

Sermon Series: "I Am" Part 1
"The Father's Love"
Pastor Dale Campfield - January 2nd, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Intro:

Today we begin a new sermon series entitled: "I Am".

The Goal of this series: To fall more in love with who God is, becoming a passionate follower of Christ, desiring to walk in obedience to His teachings.

How will we do this: By Learning Who the Father Is.

Jesus asks the question of Peter...

Mark 8:29

"Who do you say that I am?"

How would you answer that question if Jesus were to ask you that today? Who do you say that He is? Who is Christ to you?

"I am" appears in the Bible 719 times. 508 times in the Old Testament and 211 times in the New Testament. There are several times where the words are separated - such as "I (the Lord thy God) am...", but otherwise they are together.

Let me give you a few examples of how God refers to Himself when speaking of being "I Am."

I AM...

Genesis

15:1 Your Shield
15:7 The Lord
17:1 God Almighty
26:24 The God of your Father Abraham
31:13 The God of Bethel

Exodus

3:14 Who I Am
15:26 The Lord Who Heals You
22:27 Compassionate

Leviticus

11:44 Holy
19:36 Your Deliverer

Psalms

35:3 Your Salvation
46:10 God

Isaiah

44:24 The Maker of All Things
48:17 Your Teacher

Jeremiah

3:12 Faithful
9:24 Just and Righteous

Ezekiel

29:16 The Sovereign Lord

Matthew

11:29 Gentle and Humble in Heart

John

6:35 The Bread of Life
8:12 The Light of the World
10:7 The Gate for the Sheep
10:11 The Good Shepherd
11:25 The Resurrection and the Life
14:6 The Way the Truth and the Life
15:1 The Vine

Revelation

1:8 The Alpha and the Omega
1:17 The First and the Last
1:18 The Living One
22:16 The Root and the Offspring of David

22:16 The Bright and Morning Star

Let me ask you again: “Who do you say that He is?”

We know of God as the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. During this series, we are going to look at the aspect of who God is as our Father. Who is He as the Great I Am, in the perspective of being our Heavenly Father?

When we are born into this earthy, we all have a father. Today we are dedicating a baby to the Lord. The natural father of the child is Caleb. Each of you has a father. For some of you, you have a good relationship with your father and it is healthy; for others it is not. For some, you’ve not known your father. For some, you’ve been disenchanted with your father. For some, your relationship with your father over the years has been very healthy and enjoyable.

Each of us, within the knowledge of our earthly father’s can easily equate and compare God to. If we have a positive view of our father’s on earth, it’s easier to have one with God the Father. If we’ve had a negative one, it’s easy to equate God the Father with that.

Take a look at some of the positive role model father’s in the past as well as the negative...

Illus: Pics/Vid’s of dads on TV or movies...

In preaching a message like this, I can’t help but think of my own father, Jerral Campfield. He is one of the greatest examples of a person who is a great dad that I know. He’s loving towards my mom; protecting, guiding and leading of our family; he’s a true man of God; he exhibits daily the fruit of the spirit and walks in the fullness of the gifts of the spirit. He is a manly man and a Godly man at the same time. He has great strength and passion. He is strong as an ox and humble as a lamb. He’s a great husband, dad and pastor. He’s a great grandfather, etc. etc. etc.

He’s recently been diagnosed with cancer, and is now in the process of conquering it. On Tuesday of this week he had his second dose of chemo; and is doing well. In the process, he’s lost his hair. So, I’ve now lost mine – or I should say, I cut it off. I did this for two reasons. 1 – to honor my father and let him know that he’s not alone in how he looks, etc. 2 – to bring awareness to others who see me to be reminded of my dad’s battle and pray for him.

Do you know who your Heavenly Father is? Yes, you may know the FACTS about God the Father, that He’s the creator of all, that He’s in heaven, that He’s God... BUT, do you know Him? I could ask the question: “Who’s Your Daddy?” Not, what is his name? But who is he?

In order to be able to truly love God...you have to have an understanding that God loves you! Once you have that understanding, it’s a bit easier to be able to love Him. Have you ever found that it’s easier to love the people that already love you? It’s not near as hard to love those that love you than it is to love those that don’t love you, or even like you! If you understand that God loves you, and you begin to understand just a little about that love that God has, and that it is truly unconditional love...then you’ll be able to love Him even more.

