
The People Who Know Their God Will Be Strong and Take Action

Resolutions for Life in Light of Knowing God

Galatians 3:26-28

I'd like for you to open your Bible to Galatians, chapter 3. For those of you who are visiting, you are here this morning on the tail end of a series we began about four weeks ago entitled, "Knowing God."

Sometimes churches get a bad rap and we bring it upon ourselves for this reason: We act as if there is something special about this building and this platform. The truth of the matter is – there isn't.

What *is* special is you, and me and the people seated around you. Christianity is all about lives being changed by the Grace of God. The truth is I wish that we could have done this series in your living room around your kitchen table, with me talking and you dialoging with me, asking questions because in the New Testament that's the way people learned.

It was Socratic, meaning there was dialogue. The idea that there's something very special about this platform and about the person who speaks from it gives churches this mentality that that's what Christianity is – and it's not. It's your life being changed by the grace of God.

The truth of the matter is what you do at home, what you say to people outside this building, how you live your life as a believer, on Monday ... Tuesday ... Wednesday ... Thursday ... Friday ... Saturday is far more important than what we do in the next twenty-five minutes.

I know that some of you wish this series would have been presented in your home where you could dialogue because you've been uncomfortable with some of the things that have been said.

Let me remind you, that I could be wrong in what I'm saying, I know that. I'm not God, nor am I his Vicar. He's not given me an insight into the interpretation of His word that others don't have.

Now having said that, I do not for a *moment* believe I am wrong. Not even close! There are no doubts within me, but what I'm saying to *you* is I realize I *could be* and so therefore, disagreement with your friend, your pastor, is okay.

Bottom line, you should never receive what anybody says, because that person says it, no matter their position. You are responsible for discovering truth and God reveals His truth in His word.

I believe I'm going to tell you the truth of His word this morning, but because I could be wrong you've got to search it out for yourself.

In light of that, because I don't believe I'm wrong, because I believe I will be telling you the truth this morning; continue to remind yourself that truth sometimes makes us uncomfortable and if truth makes us uncomfortable, we need to align our lives toward the truth in a time period of change that is not always easy.

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In other words, when God reveals Himself to us in His word He's not really concerned about your comfort. Having said that let me remind you what we have said so far in our five week study.

First, according to the Bible, God reveals Himself to us as Spirit. That means that God has no body and takes no form. He is Spirit and knows no end. This is why God is Omnipresent. He can be present with us here this morning, and He is, and simultaneously He can be overseas in Africa with our missionaries in Niger. He can be with you in your home as you pray over your sick child as well as in the White House – at the same time, for He is Spirit and has no form.

I have shown you in this series that God possesses both male and female attributes. Now this is where it's been a little confusing for some of you because any time you have thought about God you've only seen Him like a male. It's almost as if you are living in ancient Greece where your God is the mythological Zeus – an old man with a white beard and an arrow in his right hand, sitting on his throne, ruling the world with a wrought of iron; that's your image of God.

But I have shown you that when the Bible says that God has a powerful right hand – it's a metaphor. He has no hand. It is a metaphor of His strength and we are saved by His power and His strength. When the Bible speaks of His all-seeing eye, God has no actual eye. It's a representation that He sees all things. It's a metaphor.

I've shown you in this series that the Bible says God Has breasts. *El Shadai* is His name, the God with many breasts. God no more has an actual breast than He has an actual right arm, but why does Isaiah, the prophet, say He does? Why does Genesis, Moses – the Bible say He's *El Shaddai*? Why does John say it in Revelation of the glorified Christ? Because, God is revealing Himself to us in terms of His attributes.

In other words, God is stronger than the most powerful man who has ever lived. Infinitely stronger and more powerful, but He's also more gentle, tender, and nurturing than the most feminine mother who's ever cared and suckled her infant child.

When the Bible speaks of God having a womb; God no more has a womb than He has a right foot. It's a metaphor, but John Calvin understood the metaphor when he commented in Isaiah and said God represents Himself to us as a female and we are the fruit of His womb.

He understood that all God was doing was revealing to us His tender nature, for us, His children. Do you understand metaphors now? We Christians are so intellectually lazy. We want people to tell us something and we're going to believe it because they say it. We don't think through what it means for God to be Spirit.

