



Thank you for your interest in Look at the Man—a year-long study in the life of Christ.

The pages which follow include:

- A "Member Manual" that explains this program (8 pages)
- A sample sermon/class outline (4 pages)
- A sample handout (4 pages)

Again, thank you for your interest in our material. If you have questions or want to place an order, contact us at:

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Man
Look
at the

Member Manual

Series

Christianity is Christ 1-16

- Christianity is Christ 1-4
- The Christian Must Know Christ 5-8
- The Christian Must Teach Christ 9-12
- The Christian Must Become Christ 13-16

The Incredible Christ 17-36

- The Incredible Christ 17-20
- The Credible Christ 21-24
- Compassionate Christ 25-28
- Christ and Sinners 29-32
- Jesus and the Nobodies 33-36

The Religion of Jesus 37-56

- The Religion of Jesus is Supernatural 37-40
- The Religion of Jesus is Scriptural 41-44
- The Religion of Jesus is Mercy not Merit.. 45-48
- The Religion of Jesus is Heart not Hands .. 49-52
- The Religion of Jesus is God-Centered53-56

Discipleship 57-72

- The Way of Discipleship 57-60
- The Call to Discipleship 61-64
- The Cost of Discipleship 65-68
- The Blessings of Discipleship 69-72

Mark's Story of Jesus 73-148

- The Gospel According to Mark 73-76
- Undercover Christ 77-80
- Popular Christ 81-84
- Controversial Christ 85-88
- Gathering Storm 89-92
- Taking Sides 93-96
- Magic Seed 97-100
- Who is Jesus? 101-104
- Dull Disciples 105-108
- Second Touch 109-112
- Radical Christ 113-116
- The Jesus Style 117-120
- Blind Disciples 121-124
- Cleaning House 125-128
- The Final Conflict 129-132
- Watch Out 133-136
- The Disciples' Failure 137-140
- The Servant's Success 141-144
- Resurrection 145-148

The Cross of Christ 149-204

- The Central Cross 149-152
- The Conscious Cross 153-156
- The Cruel Cross 157-160
- No Common Cross 161-164
- Cross and Blood 165-168
- The Passover Lamb 169-172
- Man and the Cross 173-176
- God and the Cross 177-180
- Christ and the Cross 181-184
- Satan and the Cross 185-188
- The Cross that Cuts 189-192
- Tree of Death 193-196
- Tree of Life 197-200
- The Big Picture 201-204

People have wondered about Jesus of Nazareth from the beginning. The religious leaders of his own day thought he was a fraud. The crowds believed him to be a prophet. His disciples claimed he was the Son of God. Two thousand years later, people are still trying to figure Jesus out.

What you conclude about Jesus may be the most important decision you ever make. Christ is not nearly so interested in what you believe about his teaching or his life as he is in what you believe about his *identity*. *Who is this Jesus? What claim does he have on your life? What will you do with him?* If you get Jesus right, he promises that everything else will come out right as well. If you get Jesus wrong, nothing else really matters.

Unfortunately, there are many people who have gotten Jesus wrong. Though they may go to church every week, they do not know who Jesus is or what he taught or how he lived. They claim to believe a few things *about* Jesus, but they don't really *know* him. They have been told some "Jesus-stories," but they have never taken the time to look at him for themselves.

There is a world of difference between "going to church" and having a personal relationship with Jesus. To really be a **Christian**, you have to know **Christ**.

We invite you to spend some time this year looking at Jesus Christ. Look with us at the gospels, the most ancient and accurate accounts of Christ's life. Listen to his friends as they remember his words and actions. Think seriously about his ideas and his claims. Get to know Jesus for yourself this year and decide what he should mean to you.

The important thing is that you at least give him a chance. You may decide that Jesus really should be your Lord. You may reject his claims and decide he was crazy. Either way, you are at least making a rational and thoughtful decision.

A Man Worth Looking At

But to *evade* the Son of Man;
to look the other way;
to pretend you haven't noticed...
that is a different matter.

You may not be certain yet
whether you ought to be a
Christian;
but you do know
you ought to be a man,
not an ostrich hiding its head
in the sands.

C. S. Lewis
God in the Dock, p. 21.

A Program of Reading and Study for the Year

Let us fix our eyes
on Jesus,
the author
and perfecter
of our faith.

Hebrews 12:2

Next week, this congregation will begin a study of the life of Christ that will lead us through the gospels in one year. The purpose of this study will be to encourage in each of us a personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on an intimate knowledge of his heart and mind. We cannot relate to Jesus until we get to know him. A program of personal Bible study and corporate worship has been designed with this end in mind.

