

HOW TO KNOW GOD

(WITHOUT BEING RELIGIOUS)



1. THE STORY

In order to know God you first need to know His story. Lots of people think they know about God or they make up their own ideas about God but **the unshakeable truth is what God says about Himself**. He knows His story and He isn't going to change it to line up with what is spiritually popular or culturally trendy. The story starts and ends with God. That's the first thing you need to know about God.

God starts long before the earth and everything in it. He is the Uncreated One. That means He doesn't have a beginning and He doesn't have an ending. Now for the human mind this is tough to grasp because we (along with everything else we know about in the natural world) has a starting point and an ending point (at least as far as we know). It is difficult to grasp something eternal from our limited viewpoint here inside of time and space. God, however, does not struggle with this at all. He is eternal and uncreated.

God is love. He longs to pour out His love upon us and set out to do just that when He created us. The only challenge is that for love to be genuine and real there needs to be a choice. God could have made a planet of God-loving robots but instead He knew that for love to be love – we needed to be able to choose to not love God. Now if you know who God is it is

easy to love Him because He never does anything wrong or hurtful. He is not boastful, proud or rude. He doesn't demand His own way. He is not irritable and is quick to forgive us when we acknowledge our wrongdoing. He rejoices when the truth wins out. He never gives up on us and endures our bad decisions hoping that one day we might actually realize that His love for us is the only thing that makes life worth living.

The earth is filled with the consequences of people who have gone their own way. War, famine, plagues, genocide, pornography, divorce, abuse, rape, murder, torture, mutilation and every other manner of darkness have been released by people who don't want to live in surrender to God's love. We don't like being told what to do. We want what we want (even if it destroys us). For the most part we are spoiled, self-centered and self-absorbed.

This is not God's fault, it is the result of a world full of rebellious people that would rather go their own way. Our very nature keeps us separated from a holy loving God. The crazy thing is that many people don't want to believe that God is real because we want to continue to live our self destructive lifestyles. God keeps loving us anyway.

That is where Jesus breaks into human history. 2,000 years ago, God came down to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He was born to a young unwed Jewish woman named Mary (who had never slept with a man) and her fiancé Joseph. God loves to disrupt the normal order of things to keep us from getting religious. He grew up the son of a carpenter and then at the age of 30, Jesus began His public ministry teaching the world all about the uncreated God that very few (up to that point) really knew.

In three years He did what no other human being since the creation of the world had ever done. He healed the sick, He opened the eyes of those who were born blind, He touched lepers and cured them (who would touch a leper?), He cast out evil spirits of every kind and He even raised the dead! All the while He continued to proclaim that God was doing something that would change everything. God was making a way for humanity that was covered in spiritual darkness to return home and enter into an intimate love relationship with the uncreated God. None of His contemporary opponents denied these miraculous signs and wonders – they just wanted to get rid of Jesus because He was turning the religious establishment (which gave men control and power over other men in the name of God) upside down.

No one has ever been healed in the name of Mohammed. No one has ever been raised from the dead in the name of Buddha. There is something about this Jesus of Nazareth that no other alleged prophet or spiritual guru can claim. His message was accompanied with tangible demonstrations of the power of God.

Then, unlike any other messenger, Jesus willingly surrendered His life into the hands of Roman authorities and paid the death penalty for our disobedience before a righteous and holy God. Jesus died to authenticate the love message of God. Through Jesus, God is pleading with us – look at my love for you! Stop running away from me and come home so that I can heal you!

Then three days later, Jesus rose from the dead with hundreds of eye witness accounts to His resurrection. Jesus foretold his death and

resurrection then it happened just like He said it would. No one could do that unless He came from God.

A relationship with God starts with a revelation that no one can find God without God allowing us to find Him. God gets to determine how we find Him and God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world through Jesus.



2. SURRENDER

So what is God really looking for from us? To answer that question we first have to understand the difference between religion and a relationship with God. In religion, you try to get right with God through your own human effort. In other words, you try to help people out when you can, maybe you go to church and otherwise try your best to be a good person. That won't accomplish anything with God or get you any favor or special consideration.

God is far too holy and righteous for any of us to ever earn our way to heaven or into His graces. The Word of God tells us that our righteousness is like filthy rags to God. There is only one way you can be right with God and that is by surrendering control of your life to His Son Jesus Christ and acknowledging that it is only through His death, burial and resurrection that we can have a relationship with God.

