

How to seek and know God: scripturally

With Bishop Ronald Powell

Seeking and knowing God is often described in the Bible not as a one-time event, but as a lifelong pursuit—a “holy hunt” of sorts where the prize is already waiting to be found. Scripturally, this process involves a combination of intentional desire, disciplined study, and personal relationships.

1. The Requirement of the Heart

The Bible suggests that the “how” of seeking starts internally. It isn’t about a physical location, but a mental and spiritual posture.

Wholeheartedness: Jeremiah 29:13 is the cornerstone here: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” This implies that a casual or half-hearted search rarely yields deep results.

Humility: God is said to resist the proud but give grace to the humble (James 4:6). Approaching the search with a “beginner’s mind” or a spirit of “poverty of spirit” (Matthew 5:3) opens the door.

2. The Mechanics: Ask, Seek, Knock

In the New Testament, Jesus provides a practical framework for the “seeking” part of the equation in Matthew 7:7-8:

Ask: This is the verbal expression of desire (prayer).

Seek: This is the active effort (studying, observing, and looking for God’s hand in daily life).

Knock: This is the persistence—continuing to push on the door even when it feels closed.

Key Concept: The Greek verbs used in this passage are in the present imperative, which translates more accurately to “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.” It is a continuous action.

3. Knowing Him Through the “Word”

To know someone, you have to listen to what they say. Scripturally, God “speaks” through the Bible (the Logos).

The Blueprint: Psalm 119:105 describes Scripture as a “lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” You know God’s character by studying His historical interactions with humanity.

The Living Word: John 1:1 and 1:14 explain that Jesus is the “Word made flesh.” Therefore, to know God the Father, one must look at the life, tone, and actions of Jesus. As Jesus told Philip in John 14:9, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

4. Knowing Through Obedience

A unique scriptural claim is that “knowing” is tied to “doing.” It isn’t just intellectual data; it is experiential.

Testing the Will: John 7:17 suggests a “try it and see” approach: “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

The Result of Love: 1 John 4:7-8 states that because God is love, the act of practicing love for others is a primary way to “know” Him. If one does not love, the scripture argues, they do not yet truly know Him.

5. The Role of Quietness

In a world of “weekly broadcasts” and constant noise, the Bible emphasizes stillness as a prerequisite for recognition.

Be Still: Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

The Small Voice: When the prophet Elijah sought God, he didn’t find Him in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a “gentle whisper” or “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11-13). Knowing God often requires turning down the volume of the world to hear the frequency of the Spirit.