1. **Personal Bible Study** - The focus of our reading and study throughout this year will be the gospels. Each week, a certain portion of the gospels will be designated for careful reading and in-depth study. Special studies in background, Jewish culture, religious practices of the times, etc. will accompany every investigation of the gospel text. This program of study helps us not only to read our Bibles consistently, but to learn better study skills and to develop a more complete picture of the life and mind of Christ.
2. **Preaching the Man** - The sermons on Sundays will correspond to the reading each of us will be doing throughout the week. We will study a passage privately and then gather on the Lord's Day to study it as a body.

Look at the Man is an invitation to embark on what could be the most exciting year of your Christian life. Spending an entire year looking at Jesus, meditating on his life, imitating his behaviors and attitudes is one of the most rewarding and growthful things we could do in the coming year.

Would you make a commitment to **Look at the Man** with us during this year? There is reading to be done, notes to be taken, questions to be asked, and answers to be sought. But the goal is worthy of the effort - a better understanding of God's Son. So get ready for a study that will change your life. We are about to take a good, hard **Look at the Man**.

Personal Bible Study

One of the major objectives of this year will be to encourage personal Bible study. Most of us want to be better students of God's book, but lack either the discipline or the tools to make a meaningful study on a daily basis. We know how to *read* the Bible, but find ourselves at a loss when it comes to *studying* it.

Look at the Man is designed to give each of us the encouragement and structure we all need to succeed in a disciplined study through the gospels in one year. Every week, a certain section of the gospels will be selected for study. You will receive a study guide that gives detailed instructions on how to study that section of Scripture.

1 Insight provides additional information on some topic in the gospels. Background information, themes, and special topics will be covered in this section (e.g., who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?).

2 Key Text will give the central text for the passage being studied that Sunday morning. Memorizing these verses each week would help you grasp the heart of the gospel message.

3 Theme explains the major point being taught in the sermon that morning.

4 Application indicates one practical idea from the text which can be incorporated into our daily walk.

5 Bible Study gives a daily guide for careful and in-depth study of the next passage of scripture to be considered. Various Bible study tools (e.g., atlases, commentaries, concordances) will be used to go deeper into the text than a simple reading will allow. You may want to make notes of your findings and include your notes with the handouts in a 3-ring binder.

1 Insight

Christianity is the only religion in the world which rests on the Person of its Founder. A man can be a faithful Mohammedan without in the least concerning himself with the Mohammed. So also a man can be a true and Buddhist without knowing anything whatever of Buddha. It is quite different with Christianity. Christianity is so inextricably bound up with Christ that our view of the Person of Christ involves and determines our view of Christianity....

It has also been pointed out that Christianity alone of the great religions of the world calls itself by the name of its Founder, and that while we call other religions by the names of their founders, the adherents of these religions do not call themselves by these names. This fact is full of very interesting meaning. Does it not inevitably suggest that the contrast between Christianity and Christ is so close as to be negligible? Christianity is nothing less and can be nothing more than relationship to Christ....

With a sure instinct both followers and opponents have realized the supreme importance of the Person of the Founder of Christianity. On the one hand, Jesus Christ has been the centre of opposition in almost every age; on the other hand, He has been the Object of worship and the heart's devotion of all Christians. We cannot get away from this central fact; it influences our thinking; it controls our action; and it tests our entire attitude to the religion of Christ....

To the consideration, then, of the Person of Christ we address ourselves. That it is the most prominent feature of the Gospels is obvious to the most casual readers; that it was the substance of Christ's own teaching, the main theme of the Apostolic preaching and teaching, and the very life of all Church history, will be admitted by all, whatever may be their own view of Christ. We must endeavour to find out the reason of all this concentration of attention on Christ, and to see whether the Christian Church has been justified in giving this undoubted prominence and unique position to the Person of its Founder.


W. Griffith Thomas
Christianity is Christ, pp. 1-5.

Christianity is Christ

2 Key Text: **Php 3:8-11**
I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ... I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

3 Theme:
Jesus Christ is the center of Christianity. He is the focus of the New Testament, of the early church, and of the apostle Paul. Take Jesus away from the Christian and you don't have anything worth keeping. Christianity is no less and no more than Christ.

4 Application:
What is Christianity to you? Is it gathering weekly to worship? Is it a lifestyle characterized by moral behavior? Does it consist mainly in the content of your beliefs and a body of dogma? Christianity is Christ. Make the knowledge of Christ your consuming passion.



5 Knowing Christ

M O N D A Y Read **Php 3:1-21**. Notice that two groups of people are being identified in this section. Paul refers to the Philippian Christians, on the one hand, as "brothers" (vs 1) and to their opponents, on the other as "dogs" (vs 2). Make the following chart in your notebook and fill in any information you can.

