

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

SERMON TITLE: How You Can Know God Personally

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Be finding the book of Psalms, that's about the middle book in the Bible, and find the nineteenth chapter of the Psalms.

Some time ago, somebody handed me a tract. That tract was distributed by the American Atheist Association. They are handing out tracts also. And the title of the tract was, "An Invitation to the Intellectual Elite." So I thought I would see if I was in that group. And so I read it and here's what it said, "If you accept, number one, that God is a myth, humankind's future is in its own hands. Secondly, prayers are what you say to yourself. Success in life depends upon human effort. Thirdly, humans are a part of nature and developed in it. What purpose there is in life, humans make." Next, "When you die your life is over forever. Only your ideas can survive." Next, "The church and clergy are in business for themselves. They have no more special knowledge about life than the average person." Next, "Humankind is responsible for what it does. There are no sins. Crimes cannot be forgiven by religious rites, holy water, or doing penance." Next, "The time to live is now. The place to live is here. And the way to be happy is to make yourselves and others happy." And then it says, "If you believe that, you're an atheist." May I say, I don't believe it! I must not be a very intellectual, according to them.

Let me say this, you can be an intellectual and believe in God, did you know that? You certainly can be. And I want to say something else. You need not be an intellectual to believe in God. Matthew 11 verse 25, "*God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.*"

Now, somebody says, "Well, Pastor, I know some intellectuals who believe in God." Fine! I know some intellectuals who don't. You say, "Well, Pastor, I know some people who are not very bright who believe in God." I know some people who are not very bright who don't believe in God. I mean, ladies and gentlemen, it's really not a matter of your gray matter. You don't come to God head first; you come to God heart first. "*And God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and God has revealed them unto babes.*"

Now I want to tell you today how you can know God personally. You don't have to guess about it. You can know Him personally. And that's so very important. You see, because to know Him is to trust Him, to trust Him is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to be blessed.

Now how can you know God? Well, the nineteenth Psalm gives us three ways in which God speaks to us. And you don't have to guess about it. There can be no stutter, no stammer, no apology, no equivocation. You can know God personally, intimately, assuredly. You can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Now here are the three things. Here's the three ways that God speaks to you. First of all, there is **the convincing Word of God in the heavens**. Look, if you will, here in this Psalm at chapter 19 and verses 1 through 6, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and*

night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth,” that is, the sun’s going forth, “is from the end of the heavens, and His circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

Now what he’s talking about now is God’s Word in the heavens; God’s convincing Word in the heavens. As you look up into the starry night, as you see the vast universe that Almighty God has created, that alone is enough to confirm what the Bible has said in Psalm 14 verse 1, “*The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’*” For out of nothing, nothing comes.

What do the heavens declare? First of all, **the glory of God**. Look in Psalm 19 verse 1, “*The heavens declare the glory of God.*” Go out some night, some starry night, and just look upward at that candelabra in the sky and think about all of that. Think of the glory that is displayed there.

Some time ago Joyce and I took a vacation down to a little island in the Caribbean, small little island. No automobiles on the island. And we stayed in a little cabin that had no air conditioning, right there by the water’s edge. And there was a wooden dock, a wharf. Nothing to do. We made a big jigsaw puzzle; took us all week to do that, walked the beach and in order to go down to the little village, there was a little boat out there. You had to take the little boat. And the boat came with the cottage. But for recreation, Joyce and I would go out and lie down on our backs on that little wharf, that little dock, at nighttime and talk to one another and look straight up into the stars.

And down in the Caribbean, the sky, like the water, crystal clear. And to see those stars up there, millions and billions of them, just to lie on your back and look at those stars would just fill you with awe. You know, we’ve forgotten to look up, haven’t we? We’re so busy running around. Some night, find a clear night and just go out and look up there and see what God has made. And, “*The heavens declare the glory of God,*” Amen? You’re going to see God’s glory.

And when you see God’s glory, you’re going to see **God’s greatness**. Look again in Psalm 19:1 if you will, “*And the firmament showeth His handiwork.*” Once you see the glory, you say, “Who did that?” God did that. That is God’s handiwork. What great power is demonstrated in creation! You don’t have to be a Ph.D. to know that out of nothing, nothing comes.

A great preacher, eloquent also, said one time, “God stepped from behind the curtain of nowhere and stood upon the platform of nothing and spoke a world into existence.” I love that.