We don't think through who God is and then when we come to men and women we make all kinds of errors and we miss what Scripture teaches, which is this: God created man and woman; males and females in His image. So that when you see a man you see the attributes of God's strength and power. When you see a woman you see the attributes of God—tenderness and nurturing.

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The only time in the creation narrative that God ever said “It is not good,” is when He created the male. Then He comes along and He creates the female and says, “It is very good.” Now, why would He do that? Because it is only in the man *and* the woman that the full-orbed image of God is seen.

I showed you last week the reason it is important for us to understand God as He reveals Himself to us is because it is through the knowledge of Him as He is that true healing comes to us.

In other words, when you begin to understand God, the way He reveals Himself to be, not the way you grew up thinking God was ... when you understand the scriptural, inspired, infallible revelation of your Creator, then you will understand that God never moves in your life in power, but that His actions are wrapped in love.

In other words, God no longer becomes this distant Deity who is forcing you to bow your knee in submission to His Kingship. No, He is King alright, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Creator of the universe, but He is tender toward you. He loves you. He nurtures you better than any human mother could ever nurture her children. Now, that’s what we’ve been talking about.

Now, let me just say a couple of things before we read our text. Some people have heard this series and have said to me “There you go Pastor Wade, all you’re doing is promoting feminism.” I say, “What! You’ve got to be kidding me, feminism? What are you talking about?” I no more promote feminism than I do patriarchalism. That means male superiority. Isn’t it amazing how feminists want authority over, just like patriarchalists want authority over?

Listen, I’m not promoting feminism. I’m promoting the Word of God. When you begin to understand who God is and you believe in Him and follow Him do you know what you do as a man or a woman? You serve. You serve the people around you, you love them; why? Because when you understand that you’re in the image of God then you don’t need to promote your position, your superiority or your personhood over another in order to feel significant.

You are significant because of who you are. Therefore, out of the knowledge of who you are you serve others. This, isn’t a promotion for feminism, for heaven’s sake. In fact, let me even prove that to you.

Do you realize that it was only when God came to earth, *Emmanuel*, that women were set free? Have you ever thought about that? In fact, I would propose to you; culture by its very nature suppresses women; Jesus sets you free.

Here’s an example, do you know what one of the prayers of the Jewish men was? It was a daily prayer. They prayed it every morning listen to it: “God, thank you that I am a Jew and not a Gentile. God, thank you that I am free and not a slave, and lastly God, thank you that I am a man and not a woman.”

Let’s take a look at our text Galatians 3, verse 26 through 28. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with

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Christ. There is neither Jew, nor Greek, God, [thank you that I am a Jew and not a Gentile.] There is neither slave nor free. [God, thank you, thank you that I am free and not a slave.] There is neither male nor female [and lastly God, thank you I am a man I am not a woman.] For you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Paul was chopping the legs out from under this idea of male superiority.

In Christ, we are one. Now let me show you what this means practically and we’ll conclude our series with these thoughts. First, the blessings of God in Christ are given to men and women equally. Our text says, “You are all sons of God through Christ Jesus.” Obviously that doesn’t mean we’re all males because the text distinguishes male and females.

What does it mean – “we all”? Males and females; slave and free; Jew and Greek; we are *ALL*, one in Christ; *ALL* sons of God. What does that mean? Well, it’s very clear: In the Old Covenant, if you were a Jew, if you were a male, if you were the first-born son—you received all the blessings; you received all the favor; you received a double portion of the inheritance—you were “it”.

Here comes Jesus, Emmanuel; the first-born and only begotten son of God and in His life and in His death and in His resurrection; He obtained for all of us the blessings of the Father. Therefore, it makes no difference if you’re male or female; slave or free; Jew or Gentile – in Christ all the blessings of God are yours.

Please don’t fall into this fish trap of teaching that says “Men are created in the image of God and have their favor and women are created in the image of man and are their servants” – that’s ridiculous.

The New Testament says in Christ we are one. Now, what does this mean? Well, the practical application of this is clear. First, it is the privilege of both men and women to teach others of Jesus Christ. We’re living in a day where there are some men who say, “I will never be taught by a woman. I will never allow a woman to teach me the Word or about Christ.” And they think that they are being biblical – not even close! Let me prove it to you.

