

How Do You Know Me?, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E2090118
1 Samuel 3:1-10 and John 1:43-51
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Imagine a God who knows us and who loves us! That is the theme of Psalm 139: “O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.”¹

God knew the boy Samuel, and called to him in the middle of the night. “Samuel! Samuel!” But, Samuel didn’t know God. He thought it was the old priest, Eli, calling to him. The story is really quite humorous, God waking up the boy, the boy running to the old man and waking him up, three times! On the third time, Eli realized that it was God calling the boy Samuel and told him how to respond, “Speak LORD, for your servant is listening.”²

God also knew the old priest Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. The two sons were scoundrels, sleeping around with the servant girls and stealing the meat that people had brought for sacrifice to God. The sons blasphemed God: they treated God with disrespect. Because of this disrespect, God would punish Eli’s family.

It can be scary to know that God knows when we sit down and rise up and what our thoughts are. If God knows what I did last week, will God punish me? I don’t think so, but I will punish myself if, knowing what I do about myself, I don’t grow or improve. God knows when we sit down and rise up and what our thoughts are. We are God’s children, made in God’s image. Therefore, we will grow and improve because of our mistakes and misbehavior. God knows you, and God loves you.

The reading from the gospel of John is another story of knowing. Nathaniel knew Jesus, and Jesus knew Nathaniel. Philip answered Jesus’ call to follow as a disciple, and he went to get Nathaniel and introduce him to Jesus. Nathaniel’s reply was, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”³ Nathaniel thought he knew all about Jesus because he knew where he came from. He made an assumption, that because Jesus came from that village on the hill, he had nothing good to offer.

We make assumptions too, about people because of where they come from. “Oh, he’s from Chapel Hill. Don’t pay attention to him. Those people from Chapel Hill have all those crazy ideas.”

“Oh, she’s a Northerner. You know what they’re like.”

“Oh, he’s a Southerner. You know what they’re like.”

Those assumptions, of course, can be quite off base. Allow a person to be him or herself, not what you assume them to be. Everyone has a gift given by God. It is our duty to discover those gifts and use them, and help others to use them, for spreading God’s love.

Philip had the right response: He said, “Come and see.” Come and see. Don’t judge another by assumptions. Know someone, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “by the content of their character, not the color of their skin.”

Come and see for yourself who Jesus is. Jesus knew Nathaniel. Jesus said, “Here is truly an

¹Psalm 139:1-2

²1 Samuel 3:9

³John 1:46

Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”⁴ How did he know that?

Nathaniel asked, “Where did you get to know me?”

Jesus said he saw Nathaniel under the fig tree. But, if Nathaniel had this reaction about people from Nazareth, and voiced it aloud to Phillip, Jesus knew that Nathaniel was skeptical. Nathaniel would not be inclined to deceive others. Perhaps skeptics make the best disciples of Jesus. Once Nathaniel “came and saw,” he was changed forever.

There are people out there who need you to introduce them to God’s love and to this church. Churches grow best by word of mouth. People cannot become Jesus’ disciples unless someone calls them. “Come and see this place I have found.”

Some of your friends will be skeptical. “Can any good come out of the church?” they will ask. “Can any good come out of that liberal denomination?”

“Come and see!”

“Can I find relief from my sorrow at that church?”

“Come and see!”

“Will I be accepted there at Elon Community Church?”

“Come and see!”

You are the mouthpiece for God’s call. Jesus calls you, just like he called Philip: “Follow me.”⁵ God calls each of us and has given us gifts for ministry, but that call, most of the time, comes from a human voice. God wants to use you to call others into a relationship with God.

God knows you and loves you. That is a marvelous thing. It is wonderful to have someone love you, even though they know you. My wife knows my history. She knows my flaws and weaknesses. She has heard my worst sermons and she still loves me! That is a treasure.

In the same way, God knows each of us and loves us.

We are going to install the new officers and leaders of Elon Community Church for 2009. God knows Elon Community Church. God knows its leaders and its members, for God has called each of us to service. It is our duty to be sensitive to the world around us and to be able to respond with a Christ-like love for all. We need to listen.

Our response should be like that of the boy Samuel’s: “Speak Lord, for your servants are listening.”

⁴John 1:47

⁵John 1:43