Philippian Christians		Opponents	
Text:	Characteristic:	Text:	Characteristic:

T U E S D A Y In your notebook, make these columns in order to do a little "life accounting":

Before:		After:	
Profit	Loss	Profit	Loss

Focus particularly on **Php 3:4-11**. How would Paul fill out this chart? Before meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, what did he consider valuable and worthless? After meeting Jesus, what did he consider "loss" (vs 7) and "rubbish" (vs 8)? What did he consider to be his greatest "gain" (vs 8)? Under the Profit column, itemize the list Paul gives in verses 10-11.

W E D N E S D A Y Having done this, go through another "life accounting," this time focusing on your own life. Before Christ, what did you put under the Profit and Loss headings? After becoming a Christian, did your values change? What should be true of the values of a Christian? Does Paul's list in verses 10-11 reflect what is now in your Profit column? Write out, word for word, verses 7-8. Are these words true for you? How true are they? Write down your observations.

T H U R S D A Y Notice that the primary qualification for being a disciple in the days of Jesus was a willingness to be with Jesus and come to know him. The disciples were asked to leave their families and businesses (read **Mk 1:16-20; 2:13-14; 3:13-15**) to be with Jesus. Jesus did not establish a school of theology in order to make disciples. He had no formal course in Biblical studies. Rather, disciples were expected to become experts in Jesus himself. Read **Acts 1:15-26**. It is interesting that, in choosing a replacement for Judas, the other Apostles went looking for a man who had "been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us."

F R I D A Y Read the material in your commentary covering **Php 3:4-11**. How do those comments confirm or challenge your own conclusions on the text? What new insights does the commentary provide? Do you see any problems with the commentator's understanding of the text?

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Sundays During the Year

**I am the way
and the truth
and the life.
No one comes
to the Father
except through me.**

Jesus of Nazareth
John 14:6

Preaching the Man

It was no accident that the preaching of the apostles centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Faith can only be produced when Jesus is lifted up so that listeners can fall in love with him. Lessons on doctrine and morality can teach us **how** to act. But only preaching on Jesus Christ can tell us **why** we should act that way.

As you are reading and studying the gospels through the week, we will also focus on the gospels on Sundays. As a result, Sundays will be even more Christ-centered than usual.

- 1** The episode in Christ's life you have explored in your personal study will be the subject of the Sunday morning sermon. These sermons will be based firmly on the text you have been studying through the week, and will attempt to make the meaning of the text clear. Your observations and insights can thus be tested and compared to another's insights. The hope is that such a "dialogue" will make the life of Christ more powerful, more real for you than it has ever been before. The handout you receive each week will include an outline for the Sunday morning sermon. Be sure to follow along and make notes.
- 2** Sunday evenings will be more "topical" in nature, investigating some particular aspect of Christ's personality or ministry. The humor of Christ, his use of parables, his interactions with people — these are just a few of the topics to be explored each Sunday evening. The handouts will include brief essays or portraits of Christ's life from which the Sunday evening sermons will be drawn.
- 3** Each handout will include a small group Bible study on the gospels. If you would like to be involved in a group meeting near your home, call the church office for information on how to join.

1

Sermon Outline

[Quote from W. Griffith Thomas, see p. 1]

I. Christians and Christ

A. The Old Testament focuses on Jehovah

1. "In the beginning, God . . ." (Ge 1:1).
 - a. God created the world and made man.
 - b. Jehovah worked through Noah and Abraham and Moses and David.
 - c. It was Elohim/Yahweh/El Shaddai.
2. There were hints of a coming Messiah, but still it was Jehovah who was in center stage.

B. But in Christianity, the focus is on Jesus

1. "In the beginning was the Word . . ." (Jn 1:1)
 - a. The first four books of the New Testament are accounts of Christ's life.
 - b. Acts tells of his disciples preaching Jesus.
 - c. The epistles teach Christians how to live under Christ's lordship.
 - d. The Revelation shows Christ's victory.
2. Early Christians reflected this emphasis.
 - a. They called themselves by his name.
 - b. They sang songs about him, and prayed through him, and remembered his death.
 - c. When they were martyred, the last word on their lips was often the name of Jesus.
3. Christianity is Christ. Not that Christians refuse to believe in Jehovah; they simply believe that Christ is the God of the universe translated into human language.

II. Our Enemies and Christ

A. Enemies of Christianity have focused their attacks on the person of Jesus

1. They have ridiculed everything about him.
 - a. They have questioned his morals and impugned his character.
 - b. They have dismissed him as a hopeless idealist or labeled him a megalomaniac.
2. They have tried to convince themselves that he really didn't exist at all and, failing that, they have tried to convince everyone who would listen that his existence really didn't matter.