So the question I have for you this morning is...

WHAT DOES GOD KNOW ABOUT YOU and yet...HE STILL LOVES YOU!

It's awesome to think that God knows EVERYTHING about you, and yet He still loves you. We as human beings have a tendency that when we find out something about someone that is maybe a bit questionable, we have a tendency to wane a bit in our feelings towards them. Many times, this is natural. But for God...HE doesn't waiver one bit in His love for us.

So...

5 THINGS GOD KNOWS ABOUT YOU...AND STILL LOVES YOU

The Bible says in Psalm 139 that God knows everything about you. He's intimately acquainted with you. We say that we know that we know God knows everything. But we really don't act like it. Today, I want to do a little reminder of five specific areas that God knows everything about in your life and the difference that it will make if you just remember that fact; and how that will help you in falling more in love with Him...as we Make an Impact to LOVE!

1. GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT MY FAULTS AND FAILURES

This is the bad news.

Psalm 69:5 (Good News)

"My sins, O God, are not hidden from you; you know how foolish I have been."

God knows everything about us. The fact is, sometimes we want to forget the omniscience of God because it's a little uncomfortable. It is uncomfortable for me to realize I don't have any secrets from God. There are some things I'd rather God not know about me. But I don't have any secrets and neither do you. God knows everything.

Foolishly, when we do something wrong, we try to hide our sins, sneak them past God, put them in the closet and lock the door but God knows what's behind that locked door. Adam, when he sinned, the first thing he did was run away and hide as if you can hide from God. God comes walking through the Garden, figuratively speaking, and says, "Adam, where are you?" Whenever God asks a question it is never for information, never for His benefit. God knew exactly where Adam was. Adam needed to know where he was. God told Cain, "Where's your brother Abel?" Abel had been killed and He wanted Cain to admit it.

Proverbs 5:21

"For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and He examines all his paths."

You always have an audience. Nothing you ever say is "off the record." God is always watching, you're always on stage, there is no secret closet. Everything you think, everything you see, everything you do, feel -- God sees it all. He knows all about it.

That means this week when you were on your diet and you got up for one of those midnight refrigerator raids and you open the refrigerator or freezer and think, "Just one bite..." The devil

has a line for us then. He says, "No one will ever know." So we go ahead and do it and then afterwards he hits us with another question, "What if they find out?" "What if my parents find out about what I've been doing? My wife/husband? Boss? IRS?" And we worry! You have already been found out. God knows and He's the one who counts. He knows all my faults and all my failures.

God is not shocked by my sin. He's already seen it. He saw it coming. When we confess to Him the things we've done wrong, He's not shocked. He saw it coming: "I know, I understand. I know why it happened. I know why you ended up in that situation." He understands our faults and our failures.

My response to that: be honest with God. Just admit it. The Bible says, *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* Just admit it. I'm not fooling anybody. "You're right God. I was wrong." God knows everything about me. He already knows all I've done wrong and He still loves me. When I admit it to Him, it never changes the way He feels about me, because He already knows. He loves me and He loves me unconditionally. That means I don't have to fake it, I don't have to pretend.

Proverbs 28:13

"Cover-ups never work."

Especially toward those who it counts most and that's the Lord. God knows all my faults and failures.

2. GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT MY FEELINGS AND FRUSTRATIONS

Psalm 31:7

"... you God have listened to all my troubles and have seen the crisis in my soul."

Some of you think, "Nobody knows what I'm going through, nobody feels the pain I'm going through." God knows. He knows my feelings and frustrations. He has seen the crisis in my soul.

Psalm 56:6 (Good News)

"You know how troubled I am; you have kept a record of my tears."

There is no hurt that goes unnoticed by God. He sees it all.

Often when we're hurting we feel very isolated, very lonely. Maybe there's been a death in the family, a divorce, maybe we've gotten fired. We feel all alone and think, "Nobody understands the way I feel, nobody can tell the way I feel, and nobody feels the pain." But God knows. He understands my hurts, my feelings, my frustrations.

What do you do? What does God feel? What does God think when He knows how you feel?

Psalm 103:13-14

"He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic for he knows what we are made of -- dust."

