



“Knowing and Being Known” 1 John 1-2

Idea: Man was designed to know and be known by God and by other people.

Intro: It seems our country and Virginia specifically are opening up. During the last thirteen to fourteen months, the vast majority of people in America have lived behind a mask. There are thousands upon thousands of teachers and students who have not seen one another’s faces. The same is true of coworkers, family members, and church members. In addition to the face coverings, many people have also lived the last year in isolation. They made the decision to not eat in restaurants, shop in stores, or be anywhere near other people. Some even went so far as to isolate themselves from their own family. They chose to not celebrate holidays, birthdays, or visit the grandparents. This past year has been one of separation and isolation.

This experiment has been unnatural and, in some cases, surely damaging. I have no doubt that history will prove this season to have been highly destructive to the relational health and capacity of our society. Now, I do not say this as a political statement but as a general concern for people. It has been damaging because humanity was designed for relationships. The separation and isolation are foreign to the way humans are wired. We are a communal species. Therefore, the physical isolation and even the facial isolation has scared us psychologically and sociologically. There is an innate desire within each of us to both know and be known by others. We desire to be in relationship with people, to talk and touch. This desire, however, is not only to be in relationship with other humans. It is first and foremost a desire to be in relationship with God, the Creator. We, after all, were made by God and for God (Col 1:16).

Inquiry: The Bible describes the creation account in the first two chapters of Genesis. There we learn that God who dwells in perfect community as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit created the universe to reflect His nature. He created a community-oriented world. Biblically, this is the reason we find animals, fish, and insects grouping together, and this is the reason why humans dwell together and relate to one another.

Humanity was the apex of God’s creation. It is man who was made in God’s image and according to His likeness. There is something divine in human beings, which is not present within the rest of creation. It is this image which enables man to relate to God in ways the rest of creation cannot. Therefore, Adam and Eve, the first two humans, enjoyed community with God, community with one another, and community together with God. As Genesis 2 ends, Adam and Eve have entered into the covenant bond of marriage. They are one together and without shame. They also enjoy the blessing of walking in community with God. In Genesis 3 their community is broken. Adam and Eve listen to the crafty words of the serpent who questions God’s Word. They eat from the tree, which was off limits to them. At that moment, everything God had warned takes place. They died spiritually and later died physically. Adam and Eve’s disobedience killed the life of God in them and overshadowed them with shame (3:7). Their death and shame are portrayed in how they hid from God and made loincloths to cover their nakedness.

In spite of all the ugliness of rebellion in Genesis 3, the chapter ends with beautiful words. *“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them”* (Gen 3:21). In the midst of their rebellion, God pursued and called out to them (3:9). He inquired about their location and their knowledge of shame (3:11). Yes, God brought judgment upon their sin, but He also offered grace. Rather than destroying, He redeemed. The life of an animal was taken so that a covering for sin and shame could be provided. This beautiful picture of grace foreshadowed what God Himself would later do to provide salvation for all sinners. The sacrificial death of Jesus reveals God’s love and desire to be in relationship with humanity.

All of that background was shared to set up the understanding for today. This is a special day here at Red Lane. It is Friend Day. This is a day that we set aside on our calendar to focus our attention and energy on our friends. Today, is all about sharing with our friends the one thing that is most meaningful to us...Jesus. He has changed our lives. He has become our friend. And we want you to experience what we have experienced...grace and redemption. We want that innate desire to know and be known within you to find fulfillment in the God who created you.

The Apostle John explains this desire to know and be known in 1 John 1-2. There are four truths I want to point out about knowing and being known.

1. God's Design: Intimacy

Read 1 John 1:1-3.

John is describing his relationship with Jesus Christ. The same language is used here that he used to describe Jesus in his gospel (John 1:1-5, 14). God manifested (revealed) Himself. He dwelt among us. Jesus is the Word of Life who was in the beginning, and John and the other disciples heard, saw, and touched Him. In other words, they knew Him. They were in relationship with God.

This reality is significant because it follows the pattern of creation. Again, when God created the universe and brought life into it, He did not step away. He engaged because that was the purpose from the beginning. He created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness, so they could relate to Him. Every species of life on some level expresses relational intimacy, but humanity expresses it in a special way because of the divine aspect built into our creation. Therefore, we can relate interpersonally to one another in a way that no other species can. More importantly, we can relate to God unlike the rest of creation.

These verses point to the reality of God's design. He has a design for every area of our lives—our families, marriages, money, sex life, work life, and just plain life. God designed us to be in relationship with other people, and He designed us to be in relationship with Him. Unfortunately, we have all departed from that design, which leads us to the second truth we see in this passage.

2. Sin's Brokenness: Separation and Judgment

John continues in the letter by explaining his purpose. He writes to share and win his readers over to the gospel (1:4). He wants them to be in relationship with Jesus, who is holy. Jesus is the light without any element of darkness (1:5). Light represents holiness, and the darkness represents evil. Jesus is sinless, but humanity is sinful.

Read 1 John 1:8, 10.

