

GLENKIRK CHURCH



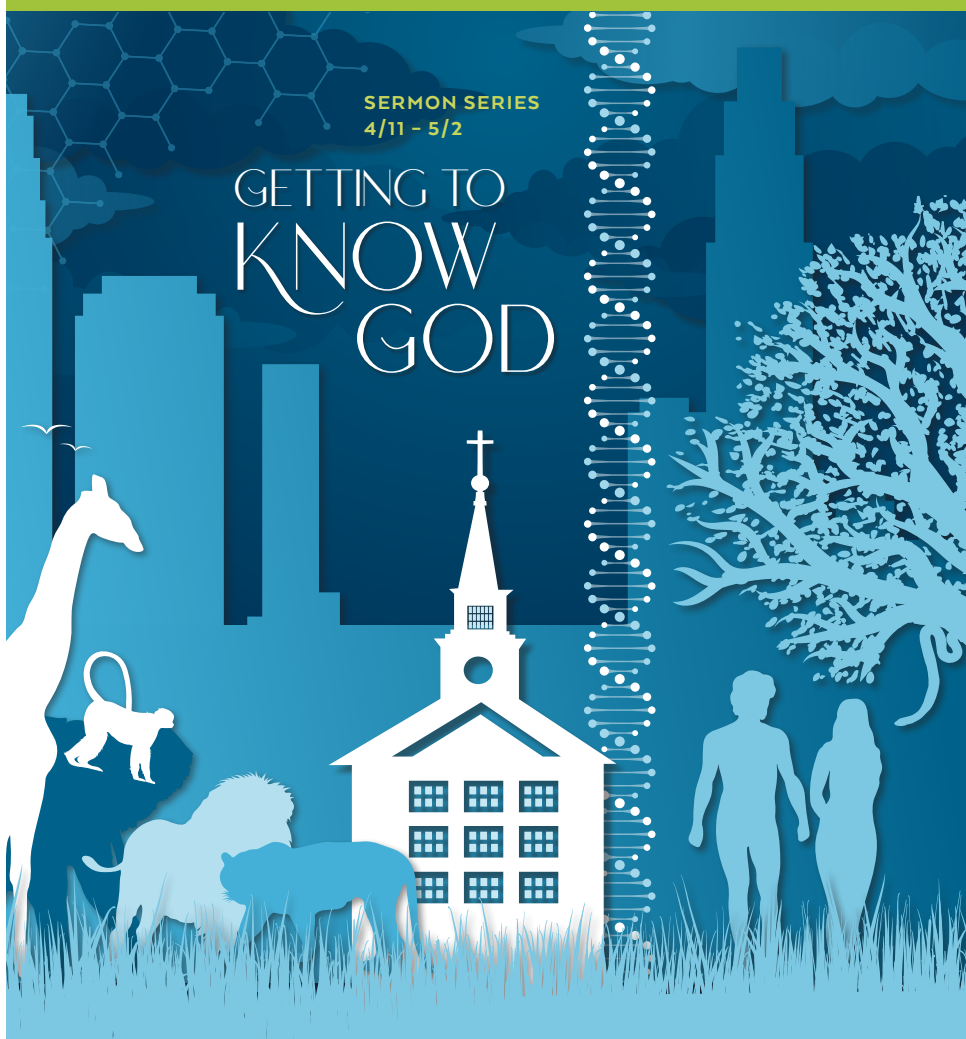
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

APRIL 12 - 16, 2021

SERMON SERIES
4/11 - 5/2

GETTING TO KNOW GOD



MONDAY

2 Timothy 1:1-7, 3:14-17; Acts 16:1-5

Paul's last published epistle, 2 Timothy, was likely sent to his young protégé weeks before Paul's Roman execution. This "swan song" encouraged Timothy to advance church-building and faithfully proclaim the Gospel. Timothy was grounded in biblical truth and right relationship with God—"from childhood ... acquainted with the sacred writings" (2 Timothy 3:15)—a fruit of Paul's ministry. "[Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois] were likely converted (from Judaism) during Paul's first evangelistic journey to [Lystra] in 46 A.D." (Biblestudy.org)

My wife's and my own biblical roots are spottier than Timothy's. I grew up as a cultural Christian, including attending Sunday School and youth group. I knew about God, but *didn't know Him* until decades later. Upon accepting Christ in 1995, I confronted my biblical illiteracy during Glenkirk's new members curriculum. Joining a men's Bible study, I came to know the Lord personally. God used the little I had retained from youth, calling me to Him.