You know man can't create anything? No man has ever created one thing. We talk about human beings with creativity. All you can do is rearrange what God has already created. God created in one great act everything. People are looking for the Big Bang; they better be trying to find out Who is behind the whole thing.

Light travels, I'm always impressed with the speed of light, 186,282 per miles per second, per second! How fast is that? Well, if you're going to hijack a light beam and go to the moon, [clap, clap] you're at the moon. Two seconds, you're at the moon. But you have to travel at the speed of light, 186,282 miles per second, you have to travel four and one-half years to get to the nearest star, the nearest star. And, folks, to travel on out to the rim of our known universe, traveling at the speed of light, you would travel for ten billion years. To the moon in two seconds; ten billion years and you still have not reached the edge of this vast universe. Who made all of that? I want to tell you that God made it.

But if you think not only about the vastness of this world, but think about the intricacies of this world. The smallest unit of human life is the cell. There're so many cells in the human body, some of us have more than others. And Paul Doty of Harvard University said that one of these cells, just one, is more complicated than New York City. You think of everything that's happening in the great city, just one of those cells, billions of them, in your body.

Whether you look inward, whether you look outward, whether you see the vastness or the minuteness of this creation, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.*" Psalm 19 verse 1.

People talk about "the laws of nature." There are no laws of nature. They're God's laws that nature obeys. And science only discovers what God had already put there. That's all. All of this internet technology was there for people to discover, but they didn't create it. Nobody created that, Mr. Gore, or anybody else. It was there, and all they do is just discover what is already there. They're no more capable of creating that than Columbus was capable of creating North America. He just found what was already there.

This is the handiwork of Almighty God. Therefore, a person has no excuse whatsoever for not believing in God. And God's Word says it clearly and crisply. Romans chapter 1 verses 19 and 20, "*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*"

Do you think that, as this atheistic tract says, that not to believe in God is a sign of intelligence? It's not a sign of intelligence not to believe in God.

Most of the great philosophers believed in God. As a matter of fact, historians tell us there have really been only fifty-four truly great philosophers, and most of

them believed in God. Aristotle believed in God. Plato believed in God. Socrates believed in God. Forty of the fifty-four believed in God. The other fourteen who did not believe in God, every one of them hated their father. It's a very interesting thing. Every one of them hated their father.

Charles Darwin. His father was six feet tall, six feet, three inches tall. He weighed 365 pounds. Green Bay would like to have him. He was a huge man. He was a medical doctor. Charles Darwin said he had huge, hairy hands; and when he spoke, his voice was a roar. Darwin said, "My father could not stand to be opposed. If opposed, he would roar at me and had the gift of always making people do just what he wanted them to do."

Charles Darwin's mother died when he was eight. He could not remember anything about his mother, nothing. He could remember events that happened when he was four, five, and six years of age, but he could not remember when he wrote in his diary anything about his mother. But he remembered the oppressive ways of his father. He did write this one thing in his diary, "My father was a doctor and healed others, but he let my mother die." He had an antipathy, a hatred, for his father.

And Charles Darwin was not a bright student. Matter of fact, he failed in school. His father pushed him on through in school and tried to make a doctor out of him. When he went in for his first autopsy, he fainted and said, "I don't want to be a doctor." So then his father tried to make a preacher out of him, put him in theological school. He hated it. He had no desire to preach. Finally, they got somebody to tutor him, who happened to be a biologist. And there he found that he had a penchant for biology.

He couldn't find peace anywhere; had no confidence in God or his father. He took a trip upon that ship called *The Beagle* and went to the Indies Mountains in Brazil and Galapagos. And he began to make sketches and drawings. And out of his fevered brain and some readings, he got the idea of evolution. His heart was filled with hate, hating God and hating everybody else. And, finally, he wrote that book, "*The Descent of Man and the Origin of the Species*." He was a philosopher. He had other ideas about creation.

There was another famous philosopher. His name was Friedrich Nietzsche. He was also the son of a dogmatic preacher. And Nietzsche hated his father. And he learned to hate God, and he hated the idea of God. What some people don't know is Nietzsche was a sexual pervert. He died of syphilis. And he had the idea also of the survival of the fittest. He wrote a book entitled *Man and Superman*. He developed the idea of a superior race. He was a true racist.

