Knowing Him

I loved Bob’s message last week; it was very encouraging, and it spoke to me. I can tell you right now, this is an area I needed a reminder. What resonated with me was how Bob laid out the correlation between the bible calling us conquerors, overcomers, and victorious that is the reason why we experience circumstances that would cause us to be those things. It’s helpful to have reminders of that truth from time to time.

Bob said something that stuck out to me as well, we are called to be different than the world. Speak, think, act.
I feel today’s message ties in nicely with Bob’s message last week. Once of the themes last week was “trusting God” The subject this week is “knowing God”
I think the two go hand in hand. You see you get to know God by trusting in what He says, and the more you know God, the more you can trust Him and in turn, the more you know Him. It is truly a never-ending cycle, but it’s a beautiful one.
I am also very excited because I can see God is up to something, two weeks ago Kim had a word of encouragement for Joy Church about people being hindered in seeking the Heavenly Father because of a distorted or unhealthy relationship with their earthy father.

And it’s true, the relationship we have with our earthly father does impact the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father. God wants to change that all around.
Today’s message is about knowing God. It’s about aligning our efforts with what the word says about knowing God.

We should always use God’s word as our barometer, in today’s culture it’s too easy to be complacent on how we approach Christianity, we are saturated with opinions and commentary where everyone is an expert.

Back story, I was at a day of worship many years ago, there was a tent set up handing out scriptures on business cards. The card I picked up had Hosea 6:3

Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord, His going forth is established as the morning-He will come to us like the latter and former rain to the earth. (NKJV)
At the time, the verse really spoke to me, I was newly returning to the Lord and trying to rediscover my identity in Christ after years of being the prodigal’s son.

I kept that card as a glimmer of hope for my relationship with God. To this day still have it, every so often I will take the card out and read the verse as a reminder of God’s promise to me over the years I have found this verse to be an encouragement to me on many occasions through many different circumstances.

Here’s the thing about God’s word (promises) they don’t have an expiration date. You can read a scripture today and not go back to it again for 10 years, but when you do, it has the same significance as it did 10 years ago.
It’s a promise to you as well, and I believe this is a special message of encouragement God wants you to hear today.
Hosea 6:3 is a promise from God

Perhaps some of you are overwhelmed by the trials.
Or just plain exhausted from the battles you face.
Maybe you’re overwhelmed by sin in your life and you don’t think you can go to God, you feel like he is angry with you or has run out of patience. Maybe you are angry with God (that’s okay God is bigger than that)
You’re not alone, I can relate to the trials and tribulations of life. The enemy is very crafty at distracting us, accusing us, accusing God, whatever it takes to knock us down, he wants to make sure at all costs, going to God is the last thing we consider.
If any of these fit, my encouragement to you is to pursue the knowledge of God.

I like the way the Amplified version describes knowing God.

AMP So let us know and become personally acquainted with Him; let us press on to know and understand fully [the greatness] of the Lord [To honor, heed, and deeply cherish Him]

His appearing is prepared and is as certain as the dawn, and He will come to us [in salvation] like the [heavy] rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.

God wants us to know Him, He wants us to understand His greatness, and when we fully understand His greatness, our posture is a desire to honor Him, to observe (listen to) Him and to deeply cherish Him.

To cherish is to love and protect it is something of great value. When you cherish God, you protect your relationship with Him by looking for and getting rid of anything that would get in the way of your relationship with Him. Idols, attitudes, outside influences.
Over the years as my relationship with God has developed, I have become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit, particularly in the area of entertainment. I notice things more and my tolerance has dropped.
I used to watch the show “Suits” on Netflix and the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to the amount of times the characters took the Lord’s name in vain, and it began to bother me and then I became convicted and had a decision to make. As much as I loved the plot and story line of the show, I made the decision to stop watching.
It took me 3-4 seasons to recognize, but when I became aware, the decision was easy. To me being barraged nightly by people taking the Lord’s name in vain wasn’t honoring to God and I didn’t want to disrespect Him by listening to overtly
It’s easy to casually say “I know God” but, as this verse implies, knowing God is not a casual undertaking.

Let us pursue- This means to press on, chase after, eagerly strive towards. To pursue the Lord is an intentional action on our part.