Genesis 3 explains how sin entered the storyline of humanity. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God's command in the garden, they brought God's curse upon them and passed it on to every generation that followed. We are now born with a sinful nature, so sin comes naturally to us. There is no one who gets it right all of the time. We all sin and fall short of God's perfect design (Rom. 3:23). This sin leaves us in brokenness.

Brokenness is easy for most of us to understand. It feels like broken relationships, addiction, depression, discouragement, guilt and shame. All of these expressions of brokenness stem from the rebellion against God that is present in our hearts. We naturally do not want God, but we all want out of brokenness. Therefore, we try to fix ourselves. We medicate the problem with drugs or numb it with alcohol. We strive to be better people, hoping that somehow, someday, our good will outweigh our bad.

We look for ways to alleviate our pain. When we do that, we just get more and more broken. Adam and Eve are great examples of how to make your brokenness more broken. They ran from God, tried to fix themselves, and then when confronted blamed the other. Adam and Eve did all this because sin's brokenness brought separation from God and His just judgment.

Today, we are all broken by our sinful nature. We are separated from the relationship for which we were created. We are under judgment for our sin; we are condemned by God. This is our reality...broken.

This brokenness feels like a bad thing, but in many ways, it is a good thing because it is the way God gets our attention. When we feel broken on the inside and everything is messed up, we know something needs to change. The change needed comes through a third truth.

3. Christ's Gospel: Forgiveness and Restoration

Read 1 John 2:1-2.

The Bible has a word for the change we all need...the gospel. The word gospel simply means "good news." The good news the Bible declares is that God has done for you and me what we could not do for ourselves. He made a way where there was no way. God the Father sent God the Son to this world. His name was Jesus. He was fully God and fully man. Jesus lived a perfect life, keeping and fulfilling the Law. Therefore, He was able to offer His life as a sacrifice on the cross to atone for our sin. He is "*the propitiation for our sins*." He is the offering that satisfied and turned back the wrath of God the Father. The Bible says Jesus' blood was shed for our forgiveness as He died on the cross. He was buried in a tomb for three days before rising from the dead and ascending back to the Father in heaven. Jesus did this so that far from God people could experience God's design for their lives. He did this so that we might be forgiven and restored.

We see an example of this back in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were playing the blame game. Their marriage was on the rocks, but the Lord's forgiveness and restoration brought a horizontal healing to them. They came together and had children (Gen 3:20; 4:1).

In order to experience God's solution for our brokenness, the Bible declares that we must repent and believe the gospel. The change we really need comes only from Jesus. When we repent, we choose to turn away from our sin and ourselves and turn to Jesus. Instead of trusting in our ability to earn our way to heaven and a better life, we believe in Jesus' provision through the cross. We believe that His sacrifice and resurrection are sufficient. When we confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior and put our trust in His death and resurrection, the Bible says we will be saved from our sins (Romans 10:9-10).

Jesus' sacrifice makes forgiveness and restoration available to us. It comes through simple faith as one turns from sin to Him. This brings us to a final truth that John shares.

4. My Proof: Obedience

Read 1 John 2:3-6.

Salvation is free and available to all, but its accessibility in no way cheapens it. John makes it clear that the way you can know that your life has been changed is by the evidence of a changed life. When Jesus gets ahold of you, He changes your "want-to's," your desires.

Jesus said, "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). He is not speaking of religious ritual or keeping a list of rules. Jesus is speaking of a desire to follow Him out of love. He is

your Master, your Teacher, your Lord. Therefore, you want to set at His feet and learn from Him so that you can live like Him. Jesus never applauded the Pharisees of His day. No, He rebuked them for their rituals and rules without love for God.

Today, there are many people in church or with a church background who think they are Christians. They think this because they attend church and know the language. They think this because they made a spiritual decision at some point, were baptized, or became members of the church. In reality, their lives have little to no evidence of having ever been transformed by the life of Jesus. They have no love for God's Word, for prayer, being with God's people, serving others, or sharing the one thing that has supposedly changed them...the gospel.

John would caution those who show no evidence of faith to take a spiritual assessment of their lives. He would caution them to not trust in past decisions, religious experiences, or spiritual pedigrees. If they love God (are in relationship with Him), there will be a strong desire to obey His commandments...love God, love others.

Conclusion: Humanity possesses an innate draw toward relationships. We need them; we want them. We want to be in relationship with other people. This is why this past year has been so difficult. Separation and isolation are destructive. We also want to be in relationship with our God. The rebellion in our hearts because of sin clouds that desire. It misplaces the desire, leading people to try and attempt to fill it with lesser things. Nonetheless, the desire is there and only God can satisfy. The desire is God's design. You were created for intimacy with God and others. Sin has broken everything and resulted in separation and judgment. Thankfully, God so loved the world He gave Himself. Christ's sacrifice made a way for forgiveness and restoration to take place in our lives. If you will by faith turn from sin and believe on Jesus and His death, burial, and resurrection you can be forgiven and restored. Then the proof comes through obedience to Him.

Today, can you say definitely that you know and are known by Jesus? Is He your Lord and Savior? If not, will you turn from your sin and place your faith solely in Him for salvation?