B. Most of the great heresies have centered on the person of Jesus Christ

1. When Christians go wrong there is something faulty about their understanding of Jesus.
2. Even today, the defining mark of a cult is its perversion of the person of Jesus.

C. Satan knows what he is doing

1. Destroy the Christology of the church and you destroy the church.
2. Get Christians to focus on something other than Jesus and you have taken their eyes off of the only thing that makes them distinct.

Transition:
Christianity is Christ. You can be moral and not be a Christian. You can be honest in your business and be a good citizen and never cheat on your income taxes. You can even be religious and worship God without claiming to be a Christian. The primary thing that makes Christians different is that they know Christ. Take Christ away from Christians, and you have nothing left worth keeping.

III. Paul and Christ

A. Musings to the Philippians

1. Review of past 30 years of Paul's ministry.
2. Last words to the Philippian church.
3. **Read Philippians 3:1-11**

B. The quest for Jesus

1. It began on the road to Damascus.
2. It continued through long years of ministry.
3. Now, at the twilight of his life, Christ is still the consuming passion of Paul's life. In all that time, Paul had not grown bored with Jesus. He still wanted to know him and would give up everything again in order to do so.

Conclusion: Us and Christ

[Read Thomas à Kempis quote, see p. 3.]

2

Familiar Converse with Jesus

3

Small Group Study

When Jesus is present, all is good and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, all is hard.

When Jesus speaks not inwardly to us, all other comfort is worth nothing; but if Jesus speaks but one word we feel great comfort. Did not Mary rise immediately from the place where she wept when Martha said to her: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (Jn 11:28)? Happy hour, when Jesus calls from tears to spiritual joy!

How dry and hard are you without Jesus! How foolish and vain, if you desire anything out of Jesus! Is not this a greater loss, than if you should lose the whole world (Mt 16:26)? What can the world profit you without Jesus? To be without Jesus is a grievous Hell; and to be with Jesus, a sweet Paradise. If Jesus is with you (Ro 8:35), no enemy shall be able to hurt you. He who finds Jesus finds a good treasure (Mt 13:44), yea, a Good above all good. And he who loses Jesus loses much indeed, yea, more than the whole world! Poor is he who lives without Jesus (Lk 12:21); and rich is he who is well with Jesus.

It is great skill to know how to hold converse with Jesus; and to know how to keep Jesus, great wisdom. Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with you (Pr 3:17). Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with you.

You may soon drive away Jesus, and lose His favor if you turn aside to outward things. And if you should drive Him from you and lose Him, unto whom will you go, and whom will you then seek for your friend? Without a friend you cannot live well, and if Jesus is not above all a Friend to you, you shall be indeed sad and desolate. You act therefore like an idiot, if you trust or rejoice in any other (Gal 6:14). It is preferable to have all the world against us, rather than to have Jesus offended with us.

Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself.
Thomas à Kempis
The Imitation of Christ, pp. 75-76.

Teaching the Man

Many congregations choose to focus their Adult Bible classes on the Look at the Man material. Thus, a Christ-centered viewpoint is maintained throughout the week in all aspects of the church. The classes may center on Christ-centered evangelism, worship, service, or relationships. They may draw from the handout material you will receive each week.

Whatever the format, these classes will encourage you to keep up your personal study, answer questions that arise in the course of your study, and stimulate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the man from Nazareth.

Your Look at the Man Notebook

We suggest you purchase a three-ring binder and load it with notebook paper. Use this binder to keep all the handouts. In addition, organize your study of the gospels by keeping your notes and observations in the binder as well. Sermon notes, Bible study exercises, small group insights - all can be stored in such a binder. At the end of the year, you will possess an invaluable resource for the future. Use it to review. Base further studies on questions you could only briefly touch this year. Add to it in the future. This one suggestion, if followed, will greatly enhance the value of Look at the Man to your personal growth.

For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2Co 4:5 & 6

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Col 1:28



Tools for Personal Bible Study

There is a crying need for Christians to stop admiring God's word and talking about it and pledging allegiance to it - and start reading and studying it! If a majority of Christians would begin to read the Bible in a regular and thoughtful way, it would revolutionize the church. And if ever a substantial number of us progressed from reading to actual study of God's word, there is no telling what miracles would result.

Look at the Man stresses Bible study rather than reading. You are asked to do more than peruse the text; you are encouraged to dig into it and squeeze out of it the meaning and power that is there. To do that, you need to start a library of tools which can help you come to deeper understandings. We have listed several books below. Some are simple and inexpensive. Others are more substantive and expensive. Choose at least one book in each category and order them either through the church office or your local Christian bookstore.

Commentaries

France, Richard. *Matthew*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985.

