

What Is Eternal Life ?

And How Do We Receive It ?

When I mention eternal life what is the first thing that comes into our minds?

Living for ever?

This is **not** what comes into God's mind **nor** the thoughts behind His Words when He talks about eternal life.

As I seek always to do I want to look at God's Word from God's perspective.

God is **not** linked to time, it is just something He created so to understand what God is speaking about we have to forget the time aspect.

What is eternal life from God's viewpoint?

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

The simple answer is to know God, but such knowledge is life-shattering and demands change on our part.

The Greek word translated “know” is “ginōskō” [ghin-occe-ko].

This word frequently indicates a relationship between the person knowing and the object known.

In this respect, what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows.

Hence the establishment of an intimate relationship.

Matthew 1:25 [King James] *“And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.”*

The same Greek word is used to convey the thought of the intimate union between a husband and wife.

The knowing goes far beyond intellectual head knowledge: it involves the whole being; our body, mind and spirit.

1 Corinthians 8:3 [NIV] *“But the man who loves God is known by God.”*

As we seek to know God He knows us.

Galatians 4:8-9 [NIV] *“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”*

This knowing and being known by God suggests approval by God and a special relationship.

John 10:14, 27 [NIV] *“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...” ... “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*

This knowing is an active relationship, a relationship in which we can mature.

This same idea of appreciation as well as knowledge underlies several statements concerning the knowledge of God and His Truth.

John 8:32 [NIV] *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

Knowing the truth brings us freedom.

Freedom from what?

Deception but also eternal death!

How does this happen?

John 17:17 [NIV] *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

When we believe God’s Word, His Promises of what He has done for us through Jesus the Living Word, we are made Holy by the Creator God and set apart for a special relationship.

John 14:6 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Jesus Christ personifies the “*truth*” [God’s Word].

The “*way*”, only through accepting the sacrifice of Jesus in our stead can we avoid eternal death.

The “*life*”, the knowing of Jesus is eternal life, only through Him can we receive the gift of eternal life.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

We receive the gift of eternal life.

1 John 2:3 [NIV] *“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.”*

Why is this knowing God linked with obedience to the words of Jesus Christ and the additional truth that our relationship with the Holy Spirit will bring to us.

1 John 4:6 [NIV] *“We are from God, and whoever **knows** God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognise the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.”*

The spirit of truth or the spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

This knowing God is not merely an intellectual activity but a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 3:18 [NIV] *“But grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.”*

This knowing God is an ongoing, ever more intimate, loving relationship with God through the special presence of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:7-12 [NIV] *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*

The initiative was with God.

He showed us through Jesus the Great Love He has for us.

We learn to love, as God loves, by our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask **the Father**, and he **will give you another Counsellor** to be with you for ever, the **Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

Note the Holy Spirit is **always with** a Christian but **can be in** us.

I believe it is not by accident that the same Greek word is used for the intimate knowledge of God and the intimate union of a husband and wife.

The marriage relationship was created by God at the very beginning of human existence. God holds this physical union in great esteem, to the point of being sacred.

The relationship between Christ and the church is likened to a marriage.

Each of us as Christians are to be *“born again”* and as babes in Christ are to grow and mature.

For this birth and maturing to happen on a physical level the wife has to yield to the husband and through a union a new life is started within the wife.

Spiritually for us to be *“born again”* we have to yield to the Holy Spirit and our union with Him will cause a new child of God to be born.

Then grow and mature in us, to replace the *“old self”* that died and was buried at our baptism.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

It is through this intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit that these God-like *“fruits”* rub off on us and we begin to show the characteristics of the Father.

John 15:16-17 [NIV] *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”*

The *“lasting”* fruits are the spiritual [eternal] fruits of the Spirit.

Knowing God in this way is the start of an eternal, evermore intimate relationship with God.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

I hope we can all have this **eternal relationship** with our Creator God, **starting now**.