

Love

We are living in the age of Facebook and Twitter. For those who don't know what those are, it's got to do with computers and "going online"; you know, using the internet. What are Facebook and Twitter often used for? They're used to keep other people informed about our activities. For example, we can write, "I'm going shopping now," or, "Tonight I'm going to see the movie..." or something else. This is the world we live in, and we might imagine that if we keep up with what our friends are doing that this is how we know them. We know them by what they do.

But is it really possible to know someone by what they do? If we simply watch someone from afar, can we know them? At most we will be able to say, "I know about my friend on Facebook," but knowing "about" someone is not the same as knowing that person. Peter, in this chapter we've been looking at together has a lot to say about knowledge. Three times he uses words that mean *knowledge*, either the knowledge of God or the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is when we grow up and mature, when we continually add to our faith the seven qualities we've looked at, that we will know we are still growing. *For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:8).*

J.I. Packer in his book, Knowing God helps us understand what it means to know God and Jesus Christ whom he sent. He says first of all that it is "a matter of *personal dealing*." It is about dealing with God and Jesus Christ "as He opens up to you." This is the story we are being called to be part of, the amazing truth that God opens up to us. It's about "being dealt with" by God himself directly, so that it's not so much about *us* knowing God, but about *God* knowing us (J.I. Packer, "Knowing and Being Known").

He was lying prostrate on the floor, crying out to God. His name was Cotton Mather and he, along with his father, was going through a particularly rough patch in their lives. He was someone we would say who knew his Bible well, someone who had acquired all the right information about how to view God's ways in the world. Yet he knew there was something missing. He wrote in his journal, "All this while my heart had the coldness of a stone upon it." Please note the description: his heart was cold. He wrote, "But now, all on the sudden, I felt an inexpressible force to fall upon my mind, ... that cannot be described in words... It was told me that the Lord Jesus Christ loved my father and loved me and that He took delight in us as in two of His faithful servants and that He had not permitted us to be deceived in our particular faith" (quoted in Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Seeking Certainty"). Peter describes it in his first letter. *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 (1 Pet 1:8).*

Has the Lord Jesus himself warmed our hearts in this way? It is only when we

know God in this way that we'll be able to grow in our love for him.

What does it mean to know God, to know Jesus Christ? It is about being in the company of Jesus and being interested in the very same things he is interested in. It is about being “personally and emotionally involved” in the things that concern him (J.I.P). The quote from Peter's first letter speaks about *love* and about being *filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy*. The psalms often describe emotions when it comes to the things of God. We get emotional about God, and our emotions tell us that God matters to us. *Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed* (Ps 119:136). Barnabus, one of Paul's companions in mission shows emotion when he witnesses the church in the city of Antioch. *When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts* (Acts 11:23). To be sure: emotion is not everything, but if our relationship with God does not include emotion, we need to wonder if it's even real. If we have no emotions regarding God, it's going to be very hard to love him.