Lewis, Jack P. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (2 vols). The Living Word Commentary. Austin: Sweet Publishing Co., 1976.

Hurtado, Larry W. *Mark*. A Good News Commentary. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983.

Williamson, Lamar Jr. *Mark*. Interpretation Commentary Series. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to St. Luke*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982.

Bruce, F.F. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983.

Tennery, Merrill C. *John: The Gospel of Belief*. Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948.

Bible Dictionaries

Any good Bible Dictionary will give you a wealth of information for your study of the gospels. Find one that fits your price range and study level.

New Bible Dictionary. Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton: 1982.

Concordance

There are many good concordances available. Choose one that is based on the translation you like to use (e.g. *The NIV Complete Concordance*).

Atlas

New Bible Atlas. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1985.

Beitzel, Barry J. *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

Study Bible

We highly recommend the *NIV Study Bible*.

The Christian Must Know Christ

Introduction

What does a Christian have to know? What does the Christian have to know first and foremost? There are many answers to the first question, there is only one answer to the second. We need to know about the plan of salvation. We need to know about Scripture and how to find our way about the Bible. We need to know about morality. We need to know about doctrine and about some of the distinctive teachings that Jesus brought from the Father.

But when all of that is said and done, when we've learned all these things, have we yet become Christians? Is it possible to learn about doctrine, morality, the Bible, the plan of salvation but never really learn about Jesus?

Christians must know many things. But there is only one thing which is fundamental, only one thing which is first and foremost. The Christian is one who knows Christ. Christ is the focus of our learning. He is the foundation upon which all else in our lives is built. We study the Bible to know Christ. We learn of salvation to be in Christ. We behave morally to be like Christ. Of all the things a Christian must know, only one thing is primary and that is Jesus.

If we are to be a Christ-centered church, if we are to be a church that lifts up Christ to the world, we must be a church that knows who Jesus is. We must be a people who knows how Jesus thinks, who knows what Jesus feels, who knows what Jesus values. If we are intent on being the "church of Christ" in more than just name, we must become a church that knows Jesus.

Of course, we can't be Christ-centered without knowing how to become a disciple, or learning about the scriptures, or studying the morality that Jesus upheld, or becoming familiar with Jesus' teachings and commandments. But the focus is not on those things...the focus is on the mind of Christ. Those things must not be allowed to become an end in themselves. They are a means to the end of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. What Jesus saw to be important in producing disciples.

A. Apostles:

1. Jesus commands them, "Follow me." For three years, their primary duty was to walk with Jesus, and get to know him.
 - a. No formal course of Bible study.
 - b. No special training in study methods or preaching techniques or evangelistic approaches.
 - c. No lengthy catechism or doctrinal requirements.
2. Instead, they were asked to watch and come to know Jesus.
 - a. As he responded to people and situations.
 - b. As he responded to God.
 - c. They were to watch him and imitate him.
3. Following the resurrection of Jesus, the 11 disciples gathered to select someone who would take Judas' place (Acts 1:20ff). It is instructive that the single requirement for qualification put forth was that the candidate must have been with Jesus since the beginning. He had to have walked with Jesus as long as the others.

B. Paul - the making of a disciple.

1. Paul, before he became a Christian, while he still persecuted the church, knew much about scripture and God's morality, some about the church and the teachings of Christ. His knowledge of those things did not make him a Christian.
2. When Jesus wanted to make a disciple out of Paul, he didn't enlighten him on the plan of salvation, or on the distinctive teachings he had brought from the Father.
3. When Jesus wanted to make a disciple out of Paul, he forced Paul to meet him, and look at him, and ask the question, "Who are you, Lord?"
 - a. Something happened there on the Damascus road that radically changed Paul,
 - b. But it wasn't new doctrine, it wasn't an expanded morality, it wasn't a clearer understanding of Scripture.
 - c. It was, rather, a confrontation with the person of Jesus Christ himself.
4. Jesus **revealed** himself to Paul - that and that alone had the power to turn a Saul into a Paul.

Transition:

From that day, a fire was kindled in Paul that was to burn all the days of his life. Something was born on that day that would consume Paul, something that provided the focus and emphasis of his work and ministry. From that point on, Paul sought one thing above every other blessing - Paul wanted to know Christ. He wanted to know Jesus - not know about him. Paul didn't want to know dates and places and events - he wanted to know Jesus himself. As a man knows a woman, as one friend knows another, as two brothers know each other - just so did Paul want to know Jesus. It became the consuming drive of his life. **Read Philippians 3:1-11.**

II. Paul's Desire to Know Christ

A. Paul's "Profit" (vss 4-6)

1. His fleshly credentials for righteousness.
 - a. "A Hebrew of Hebrews" - circumcision, nationality, tribe.
 - b. In regard to the Law - a Pharisee.
 - c. In regard to zeal - a persecutor.
 - d. In regard to righteousness (legalistic) - faultless.
2. These were Paul's reasons for having confidence before God prior to the time he met Jesus on the road to Damascus.