My wife was raised dutifully in another denomination, attending parochial school. She "believed in God," but didn't really know Him. Like me, she eventually joined Bible study groups and grew into a personal relationship with Jesus. Our answer to the "How can you be in relationship with Someone you don't even know?" question: "Impossible!" The Bible says, "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17, NKJV).

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. ... For I will forgive ... [them] and remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33-34)
“... boast about this: that [you] have the understanding to know Me ... the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness ...”
(Jeremiah 9:24)

Timothy followed in the footsteps of his mentor and those of the Savior Himself. “Timothy was ... entirely at Paul’s disposal from Paul’s visit to Lystra on the Second Missionary Journey until the time of Paul’s death in Rome ... [totaling about] 17 years. ... Timothy became the first bishop of Ephesus. ... [He was martyred in] 97 [AD], when protesting [the veneration] of Diana of the Ephesians.” (STELC) Timothy, knowing God, faithfully lived out Paul’s prescribed mission—I look forward to meeting him!

QUESTIONS

What was Paul’s apparent role in Timothy coming to Christ? What are the differences between *knowing about Jesus* and *knowing Jesus personally*? What are some parallels between Timothy’s life and Paul’s, as well as Jesus’ life?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

Pars is a holistic ministry supporting a growing network of underground house churches in Iran, as well as the worldwide Iranian diaspora. In Iran, declaring one’s faith in Christ is a subversive act that has dire consequences. Praises to God for His faithful support for this innovative ministry.

TUESDAY

Psalm 22; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Paul's referenced "*sacred writings ... to make you wise ... through faith in Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 3:15) were Old Testament (OT) books. Likewise, while accompanying the two disciples walking toward Emmaus, "[Jesus] interpreted ... what was said in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27)—these were also OT Scriptures. The Messiah in the OT?! Consider some notable examples.

Jesus declared from the cross, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1) Certainly Jesus was expressing relational, spiritual and physical anguish here, but also something more: His Messiahship and fulfilled prophecy. David penned Psalm 22 around 1000 BC, centuries before crucifixion existed—yet it provides amazing crucifixion details.

In calling Jesus "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29), John the Baptist shared Messianic imagery featured throughout the Jewish festivals. Jesus is our "Passover Lamb," the One whose blood redeems. The "Festival of Unleavened Bread's" matzah—like the Exodus' manna and tabernacle's "shewbread"—foreshadowed Jesus as "*the Bread of life*" (John 6:35). Paul called Jesus, "*the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15:20), applying Jewish harvest offering imagery. The tabernacle and animal sacrifices included Messianic elements: the sacrificial blood and washing laver ("*the blood of Jesus ... cleanses us from all sin*"—1 John 1:7); the candlestick ("*I am the light of the world*"—John 8:20); the veil to

the Most Holy Place, representing our pre-crucifixion separation from God (“the curtain of the temple was torn in two”—Matthew 27:51), etc.

The vocational prominence of shepherds among Jewish patriarchs anticipated Jesus—“I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:14); “My sheep hear My voice” (John 10:27). Three other examples of Jesus in the OT: “The [woman’s Offspring who] shall bruise [the serpent’s] head” (Genesis 3:14); the “[bronze] serpent ... set ... on a pole” crafted by Moses to heal responsive, snake-bitten Israelites (Numbers 21); Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac, prefiguring Jesus’ crucifixion at the same location (Genesis 22). There are other examples too numerous to list.

The eternal Word, who came on an earthly rescue mission as Jesus of Nazareth, is God the Son. The Bible is about God’s redemptive plan for humankind; thus, it’s all about Him. Know Christ, know God; no Christ, no God.

QUESTIONS

This devotional lists some prominent examples of Messianic imagery and references in the Old Testament. Can you think of any more examples? How was Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac Messianic?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

To strengthen the underground church from afar, Pars uses online technology and week-long intensives for teaching sound theology and for providing counseling to believers who experience persecution as they spread the Gospel in a hostile setting. Pray that these committed followers feel uplifted by the love of the entire Christian body.

