

DISCUSS

When we read the Bible, we aren't reading a list of facts, rules, or statistics about God. We are encountering him. God is speaking to us in Scripture. **What does your time in God's Word look like? Do you feel like the truths you encounter in the Bible translate into your everyday life? Why, or why not?**

Francis made a point of reminding us that what you learn in this study is not knowledge for a test, but to understand the fullness of God's love for you. **If you were brutally honest, do you feel your knowledge of God is test knowledge or experienced truth? Why?**

*[Note: In biblical Greek, there are two words for "knowledge" that help us understand the difference between knowing about God and knowing him personally. For a quick study on the words oida and ginosko go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.]*

In the Upper Room, Jesus was spending one last meal with his disciples. John 14-17 is his last sermon, the last chance he had to share essential and life-changing truths with them before his crucifixion. The first deep truth he shared was a command to not be distressed. Read John 14:1-4.

Jesus's command is not meant to brush off our anxiety. **How do you feel when you are worried or afraid and someone tells you to stop worrying? What kind of advice or support from friends have you found helpful? What truths or reassurances does Jesus give to his disciples?**

Jesus was about to be executed in a violent way, which he knew would distress his disciples. But he confronted and comforted them with truth: their current anxiety is not how the story would end. **What makes you anxious? What negative future are you worried will become reality?**

Our stories don't end with our worst fears but in eternity with Jesus. Even when we are afraid, we can look forward in hope to God's future for us. Think about your present worries. **In what ways can a secure future with Jesus confront and comfort your anxiety? What does it look**

Horizontal lines for writing.

like for you to trust Jesus despite your current circumstances?

Even when we trust Jesus and know the hope he provides, we can still experience worry and anxiety. For many of us, we just want to know what to do. What is the first step toward security and peace? Read John 14:5–6.

Jesus is the way to God. We don't earn our way to God through good behavior or by being spiritually impressive. If we want to encounter God, we have to know Jesus.

What do you think it means for Jesus to be "the way"?

Francis said following Jesus is not about having more things to do, but about knowing him. God will direct your path, but your best next step is to know Jesus more deeply. **Does knowing God feel like an effective way to overcome your current challenges? Why, or why not?**

The more we know Jesus, the more we will know truth and experience life as God intended. Even when chaos surrounds us, we can find peace and hope in Jesus.

Where do you turn for peace and hope in times of chaos? What would it look like to trust God for his peace, hope, and truth in your current circumstances?

Trusting God can be difficult, especially if you think he is angry and vindictive. For some of us, even the title "Father" brings up negative thoughts. But Jesus reveals who the Father is to us. Read John 14:7–11.

Jesus is not a counterpoint to the Father. He is not merciful where the Father is always judgmental. If you recognize Jesus's love for you, you have seen the Father's love for you. **In what ways do these verses challenge your perspective of God?**

*[Note: If you want to learn more about the Father's deep love and mercy, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.]*

Francis said, "We learn about God the Father by listening to what Jesus says. We hear the gracious words out of the mouth of Jesus, and we go, 'Whoa, that's what the Father is like. He loves me. He doesn't want my heart troubled.'"

Do you believe the Father doesn't want you to be distressed? How might your life be different if you trusted that he has a better plan for you?

Horizontal lines for writing.

Jesus told Thomas that knowing the facts about the future was less important than having a relationship with him. Knowing what will happen would not bring Thomas peace but knowing the one who holds his future could.

Jesus’s answer to our anxieties seems counterintuitive: he responds to our worries with a relationship rather than solutions. The Father created us, loves us, and holds our futures in his hands. When you know—or *ginosko*—him, you can trust his loving plan, even when the future is unsure.

Think about your future and the possibilities that it holds. What about tomorrow causes you anxiety? What would it look like to trust the God you know with your unknown future?

2. The Father of Mercy

It is not unusual to think of God as an angry father. Sure, he loves us and wants the best for us but, in our hearts, we imagine him to be disappointed, annoyed, or angry with us. We imagine that he is, at his core, unhappy with us and must be provoked to feel kindness. But this image of the Father is the opposite of his true nature. Read Hosea 11:1–7.

In this passage, Israel has—once again—turned away from God to idols. Idolatry is a repeated habit for Israel, one that provokes God’s anger. Verse 7 tells us Israel is “obsessed with” (NET), “determined to” (NIV, NLT), or “bent on” (CSB, NASB) rejecting God. They looked at God and chose, even longed, to turn away from him. **How do you think God will respond to their hostility and rejection? What do you expect God to do when you return to old sins?**

We imagine God will smite or destroy his people. In the face of sin, we think God rushes to wrath. But his response to Israel reveals his heart, overflowing with mercy. Read Hosea 11:8–9. **What explanation does God give for his unusual decision?**

God is not a human; he doesn’t react to situations the way we would. He is, at his core, compassionate and eager to forgive. **How does God’s decision in Hosea 11 challenge your perception of him?**

In the video, Francis quotes Ephesians 3:14–21. Grab your Bible and a journal and turn to that passage now. As you read, write down every unique hope Paul is praying for the Ephesian church.

Which of the requests Paul makes would you want to come to fruition in your life?

Take a moment to read through these verses. You can read out loud if you are with a group or silently if you are alone. Then, personalize Paul's ancient prayer, making his requests your own.

Paul's culminating request is that the church would know (*ginosko*, see **Go Deeper Section 1** to study this word) Christ's boundless love so that they would be filled with God himself. We often pray for things to change; not for things to know. It can seem unusual, but deeply understanding God's love leads to fullness and flourishing. If you feel like you do not know God in that way, pray that he would help your head knowledge about his love become experienced truth.

Finally, reread verses 20–21. These are verses of praise. Instead of ending your time in prayer asking God for things, end in praise. Let these words be a jumping-off point into a time of worship.