We find in the New Testament when God split the heavens [and came to earth] and set women free. We find that Priscilla was a co-worker of Paul, we find Junia was an apostle of Christ, we see Anna in the temple and Luke, chapter 2 says, “All the people gathered around her, men and women and she taught them of Christ.” We find Phillip’s four daughters prophesied in Acts 21. I could go on and on and on, but let’s examine Anna in closer detail.

In Luke, chapter 2, the word that is used when it says that Anna spoke to the men and women of Christ is the same word that is used of Jesus in Mark, chapter 2, verse 2 where the Scripture says that Jesus went to Capernaum and the crowds gathered around Him were so large that He had to come outside of the house and He preached to them the Kingdom of God. It’s the same word. Anna did it in the temple; she spoke of Christ.

Second, it is the privilege of both men and women to serve others for Christ: Phoebe was a deaconess servant who carried Paul’s letter to the Romans in the folds of her robe. The very word

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Deacon is used of Phoebe – she was a servant, that’s what the word means. It’s the privilege of men and women, *both*, to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, it is the privilege of both men and women to lead others to saving faith in Christ. We see examples of this throughout the New Testament and then of course in our modern day we see examples of this: Lottie Moon; our female missionary to China. She went and she led many men and women to faith in Christ and baptized them. Our Christmas offering is called the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

The New Testament teaches us that because we are all sons of God, there is a freedom to teach, a freedom to serve; a freedom to lead of both of men and women. Let me give you a couple of illustrations of this ... Our Women’s Ministry Team is currently looking for a Pastor to Women; someone to shepherd and disciple women. This is a verb – it means to nurture, to serve.

One of the women that they interviewed and brought to us was a young lady named M.K. She was the number one theological graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary. I called her professors and they said, “Oh, she’s a gifted, gifted, teacher.”

She gathered with the pastoral staff, men and women here at Emmanuel and she taught us. She opened to the Gospel of Luke and she taught the story of Christ walking on the water. She was brilliant.

She was Socratic, she asked questions; there was a dialogue. When she got done, after about forty minutes, we went to a staff retreat and she went on back to Dallas. All the guys could talk about was the wonderful teaching of M.K.

Is that a surprise to you? It shouldn’t be. She’s gifted – she’s anointed. She’s just like Anna. She’s just like Lydia. She’s just like Priscilla. She’s just like other women in the New Testament – gifted.

I’ll give you another illustration ... years ago when I served on the International Mission Board [IMB] as a trustee; some of you know the troubles that I had with the IMB.

What I am teaching you is not new to me. I’ve written on this for over a decade.

If you’ve ever gone on my blog and you’ve read – you know that I believe with all of my heart this is the teaching of the New Testament that men and women are equal in Christ.

I was a trustee for the IMB and we were in a meeting and a question was asked by fellow trustees they said, “You know, we’ve got a woman who’s a missionary in China; she’s single; she’s by herself; she’s near Tibet and she has won many Chinese men and women to faith in Christ.

I knew and had learned even more as a trustee that women–foreigners–particularly, foreign women have an easier time getting into China than men.

She’s out there by herself and she has led these people to Christ. Then my fellow trustee said, “What are we going to do? How are they going to be baptized?” I looked around and said “What are you talking about?” And they said, “Well, she’s taught them of Christ, they’ve been converted, they’ve come to

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faith in Christ and they need to follow the Lord in Believers Baptism. How are they going to be baptized?” I said, “Why is that even a question?”

When Jesus gave us the Great Commission He said Go and teach all things concerning me— baptizing the disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The people whom He commissioned are the people who’ve been given the privilege of baptizing converts.

“Our missionary should gather the families around and baptize them.” “No! Never! Never ever could a woman ever baptize a man.” I said, “Show me in Scripture where that is prohibited.” They couldn’t. I pressed, “Show me.” “Well, we can’t. That’s just the way we ...” “Show me in the Word where this missionary cannot baptize her converts.” “We can’t.”

But here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to spend three thousand dollars and were going to fly a male trustee to Tibet and we’re going to let him baptize her converts. I said, “Ichabod is written across the door of our convention if we do that.” No wonder they wanted to kick me off the board. This is ridiculous. What are we doing? The Scripture says, “In Christ we are all sons of God.”

