

GLENKIRK CHURCH



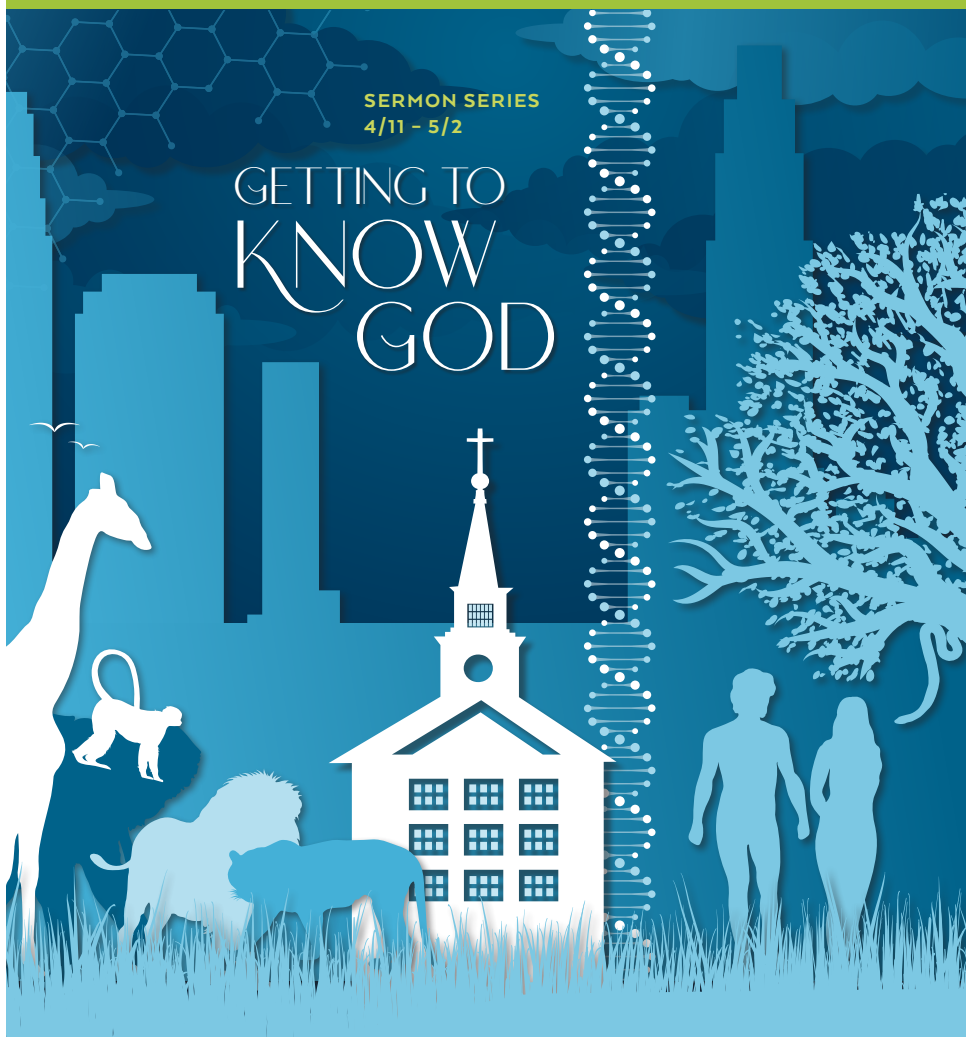
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

APRIL 26 - 30, 2021

SERMON SERIES  
4/11 - 5/2

## GETTING TO KNOW GOD



# MONDAY

## 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; 5:7

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*“For we live by believing and not by seeing.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)*

How do you feel when a person tells you to “see your troubles as opportunities”? Paul was a man who constantly faced “opportunities” and wrote to the believers how he does not lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:16) and quit. He focused not on what he could see but on what he knew about God (unseen). Paul commanded believers to exercise the same focus in Colossians 3:1-4: *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is ... Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”*

To live by faith means that our confidence in God’s promises must be the product of faith in His trustworthiness to fulfill His promises, not visual observation. We live by our senses in this world. Every interaction, every activity, and every meal come through our God-given sensory organs. But spiritual life is different. It operates in the unseen realm and is based on faith, not feelings. It’s focused on God’s character and promises, not on tangible things. We know more about God as we ponder nature, seek to understand and apply His Word, serve His church, and spend time in prayer.

“All prayer is responding to God ... yet all prayer is not alike or equally effective in relating to God. The clearer our understanding of who God is, the better our prayers ... Prayer as a spiritual gift is a genuine, personal conversation in reply to God’s specific, verbal revelation.” (Timothy Keller) Prayer may be long or short, alone or in a group, silent or aloud, but it should be a true communication with God and not done for public recognition (Matthew 6:5-8).