What kind of surrender is God looking for? Total surrender. He gave up Jesus on the cross so that He could have every part of our heart. That doesn't just mean that we are going to start going to church or reading our Bible. Those are great things but they don't really change you if you miss the surrender part. God wants it all.

He wants to be Lord over your finances, your emotions, your sexuality, your career, your family and relationships, your physical body, your mind and thoughts and everything else you can think of.

For thousands of years people have tried to find life in relationships, money, material things, power, status, food, drugs, alcohol, sex, religion and sports and everything else besides God **but nothing provides lasting satisfaction**. You can continue to search for meaning and purpose in things that will pass away but only one thing will provide eternal meaning and purpose.

God designed us to never be complete until we surrender our lives back to Him. You will never experience real love, joy or peace until God is truly the Lord of your life. Life without God doesn't work. Be honest, how has it worked for you?

If you sense God pulling at your heart to make this decision and surrender control of your life to Him then you can just talk to Him right now or you can use this prayer as a guide. Its not about the words as much as it is about your heart posture before God. If you really want to surrender then ask God to help you. As you go through this prayer, make sure you give God the opportunity to help you understand the gravity and significance of surrendering each area of your life to Him.

God, I acknowledge I have not lived for you. I have gone my own way and done what I wanted to do instead of what You wanted for me. As a result I have experienced emptiness and brokenness. I have harmed others and myself. I want a change. I want to stop living for myself and start living for You.

By an act of my will I am choosing to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of my life. Would you come into my life and take over control. I

surrender my life to you. Not just the parts I don't like but everything.

I make you LORD of my spirit and my heart;

I make you LORD of my will and all my decisions;

I make you LORD over my mind, my thoughts, and my emotions;

I make you LORD of my body, my health and the time and manner of my death;

I make you LORD of my sexuality and all its expressions;

I make you LORD of my family and my relationships;

I make you LORD of my business and my work;

I make you LORD of my finances, my home and all my possessions;

I make you LORD of my schedule and my time;

I submit to your authority in every area of my life and ask that you would come and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Teach me who You are and how to walk in Your ways. I commit my life into your hands forever in Jesus' name.

This is not something that you do once and it's all over. Surrendering control of your life is something you will need to do **every day for the rest of your life.** The human parts of you are going to want to go back to taking control in different areas of your life. Resist your old ways and keep crying out to God for help. He will come and save you from yourself. In fact, that is a great prayer to use whenever you need to – “God please save me from myself.”



3. REPENTANCE

Repentance is something that is significant to God. It literally means to “turn around.” In other words, before you gave your life to God you were doing whatever you wanted to, you were going in the direction that you thought was best. Now that God is revealing Himself to you, He is essentially saying, “you didn’t know any better but now you do – turn around and follow Me.” Many people realize that God is real, say a prayer to surrender but keep going in the same direction they were going. That won’t accomplish anything. Repentance is the process of being deliberate about turning around in many (perhaps all) areas of your life to bring them into alignment with God.

Repentance is an important part of starting and growing in a relationship with God. Hopefully, repentance will continue to be part of your life as God continues to show you things that need to change. One of you needs to change – and it's not going to be God!

God wants the opportunity to show you things that you have done in your life so that you can repent and ask Him for help in that area. Take some time and just ask God to start showing you things from your life that are now inconsistent with this new relationship you have with Him. As God shows you, write them down.

It would be good if you could find another believer to go through your list with (this is called confession). Confession is powerful for a couple reasons.

The first is that it brings something that was in the darkness (not known by anyone) into the light (someone now knows about it). God operates in the light so it is good in your new relationship with Him to begin to operate in the light in every area of your life. The second reason why confession is good is that it is humbling. God resists the proud but He gives mercy to the humble. If we want God's grace and forgiveness we need to confess our sins (those things we have done that are wrong). The third reason that we should confess our sins is that God forgives us and cleanses us when we do. Now that is a great reason to go through this repentance process!

Stay open to God continuing to show you things in the weeks and months to come. When God reminds you of things you have done in the past it isn't to make you feel horrible (although sometimes this may happen) but it's to make sure you understand how harmful sin is so that you are less likely to go back and do those same things again.



4. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit reveals who God is and shows us our sins so that we can repent. If you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ it means the Holy Spirit has already been working in your life.

Jesus understood the importance of the Holy Spirit which is why He told His disciples to remain in Jerusalem after His ascension to Heaven and wait for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit is who empowers us to follow God. There are many things the Holy Spirit does, but one of them is to teach us who God is.

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Often people describe a burning or tingling sensation when they are filled with the Holy Spirit. Others begin prophesying (speaking God's words) or speaking in unknown languages. You can't help but be changed when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. How does this happen? The Word of God says that if we ask God, from a surrendered heart, He will give us the Holy Spirit.

We can also ask other believers to pray and lay hands on us so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Please understand that this is something that you will need to continue to ask for. As followers of Jesus we need to continually be filled with His Holy Spirit (not just one time).

It is impossible to follow Jesus without the Holy Spirit because we can only understand what God is saying by His Spirit. This includes reading the Bible. The Word of God is understandable only with the help of the Holy Spirit. So what are you waiting for? Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit!

**WHAT
NEXT?**

5. NEXT STEPS

Now that you have surrendered your life to God, repented for the things God has shown you so far and asked God to be filled with the Holy Spirit, here are some important things for you to know in your new relationship with God.

a. Getting to know God Now that you have started a relationship with God it would be good to find out who He is! The primary way we have to get to know God is to spend time with Him (just like any other relationship). You can do that in many ways but one is reading the Bible (which is what

God has said about Himself). With the Holy Spirit, the Word of God will begin to come alive and speak to you in different areas of your life. If you don't have a Bible that is written in language you understand then email us at info@lovesf247.com or call **415.637.9438** and we will send you one.

Another way we have to grow closer to God is to worship Him. The Bible actually teaches us that when we worship God (say what is true about Him), He actually draws close to us by inhabiting our praises.

Spending time in the presence of God will change you and God will show you things about yourself and about who He is while you worship Him. If you have no clue how to begin finding worship music just email us at info@lovesf247.com or call **415.637.9438** and we will send you some worship music.

b. Finding other believers After you start a relationship with God it is important to find other believers who are also pursuing a relationship with God. Often this will happen as part of a local church. God has a specific local church in mind for you so you should pray (ask God) where that is and trust that He will be leading you through the Holy Spirit. You could also try visiting the local church of the person who gave you this booklet to start. If you would like to know the names of several local churches in your area then please email us at info@lovesf247.com or call **415.637.9438** and we will send some recommendations to you.

You can't do this alone. God wants us in relationship with other believers who He will use to encourage us. We get to learn more about God through the experiences of others who have walked with Him longer.

Make sure you find a couple strong believers to get into relationship with early on. It may very well save your life.

c. Telling other people This is a big deal! You should tell people about your decision to follow Jesus and start a relationship with God.

God will likely send you to tell other people in your life that also need a relationship with Him. Don't be surprised if they don't receive the news with excitement. Many people do not want to hear that God is real and that Jesus is the only way to Him. It is an offensive message to those who want to cling to a self centered lifestyle.

When you are ready to start telling other people about God let us know so that we can help equip you to share your faith. You can order additional copies of this booklet to share or arrange to record your testimony on audio CD so that

you can share it with others. Please email us at info@lovesf247.com or call **415.637.9438** to let us know about your decision and tell us how we can help you. If you need prayer at any time night or day please call **415.637.9918**.

d. Things will change Surrendering your life to God disrupts “business as usual.” You are moving from a life that you were directing and giving control over to God. it will take a while to get used to this new life style of seeking God before you make decisions but the good news is that all of these changes are going to allow you to experience the reality of God all around you and to help others experience God. Things are going to change because God doesn’t leave anyone the same. The measure of transformation you experience will be directly connected to your willingness to cooperate with God in this process.

He doesn't make anyone change – He changes the willing.

If you are willing and continue to seek God then He will change you in awesome and radical ways and make you look more like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you.

May the LORD who has called you, revealed Himself to you and started this great work in you give you all spiritual wisdom and understanding to know Him and to make Him known everywhere. May He continue to pour out on you His unfailing love and grace so that everyone around you will praise God and be drawn to Him in Jesus name. Amen.

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