Second, all the roles in the church and home are filled by people with character gifting and anointing. Let me show you what I mean. First, in a Christian marriage when you understand the equality of men and women there is flexibility in roles. Now each marriage is different with different personalities and different goals; neither spouse will be gifted to lead in every area of marriage. Each leads where they are strong and able and gifted like instruments in a duet – deferring to the other.

For Example, I’ve met some Christian men who say, “Well, my wife, she’ll never take care of the finances. That’s my job. I am the boss and I’m going to deal with the money.” I say, “Wait just a second, that’s the wrong attitude. Who’s gifted in handling the money?” In our marriage, I’m a free spender. I’ll give it away, I’ll spend it. I’m not a budgeter, but my wife, she’s a numbers person. She’ll operate by a budget. She’s gifted in that area so she does it.

Now I know that there are some Christian men who will say, “Well, you know, I’m the boss; I’m the leader, I’m going to take care of my house, my wife needs to be barefoot and pregnant – stay home and take care of the family – that’s who she is.” I say, “Wait, hang on.” That may be good for you, no problem with that, but you better not impose that on everybody else.

Do you remember my cousin? He was a stock broker when 9-11 happened he quit his job. He and his wife have three beautiful kids. His wife works with Nike. She’s the head of the billion-and-a-half dollar Jordan arm of Nike. What does my cousin do? He stays home and he raises those kids. Why? Because his wife is gifted. Is there anything wrong with that? Absolutely not. What would be wrong is if my cousin imposed his marriage on yours, or if you imposed your marriage on his.

Where there is equality, there are roles based upon character, gifting or anointing. You say, “Well now wait a minute pastor—here’s the problem. How in the world do people make decisions where the man sees his wife as an equal and the wife sees her husband as an equal? How in the world do you make decisions?” What, are you kidding me? Is that genuinely a question? I don’t understand it.

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Here's how you make a decision. You talk. You discuss. You listen to the Holy Spirit. You come to an agreement and in harmony—you make a decision.

You say, "Well pastor, we're not in agreement yet." Then wait. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." One of the evidences of the Spirit of God in the home is harmony.

You say, "Oh, but pastor there are times when decisions have to be made and we cannot come to an agreement. If we are equals, what do we do?" I'll tell you. Here's a good plan of action. The person who is gifted and responsible for that area of the family makes the decision and the other spouse defers.

For example, we wanted to buy a new television. When I watch television—I'm half blind anyway—I want to see a *big* screen. I want the big screen. Who's in charge of the budget at the Burluson home? My wife. Could we come to an agreement on buying a big screen? No. I asked her to pray about it, I asked her to fast; we still couldn't come to an agreement. Ephesians 5 says, "Submitting one to another" right? I defer to my wife.

There are other areas in our marriage where I am responsible. My wife, if we can't come to an agreement will defer to me, but it's none of this – 'I'm the boss' type of thing. It's equality. In a Christian Church, there's a focus on serving.

Let me give you some encouragement. If you ever attend a church where the pastor acts as if he is God's Vicar, and is telling you that you should listen to him because his word is like God's Word. Put your tennis shoes on and run. Get out! Do you know why? Listen to Jesus: "Those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lorded over others. It shall never be that way among you."

In a church any time there is an emphasis on authority the image of God has been marred because when God moves in power and leads us it is always in love and persuasion. So it is in gifted, anointed leadership. There's not a forcing of people through authority. There is a leading of persuasion of people through love and serving. This is why men and women serve based upon their giftedness in the church in the New Testament.

Third, in the Christian life Christ Alone is my Spiritual authority. Now I know that many of you grew up with this idea that as a woman there was an authority over you—a spiritual authority—first a father, then a husband. Listen to me: The New Testament says, "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." Mom and Dad.

In some cases where there is a fractured home a mom must serve as a mom and a dad and she can do it quite capably. And sometimes a Dad must serve as a mom and a dad and he can do it quite capably because the Spirit of God resides in Him and God is not gendered. He has both the attributes of the male and female; the strength and the nurturing. But in a home where there is a mom and Dad—kids you obey them.

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Let me tell you something. Your only ultimate authority ladies is Jesus Christ because young ladies your dad may one day tell you to do something that is too embarrassing for Pastor Wade to even mention right now—I've seen it happen in too many families. Young ladies, you kick, you fight, you scream, you hit, and you call the police because your only authority is Jesus Christ; ultimately.

