

I believe part of my DNA is about improvement. There's always a better way to do something. A better it improves part of the house. More fish to catch. A better golf score.

A life more like Christ. A life that is more in line with what God intended for me. A church that is more vibrant. One who is growing people. One who is attracting people. One who is serving people.

Yes that implies change. There should, I believe, always be change. Change to make things better. To improve upon what it is we are doing. To never get too comfortable or satisfied. That is different than just changing to change. I've been part of that before too. "We should change this or that and HOPE it makes some improvement" "Everybody else is doing this so we should too. All the cool churches are ___ so we should too"

No that is not what I'm talking about. But to look for things that improve ourselves and our individual walks. How can we improve this faith experience? How is it that we can position ourselves to really become more transformed into his likeness? Or as a church. What is it we can do to glorify God more? How is it that we as PC can foster an environment where people are becoming deeply connected to God, where they are intently serving him? How can PC become a place where people who are far from God are coming to begin a relationship with him?

To me those are ongoing questions that should challenge you and me here.

These questions stir within us. God works on us in our hearts and in our minds to become, to improve, to be the body better. He challenges us to take steps to grow and to improve.

Chip Ingram's Book *The Real God* has recently challenged me.

This book is what FC is working through. Jason Parsons is coming here in a few weeks and I am going there and he wants me to continue with their discussion. So after reading the book, there are some great things here I believe you and I can benefit from.

Ingram says,

20. what you think about God shapes your whole relationship with him and additionally what you believe God thinks about you determines how close you will grow toward him

23 your misconception about God have formed a barrier that keeps you from experiencing him as he really is and as he wants to be seen

24. there's a difference between understanding God's attributes intellectually and letting them affect the way you live your life

31. Tozer says, "what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us The way we think about God impacts all aspects of our life."

To be sure about this, these are not statements allowing us to think up our own imagined god. We don't have the freedom to simply imagine who God is. But rather they are placing great importance on our knowing and thinking and believing the one true God. And again this is not completely achievable thing. We'll, while here, will never completely know God. To continue on this coming to know is part of our journey.

Romans 12:1-2(NRSV)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Philippians 4:6-9(NRSV)

6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

And so the importance of thinking the right things about God.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

There is a lot of emphasis on our thinking about. And for a good reason. We relate by faith and not sight. We're making a relationship based not like our human ones but one imagined.

Our thinking about and believing in God is based on relationship. Unlike personal relationships which are human and based largely on experience, our relationship with God, what we think about him and what we believe he thinks of us is spiritual and based largely on faith.

But like our human relationships, our part is active, it seeks the other, there is effort in coming to know the other. Likewise is it with God. We are called to seek and exert effort to come to know. We perceive things about him then formulate a clearer perception of who he is. The relationship grows and is dependent upon that perception.

Here's an exercise in perception.

Coming up on basketball season. To get more out of the game, one has to train your eye on aspects of the game. You can then understand more of the game

(Used this video as an illustration)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47LCloidJh4>

Sometimes our perception is biased because of what we are looking for. Our perception of the scene of the basketball players was biased because we were looking for something specific. We were looking at the ball and counting.

Similarly when we consider our perception of God, that perception can be biased based on what we are looking for. Our thinking about God, or our vision of him, or our beliefs about him can be limited by what we learned from other people. If what you know about God is mostly what you see or hear from people, you probably will be missing out on some important aspects of his character. You'll miss the moonwalking "baya"!

Or our perception can be solely based on the experiences we have at church. There are expectations and things we naturally look for within the church that we believe represents a complete picture of God. It is easy to focus just on the ball and counting the passes. We too can get so focused on Church, style of worship, what we sing, the activities the church promotes, the behavior that are typically accepted. And this list can go on. But is it possible that we can get so narrow-minded on these things that we miss out on a clearer picture of God. Consequently we miss a richer deeper and more complete relationship with him.

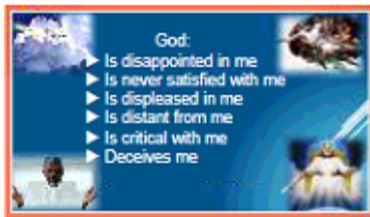
We can get too wrapped up in church that we miss Him!

Matthew 7:21-23 (NRSV) 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' 23 Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'

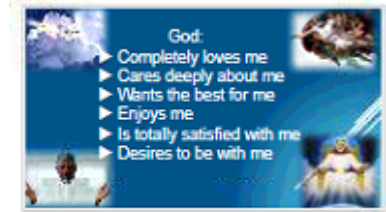
It is so important then that we have a clear perception of God and then respond relationally as we come to know him.

What you think about God shapes your whole relationship with him and additionally what you believe God thinks about you determines how close you will grow toward him

The truth is we can never fully know God. He is ultimately incomprehensible. But the good news is that he can be made more known to you. You can come to know him more deeply then live a life that reflects the deeper relationship you have.



How do you imagine God?



We will explore this the next several weeks.

God makes himself known by nature, Jesus, our experiences (prayer church scripture spirit)

But in each of these we are to seek and choose. We must exert effort in coming to know him. There is a commitment to seeking him by faithfully coming here, frequently seeking him in the Bible, devoting selves and time to prayer.

We have a responsibility in coming to see him more clearly, understanding him more fully. I hope you will join me in exploring just how we can do just that.