

Introduction: An Unknown God

Our religion is not, as someone has said, like the moon, giving light without heat, nor like the stove, giving heat without light, but like the sun, giving perennial light, and warmth, and life.—James Waddell Alexander¹

The Bible's one-sentence biography of Jesus is 'He went about doing good.'² Doing good to others wasn't something Jesus did as rarely as a hanging judge shows mercy. It wasn't even something He did as frequently as a thrice-a-week golfer hits the links. It was something He did as constantly as a loving mother does each and every day with her children. Doing good to others was the way Jesus lived His life from sun-up to sundown. It was His functional DNA.

Jesus' one-sentence autobiography is, 'Whoever has seen me has seen my Father.'³ When you look at Him you're

1 David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 238.

2 Acts 10:38.

3 John 14:9.

looking at a full-length, three-dimensional flesh-and-blood, live and in-person picture of God. So, putting the two sentences together, we learn that the great I AM, the true and living God, is a God who has the glorious habit of going about doing good to people.

He's especially inclined to do good to those who believe in His Son. Of them He says, 'I will not turn away from doing good to them...I will rejoice in doing them good.'⁴ The Psalmist testified to God's goodness to His Old Testament people by saying, 'Truly God is good to Israel.'⁵ The book of Hebrews echoes this for God's New Testament people by assuring us that He 'rewards those who seek him.'⁶

Simply put, God wants His people to know Him in the sense of *experiencing Him* in everyday life as the God who gets glory from us by doing good to us. As Paul puts it, God 'blesses us' by doing good to us so that we will 'bless' Him by lauding and loving Him.⁷

Tragically, many believers don't know Him this way. Like the Athenians, they worship an 'unknown God'⁸ in the sense that they are as acquainted with the God who delights in doing them good as they are with some distant cousin they've never heard of.

This isn't saying that these believers aren't acquainted with God in the sense that they aren't Christians. Yet it was to a Christian named Philip that Jesus says, 'Have I been

4 Jeremiah 32:40, 41.

5 Psalm 73.1.

6 Hebrews 11:6.

7 Ephesians 1:3-14.

8 Acts 17:23.

with you so long, and you still do not know me?”⁹ You can be a believer and not be acquainted with God as the God who rejoices in being good to you. I know because I was one for years.

And you can be orthodox and not be acquainted with Him as the God who enjoys being good to you. You can recite the Apostles’ Creed Sunday by Sunday with the sincerity of an Apostle and yet be as unacquainted with the God who rejoices in doing good to you as Nicodemus was with the reality of the new birth¹⁰ or a newborn child is with the names of its mom and dad. I know because I did that for years.

God doesn’t want you to remain unacquainted with Him as the God whom the Apostle James winsomely describes as ‘the constantly giving God.’¹¹ Just the opposite. He longs for you to know Him as the God who is eager to do you good things like helping you say ‘No!’ to temptation, answering your big prayers, continuously forgiving your sins, enabling you to conquer fear, and giving you wisdom in decision making—to inventory just a few of the items on the shelves of this wonderful grace warehouse called ‘good.’ In fact, He wants you to know *the single truth* about Him that assures

9 John 14:9.

10 John 3:4.

11 James 1:5. This is R. Kent Hughes’ translation of the Greek phrase James uses. Hughes supports his translation by quoting D. Edmond Hiebert’s comment on this text. Hiebert says James is stressing here that “‘giving’ is the inherent nature of God. The present tense of the participle sets forth God’s generous nature as continually giving. He has revealed Himself as a God who is continually giving to men.’ R. Kent Hughes, *James: A Faith That Works* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 282, fn. 9.

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you He desires to do you these good things and many more besides. And He wants you to *understand and use the method He employs* to give them to you.

When you know this truth about God and begin using His method, you will find Him going about doing good in your life. And you will begin *consciously* giving glory to Him as you *consciously* receive good from Him.¹² This is His purpose for you. It's what Jesus means by 'abundant life.'¹³

There are three steps to knowing God as He wants to be known.

Step One: *You must immediately begin making a big deal of the truth most Christians know but fail to take seriously.*

Step Two: *You must immediately begin emphasizing the Father's method of doing good to you.*

Step Three: *You must immediately begin using the Father's promises to experience Fatherly good now.*

Here's the message of *Good, Good Father: God wants you to know Him as the Father who gets glory from you by being good to you through His promises everyday, all day long.*

By His marvelous kindness, I am getting to know Him this way.

May I introduce Him to you?

12 Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14.

13 John 10:10.