He's our creator. The fact is: God is sympathetic to my hurts and your hurts. Not only does He see, He cares. God understands why it happened. He knows the causes, the reasons, the things that brought you to this point. He sees how it all fits together. The Bible says He understands because He made us. He knows my thoughts, my failures, my feelings, my frustrations. He sees the hurt in your heart. Nobody else may.

What should I do?

Psalm 142:3

"When I am ready to give up, He knows what I should do."

Some of you are ready to give up and God knows what you ought to do.

My response: If He sees all my hurts, give them to Him. Give Him my hurts. 1 Peter 5:7 *"Cast all your cares on the Lord, for He cares for you."* Cast them all permanently, once and for all, don't take them back. Give Him your hurts just like you give Him your faults, every area of your life.

3. GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT MY FUTURE

He knows all my future, even before I was born.

Psalm 139:16

"The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book before any of them ever began."

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, ... plans to give you hope and a future."

Circle "know". He knows the plans and He knows your future.

Everybody is interested in the future. It's interesting to me the things people will try to know what the future holds: astrology, horoscopes, reading tea leaves, consulting with people, bio-rhythms. People try all kinds of things trying to figure out what's going to happen next. They are going to the wrong source. There is somebody who knows what's going to happen next -- God.

The fact is, God sees my tomorrow, today. He already sees the things we'll face. He knows my future.

God is not limited by time. He can be in the past, the present, and the future all at the same time. It's like if you were in the Goodyear Blimp looking down on the Reds Opening Day Parade. You could see the beginning of the parade and the end of the parade all at the same time, without even stopping it. God, from His perspective, can see past, present, and future all at once. He sees all my tomorrows, today. That gives me great confidence in God. It is comforting to me that He knows everything that is going to happen in my life. He not only knows about the future, He's there. He not only walks with you day by day, but He's actually out there in the future. He's

already prepared for everything you're going to face -- tomorrow, next week, and next month. It may surprise me but it's not going to surprise God. Nothing ever catches Him by surprise. The crisis that you'll experience next month, next year, or whenever, the inevitable crisis that catches you and you ask, "What's happening? Where is God?" God's been there all along, preparing. He knows your future. He is in your future and He's prepared for everything. That gives me confidence. I know when I hit that crisis, it may surprise me, but it hasn't surprised God.

My response is if I know that God knows all my tomorrows, today, then I should ask for advice. He knows what's going to happen.

Jeremiah 33:3

"Call unto Me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things that you know not."

The things you don't know, God can tell you about. He's not going to lay out your whole life all at once, telling you everything that will happen in your life. If He did you'd get very discouraged or full of pride or both. He will lay it out a little at a time. He says, "Call to me. I'll give you advice because I know what's going to happen!"

If you're driving up a mountain on a curving road and caught behind a slow car. You think, "If I could just see around the curve I'd go ahead and pass him." If there was a helicopter above, he could let you know if there was another car. From his perspective, he could help you out. From God's perspective, since He knows everything that's going to happen, you can ask Him for advise now.

Lord willing, I've committed for the long term to pastor here at Eastgate Community Church. When I think about the fact that I've got to prepare the number of fresh sermons every week for the next 40 years without repeating myself, that is a very discouraging thought! Yet, when I'm preparing I think, "God already knows what I'm going to say next Sunday. I may not know but He knows. If He would let me in on what I'm going to say a little earlier... maybe I wouldn't get so uptight and nervous about what I'm going to say." He already knows what I'm going to say.

Practical application: When you get up in the morning and you set and read your Bible for 5 or 10 minutes and you pray and you go over your schedule with the Lord, "Father, You've already seen this day that I'm about to experience. You know ahead of time every interruption I'm going to face, every cranky person in the office, every flat tire, every traffic jam, every missed plane, when I'm going to spill the coffee on my suit. You've already seen it. Would You, right now, give me the strength to cope through this day, the strength that I need for today." He already knows. You can ask Him in advance for wisdom, for strength, for what you will face that day.

God knows all my faults and failures and He still loves me. God knows all my frustrations and my feelings and He cares. God knows all my future so I can ask Him for advise.

4. GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT MY FEARS

He knows everything that gets you uptight. Often, the most things we get uptight about are in the areas of finances, our needs, our financial fears.

Matthew 6:31-32

"So do not worry saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Circle "knows". He knows what you need. He knows everything you need. He knows about your financial fears.

Do you ever act as if God is unaware of your bills? "Don't you see, God? I'm going under! I'm not going to make it!" We're trying to stretch and make ends meet... When you don't remember that God knows, then you start getting uptight, upset, fall apart. "How are my needs going to be met?" Worry is the result of not realizing the omniscience of God. When I think that God doesn't know what's going on in my life, that He's unaware of it and He doesn't care and He's totally oblivious to it, then I think I must take matters into my own hands. I'll be God. I start worrying about it. Worrying is trying to play God. Worrying is taking responsibility for things God never intended you to have.

It's my opinion that every basic emotional problem that people have is the result of not understanding the characteristics of God. Misunderstanding who He is and what He does. When you know God it brings emotional stability into your life. Stress is created when you forget what God knows and what God does and what God has promised to do in your life. Worry comes when we forget that God knows all of our fears.

Matthew 6:8

"Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

The fact is God is aware of all my needs. He's aware of every single need you have. Financial needs, spiritual needs, sexual needs, social needs -- every kind of need you have -- emotional needs. God is aware of every need in your life. The Bible says that when we come and pray God knows what you need before you ask. Prayer is never giving God information. God does not need a reporter here on earth, checking in and telling Him about what's going on. He already knows what's going on in your life. The Bible says He knows what you need even before you ask.
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What's the use of praying, then? You don't pray in order to tell your needs to God. He already knows. You pray to get the answer to your needs, the solution to your problems. You're not revealing anything to God. He's waiting for you to ask Him for help. He's waiting to offer it. He says, You have not because you ask not.

If God knows all my needs my response is Don't worry! I don't worry. I trust God.

Philippians 4:6

"Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything."

Don't panic -- pray. If God knows all my needs -- every need -- then I don't have to get His attention because I already have His attention. Therefore I don't have to work up some kind of ritual prayer to get Him to meet my needs. He's already aware. I can talk to Him about anything in my life, because He's already aware of it. We already have His undivided attention. It's no problem for Him to meet everybody's needs all at once. That's what makes Him God!

5. GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT MY FAITHFULNESS

Every time I do the right thing, God is watching. Every time, instead of sinning, I choose not to sin, every time I resist a temptation, every time I stand for something -- I have a conviction -- no matter how small or insignificant, God understands and He sees my faithfulness to Him.

Matthew 6:1&4, Jesus speaking,

"Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Fact: Every good deed will be rewarded. Every good deed will be rewarded no matter how insignificant, regardless of whether anybody else on earth saw it or not. Every encouragement you give to other people, every kind word or compliment you give to your children, every time you do a thoughtful act for your husband, every time you pick up around the office when it's not your job, every time you set up chairs in church or stuff bulletins, every kind thought, every act of courtesy, every time you had the opportunity to gossip and you didn't, every time you had the opportunity to be critical and you weren't, that you were positive instead of negative -- God sees it all! He sees every little thing. Every time you gave an offering sacrificially, God knew how much you had left over. Every time you complimented somebody, served, done some secret act of service, every time you picked up a piece of trash and nobody was around, God saw it. He's seen it all and He will reward you.

Imagine yourself on a giant stage and you're the only person on that stage. You're acting out your life. In the audience there is only one person and it's God. He's out there clapping and saying "I see that good thing you just did. Keep on going! Nobody else saw it. I know that thought you just had and I know it was a positive good thought. I saw it."

More and more in my life, I'm trying to live out my life for an audience of one. In fact, that is Pastor Gerson, our music pastor, that's the theme of his ministry, "An Audience of One", God. That's all that counts. It really doesn't matter how I appear in public. What matters is how I am in private. Character is what you are in the dark. Reputation is what other people say about you. Character is what you are. What matters is the integrity in your life when nobody is looking. Because there is someone looking. God. He's saying, "I saw that act! I saw that kind thought! I saw that patience you had with your children! Good job, my child! I'm watching!" That is a tremendous motivator for me to live a godly life. I realize that nothing in my life is in secret. God sees it all. You may fool some people some of the time or all the people all the time but there is one person you are not fooling and that is God. It's His opinion that's going to count most in eternity. God says, "I know all your faithfulness. I saw what you did."