To live or walk by faith is to be in step spiritually, emotionally, theologically, and willingly with God. Through prayer we can find strength of spirit, guidance, wisdom, joy and inner peace (Psalms 118:5-6; Psalms 138:3; Isaiah 58:9-11; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7). The two elements of faith (trust and belief) develop as we grow in the knowledge of God. You are never too old or too young to know God more richly and to live by faith not by sight.

## QUESTIONS

What is the first thing you think about when asked the question: What are you most looking forward to in the future? How does knowing God transform our faith life?

## PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Due to the pandemic protocols this past year, Shepherd’s Pantry ceased counseling clients and praying with them one-to-one. Many of those driving through to receive food have expressed their challenges and prayer requests. Our prayer is for Shepherd’s Pantry to begin new methods of reaching out to support those with personal struggles.

# TUESDAY

## Psalm 145

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Sometimes the stresses and struggles of life take their toll on our emotions and on our outlook. We never intend for it to happen, but gradually our sense of joy is washed away in the sea of demands and conflicts. King David experienced the pressures of leadership, family conflicts, personal sin, prosperity, war, peace, and more. In the middle of these pressures, he found great joy in his relationship with God. David wrote Psalm 145 from a heart that knew God was not a cosmic principle or a distant deity to be worshipped during certain times of the week in order to conform his life to a religious pattern. No, God was a person—a wonderful, trustworthy person that David could delight in.

I'd like to think I am a regular Christian, so I confess I struggle with having a vibrant prayer life. I study David's life and can see the handprint of God's love in every high and low point through the Psalms. God is glorified in the praises of His people and the Psalms have been a blueprint for His praise for the last thousand years. I always recommend praying through the Psalms to anyone who desires to deepen his/her knowledge of God.

I have gone back to using the age-old acronym A.C.T.S. as a guide in my prayer time during this past year of the global pandemic. It's simply: "A" for *adoration/praise*; "C" for *confession* of sin; "T" for *thanksgiving*; and "S" for *supplication*.

Adoration is the thoughtful declaration of an attribute, characteristic, or activity back to God. I love to hear, “I love you!” But I deeply love to hear, “I love you because you are kind.” Praising God first in our prayer time orders our heart and mind toward Him in the spiritual world and loses our focus on this world.

Like King David, all believers have the task of turning their struggles into steps toward God instead of away from Him. We all experience difficulties at home, work, church, or community; but if we turn our gaze toward God, we will find Him to be a rock we can stand on in those times of stress. When we realize that God genuinely cares, we, too, will say with the King David:

*I will exalt You, my God the King;  
I will praise Your name for ever and ever.  
Every day I will praise You  
and extol Your name for ever and ever.*  
(Psalm 145: 1-2)

## QUESTIONS

What about God’s love, care, and provision causes you to praise Him with words, songs, or shouts of joy?

## PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Children have been affected socially as well as educationally this past year. As adults we can’t begin to comprehend the long-term effects this will have on their development. Our prayer is for Shepherd’s Pantry to be able to reopen the Summer Reading Camp and fall tutoring to support those struggling families.

# WEDNESDAY

## 1 John 1:9

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When I was a new believer, I was given the admonition to memorize Bible verses to facilitate growth. I should add that I was in my early thirties, so I used my oldest son's AWANA Bible verses. When I came to this verse, a fountain of forgiveness was opened to me.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

As a nurse I understand that no one in his or her right mind would live with an open sore if the opportunity of healing were offered. In the same way, God opened to me and all who believe the incredible promise to heal the wounds of guilt and shame. His offer to forgive is ready and waiting for us to claim it. Will I take my need for healing to God in prayer?

In my prayer time, I use the A.C.T.S. pattern. I begin with "A" doration to align my heart and mind with the greatness of God's glory. Confession follows; I always have sin to confess! Sin is everything in thought, word or deed that is contrary to the will of God. Forgiveness is my greatest need. For some of us, the gift of forgiveness seems too good to be true. We're convinced that our sin is so bad, and we've been sinning so long that it would be impossible for it to be in the scope of God's cleansing. I also find I repeat sins, so what's the use?

God's promise is not to forgive us once and then leave us. His forgiveness is complete, covering all our sins. God knows my thoughts, the words I have spoken, and the deeds I have committed. None of them surprise Him. God forgives with His eyes wide open (Romans 5:8).

John tells us that God is "faithful and just" to forgive us! He is faithful to fulfill His promise, and forgiveness is an act of justice because Jesus Christ has already paid the price on the cross. Our confession does not make us forgiven, but it taps into the boundless well of forgiveness provided to us by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. If we grasp the scope of this promise, we will not hesitate to prayerfully respond, coming to know the God who loves you and provided the way of forgiveness of sin and new life in Jesus.