B. Paul's Reassessment (vss 7-8a)

1. The great "BUT" of Paul's life:
 - a. He could have been content valuing the same things, pursuing the same course.
 - b. **Read Php 3:7-8a** - "BUT..."
2. Something happened to Paul that turned his life upside down.
 - a. What Paul considered "Profit" now seemed a complete "Loss."
 - b. The very thing which before he had seen as "worthless" (the message of Jesus) he now sees as the only profit he desires.

C. Paul's New Values (vss 8-11)

1. Paul's Gain:
 - a. Now all Paul wants is the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."
 - b. *Knowing* - What does Paul mean?
 - i. Does he want to memorize the gospels, or visit every place Jesus ever went, or recite all the facts about his life?
 - ii. *gnosis* - Intimate knowledge: (esp. O.T.) communion with another, relationship, even sexual intimacy.
 - iii. Paul wants to know Jesus. But not just with his head. He wants to know him with his heart as well.
2. Paul's Garbage: (vs 8b)
 - a. Paul has lost all things because of his desire to know Christ.
 - b. But it was all garbage anyway. *skubala* - Table scraps, manure.
3. Paul's Goal: (vss 8b-10)
 - a. To "profit" Christ. Not to profit from him or by him. Paul is not interested in what he can get out of Christ.
 - b. To be "found in" Christ.
 - i. Paul doesn't want God to find him standing alone, on his own righteousness, on his own merit.
 - ii. Paul wants God to find him standing in Christ, with Christ's righteousness and Christ's merit.
 - c. To "know" Christ.
 - i. The climax of Paul's thought.
 - ii. The ultimate purpose is to know Christ, to be in relationship with him.

III. The Necessity of Our Knowing Christ

A. What do we value and put our confidence in?

1. If anyone has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.
 - a. Born to Christian parents. My father was a preacher and his father before him.
 - b. I was baptized at 12; I began preaching at the age of 17. I attended both a Christian high school and a Christian University.
 - c. In regard to Law - a conservative.
 - d. In regard to zeal - a persecutor of the Baptists.
 - e. In regard to righteousness - not quite faultless, but pretty close.
2. The temptation to appeal to such things for our confidence.
 - a. The frequency of our church attendance.
 - b. The length of our membership in the church.
 - c. Our stand on particular issues.
 - d. Our evangelistic fervor.
3. All such things are garbage compared with the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - a. That is not to say that these things are unimportant.
 - b. It is to say that without the consuming pursuit of a personal and intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ as your Lord, none of the rest really matters.

B. The Need for Reassessment

1. Something has to happen to us that radically alters the things in which some of us put so much confidence.
 - a. We need to be confronted with the person of Jesus Christ himself, because only the knowledge of him gives us the ability to stand in God's presence.
 - b. Something must force us to look at Christ and ask the question, "Who are you, Lord?"
2. How I wish that we would come to the point where everything we could put our confidence in is considered garbage compared with the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord.

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Conclusion: Tithing mint, dill, cummin.

1. The problem with the Pharisees - they majored in minors and minored in majors. Jesus tried to straighten out their priorities.
2. The problem with Saul - he was doing the same thing. Seeing Jesus on the road to Damascus turned Paul's priorities upside down. Jesus taught him to focus an intimate, personal, relational knowledge of Jesus himself.
3. The problem with us? Have we too majored in minors and neglected the weightier matters? Have we been too busy tithing our mint, dill, and cummin to focus our time and energies on gaining Christ and coming to know Him?

Insight

A Christian is, in essence, somebody personally related to Jesus Christ. Christianity without Christ is a chest without a treasure, a frame without a portrait, a corpse without breath. Christ comes to each of us with an individual summons: 'Come to me,' 'Follow me.' And the Christian life begins as, however hesitantly and falteringly, we respond to his call. Then as we start following him, we discover to our increasing and delighted surprise, that a personal relationship to Christ is a many-sided, many coloured, many-splendoured thing. We find that he is our mediator and our foundation, our life-giver and our lord, the secret and the goal of our living, our lover and our model.... We learn that to be a Christian is to live our lives through, on, in, under, with, unto, for and like Jesus Christ...

There is so much in the world today which threatens to seduce the church from faithfulness to her heavenly bridegroom, and to distract her from essentials. I do not doubt that Paul, were he here in person today, would address to us the very same words that he addressed to the Christians in Corinth: 'I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.' We will need constantly to be brought back to this personal devotion, this 'one thing' which Martha had not learned but Mary had, and which Jesus said was not to be taken away from her....

