



Why Knowing Doctrine Isn't the Same as Knowing Christ

By Kellen B. Winslow

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Does knowing facts about Christ mean we know Him? Deep connection begins with meekness and sincere prayer.

There is a difference between knowing things about Christ and knowing Him. I feel like I know Christ in the same way I know my favorite football player. I can tell you my favorite player's stats. I can tell you what team he played on. I can tell you my favorite play of his. But do I know him? No. Does he know me? No. If I were to see him in a crowd, the chances of my walking by him and recognizing him are slim, and the chances of him recognizing me do not exist, because he has never seen me in his life. (It is Barry Sanders by the way—my favorite football player).

What about Christ? If He were to see me in a crowd, I believe He would recognize me, but would I recognize Him? I don't know. I know a lot about Him. I have read the

scriptures. I have felt His spirit. So why do I feel like I do not know Him yet—I mean, *really* know Him ([Matthew 19:20](#))? At times, I feel like I do not know Him at all.

I wonder, is this problem unique to me? Sometimes I feel like I am outside looking in on everyone else's relationship with Him and concluding they all figured it out. But I am convinced of this less and less the more I think about it. I don't know Christ as well as I would like to. But I am actively, desperately pursuing Him, as if my very life depends on it.

Understanding Meekness

My favorite scripture in the New Testament is,

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” ([Matthew 11:28-30](#)).

The Lord describes Himself many times in scripture, but almost exclusively in the form of a title or testament to Himself: “[I am the Lord](#),” “[I am the light of the world](#),” “[I am the living bread](#),” “[I am he that comforteth you](#),” “[I am Jesus Christ](#),” and so forth. This is unique. This is among the few times the Lord describes Himself using a character trait in the first-person. (Only once else does He describe Himself like this in [D&C 76:5](#) as “merciful and gracious.”) And yet, because He is perfect, He could have used any word. He could have said, “I am humble,” or “I am love”—as so many Christians today declare He is. But the Lord did not. He chose “I am meek.” To me, these are some of the most important words He uttered, because they are the words I can most easily connect to. For example, I cannot learn how to become the Living Bread—that is Christ's job. But I can learn to be meek. And as I do, I will come to know Him.

Pray As If He Is Listening

The greatest thing as a dad is not how much you teach your children, but how much you learn from them. I learned how to pray, I mean *really* pray, from my son. He is 5 now, but has prayed since about 3 years old. He is the only person I have ever heard pray for Christ.

A stake president changed my perspective on prayer. Very seriously, he said, “I thought I knew how to pray before I became a stake president.” Convinced we saints do not know how to pray, he pointed out, at the rate and the content by which we pray, “we ought never to get sick.” He asked, “How many of you say this in your prayers, ‘Please bless the food that it may nourish and strengthen our bodies, that we may be strong and healthy.’?” A chuckle hovered around the room as everyone realized they likely said that very phrase at the breakfast table that morning.

He challenged us to pray, to *really* pray. To stop “vain repetitions” as the Savior plainly asked, and to start praying from the heart ([Matthew 6:7](#)). To begin a prayer in silence, put away the “grocery list of demands,” and just listen for a change. I forgot that until years later when I witnessed my son, a 3-year-old boy, pray more fervently and sincerely than his 28-year-old father. My son humbled me ([Matthew 18:3-5](#)). He talks to Heavenly Father as if He is there and listening:

“Dear Heavenly Father,

How are you?

Please bless Jesus, He must be tired.

I miss you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

How many hours have I wasted in meaningless prayer ([Alma 33:11](#))? Those were opportunities to get to know God, which in turn would allow me to know Christ, for They are One ([3 Nephi 11:27](#)). I don’t know how to pray like my son—that beautiful, innocent boy. Perhaps I can start by praying as if God is listening.

Learning Who He Is Not

Strangely, I learned a lot about Christ from reading *The Iliad*. This 3000-year-old story about the Trojan War and Greek Gods helped clarify the character of Christ ([D&C 88:118](#)). In the second book, Zeus—the Father of the Greek Gods—is frustrated that the Greek and Trojan armies stopped fighting. Wanting the fighting to continue, Zeus

convinces the Greek army general, Agamemnon, to continue the fighting by showing Agamemnon a vision of himself winning the war and obtaining great glory. However, Zeus lied. Agamemnon would suffer an ignominious death. Zeus needed the fighting to resume, and he could only do that by making Agamemnon think he was on Agamemnon's side.