God is looking for people who will pursue Him, who truly want to know Him, just to know Him.
The bible characterizes knowing God as the only eternal value. Jer. 9:23 & 24 warns us not to boast in our wisdom, might, or riches, rather that we understand and know Him.
Wisdom, might, and riches are all fleeting, knowing God is something we can begin today and will last for all of eternity.
As Eph 2:7 says-that in the ages to come, He might show you the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. I wrote a note in my bible next to this verse…it’s going to take a long time for God to show us…

The Amplified version states we should become “personally acquainted with Him.”
The relationship God wants is personal and intimate, as A.W Tozer puts it “We have almost forgotten God is a person, and as such can be cultivated as any person can”… ”God is a person and in the deep of His mighty nature He thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, desires and suffers as any other person does”.

How often, do we really view God as a person and focus on cultivating our relationship based on that reality?
God thinks about us all the time
He enjoys when we come to Him.
He loves us unconditionally.
He desires for us to know Him.
And He suffered for us on the cross, just so we could be with Him for all of eternity.
I am convinced the level of these feelings God has towards us are incomprehensible to our human minds unless He Himself reveals them to us, usually, through our circumstances.
Is the God we know a byproduct of our Christian environment? We come to church and serve, experience a great worship set, listen to a message then discuss in life group?
All of these are great things and healthy for our walk, but are we settling for way less than what is available to us? Asking for a friend…
Or are we taking the approach Paul does in Philippians 3:10- That we know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to his death.
It’s so easy to get caught up in the day to day and I know for me often times I lose sight of getting to know God and focus on my needs (Oh God please help me with xxx or Lord if you could only answer “this” prayer. In this day and age, there is an abundance of things we can pray for.

Don’t get me wrong, God wants us to come to Him with our needs as the loving Father He is, there are an abundance of scripture that say so.
But at the end of the day, God wants us to know him and it’s through those prayer requests we get to know Him.
He wants to be pursued by us.

He wants us to be personally acquainted with Him; to press on to know and understand fully [the greatness] of the Lord.
Psalm 34:8 says “Taste and see the Lord is good”
Have you ever had your prayer time consumed with silence, just sitting in silence listening for God or contemplating the beauty of His holiness?

We have so many Christian sayings like the beauty of His holiness or His awesome power, but do we really know the gravity of the meaning of those phrases?
Have you ever stared up at the nighttime sky and viewed it as a reflection of His awesome power?

I love how Hosea describes the Lord’s appearance within this verse it’s “as certain as the dawn”

The sun comes up every day and it has since God commanded it to in the beginning. According to Hosea, His appearing is as certain as the sun rising.

I have a saying (it’s not mine but I use it a lot) and I think it is one of Jocelyn’s least favorite sayings I have.

Maybe you have heard this expression or perhaps even used it yourself.

The sun will still come up in the morning. As Annie says, the sun will come out tomorrow…bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow. There is biblical truth to that.
His (God’s) going forth is established as the sun. Another way to put it, His mercies are new every morning.

Have you ever caught the sunrise? not just a photo, but the real thing. What a work of God’s creation, it’s calming and peaceful. The way the light pierces the darkness and the way the colors of the sky emerge, the hues of red and orange.

When the sun comes up in the morning, the darkness flees, and there is a warmth the sun brings when it rises.
These are attributes of God, when He comes to us, He shines light on the darkness, and the truth is His appearance is warming, refreshing yet often times our thoughts are closer to what the sunrise would be like on Mercury or Venus.
Psalm 139:11 & 12-If I say, surely the darkness shall fall on me, even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.
Pursuing the knowledge of God, is inviting Him to cause the darkness to be as light. It’s making a choice to trust God over whatever challenges you may be facing. (You are stepping towards, taking Him at his word.) And when you do that God promises to show up.
The sun comes up every morning it is constant and dependable. Even on a cloudy day, the sun still rises.
Sometimes fog blocks the sun, it is still there, and the fog is so heavy you cannot see the sun, but you know it’s there. Eventually, the sun burns off the fog.
I was on a hike almost 13 years ago, me and a couple of my buddies went on an overnight winter backpacking trip for my birthday to Wildcat mountain range. It was late winter, still lots of snow on the ground but the temperatures were warming and that particular day a light rain accompanied us along our hike.
All day long we were hiking through the snow and rain and the few views we did have were obscured by the fog rising from the melting snow.

