them. This will demonstrate your faith, love and compassion, all elements normally found in a righteous person.

As an extra note, if the person speaking with you is not a Christian, this may be the moment when God is working through you to teach this person about Salvation. As an example, we read in Acts 10 where Cornelius, a Roman soldier, and non-Jew was honored by God. It is noted that Cornelius regularly prayed to God. God's immediate response was to send Peter to teach Cornelius about salvation. The same is true about Saul (Paul) from Acts 9. The passage states that he was praying. The initial answer to whatever he was praying about was that Ananias taught him about salvation. The point is, sometimes before God moves to answer prayers in other ways, (i.e. He wants the person to become His child). This takes the person towards righteousness before God, and guarantees an answer to prayer not even thought of.

3. How do you understand, “God’s purpose” (see Romans 8:28)?

The intent of this question is to help us understand that our purpose is to serve and glorify God.

Sometimes God reveals to us His purpose in what He does. In many situations He chooses not to reveal or partially reveal His will. For example, we know Jesus will return but we don’t know when. We know the purpose is to take the faithful to be with God. In other situations, God does give us His purpose. For example, He gave Jesus to die for us so that we can be restored into a relationship with Him (John 3:16). Our role is to obey the Master regardless of our understanding. In God’s time, He will reveal to us what He wishes us to know.

4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Our responsibility is to submit our lives to God's purpose. In doing so, we then have purpose in our life. When we do so, our outlook and outcome of life changes from a focus exclusively on self to faithful servanthood. This gives wings to our lives enabling us to reach greater heights in our service and relationship with God.

Note: Consider adding:

When we face hurt and struggles, it doesn't necessarily mean that God has abandoned us, or is punishing us. Satan brought evil into the world and continues to attack us in three general ways:

- Satan tries to prevent a person from becoming a Christian. One way he does this is to cause suffering so the person doubts God.
- Satan tries to weaken or destroy the faith of a Christian. Again, Satan often uses the suffering in one's life or the life of others to accomplish this.
- Satan also tries to weaken our influence. If our faith is weakened, then so too is our desire to confess our faith in God to others. Confessing our faith to others is a key way in which we influence others to come to our Lord. If we doubt God's love for us and turn away from Him, then our influence to others turns them away from God as well.



Lesson #5 - The God Who is Able

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this final lesson of this series is on the relationship we have with God when we face trials and troubles. Of special note is God's willingness to be ever present and our willingness to allow Him to help.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand that God is willing to help.
- **Feel:** Allow God to help.
- **Do:** Strengthen our relationship with God through the imitation of Him.

Support

- Series – Getting to Know You, God – Mike Mazzalongo, 2017
- Video – Lesson 5 – A God Who is Able.
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 5

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Aspects of God's character and being

1.1 God is a spirit

1.2 To know God we must imitate Him

1.3 Submitting to God

1.4 Three points about God

2.0 A willing God

2.1 Our God is able

2.2 Are we willing

2.3 What to believe

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson.

There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts.

These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as "right or wrong" responses.

1. What is the most accurate portrayal of Himself that God provides and what do we see in that portrayal?

The most accurate portrayal is through Jesus. In Him we see the attributes of God (Love, compassion, forgiveness, etc). Jesus stated this in John 14:9 when Philip asked Him to show them (the other apostles) the Father. Just like the apostles, we have to be willing to look for God. When we do, God will reveal Himself to us in growing ways as we develop spiritually.

2. What is the best way of knowing God?

We best come to know God by imitating Him. We put into practice the characteristics of God as taught and demonstrated to us by Jesus. In doing so we develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation of Him. We also grow in our knowledge through separating ourselves from things of the world. We fill this separation with study of God's word, prayer, worship, fellowship and service in His name.

3. What can we learn from Psalm 139 regarding our relationship with God?

Our relationship with God is a two-way street. He knows us and we should grow to know Him. When we do so, we go through a process of drawing closer to Him and in doing so also find ourselves drawing upon His strength.

4. State three things from the associated text that we can know about God, especially during times of trouble.

- God sometimes is silent, but never absent in the lives of the faithful. If God is absent, it is because we have removed ourselves from Him. God does not normally remove Himself from us (Romans 8:31-39).
- When we are in trouble, we should let God know about it.
- God has His purpose and our role is to submit ourselves to Him in order to accomplish that purpose.

5. What is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God?

We know a lot about God intellectually as we've learned throughout our lives. This is not the same as actually knowing God. To know God is to have an intimate relationship with Him like a child has with a loving father. If we truly believe in Him then we will always turn to Him with conviction and confidence in our relationship with Him. Knowledge about something or someone is described as having an awareness. Knowing God and believing in Him is witnessed through a faithful acceptance and submission to Him and His will. This approach to God enables us to develop a deep and loving relationship with Him. This relationship will grow over time as we notice His increasing activity in our lives through the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit.

Note: If we do not believe, it is impossible to see or have a relationship with Him (Hebrews 11:6)

6. We know that God is all powerful and willing to be active in our lives. Why, then, does He not impose His will on us?

God created in us the freedom to choose. When we willfully choose to turn to Him we develop a loving relationship (See Psalm 139). When we choose God we receive His blessings and power working for and through us (See Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:20-21; Romans 8:31).

7. Discuss from the associated text the two things God can and will do for us.

Note:

This should be a personalized and not generalized point. What can God do for “me”?

- He deals with things we bring to Him. Nothing is beyond God’s power.
- God can save us. We have to be willing to turn to Him.

8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

A key point in our relationship with God is our willingness to obey Him. It begins with our confession of who He is and our need for His forgiveness. We then turn to Jesus in repentance and submit to baptism (Mark 16:15-16). This is the beginning of our journey to growing into who God wants us to be.

To God be the glory because of His immeasurable love for us!

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