You know who got hold of Nietzsche's work? Hitler. Hitler read both Darwin and Nietzsche. And Hitler wrote his book, "*Mein Kampf*," where he gave his philosophies. And here's what Hitler said, you talk about racism, "I have a right to eliminate an inferior race that breeds like vermin." He's speaking of the Jews. Hitler

and Stalin, students of Darwin and Nietzsche, and Karl Marx, were all atheists. They learned from Darwin and Nietzsche. Hitler and Stalin together put to death fifty-seven million people, fifty-seven million.

Have you ever heard anybody say, “Well, it’s all these religious wars that’s causing so much problem in the world, religious wars, religious wars?” You’ll hear that. That’s, that’s the mantra of people today, saying it is religion that puts people to death.

Did you know from the dawn of recorded history to this time, there’ve been about three million people who have been killed in religious wars? And I’m sorry for any one of them. But this includes wars perpetrated or participated in by Muslims and Hindus and the oriental religions, as well as some who might call themselves Christians, about three million. Now, if you would take the conflicts of those who were killed in wars that involved Christians, you’d narrow that down to 1.8 million. If you were to take the wars that involve what we would call Bible-believing, evangelical Christians, you would drop that down, friend, to about 180,000. Hitler and Stalin in fifty years, not six thousand years, but in fifty years killed fifty-seven million on the philosophy of atheism, that there is no God. Because if there is no God, there’s no real, intrinsic value to human life, and there is no right and there is no wrong.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The heavens declare the greatness of God. And the heavens declare **the goodness of God**. Look if you will again in Psalm chapter 19 verse 2, “*Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.*” Now what does that mean? It means there is a fixed order in the universe: night and day, day and night. It is God who daily loadeth us with benefits. And His mercies are new every morning.

And this knowledge is universal. It is everywhere. Anybody, any place on the face of the Earth that can see the sun like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and going across the orbit of the sky, to feel the warmth of its rays, to see it fructify and cause the earth to blossom and bloom, and to feel the gentle rain that’s a part of the hydraulic action of that sun, and knowing that God makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust, can look up and say, “*The heavens declare the glory of God, the greatness of God, and the goodness of God; and the fool hath said in his heart, there’s no God.*”

Now, we see God’s convincing Word in the heavens. But there’s another way that God speaks. Here’s the second way, and it’s **God converting Word in the hand**. Look up here. See what I have in my hand? I have in my hand the Word of God. Not only is God’s Word in the heavens, but God’s Word is in my hand! Oh, the marvel of the Word of God. Oh, the marvel of the Bible.

Begin now in verse 7 of this same Psalm and look, if you will, please, Psalm 19 verses 7 through 11, “*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing*

the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is Thy servant warned; and in keeping of them is great reward."

There's the convincing Word; and there is, my friend, the converting Word, the converting Word that I hold in my hand. Look again, if you will, in verse 7 of this Psalm, "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.*"

You cannot know God through creation alone. You can know about God, but, friend, you have to have the Bible to truly know the heart and mind of God, not only what God has wrought, but what God has written. That's the reason I love the Bible.

Think for a moment about **the virtue of the Scripture**. First of all, he says in Psalm 19 verse 7 that, "*The law of the Lord is perfect, perfect, converting the soul.*" That's the reason we believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture. Every sentence, every jot, every tittle, every syllable is put there by the mind and purpose of God. God wrote it. Second Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" And a God of truth could never inspire error.

J.B. Phillips decided he would make a translation of the Scriptures, put it in more friendly language, more understandable language than the King James Version of the Scripture, so he thought. J.B. Phillips, when he began his work, did not believe in a verbal, plenary inspiration; that it was all verbally inspired by God. But as he got to dealing with the Scriptures, here's what he said. He was so impressed with the power of the Bible that he said that, "Trying to do this was like trying to re-wire a house without pulling the main switch." Just in there dealing with the power of the Scripture. "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.*" Psalm 19:7.

Next, "*The law of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*" It's the foundational Word. Friend, when you understand the Bible, you have a place to stand! It is sure! It is certain! You're not walking on eggshells. Isaiah 35:8, "*A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.*"

Again, look in Psalm 19 verse 8, "*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.*" The word "right" has the idea of a straight path. The Bible will never lead you astray. Sometimes I hear people say, "Oh, it's so hard to be a Christian." That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches the way of the transgressor is hard. This verse says that, "*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.*" The saints and heroes of the ages have found joy in the Word of God, as I do continually day after day.