I remember arriving at the hut after a long day drenched from a light rain and the sweat from an arduous () mile hike. The hut itself was down in the valley between two mountains, outside the hut a short way away was a place called the ramparts, it was the base of the mountain with huge boulders and after unpacking, finding a place to sleep in the cabin and changing into dry clothes I took a walk to decompress. I made my way over to the ramparts and was sitting on a rock taking in the view. As I was looking around, I glanced back looking over towards the hut and the fog was so thick I couldn’t see it, nor could I see the mountain we just hiked down.

Then I looked to my left and saw the valley extending below and I could see the fog lifting, the sun beginning to shine through exposing the beautiful landscape. I began to look back at the fog and compare and it was at that moment the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. He showed me the fog and the hike we had just completed and compared it to the valley ahead and what He impressed upon me very clearly was a metaphor, and said that is what you are coming through, and that is where you are going. God was telling me I was coming through the fog and heading towards clearer times. That really spoke to me, I love the outdoors and enjoying God’s creation so that was a very special moment for me.

Here's the thing, up until that point Jocelyn and I didn’t have kids, and we had been trying for a long time to no avail. It was a very stressful time for us, more so for Jocelyn, but I felt it as well. We had even started down the medical road and were contemplating going further with IVF. It was the end of that weekend after I returned home from my hike that Jocelyn found out she was pregnant with Sam.

God is always here for us, always, even if we don’t take an opportunity to reach out to Him through prayer or worship, even if we are not looking for Him, He is still there.
I can tell you, the relationship I had with God back then was nothing compared to what I have with Him now, yet He still chose to share that moment with me knowing I wouldn’t learn what it meant to truly pursue Him years later.
Perhaps you are in the midst of waiting for God to show up, you’re looking for that sunrise and wondering where it is. Or walking through the fog, you know God is there, you’ve heard others speak about Him and His mercies and greatness, but you haven’t experienced it for yourself.

Keep going, keep pressing in! God will show up! As I said, it was almost 13 years ago, I had that moment with God, and I have had many more since then and I will tell you this…While preparing this message and looking at those photos, His promise of bringing me through the fog sprung up again moved me, almost as if He was renewing that promise. Because you know what, I still have mountains to climb, fog to walk through and the more I walk though them, the more I get to know God.
Bob’s message last week told the story of Caleb and the spies going into the promised land.
I was reading about this in Joshua a few weeks ago and was curious about the timeline, sometimes I lose context with timelines in the bible. I can read through a book of the bible relatively quick.
The book of Joshua covers approximately 25 years if Israel’s history. Do you know it took approximately 7 years for the Israelites to conquer the Promised land, there were many scouting excursions and battles that took place before the land was fully theirs.

Even though the land was a promise from God there was action required by the Israelites. God has many promises for each of us as well and many times they are not just handed to us.

Sometimes the promises of God don’t materialize overnight sometimes they are a culmination of years of little steps or little answers to prayer.

It is through the process of walking towards those promises, that we get to know God.

And through that process, something else happens, the Glory of God is revealed in our lives.

Pursuing the knowledge of the Lord isn’t easy, it is to ask for healing, and restoration, it’s to intentionally allow God to peer into the dark corners of our heart.
Pursuing God is seeking Him to revive, heal, and restore perfectly (not our version of restoration) Sweeping things under the rug or ignoring hurt/offence is not healing, at least not the type of healing God offers.
To pursue the knowledge of the Lord means to acknowledge our own shortcomings & the sin in our lives.
That can be scary because the root of sin lies deep within our hearts, sometimes we may not even know what the root of the sin is. Sin is the fruit of our sinful nature.
I think that’s why David prayed for God to search his heart at the end of Psalm 139. David, a man after God’s own heart, because he knew and acknowledged the condition of his.
The pursuit of the knowledge of God begins when He calls us, at some point God’s love interrupted our lives and we responded.

