

A misty forest scene with a path leading to a bright light, surrounded by trees and fallen leaves. The path is covered in red and orange autumn leaves. Several large, dark rocks are scattered along the path. The trees are tall and thin, with green and yellow foliage. A bright light emanates from the end of the path, creating a strong glow and illuminating the mist. The overall atmosphere is serene and spiritual.

What it means to Know God



Introduction

In his book *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, Timothy Keller advances the biblical idea that “our ultimate future is one of perfect, ***unhindered*** love – love with God and others.” This very thought reminds us that in our present existence, before we meet Christ face-to-face, we can be hindered – and many times are - as we make our journey toward the *Celestial City* (heaven).

To be hindered is to face an impediment or an obstruction. Throughout our lives, we have faced thousands of hindrances – from flat tires to cancelled flights to surgery. We have been injured, rained out, misled, interrupted, opposed, re-routed, delayed, and prevented. Generally, these impediments come without warning, blind-side us in unguarded moments, and create varying degrees of difficulties for us.

Introduction

Depending on the kind and intensity of the hindrance we encounter, whether a mild inconvenience or a serious problem, we become immediately aware of the consequences that we will have to pay for this unwelcomed intruder. Our flat tire will make us late.

As it is in the physical world in which we live, so it is in our spiritual lives. While (figuratively) walking on the mountain tops, we are keenly aware of the deep valleys below. One day we can be walking with Christ, enjoying His fellowship and the blessings of His presence and power, only to succumb to a fierce temptation or doubt in the next. As with Job, our unparalleled joy can quickly turn into immense sorrow, and we can be robbed of the closeness with God we once enjoyed.

Introduction

The Scripture indicates that a **person** may be a hindrance to our relationship with God. Paul asks the Galatian churches, “You were running well; who **hindered** you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7). At times, we are not told what the hindrance was, as in the case of Paul who told the Christians at Rome that he had “often been **hindered**” from coming to them (Rom. 15:22). In I Thessalonians 2:18, Paul told the believers there: “For we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, more than once – and yet Satan **thwarted** (hindered) us.” And the Apostle Peter reminds husbands that their prayers may be **hindered** if they don’t live with their wives in an understanding way and do not grant them honor as fellow-heirs of the grace of life (I Pt. 3:7).

The Basic Meaning of *Hinder*



The primary sense of the word group for *hinder* in the Greek language is “to block the way.” Only a temporary hold-up is suggested. In the New Testament, the obstacles are always of a religious nature.



What Hinders You?

While we will not be able to prevent or remove all of the physical hindrances we encounter in life, there are certain biblical precautions we may take to preserve our relationship with Jesus Christ. In his book *Longing for Heaven*, British theologian Peter Toon (1939-2009) wrote about the steps we can take to live in hope while waiting and longing to enter into the glory of God. He also noted that there are “*hindrances* that must be removed or put away.” He lists seven hindrances, while admitting that this is not an exhaustive list and that we may be aware of others. His method is to use questions for our personal reflection.



Seven Hindrances

1. Are you living in a particular sin of which you are conscious and have not repented?
2. Is making money, amassing possessions or a related pursuit more important to you than rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?
3. Do you spend a lot of time in the company of those who make no time for the worship of God and the seeking of his kingdom?
4. Do you regularly engage in arguments about minor religious questions or grumble about this or that moral problem?



Seven Hindrances

5. Have you a proud and haughty spirit?
6. Have you a slothful, indolent spirit in spiritual matters?
7. Are you contented with preparation for the heavenly life or, maybe, with the foretaste of it available here on earth?



Additional Hindrances to Knowing God

- Have you failed to acknowledge that knowing God is the greatest privilege in the world?
- Are you distracted by marginal issues and concerns, putting second things above first things? “By valuing too highly a real, but subordinate good, we have come near to losing that good itself...Every preference of a small good to a great, or a partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice was made...You can’t get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first” (C.S. Lewis).
- Is there a lack of humility and submissiveness before Him?

Additional Hindrances to Knowing God

- Do you neglect the means of grace: the Word of God, sacraments, & prayer? The *Shorter Catechism*, Q. 88 asks, “What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?” The Answer: “The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.”
- Do you long for independence and fear giving up control? “What I have in my own hand, I usually lose; but what I put into God’s hand is still, and ever will be, in my possession” (Martin Luther).

Additional Hindrances to Knowing God

- Are you unwilling to be patient and wait on the Lord?
- Do you refuse to obey God's Word and will?
- Do you neglect practicing spiritual disciplines?
- Do you desire personal holiness? "Say not that you have royal blood in your veins, and are born of God, except you can prove your pedigree by daring to be holy" (William Gurnall).
- Do you fear the disapproval of others? "Never let a man who is but a worm frown you away from God" (Charles Spurgeon). "If we are determined to be honored and smiled upon by our fellowmen, we shall remain alienated from God" (A.W. Pink).

Additional Hindrances to Knowing God

Are you being drawn away from Christ by other people?
“Association with inconsistent Christians has been the downfall of many young believers. The devil delights to use God’s own birds as a decoy for his nets” (Charles Spurgeon).





What It Means To Know God

1. It means knowing God as *Lord*, **knowing His name**.
2. It means knowing His ***control***, His mighty works in nature and history. “It is all of God, all of grace.”
3. It means knowing his ***authority***, knowing what He commands us to do. So, knowledge of God is an *obedient* knowledge. Knowledge leads to obedience, and obedience leads to knowledge.
4. It means knowing His inevitable and intimate ***presence*** as the One who unites us to Him in a covenant relationship.
5. It means that “as we come to know **about** God, we inevitably come to know **Him**” (Frame).