WEDNESDAY

2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 4:1-11; Psalm 19:7-11

I find it easy to minimize Satan—upon sinning, I don’t default to “the devil made me do it,” being keenly aware of my fallenness. However, never forget that the enemy understands humankind and our frailties far better than we do—he is cunning and ruthless, and he has been around since the beginning, seeing opportunity when underestimated. As a Man, Jesus was “*in every respect ... tempted as we are*” (Hebrews 4:15). Presumably then, when Satan tempted the Lord at the end of His 40-day wilderness fast, the related lure to the Savior was real.

The devil quoted Scripture with sufficient twists and misapplication, aiming to persuade Christ to abandon His mission. Satan soon discovered that he was outmatched. “[Jesus’] knowledge of the Word enabled Him to [rebuke] the tempter with three deft quotations from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:13; 6:16). ... Indeed, His summary response ... [declared Scripture as] the soul’s essential food—“*It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’*” (Matthew 4:4). (Bryan Chapell, R. Kent Hughes)

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable ... for reproof [and] for correction ... ” (2 Timothy 3:16). Satan knew He was dealing with Jesus of Nazareth, but he either overlooked or arrogantly dismissed that he was also challenging the very Creator of the Bible and life itself. “Human (biblical) authors put the words to paper, through their own personal perspectives and styles. But the ultimate Source of this information is not human, but divine. ... The [Greek] word Paul uses,

theopneustos ('God-breathed'), is a model of the Bible itself: an extension of God's will, formed out of His Spirit, in written form." (BibleRef.com)

How do you feel you would have fared in Jesus' devilish confrontation—do you know the Bible and the God it reveals well enough to have prevailed? Do you cherish, read and meditate upon Scripture as "*the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68)?

"The Scriptures were ... *food* to Jesus. They ... must not be anything less to us [as] ... the very breath of God." (Chapell, Hughes) "*Taste and see that the LORD is good!*" (Psalm 34:8). Will you "taste and breathe" regularly and deeply?

QUESTIONS

Was Jesus, God the Son, truly tempted by Satan in the wilderness, or was this just a "dance" of sorts? How did Jesus resist the devil and his temptations? What does "*All Scripture is breathed out by God*" (2 Timothy 3:16) mean and why does this matter?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

With a small, dedicated staff, Pars continues to perform a truly remarkable number of functions to build a strong and growing Iranian church. In 2020 it supported over 500 students with 18 online courses and broadcasted almost 600 hours of video lectures. Through Pars, God is building a strong foundation. Praises to our Lord.

THURSDAY

2 Timothy 3:14-17; Genesis 1; Job 26:7-14

Today's devo is the amazing story of one who, through study alone while knowing no other Christians, accepted Christ. Reasons to Believe founder, Hugh Ross, is married to Glenkirk elder and RTB vice president, Kathy Ross. Hugh's testimony follows.

"My parents were morally upright but non-religious. ... I did not know any Christians ... growing up. ... By eight, I had decided to make astronomy my career. ... [Scientific] study ... convinced me that the universe had a beginning, and a Beginner. ... [I explored] the 'holy' books ... [using] the facts of history and science to test each ... [Debunking these] was easy *until* I dusted off the Bible ... [It was] noticeably different ... simple, direct, and specific. I was amazed at the quantity of historical and scientific ... material it included and [its] detail ... [Genesis 1] ... correctly described the major events in the creation of life ... [sequencing them] in the scientifically correct order...

"I [began] ... searching the Bible for ... inaccuracies ... [discovering] that it was error free ... [Its Source] could [only be] the Creator ... The Bible stood alone in describing God and His dealings with [humankind] ... I had proven to myself ... that the Bible was more reliable than ... [anything else. I came] to trust the Bible's authority ... I clearly understood that Jesus Christ was the Creator ... [and Savior]. Eternal life would be mine if I would receive His pardon and [follow] Him ...

“[After] months [of delaying a commitment, however], I experienced a strange sense of confusion ... my grades dropped, and I [struggled]. ... Romans 1:21 ... says that when [one] rejects what [they] know and understand to be true about God, [his/her] thinking becomes futile and ... [his/her] mind darkened. ... One evening I prayed, asking God to ... make me a Christian. ... [I surrendered,] ... acknowledging Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior ... [and] sensed an assurance that God would never let me go...