We became “saved” but too often the pursuit of God stops there as if that is the end of the line. Let me tell you, there is so much more to being a Christian than just “accepting Christ” that is only beginning.

It would be like Tom Brady being content he made it to the NFL as the 199th pick of the draft.
Hosea, this is an interesting book in the bible, it’s a book that illustrates the deep, unfailing love God has for His children in a unique way.

The backdrop of Hosea is a culture chasing after love in all the wrong ways looking to fill a void in their life all the while, God was right there wanting His children to turn to Him. They were looking to fill that void through the pursuit unhealthy means, self-gratification, looking to idols. God describes their actions as harlotry.

In His love for them, God message to them is that His love is genuine, unfailing, and secure. A love that continues forever.
The problem is, the people weren’t really inclined to listen (how easily the noise in our lives drowns out the voice of God) and even if they did listen, they probably wouldn’t understand.
God gets creative and chooses Hosea to deliver a message to the people, the message is delivered in real time through Hosea’s life.

God has Hosea marry a prostitute and have children with her and then He has Hosea chase after her to win her back when she goes back to her old ways of being a prostitute. This is in a time when adultery was punishable by death.
Hosea 6:6 highlights an attribute of God’s love when He says “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offering”
The mercy God is talking about is a covenant love, one that is extended to others because it has been experienced in our own relationship with God, that is the “knowledge of Him.
The more we know God, the more we understand the depth of His love and in turn the more we can demonstrate His love to a hurting and wounded world through our attitudes and actions.
God is the only perfect example of genuine love and we can only demonstrate that love to others by drawing from the fountain of His love, by getting to know Him.

Everyone all over the world goes through trials, everyday people lose, jobs, close relatives or friends. Everyday unfair circumstances arise that will leave us crying out wondering why? Questioning God’s sovereignty. You and I are no different in that respect.

You and I have a hope, a hope in Jesus. Many of us were brought to Jesus through
God’s call to know Him continues in the New Testament…

Paul prays for the church in Eph 1:17- That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Paul prays directly to God asking to give the church the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.
In 14 verses prior, Paul lays out a very detailed statement of our redemption in Christ where you see an abundance of God’s preeminence over all creation.
Paul uses the terms “His will”, His grace”, “In Him” and “His Glory.” They are used a combined 12 times in these verses.
The point of those verses, the salvation we have is a result of and the action of God’s will, grace, and glory.
Paul recognizes the faith in the church of Ephesus and their love for one another he encourages them to continue to mature in their faith. He prays they would recognize the power and truth of the work of salvation accomplished on the cross. That the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened to know the exceeding greatness of His power towards you and me. It is the same power that enabled Christ Jesus to defeat death and rise from the grave.
Above all your needs have you ever focused on asking God to reveal Himself more to you? Do we even know the value of having the knowledge of God over our circumstances? That is something I am striving for now.
I am starting to embrace the reality that if I focus my energy on simply knowing God, the rest of life will work itself out.
I stated earlier in my message, God uses our circumstances for His glory. Much like the life of Hosea, our lives are on display. People are watching us, they see our trials, they see our pain, suffering. They see our disagreements as a church and hopefully, they see how we overcome all these things.

Reading a little further in Ephesians you can see God has a plan, and it is a plan that He has been working on long before the world was even created.

Let’s pick up in Ephesians 3:10 – to the intent, that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are on display, not only to this world, but to the powers and principalities of the heavenly realm. That is why we need to be different from the world.
Today culture isn’t much different than it was almost 3000 years ago. People want to be accepted, they want to be loved and they will pretty much do anything to fill a void that can only be filled by God and God desperately wants His love to be known to everyone.

You and I we are called to be a light unto the world and it is through our circumstances of our lives that God’s love shines the brightest to those around us.
Are we pursuing the knowledge of the Lord, and chasing after that knowledge in the same manner as our worldly pursuits.
A.W Tozer says this, “Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people”

I am going to end with the Prayer from Ephesians 1:17 it’s a charge really. Father, I pray you would give us all the spirit of wisdom and revelation of you, that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened and that we would all know the hope of Your calling and what are the riches of the glory of Your inheritance in us. That we would know the exceeding greatness of Your power, the very same power that rose Jesus from the grave