What It Means To Know God

6. It means we **cling** to Him. “My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me” (Ps. 63:8).
7. It means we **wait** upon Him: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10).
8. It means we **trust** Him: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6).
9. It means we **obey** Him: “I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies!” (Ps. 119:125).

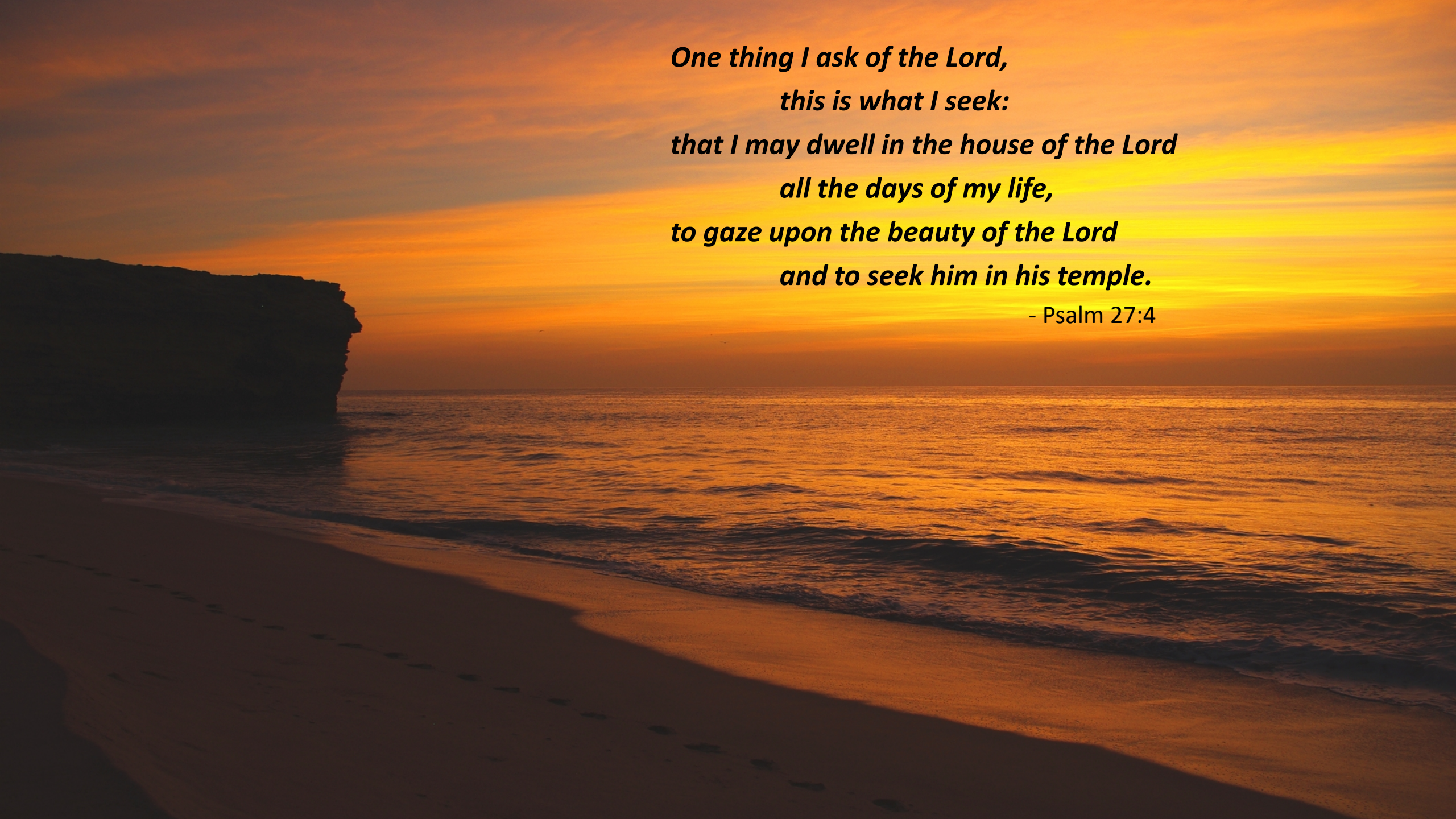
What It Means To Know God

10. It means we know His **judgments**: “The Lord has made himself known; he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands” (Ps. 9:16).
11. It means we know His **ways**: “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths” (Ps. 25:4).
12. It means we **glory in His name**: “Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!” (Ps. 105:3-4).

Counsel From J.I. Packer

What Does the Activity of Knowing God Involve?

1. First, listening to God's Word and receiving it as the Holy Spirit interprets it, in application to oneself;
2. Second, noting God's nature and character, as His Word and works reveal it;
3. Third, accepting His invitations, and doing what He commands;
4. Fourth, recognizing, and rejoicing in, the love that He has shown in approaching us and drawing us into this divine fellowship.

A full-page background image of a sunset over a beach. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, with the sun low on the horizon. The ocean reflects the warm light, and gentle waves are visible. In the foreground, a sandy beach is partially covered by the shadow of a cliff on the left. The cliff is a dark silhouette against the bright sky.

***One thing I ask of the Lord,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.***

- Psalm 27:4