And then, next, "*The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*" Do you see that in Psalm 19 verse 8? When the Bible says it's pure, that means there's

no mixture of error in the Bible. There are over six thousand promises in the Bible, and not one of them, of God's pure Word, has ever been broken.

Look in Psalm 19 verse 9, "*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.*" Why does the Bible live on? Because there're no seeds of corruption in the Word of God. It is the incorruptible, indestructible Word of God, which lives and abides forever. And by the way, the Scriptures are never out of date and never inappropriate. I've been preaching the Scriptures now for well over four decades, and they're as fresh to me as they've ever been. I'm not finding hidden flaws. I'm finding hidden beauties. I love the Word of God more today than I ever have loved the Word of God. Why? Because, "*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.*"

But think not only of the virtues of the Scripture; think of the **value of the Scriptures**. Look in Psalm 19 verse 10. They're **precious**. "*They're more desirable than much fine gold.*" I wonder how many people in this building really believe that. To a true believer, the Bible is precious indeed. You cannot love God without loving His Word.

I say this, and I know that God is listening, and I'm thinking as I'm saying it. If you were to put all of the treasures in this world on this side, and put the Bible over here, and say to me, "Adrian, you can have one or the other." I wouldn't have to think for a skinny minute. I would choose the Word of God. I mean that with all of my heart. No stutter, no stammer. God is listening to me. I would not have to think about it! Greater than gold is the Word of God! Oh, they are precious indeed.

A lady visited Yosemite. She said to the guide, "I only have an hour. What should I do if I only have an hour to see Yosemite?" He said, "You what?" She said, "I've got an hour. What should I do?" He said, "Lady, if you want to see Yosemite and you only have an hour, I suggest you just sit down over there by the river and cry. Just cry, that's all!" Oh, friend, the Bible is a treasure. How we ought to love it.

And not only is the Scripture precious; it is **protective**. Look in Psalm 19 verse 11, "*By them is Thy servant warned.*" You know, protection is far better than cure. There are so many hurts and so many harms and so many failures that you would be kept from if you would only let the Word of God lead you; if you would get up in the morning and bathe yourself in the Word of God. "*By them is Thy servant warned.*" Let God turn His light on your path and say, "Walk this way, and don't walk that way."

Not only are they precious, not only are they protective, they are **profitable**. Again in Psalm 19, "*In keeping of them is great reward,*" verse 11. You cheat yourself of an incredible blessing by not loving the Word of God.

Now, what am I saying? There's God's Word in the heavens, "*The heavens declare the glory of God.*" There is God's Word in the hand, the Scriptures, the written Word given by inspiration of Almighty God as God speaks to us. And we think of the virtues and the values of the Word of God.

But still, that's not enough. There's one more thing that we need, and that is **the convicting Word of God in the heart**. The Word in the heavens, the Word in the hand, but now the Word in the heart. Look if you will now in chapter 19 verses 12 to 14 of this same wonderful Psalm. "*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*" Now what he's doing now is praying. He's speaking to God. "*Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer.*" This is a prayer to the Holy Spirit.

You see, we see objectively that God exists. Then we learn from the Word of God the truths of God's Word, the converting Word of God. But the Holy Spirit of God must make all of this real in our heart.

Look in Psalm 19 verse 12. There is the convicting Word of the Spirit. "*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*" Do you know why we have moral earthquakes? Because we have secret faults, and we don't know what's beneath the surface. And so he's saying, "I can't understand this." You see, your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and so is mine. So what do we need? We need the Holy Spirit of God to bring conviction of sin. And Jesus said in John 16 verse 8, concerning the Holy Spirit, "*When He is come, He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.*"

I can get you to nod your head that you've sinned, but you'll never understand the depth of your sin, nor will you ever truly be convicted of that sin. You'll only agree, perhaps. But when the Holy Spirit of God speaks to you, that's the convicting Word of God. That's the reason this morning, before I walked out here, I got on my knees and prayed.

Friend, God wants to speak to your heart today. Don't you let your heart get hard. I preach to some people, it's like pouring water on a rock: nothing gets in. You can believe intellectually in God, and you can go to Hell with a Bible under your arm unless you let, my precious friend, the Word of God come into your heart. There is the convicting Word of the heart.

I hear people say, "Well, if I know my heart, ta-da-ta-da-ta-da." Come up close, I want to tell you something; you don't know your heart. Only God knows your heart. Your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And a deceitful heart can never discern a deceitful heart.