“[I’ve discovered that] if only [honest skeptics] could see convincing evidence that God exists, that Jesus is God, and that the Bible is true, they would readily give their lives to Christ. ... [I founded] Reasons to Believe to communicate [Bible-affirming scientific] evidence as widely as possible.” (Hugh Ross) *“All Scripture is ... profitable for ... training in righteousness, that the servant of God may be ... equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

QUESTIONS

How did Hugh Ross come to know Christ despite having never met a Christian at that time? What Romans 1:21 experience did Hugh have, compelling him to confront his need?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

As mentioned earlier, belonging to an underground church is a heavy weight—many are persecuted. Pars offered 850 hours of online counseling to persecuted Christians in 2020. The need was greater, but the Pars’ staff was overstretched. Pray that they will be able to recruit a new counselor.

FRIDAY

2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:97-106; Isaiah 55:8-11

B.I.B.L.E: “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth”—trite, but true. We have received life’s “user manual,” crafted and provided by the Designer Himself. The Bible is God’s inspired word to humanity. It does not cover everything, just those things relevant to knowing God and His ways—including redemption in Christ.

“Many ... visualize a God who sits comfortably on a distant throne, remote, aloof, uninterested, and indifferent to the needs of mortals, until ... they can badger Him into taking action on their behalf. ... [However,] the Bible reveals a God who, long before it even occurs to [us] to turn to Him, while [we are] still lost in darkness and ... sin, takes the initiative, rises from His throne, lays aside His glory, and stoops to seek until He finds [us].” (John Stott) He is both the loving, forgiving Father running to embrace the Prodigal Son and “*the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2).

Reading the Bible takes about 70 hours—it can be done in a year by dedicating only about 11½ minutes each day. So, how many of us regularly read—much less study—the Bible, “God’s love letter to humankind”? According to LifeWay Research’s study of nearly 3000 US Protestants, “only 19% of churchgoers personally ... read the Bible every day ... [approximating] those who [read it] ‘Rarely/Never’ (18%). ... [25%] read the Bible a few times a week, and 14% ... read the Bible ‘Once a Week’ while another 22% say ‘Once a Month’ or ‘A Few Times a Month.’... While [most] churchgoers (90%) desire to honor Christ ...

and even profess to think on biblical truths (59%) ... few actually engage in personal reading and study of the Scriptures.” (Ed Stetzer)

Why do we so often take God for granted? Why don't I walk about continually joyful, grateful to know the Creator who reveals Himself to me? Why do I sometimes view Bible study as an “action item” vs. precious 1:1 time with Him?

“[The] Master's hand is holding ours as we attempt to trace the difficult letters ... [however,] our script need only be a ‘copy,’ not an original.” (C.S. Lewis) Jesus is “*the Way, the Truth and Life*” (John 14:6)—learn all that you can of Him!

QUESTIONS

What is the Bible's emphasis? How many minutes would one need to read the Bible each day in order to read through it entirely in one year? What is stopping you from reading through the Bible in a year?

PRAYERS FOR PARS THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

Pars is not a large organization. Its annual budget is very similar to Glenkirk's. In 2020, for COVID related reasons, a number of partners have said they will be unable to give as much in 2021 as they did in 2020. A shortfall of \$100,000 is expected. Pray for new sources of funding.

Sources:

- The Biblestudy.org quote is from <https://www.biblestudy.org/bible-study-by-topic/people-in-the-bible/timothy.html>.
- STELC is St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church; their quote can be found at www.sttimothyelca.com/sttimothybio.htm#:~:text=Biography%20of%20St.%20Timothy%20Timothy%20was%20a%20close,in%20Rome,%20a%20period%20of%20perhaps%2017%20years.
- Bryan Chapell's and R. Kent Hughes's quotes are from <https://www.crossway.org/articles/3-lessons-about-scripture-from-2-timothy-31617/>.
- The BibleRef.com quote can be found at <https://www.bibleref.com/2-Timothy/3/2-Timothy-3-16.html>.
- Hugh Ross's testimony and related quotes are from <https://fgbt.org/Testimonies/hugh-ross.html>; the Reasons to Believe website is located at <https://reasons.org>.
- John Stott's quote can be found at https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/14919141.John_R_W_Stott.
- Ed Stetzer's quotes and statistics are from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/september/new-research-less-than-20-of-churchgoers-read-bible-daily.html>.
- C.S. Lewis' quote is taken from his book, *The Problem of Pain*, and can be found at <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/Nave.html/Faithpathh/Probpain.html>