## QUESTIONS

Do you access God's promise of forgiveness most of the time, some of the time, or very seldom? Explain your answer.

## PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD'S PANTRY

Shepherd's Pantry has plans to provide personalized case management to clients along with job support classes. Our prayer request is for the volunteers needed to be able to support our community in new personalized ways.

# THURSDAY

## 2 Corinthians 2:14; Psalm 141

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*“Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”*  
(2 Corinthians 2:14)

It’s a pleasure to be around thankful people. They fill up a room with their optimism, thoughtfulness, and peace. In his letter to the Corinthian believers, Paul said that such people act as a fragrant perfume that spreads the perfume of the knowledge of Christ everywhere.

Grouchy people give off a fragrance, too, but they smell like something besides perfume. Each of us knows people who seldom have anything positive to say. This last year has tested all of us with our lists of what “we miss in the lockdown,” “when will this end,” and “COVID myths.” When has your cynicism soured people around you?

Since I use the A.C.T.S. pattern to guide my prayers, after *adoration* and *confession*, I begin to pour out my *thanksgiving*. I often use the attributes I used to praise God and the sins I confessed to initiate this step. Thanksgiving is the great bridge to the last step, *supplication*.



What makes thankful people? They are known for two connected actions: remembering God's past blessings and realizing that God is still giving them wonderful gifts. Knowing and trusting God as the One who has abundantly provided and will provide again causes us to look forward in hope and joy. Thankful people do not deny or turn away from the painful realities in life. They can be more honest about hurts and disappointments because they do not have to hide from those things. But their hope focuses their attention away from the temporary things of life and onto God's character (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). Praying your thanksgiving builds confidence that God will give you the wisdom, strength, guidance, and blessing you need to face every circumstance you face.

Take every opportunity to thank God for sending His precious Son, Jesus, to live showing us the way (John 14:6), to die providing for our forgiveness (1 Peter 2:24) and to come to life again (resurrection) giving us eternal life (John 11:25-26).

## QUESTIONS

Who is the best example in your life of someone who is an honest and thankful person? As you look back as well as forward, what needs to happen for you to take steps to become more thankful?

## PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD'S PANTRY

With economic hardships continuing to make headlines, those who have lost their jobs still have massive debt with an inability to recover. Many will have to move due to past-due rent debt. How can we show God's love to these individuals? What part can Shepherd's Pantry play?

# FRIDAY

## Romans 8:26

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“The Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)

A decade ago, I was faced with the greatest trial when my youngest son fell while rock climbing in the local mountains. I fell to my knees and could only utter, “Oh, God; Oh, God; Oh God!” Have you ever experienced the feeling that your circumstance is overwhelming, or baffling, or tragic, or prolonged and you don’t know what or how to pray? Paul tells us an amazing fact: The Holy Spirit continuously prays to the Father for us! It’s tremendously encouraging to know my time in prayer is never fruitless or feodal.

Sometimes we want to pray but we are confused. Conflicts in marriage or with our kids, problems at work, unexpected diagnosis of disease, or some other calamity like the global pandemic of COVID-19 perplexes our minds and clouds our hearts. During those times, we can feel lost, empty, and helpless. But at these very moments, the Spirit of God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, brings our needs to the Father’s throne of grace.

The Holy Spirit’s prayers are not superficial, meaningless ramblings. He groans in His intercession for us with passion, intensity, and deep concern for our good and God’s glory.

I use the A.C.T.S. pattern as a guide in my prayer time. After *adoration* and *praise*, *confession* and *thanksgiving*, I then ask (*supplicate*) God for my needs. Though not perfect, this process reorders my heart and mind. It is easy to jump into prayer with my “list.” Jesus taught us to ask, seek and knock (Matthew 7:7), so having a prayer list is not wrong; but having first spent time with God in adoration, confession, and thanksgiving puts our list in perspective. Knowing you have an advocate in your prayer time can encourage deeper trust in this divine process. As the psalmist wrote: “*Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; and give heed to the voice of my supplications!*” (Psalm 86:6).

## QUESTIONS

How does it encourage you to know that the Holy Spirit prays for you? Is there any situation right now that you don't know how to pray about?

## PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD'S PANTRY

As the Shepherd's Pantry distribution sites begin to allow clients to come inside to receive supportive services, our facilities need to be adapted to accommodate new safety protocols and increased attendance. Our prayer is that this transition can be made smoothly and effectively at all three pantry sites.

## Sources:

- Timothy Keller, *Prayer Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Press 2014), 46.