And all of us ... need to recover something of the passion for Christ which has animated the saints in every age. I take two Scottish divines as my example. Andrew Bonar wrote in his journal: 'My soul's cry is still for more acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, and the Father in him.' And the same Bonar wrote at the end of his sketch of Samuel Rutherford: 'Oh for his insatiable desires Christward! Oh for ten such men in Scotland to stand in the gap! — men who all day long find nothing but Christ to rest in, whose very sleep is pursuing after Christ in dreams.'

If Christ were at the centre like that, an ailing church would quickly regain its health, and ailing Christians their vitality. For the principal thing is simply this, that we focus on Christ.

John R.W. Stott

Understanding Christ, pp. 155-156.

The Christian must Know Christ

Key Text: *Php 3: 10-11*

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Theme:

A Christian is one who knows Christ. We must not define Christians only by what they know of religion or ethical living or even the Bible. Christians are experts in Jesus. Though a knowledge of Jesus will lead to right doctrine and morality, such knowledge is Christ-centered and flows from our appreciation of him.

Application:

Have we majored in minors and neglected the "weightier matters"? Have we been too busy memorizing religious facts that we have failed to gain intimacy with Jesus? We need Jesus to fire us with a passion to know him above all things.



Sermon Outline

What does a Christian have to know? What does the Christian have to know first and foremost? There are many answers to the first question; there is only one answer to the second. We need to know about the plan of salvation. We need to know about Scriptures and how to find our way about the Bible. We need to know about morality. We need to know about doctrine and about some of the distinctive teachings that Jesus brought from the Father.

But when all is said and done--when we've learned all these things--have we yet become Christians? Is it possible to learn about doctrine, morality, the Bible, the plan of salvation but never really learn about Jesus?

Christians must know many things. But there is only one thing that is fundamental, only one thing that is first and foremost. The Christian is one who knows Christ. Christ is the focus of our learning. He is the foundation upon which all else in our lives is built. We study the Bible to know Christ. We learn of salvation to be in Christ. We behave morally to be like Christ. Of all the things a Christian must know, only one thing is primary and that is Jesus.

If we are to be a Christ-centered church, if we are to be a church that lifts up Christ to the world, we must be a church that knows who Jesus is. We must be a people who knows how Jesus thinks, who knows what Jesus feels, who knows what Jesus values. If we are intent on being the "church of Christ" in more than just name, we must become a church that knows Jesus.

Of course, we can't be Christ-centered without knowing how to become a disciple, or learning about the scriptures, or studying the morality that Jesus upheld, or becoming familiar with Jesus' teachings and commandments. But the focus is not on those things . . . the focus is on the mind of Christ. Those things must not be allowed to become an end in themselves. They are a means to the end of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. What Jesus Did to Make Disciples

A. Apostles:

1. Their primary duty was to walk with Jesus, and get to know him.
2. They were asked to watch and know Jesus.

B. Paul - the making of a disciple

1. When Paul became a disciple, Jesus didn't enlighten him first on doctrine or ethics.
2. He forced Paul to meet him, and look at him, and ask the question, "Who are you, Lord?"
3. Jesus *revealed* himself to Paul - that and that alone had the power to turn a Saul into a Paul.

Read Philippians 3:1-11.

II. Paul's Desire to Know Christ

A. Paul's "profit" (vss 4-6)

1. His fleshly credentials for righteousness.
2. These were Paul's reasons for having confidence prior to his meeting with Jesus.

B. Paul's reassessment (vss 7-8a)

1. The great "BUT" of Paul's life:
2. Something happened to Paul that turned his life upside down.

C. Paul's new values (vss 8-11)

1. Paul's Gain: knowing Christ.
2. Paul's Garbage: (vs 8b)
3. Paul's Goal: (vss 8b-10)

III. The Necessity of Our Knowing Christ

A. What do we put our confidence in?

1. The temptation to appeal to "fleshly" things for our confidence.
2. All such things are garbage compared with knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. The need for reassessment

1. Something has to happen to us that radically alters the things in which some of us put so much confidence.
2. How I wish everything we could put our confidence in would be considered garbage compared with knowing Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Tithing mint, dill, cummin.

Most of us have grown up knowing only one side of Jesus. We have heard a few of the gospel narratives. We know some of his teachings. We understand the outlines of his life, death, and resurrection. We think we are well acquainted with the Christ.

It is possible, however, that we have seen Jesus from only one perspective. There are those obvious and beautiful aspects of his character that capture our initial attention: his compassion and wisdom and perfection for example. Like thirsty travelers who have found an oasis, we are tempted to remain at this well and be satisfied to drink from its abundant waters.