So what should be my response? If God sees all the good things that I do and He's out there cheering me on and I'm going to get credit for them all then my response should be Don't Be Discouraged! Some of you are saying, "I've been trying to do the right thing in my marriage. I don't see any results. I've been trying to be the right kind of person and respond correctly with my kids, to my parents, to my husband/wife. I've been trying to be a good Christian at work. I've been trying to have a good testimony at school. I don't know if it's paying off. I don't see it making an impact in anybody's life." God says, "I see it! And it doesn't matter who else. No good thing ever goes unrewarded!" Every act of kindness, every act of love -- God is recording it all. Nothing good that you do is ever done in vain.

Galatians 6:9

"We should not grow weary in doing good because we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Matthew 10 says even a cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus Christ, God is writing it down and you're going to get credit for it.

Conclusion:

Knowing that and knowing that God knows everything in my life, can either be very disturbing or very comforting. It depends on my relationship to Him, whether I'm trying to fool Him or not. Which of these five areas have you been acting as if God is totally unaware of?

God knows all my faults and failures. Have you been acting as if, pretending, that God does not know the wrong things that you're involved in? Maybe you thought you could get away with it. Maybe you even have said to yourself, "No one will ever know. My husband/wife/boss/parents will never know." You may be fooling other people -- everybody in this room -- but you're not fooling God. Because He's got your number! He's got you pegged. And He sees everything going on in your life. You need to admit it to yourself and to God -- come clean -- and ask God to forgive you. Remember that He already knows about it. And He still loves you. When you admit it to Him it's not going to change the way He feels about you. That's grace! He's going to say, "I know. I understand. I even know how you got into it. And I also know how you can get out of it." Admit it to Him. Be honest to God and don't try to keep any secrets.

God knows all my feelings and frustrations. Maybe you're hurting. Maybe you have been saying, "No one understands me." And you've been saying that for so long, telling that to yourself so many times, that you've forgotten that God understands you. Completely. He has seen the crisis in your soul. And the Bible says He has recorded every tear. King James Version says He has kept them in a bottle. Every time you cried yourself to sleep He has seen it. And He loves you and He's very much aware of all that has happened in your life, that has brought you hurt. Look to Him for comfort. Look to Him for strength. Realize He understands you even better than you do.

God knows your future. Have you forgotten this fact? He is already there. He's with you today in the present but He's also out there in the future. Nothing will catch Him by surprise. If you're married, one day one of you is going to die first. That is inevitable. One of us will lose a mate first, we'll lose our partner. That can be an incredibly devastating time. But the fact is, God already knows when it's going to happen and God is preparing already for that event. He's waiting there to comfort you and hold you in His arms and you can come to Him now and say,

"God, when it comes, give me the wisdom to know what to do, the strength to know how to handle it, because it's not going to catch You by surprise." God knows all your future so you ask Him for advise.

What are you afraid of? Are you afraid of your bills piling up? Are you afraid that your needs will not be met? The Bible says your Heavenly Father knows. He knows what you need. And He will take care of you. Instead of worrying why don't you start trusting? He knows your needs.

God knows all my faithfulness. Are you discouraged trying to do what's right? You think, "I've been trying to do what the Bible says and I don't know if it's paying off and I don't think anybody appreciates it anyway. Nobody seems to be thankful. I don't even know if it's worth it." God knows and He will reward you. He is the audience cheering you on, clapping -- "I saw that good thought! I saw that kind action!" and He's cheering you on.

To me, the most amazing thing in life is God knows. Nobody knows me like God does. He knows me better than I know myself and yet nobody loves me like God does. Nobody knows you like God does. He's got your number. Even the hairs on your head are numbered. Just like me when my kids were little. I saved their first haircut, because I care about them. Even their hairs are important to me! Nobody knows you like God does and nobody loves you like He does.

Now that we've looked at who He Is.... Let's entertain the thoughts that God has about you. In that God loves me, what does He think about me? When I understand what He thinks I am, I can begin to understand who He is – the Great I AM.

Question: Who am I to God?

Watch this video... I (am).