

The Incredible Benefits of Really Knowing God

There was a time in my life when I struggled with all types of fears and insecurities, constantly worried about the future, my job, my ministry and my family. Needless to say, I wasn't really enjoying my life!

However, over time, the Lord helped me to change ... and He helped me understand an important key to truly enjoying life. It all begins with what the apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:10, something I believe we should all pray regularly:

"[For my determined purpose is] that I may *know Him* [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly]..." (AMP, emphasis added).

You see, when we get to know God—*really know Him*—it fills us with hope and confidence because we realize He's greater than any situation we will ever encounter. Understanding God's character and incredible love for us allows us to relax and trust Him in every area of our lives.

I've found that we can learn so much about the Lord by examining His many names found in the Bible. Each one reveals a unique aspect of His character along with a very specific promise for our lives.

The Bible says He is Jehovah Jireh, which means "Your Provider." He's Jehovah Rapha, "Your Healer," and Jehovah Shalom, "Your Peace."

The Lord is also referred to as Jehovah Nissi, "The Lord Our Banner." This means He is our "victory"; we can expect God to

help us win our battles over sin, addictive habits, pain from the past and anything else that stands in the way of His great plan for our lives.

Satan wants us to think about all the things we can't do. He wants us to compare ourselves to others and focus on our weaknesses. However, when the Lord looks at us, He sees our potential! He wants us to focus on how much we can do; He wants us to lean on His strength and ability to do the great things He has planned for us.

The story of Gideon in the book of Judges is the perfect example.

At this point in history, the Israelites were being oppressed by the Midianites, who were destroying their land and stealing their cattle. The Israelites had lost their freedom and were crying out to God for protection against their enemies.

"One day, as Gideon was working in his father's winepress and trying to hide from the enemy, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty man of [fearless] courage ... Go in this your might and you shall save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?'

"Gideon said to Him, 'Oh Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.'

"The Lord said to him, 'Surely I will be with you, and you shall smite the Midianites.'" (Judg. 6:12,14-16 AMP).

In Gideon's mind, he was the last person qualified to lead Israel's army to a victory. However, after more encouragement from the Lord, Gideon finally agreed.

As Israel's army of 32,000 men were preparing to go into battle, the Lord had Gideon send all but 300 of them home. God wanted them to totally depend on Him.

The Lord was about to teach Gideon (and us) an amazing lesson: No matter what we have or don't have, God can make up the difference when we place our trust in Him.

That day, Gideon and his 300 soldiers overcame the entire Midianite army—a force of more than 135,000 men!

I think most of us in some way can relate to Gideon. I remember back in the 1980s when I was still holding small conferences in my hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. Each week, we relied on a certain number of attendees to help cover the costs of the building and other expenses.

Well, one particular week, we had a snowstorm and attendance was down. Even while I was teaching, I was worrying about the bills, wondering how it would all work out. Then the Lord spoke to my heart and said, "Joyce, it doesn't matter how many people are here. Whether attendance is high or low, I can save you either way."

That day someone gave an unusually large donation, more than covering what we lacked due to low attendance. Like Gideon, I learned the lesson that God can save us whether we have "many" or "a few."

Maybe you're like Gideon. Maybe the Lord is asking you to step out in an area that seems impossible, or you're facing an issue that seems way too big to handle.

Whatever it may be, I want you to know that you're in a great place for a miracle. The God of all the universe—Jehovah Nissi, "The Lord Our Banner"—is on your side, and He never loses a battle!

I encourage you to get to know God more and more. Read and study His Word. Talk to the Lord like He's your best friend and ask Him to reveal His love and character to you in a greater way.

Because when you get to know Him—really know Him—it releases new hope and confidence in the one who can change every single area of your life.

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