



The Shape of Knowing (1): Reading John's Gospel with Lesslie Newbigin

The Light has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel (1982)

what is this “knowing”?

1) a knowing that arises from the self-disclosure of an other, an act of self-opening

1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

1:18

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, **he has made him known.**

the opening of a *relation*...

1:1, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and the Word was God.....**The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, **the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father**, full of grace and truth.

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2) a knowing that happens in a relation of love

within God, first

1:18

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, **who is in the bosom of the Father**, he has made him known.

10:14-15

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵just as **the Father knows me and I know the Father**—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

(see also 3:35; 5:20; 15:9-10; 10:17; 17:23, 24, 26)

then in us.....

3) a knowing that (for us) needs to be *given*

10:14-15

⁵⁴ “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵**Though you do not know him, I know him.** If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

4)by being drawn into the Son-Father relation (through cross and Spirit)

6:53, 61-65

⁵³ Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.**

⁶¹.....Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³**The Spirit gives life;** the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵He went on to say, “This is why I told you that **no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.**”

17:24

“Father, I want those you have given me **to be with me where I am**, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me **because you loved me before the creation of the world.**

resurrection narratives:

20:17

¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, **‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’**”

20:21

²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that **he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.** ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

To know God is to share, by the Spirit, in Jesus’s knowledge of his Father.

“the whole story of salvation that the Gospel tells stems from the love between the Father and the Son and has as its goal the inclusion of humans within this loving relationship”

Richard Bauckham

5) a knowing lived out in visible obedience

14:6-7

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the **way** and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ **If you really know me, you will know my Father as well.** From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

6) a knowing that means trusting *testimony*

20:24-25

²⁴Now Thomas (also known as Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

7) a knowing that is always *communal*

15:16

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

8) a knowing that carries a “not yet”

14:1-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴**You know** the way to the place where I am going."

⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, **we don't know** where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶Jesus answered, “**I am the way** and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.



P. S.

9) a knowing that involves bodily, physical indwelling

Sudnow, David. *Ways of the Hand: A Rewritten Account*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001.

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10) a knowing that involves respectful creativity (and other things!)