But for the intrepid soul, there are other aspects of the Christ to explore—territories of his character that lie further from the beaten path. There is a far side to Jesus that merits our attention. In journeying there, we may discover that we do not know Jesus as well as we think.

Did Jesus ever laugh or cry? Did he ever feel anger or loneliness or impatience? Why were his words so caustic at times? Did Jesus, like many of us, have a particular temptation that was uniquely trying for him? Why would he hide his meaning from the crowds on some occasions (the parables), while on others he would be so blunt that many would no longer follow? Why did he so often do or say the unexpected? How could he hobnob with the low-lives while snubbing the religious and respectable?

There are aspects of Christ's character that are not easily understood. Just when you think you have him figured out, he says something that shocks you and leaves you wondering. Over the next few weeks, we will explore together this other side of Jesus, asking hard questions in an attempt to know him better. You may discover that you learn not only about him but about yourself as well.

Warm-up:

Tell the story (briefly) of your family--parents, grandparents, ethnic background, etc. If you could choose your background, what would it be? Why?

Look at the Man

Philippians 3:1-11

1. Paul was hungry to know Christ. What phrases or words in this passage tell you that?
2. Is Paul saying that his Jewish heritage is "rubbish"? Or is he saying that--compared to knowing Christ--even good and noble things have to be seen as worthless?
3. Look carefully at verse 10. What is it about Christ that Paul wants to know? What does Paul mean by "the power of his resurrection" or "the fellowship of his suffering"?
4. What do you think Jesus might feel about someone so passionate to know him? So willing to abandon everything else in search of him?

Looking Closer:

1. Name two or three things in your life for which you would be willing to suffer the loss of all your possessions, achievements, and honors. Is Jesus one of those few things?
2. Look at verses 4-6. What "reason for confidence" are we tempted to rely on?
 - a. We work hard and make diligent efforts.
 - b. We know the right answers.
 - c. We keep the commandments.
 - d. We go to the right church.
3. Paul says he wants a "righteousness that comes through faith in Christ." What does that mean?
 - a. Christ has become our righteousness.
 - b. The cross made us righteous when we sinners.
 - c. Christ did for us what we could not do ourselves.
 - d. All of the above.

Looking Around:

Go around the group. Say something about how important it is to Christ Jesus in a more personal way. Pray for those friends and relatives who need Jesus as Savior.

What is the Gospel?

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It is important that we understand what the gospel (“good news”) means and that we grasp what the essence of the gospel is. In your Bible Dictionary, read the article under “gospel.” Then read the following passages, making notes about the meaning of “gospel” in each passage: Mt 4:23; Mk 1:1; 16:15; Ac 15:5-11; Ro 1:9, 16-17; 2:16; 16:25; 1Co 15:1-8 (note 1Co 2:2); 2Co 4:3-6; 11:4; Ga 1:6-9; Php 1:15-18; 2Th 1:8; 2Ti 1:8-11; 2:8.

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Notice the message of Jesus. Though Jesus taught many things, his message centered on himself and his identity. Note the following claims of Jesus and how he asked people to believe those claims for eternal life: the interaction with Nicodemus (3:1-21 - esp. vss 13-21); the talk with a Samaritan woman (4:1-26 - esp. vss 10, 14, 26); bread for the crowds (6:25-59, esp. vss 27, 29, 35, 40, 46-51, 57); the preaching of Jesus at the feast (7:14-44 - esp. vss 17, 28-29, 37-38); the conflict with his opponents (8:12-59, esp. vss 23-25, 51, 58). Note also the following passages in John: 11:25-27; 12:44-46; 14:6-9, 23-24.

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Read 1Co 15:1-8. Paul defines the “gospel” as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus - in other words, the gospel is good news about Christ. The preaching of the apostles was consistently Christ-centered. Certainly, they spoke about doctrine and morality and theology to Christians. But when they spoke evangelistically, it was always on the subject of Jesus. Study the sermons of Acts for confirmation of this (Ac 2:14-39; 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 7:1-53; 8:5, 26-35; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 22:1-21; 26:1-23).

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What must Christians be ready to teach those who would come to Jesus? In your notebook, write down the “essentials” of the gospel based on the study you have just completed. What would you want to tell them about Jesus? How would you help them to fall in love with the Master? Write your response to this statement: Convincing someone of a doctrinal point will not necessarily produce commitment to the person of Jesus.

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Read the material in your commentary covering 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. How do those comments confirm or challenge your own conclusions on the text? What new insights does the commentary provide? Do you see any problems with the commentator’s understanding of the text?