

## **Knowledge & Self-Control**

Week 2 Day 1 Read 2 Peter 1:3-6

We live in a time of information overload. Whether it be through academic pursuits or casual media consumption, information is available at our fingertips at all hours of the day. But there is a difference between information and knowledge.

Biblical knowledge is not just gathering intellectual or academic information about God or the Bible or spiritual things. It's about knowing God, not just knowing about God. True knowledge comes from an intimate relationship with God, as we abide in Christ and walk by the Spirit.

We also live in a time where the human idea of "mind over matter" is prevalent. Whether we are trying to build new habits, or let go of habits that we no longer want in our lives, we typically believe that if we work hard enough at it, we can make it happen. And sometimes, we can.

We may be able to lose some weight, give up a bad habit, or implement something positive in our routines. But this kind of self-control doesn't give us the power to overcome sin. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. The fact that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit shows us that the strength to have self-control comes from the Spirit.

So, when Peter told us to supplement our virtue and knowledge with self-control, he wasn't talking about working hard. He was talking about submitting ourselves to God and asking the Spirit to take control so the Spirit can grow the fruit of self-control in our lives.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

What practical steps can you take to pursue not just information about God but a deeper experiential knowledge of Him?

In what ways has the Spirit empowered you to overcome struggles with sin?

#### Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, who grows your spiritual fruit in us as we abide in Christ. Thank you for the self-control your Spirit can give us to overcome temptations to sin. Help us to continue to submit ourselves to your will. Thank you for the knowledge you give us to understand your Word and walk in your ways. Help us to continue to deepen our relationship with you, to know you better. In Jesus's name, Amen.

### Knowing Jesus Changes Everything

Week 2 | Day 2 Read Philippians 3:7–14 and 2 Peter 1:5–6

Biblical knowledge is not only intellectual knowledge but relational knowledge. Relational knowledge involves both knowing about someone and knowing them personally. Like any relationship, it does involve knowing about God.

When we first meet someone, we make an effort to get to know them. When we get to know God, we talk to Him in prayer and search His Word diligently to find out what He is like. As we grow deeper in our relationship, we learn more and more about Him.

But it's not just learning about Him, it's also about knowing Him personally. The apostle Paul experienced this in a dramatic way. Before he met Jesus, Paul arrested and killed Jesus's followers because he believed following Jesus was blasphemous. Then Jesus spoke to him supernaturally from heaven, blinded him, and then restored his sight, giving him completely new vision both physically and spiritually (Acts 9). Paul did a complete 180. His life's mission changed from destroying the church to growing the church. All because he came to know Jesus personally.

Knowing Jesus became the most important part of his life. All of the accomplishments and priorities he had before knowing Christ were no longer important to him. Knowing Jesus personally, not just knowing about Him, changes everything in our lives.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

How would you describe your personal relationship with Jesus? How are you living in fellowship with Him on a day-to-day basis?

How have your mission, purpose, and goals changed since you met Jesus?

#### Prayer:

Dear God, we are so thankful that you want to have a real, personal relationship with us. Help us to truly understand what it means to know you. Give us a passion for knowing you like Paul had. Help us to want to know you more. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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# Saying No to Worldly Passions

Week 2 | Day 3 Read Titus 2:11-14, Colossians 3:1-10, and 2 Peter 1:5-6

If we want to grow in our spirituality and in our godliness, we must devote our time to the things of God and learn to say no to "worldly passions." This doesn't mean we can no longer enjoy things like food, music, and traveling. God created the world, filling it with His beauty and creativity, and He invites us to marvel at the wonders of His hands with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4). But what we are to say no to are the lusts that pull us away from God.

When we pursue our own carnal desires we dishonor God and invite destructiveness into our lives and our relationships. As Christians, we are to turn away from these earthly, sinful, behaviors and turn toward Jesus.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

Is there anything in your life that you need to turn away from? What measures can you put into place to help you do so?

How have you seen God's creativity, beauty, or goodness, in your life or in His creation? Take a moment to respond with gratitude.

#### Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the good gifts you have given us to enjoy. Please forgive us for the times we have turned away from you and pursued our own sinful desires. Please grow self-control in us by the power of your Holy Spirit to help us say yes to the things that honor you, and no to the sin that pulls us away from you. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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# Putting Our Knowledge to Work

Week 2 | Day 4 Read James 1:22-25, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:5-6

There are many resources available to us that can help us learn about the Bible. Books, apps, podcasts, sermons, and more are readily available and can often be wonderful tools to aid us in our study of God's Word. But we must remember that our purpose in studying God's Word isn't just to accumulate theological information.

When we read the Bible, we are training and equipping ourselves to live out His Word, with the help of the Holy Spirit. God's Word shows us how great God's love is for us, and it teaches us how to share that love with the people in our lives.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

In what ways has the Bible taught you how to love others? (See 1 Corinthians 13 if you need some ideas.)

How are you using what you know about God, Scripture, and theology to love and serve others?

#### Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for giving us your Word, theological books, classes, Bible studies, podcasts, etc. so we can learn more about you. Help this knowledge sink deep into our hearts and minds so that we are ready and eager to live out your Word in our lives, by the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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### Self-Control and Courage

Week 2 | Day 5 Read Proverbs 25:28, 2 Timothy 1:7, and 2 Peter 1:5-6

The book of Proverbs is a collection of short sayings that give us practical godly wisdom for how to live. It takes the spiritual knowledge we have from studying God's Word and living in fellowship with Him, and applies it to our everyday lives in a practical way.

This particular saying gives us vivid imagery about what it's like to live without self-control. It's like a city without walls; broken down and left vulnerable. Thankfully, as Christians, we have the Holy Spirit working in us, developing this fruit. Helping us have the courage to say no to "worldly passions" that lead us into trouble, and giving us the insight and ability to show God's love to the people in our lives.

#### Reflection Questions:

Has there been a time in your life where you needed courage to do the right thing?

How does knowing that the Holy Spirit is with you, helping you, change your perspective about having courage and self-control?

#### Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit to help us grow in self-control, so that we are not left vulnerable like a broken city. Help us to walk closer with you, finding comfort and courage in your presence. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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