Reading that story, I sat back in my chair and chuckled. "Man," I said, "can you imagine believing in a God who could lie to you?" Then the question turned serious: What if I believed in a God who could lie to me? What if Christ can lie? How could I truly trust Him? Do I believe in the character of Christ as I have come to learn it—both from others and as I have encountered it personally?

Questions like these "arouse [my] faculties" ([Alma 32:26-27](#)). I have grown stronger because I have learned to approach tough and difficult questions "by faith" ([D&C 88:118](#)). I began a quest to discover what I *do* believe about Christ. I truly believe Christ will not and cannot lie to me ([Titus 1:2](#)). *He is not* a liar. He is trustworthy; someone who follows through on His word ([2 Samuel 7:28](#)). And, when I have put that to the test, He has never failed ([D&C 82:8-10](#)). I came to a better understanding of Christ's "perfect character" by considering the things He is not ([BD Faith](#)). Perhaps, if you want to know who Christ is, you must first learn who He is not.

Spending Time With Him

My favorite restaurant is Macadoo's in Lexington, Virginia, about 6 miles from where I completed my undergraduate education. While I love the food there (it has my favorite burger), that is not why it is my favorite. Today, I can still point out the table where my wife and I sat for our first date 9 years ago. We would have many more dates there, both before and after our marriage. I got to know the woman I would spend the rest of my life with in that restaurant.

During the last few years on my journey of knowing Christ, I have often contrasted my experience of getting to know my wife with getting to know Christ. I have spent a lot of time with my wife, and I know her very well. But I have not spent as much time with Christ.

About a year ago, my wife and I were called as temple ordinance workers in the Lubbock Temple. Spending time in the temple together has strengthened our marriage, increased my understanding of gospel principles, and confirmed to me the reality of the work we do as saints. I did not expect how much more I would come to know Christ as I spent time serving in the temple. The temple is the “House of the Lord” after all ([Isaiah 2:2-3](#)). I should have known I would encounter Him there, get to know Him, and become comfortable with Him ([Malachi 3:1](#))—just as I did with my wife at Macadoo’s.

One day in the temple—while working at a specific place, performing a certain ordinance—I kept making small mistakes that felt like they took away from the spirit of the ordinance. This particular ordinance requires both the worker and the patron to be in harmony with one another, as if you are dance partners, going back and forth until the ordinance is over. Not until the final patron did I finally perform my part of the “dance” in a way I felt acceptable. The patron and I were working in complete harmony ([Matthew 18:20](#)). As we flowed and connected, I suddenly felt an overwhelming feeling, and a voice popped into my head, “This is what it is to know Me.”

Knowing Christ means to be in harmony with His will and feel connected to Him, to know what is expected of you and perform according to that expectation when the time comes ([D&C 4:2-3](#)), like dance partners moving and flowing with each other.

We may not get to know Christ the ‘conventional’ way—the same way we get to know our spouse or friend. But, I don’t think He ever intended getting to know Him to be the ‘conventional’ way. Getting to know Him looks different. We come to know Him through the Spirit ([Matthew 16:15-17](#)). We may not know how to do that at first, so maybe we just start by sharing moments with him. Simply put—spend time with Him.

The Price to Know Him

I imagine my life 5 years from now. If at that point in my future I know Christ, I mean *really* know Christ, what would it have cost me? Would there be any price or sacrifice that would lead me to say, “That is too much”? I don’t think so. I would rather limp into the Celestial Kingdom knowing I paid the price to know Him than sprint into the Terrestrial Kingdom unscathed by the burdens of discipleship ([Hebrews 12:1-3](#)). I tire of feeling like I just know a lot about my Savior. I want to know Him as if I knew the sound of His voice and the curves of His face ([Alma 5:14](#)). I will come to a better understanding

of meekness; to pray like He is actually listening; to learn who He is as I learn who He is not; and I will spend as much time as I can with Him. Then in the end it will all be worth it because “when he shall appear [I] shall be like him; for [I] shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2, and 1 Corinthians 13:12).

About the author

Kellen B. Winslow

Kellen B. Winslow is an Instructor of Humanities and Psychology at South Plains College. He is also a Licensed Professional Counselor who provides treatment for individuals who have been incarcerated. He lives in Lubbock, TX, with his wife and two children.