Ladies, when you get married I know you're taught that your authority is your husband. NO! It's Christ! Do you remember when Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration with His disciples? Moses and Elijah were with him. Then the cloud fell and there was fog all around and the disciples. They were very, very interested in talking to Moses, Elijah, Jesus, but then the earth shook and the disciples fell on their face in fear and when they looked up Moses and Elijah (the Old Testament lawgiver; the Old Testament prophet) were gone and Jesus alone was standing there. The voice from Heaven said to the disciples. "This is my beloved son. Hear Him. Hear Him."

Ladies, your job is to hear Christ. You say, "But Pastor, I want to serve my husband; I want to be submissive to my husband." Of course you do, just like a Christian Man wants to serve his wife and be submissive to his wife—this is a sense of servility. That's the Spirit of God, but your only authority is Jesus Christ. I can prove it to you in an instant.

When you die and go to Heaven, you will not be married. Do you realize the only religions who tell you that you'll be married for eternity are the religions that try to force you into an understanding that somehow, some way, a male is like Christ to you, over you?

When you die and go to Heaven there is no marriage, so ladies it would be to your benefit to learn how to live with Christ as your spiritual authority and no other human being. You say, "Pastor, I want to submit to my husband." I understand what you're saying, but you're missing my point.

My point is you are an equal and the Scripture teaches us this. In Christ we are all sons of God. So in our giftedness, and in our character, and in our calling we serve, we lead, we teach however God and His Spirit impresses us.

I close the entire Series with this final point. Knowing God's true character causes me to view the opposite gender with respect and dignity.

Let me give you five resolutions for my life based upon Knowing God as He reveals Himself in Scripture.

Number one: I will view all human beings as fellow image bearers of God. I get sick in my stomach when I hear about those six men who raped that woman on the bus in India; who later dies. This is an extreme example of men seeing woman as chattel and property. Those six men will answer to God.

Men, listen to me. Whenever you abuse, whenever you mistreat, whenever you suppress a woman you shove your fist in the face of God.

I will actively strive for an environment of gender equality in my home and in my church.

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I will empower people to function in their God given and spirit-gifted roles regardless of gender. Any time you immediately go to gender and say, "I'll not listen—she's a woman; I'll not follow—she's a woman" you have missed God.

I will not Lord over other people my position, title or economic status. I will be a servant to all and I will continue to find my personal identity and fulfillment in Jesus Christ and His grace in my life.

Now some of you have heard this series and you've said to yourself, "Come on Pastor, what are you doing Wade – what's your agenda? What's your goal? Is there going to be a senior pastor who's a woman at Emmanuel? Is that your agenda?" Wait, I'm senior pastor, please don't replace me.

No, that's not what I'm saying, but what I am saying is this. If you ever go to a church that has felt led to call a woman who pastors, you better be very careful before you judge them or condemn them and say you know better. Any time you're speaking on behalf of God; take a humble approach.

What I am doing is this: Ladies, I want you to be free. That's what grace is all about. Free, you are free. I want to empower you through knowing God to understand that God not only knows you, He identifies with you. You relate to Him on your own. You don't need a male.

Men, I want you to see that it is not about gender in Christ – it's about gifting, calling, anointing—even in a marriage. What I want you to do is to go home and be the man God has called you to be. Be chivalrous, be the guy who is polite.

Any time you see me walk my wife to the car, I open the door and I let her in. She is the queen of my life. She is my equal. I treat her with respect and dignity. Yes, but I know she is gifted in areas that I am not. So, what I'm going to do is I'm going to visit with her and I'm going to follow her leadership in those areas where she's gifted and I have no qualms in doing that because I know who I am and I know who she is and both of us reveal the full-orbed image of God.

I'm going to lead a church to an understanding of the importance of women and men serving together for the Glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom.

Next Sunday, we're back to Hebrews, chapter 12, for the next two-and-a-half years we'll be looking at Hebrews, chapter 12 and Hebrews, chapter 13, but in the future if anybody ever says, "Pastor Wade, what's your position on women?" All they have to do is be handed this five series set. I've believed it for decades. It was just now time to teach it.