And so, in verse 12 there's the convicting Word of the Spirit. And then in verse 12 there's **the cleansing Word of the Spirit**. Thank God for that. Listen, Psalm 19:12, "*Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*" "*Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*" You cannot know God personally and intimately if there's sin in your heart and in your life. And how does the Holy Spirit cleanse? Through the atoning blood. First John 1:9, "*If we*

confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The conviction of the Spirit, the cleansing of the Spirit, and then that's not enough. Look again in Psalm 19 verse 13. There is **the control of the Spirit**. *"Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and then shall I be innocent from the great transgression."* You see how the Holy Spirit works? First, there's conviction. Then there's cleansing. But that's not enough. Then there's the control. *"Keep me, Lord, from presumptuous sins."*

Two things you better always be cognizant of: the possibility of secret faults and the danger of presumptuous sin. It's one thing to slip into sin; it's another thing to stumble into sin. But, friend, pray God that He will keep you from presumptuous sin. That is where you say, "I know this is wrong, but." You are in grave danger when you do that. *"Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sin!"*

Now this is God's Word. This is the convicting Word now in the heart where there's the conviction of sin, there's the cleansing of sin, there is the control from sin, there's the control of the Spirit. And do you know what that leads to? This is the bottom line. **The communion of the Spirit**. Look if you will now in Psalm 19 verse 14, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer."* That's what it's all about.

God put His Word in the heavens. You hold His Word in your hand. God sends His Word into your heart. Why? That you might walk with Him and talk with Him and the meditation of your heart would be acceptable in His sight. How sweet, how wonderful that is.

I received a letter. I want to share it with you, and I'm finished. One of the reasons I'm so grateful for this television ministry and what it does, because it reaches so many people that we could not reach otherwise.

"Dear Pastor Rogers, I had to write to let you know what effect your ministry's had on my life. Many times I sat and watched your program and thought what you said was stupid. How you expressed Christ was a joke. I laughed at your God by ignoring Him. He wasn't really there. I was a Satanist, as well as a part of the Nazi movement. As bad as it sounds, Christians were nothing more than lower life form to myself and my friends. I didn't need your God. I sold my soul to the devil, and I signed a pact with my own blood. And after doing so, I read the small print. If I tried to get out of the group, I could be killed. I remembered your prayer line and your church. I called the number. Someone prayed with me, and I received Christ. I got a Bible and read it and re-read it. God saved me! Why would He do that, because I was so evil and hurt Him so badly? I had been living together with my boyfriend. He saw the change in me, too. He got saved, and we finally got married. We both love the Lord so much because we can see the love of the Lord through your church. Jesus can

save anyone. He saved me. Thanks for your prayer line and your church and your television ministry.”

That’s what I’m talking about, friend. *“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”*

And you say, “Well, I’m no Satanist, Pastor Rogers, I haven’t signed a pact with the devil in my blood.” Friend, it’s not the amount of sin that damns us; it’s the fact of sin. More people have drowned in nine feet of water than drown in ninety feet of water. If you’re a sinner, you’re a sinner; and the Bible says in Romans 3:23, *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* But no matter how deep your sin, how dark your sin, *“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”* Psalm 19:7.

God has put His Word in the heavens. God has put His Word in our hands. And God has put His Word in our hearts.

Can an intellectual believe in God? You better believe it. Do you have to be an intellectual to believe in God? Not at all. God will show it to a child! And therefore, you need to lay your intellectual pride in the dust and just say, “Lord, speak to me.” And when He does, obey Him. And don’t wait till you have it all figured out, because you’ll wake up in Hell and you still won’t have it all figured out. You come to Jesus, just as you are, and trust Him to save you.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Begin to pray for those who may not know the Lord. And if you’re not certain that you’re saved, or you’re certain that you’re not saved, and you want to be saved, I want to remind you that believing in God is not enough. The devil believes that. You need to meet Jesus. You need to be saved. You need a personal encounter with God through Christ.

Would you pray this prayer? “Oh, God, I am a sinner, and I’m lost, and I cannot save myself. I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You.” Pray this now, “I do trust You, Jesus.” Pray it from your heart. “I do trust You, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for saving me from Hell. Thank You, Lord. Now come into my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, *‘Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.’* Save me, Lord.” Amen and Amen.