



## [1 John 2:3-6](#)

(3) Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (4) He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (5) But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. (6) He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

*New King James Version*

This passage helps us understand how we can have the [right attitude](#) and emotion in our obedience. We come to know [God](#) through the same general process we get to know fellow human beings—by fellowshiping or experiencing life with them.

Around 500 years before [Christ](#), Greek philosophers believed they could come to know God through intellectual reasoning and argument. This idea had a simple premise: that man is curious! They reasoned that it is man's nature to ask questions. Since God made man so, if men asked the right questions and thought them through, they would force God to reveal Himself. The flaw in this is seen in the fruit it produced. Though it supplied a number of right answers, it did not—could not—make men moral beings. Such a process could not change man's nature.

To them, religion became something akin to higher mathematics. It was intense mental activity, yielding intellectual satisfaction but no moral action. Plato and Socrates, for example, saw nothing wrong with [homosexuality](#). The gods of Greek mythology also reflect this immorality, as they had the same weaknesses as human beings.

A few hundred years later, the Greeks pursued becoming one with God through mystery religions. One of their distinctive features was the passion play, which always had the same general theme. A god lived, suffered terribly, died a cruel, unjust death, and then rose to life again. Before being allowed to see the play, an initiate endured a long course of instruction and ascetic discipline. As he progressed in the religion, he was gradually worked into a state of intense expectation.

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Then, at the right time, his instructors took him to the passion play, where they orchestrated the environment to heighten the emotional experience: cunning lighting, sensuous music, fragrant incense, and uplifting liturgy. As the story developed, the initiate became so emotionally involved that he identified himself with and believed he shared the god's suffering, victory, and immortality.

But this exercise failed them in coming to know God. Not only did it not change man's nature, but the passion play was also full of lies! The result was not true knowing but feeling. It acted like a religious drug, the effects of which were short-lived. It was an abnormal experience, somewhat like a modern Pentecostal meeting where worshippers pray down the "spirit" and speak in tongues. Such activities are escapes from the realities of ordinary life.

Contrast these Greek methods with the Bible's way of knowing God. Knowledge of God comes, not by speculation or emotionalism, but by God's direct self-revelation. In other words, God Himself initiates our knowing of Him, beginning our relationship by drawing us by His Spirit ([John 6:44](#)).

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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