

Show Us the Father

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” —

John 14:8

Summary:

Philip’s request may have reflected a mistaken desire for a visible manifestation of God, or a deeper longing to know and enjoy him above all else. God cannot be known completely, yet he can be known truly and savingly, and this knowledge satisfies the soul in both life and eternity. The Father is revealed through Jesus Christ—through his person, sacrifice, word, and Spirit. Believers should therefore seek their knowledge of God in Christ.

Outline:

- 1. A request that may be misunderstood**
 - Philip may have desired an extraordinary display of God that human weakness could not bear.
- 2. Faith does not depend on visible signs**
 - Miraculous appearances cannot replace the sufficient testimony God has already given.
- 3. The knowledge of God satisfies**
 - Though God cannot be known exhaustively, he can be known truly as our portion and strength.
- 4. Christ reveals the Father**
 - Jesus makes God known through his person, sacrifice, teaching, providence, and Spirit.
- 5. Seek and follow Christ**
 - Those who ask and continue to follow him receive the light of life and grow in divine knowledge.

Text

What is the best way to interpret this request? It's unlikely that some believed he sought a physical portrayal of the Deity. Certainly, he would have known that God's true essence is invisible and cannot be represented by any form, especially since the Jews—and Philip was one—were prohibited from creating any likeness of the Supreme Being. It is more plausible that he yearned for a magnificent manifestation of God's presence and attributes, similar to what Moses experienced, which he referred to as God's face.

If he understood what he was asking, he might have been risking a fatal encounter. The Bible states, "No man can see my face and live," because such divine displays are overwhelming, especially for our fragile human nature. For example, the Jews once saw God's glory in a cloud, but their subsequent corruption and worship of false gods diminished the impact of these miracles. Repeated extraordinary manifestations would eventually lose their wonder and cease to be miraculous.

This is not the way in which God may be known. Still, let us not criticise Philip or assume we have never made similar errors. Have we never craved an immediate, tangible proof that leaves no room for doubt? Have we not longed to hear, 'Go in peace, your sins are forgiven,' with an audible voice? Have we never wished for a returning soul from beyond the grave or a spirit's assurance of an afterlife? Ah, what a foolish desire. We have Moses and the prophets—blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

However, some praise rather than criticise Philip. They interpret his words as, "Oh! lead us to know the blessed God, and we will regard every other wish as insignificant compared to this!" This is in agreement with David when he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none on earth I desire besides thee."

Philip, then, correctly asks for a fuller manifestation and enjoyment of God—"Lord, show us the Father, and it will be enough for us." But can He truly be shown or known?

"No one knows the Father except the Son, and the Son chooses to reveal him. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known." While some seek God in the natural world, the Apostle reminds us that "He who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts, giving us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

He reveals the Father through;

- **By his appearance**—He is the visible image of the invisible God.
- **Through his sacrifice**—where his wisdom, holiness, righteousness, truth, and love are clearly and beautifully displayed.
- **Through his words**—the simplest Christian, holding "the word of Christ," understands more about God than all the philosophers of Greece and Rome. He teaches us greatly about God's grace,

especially in the parable of the prodigal son. And how much does he teach us concerning God as the God of providence through the saying: “A sparrow falleth not to the ground without your heavenly Father; and the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

- **Through the Spirit**—who guides us into all truth and is the Spirit of Christ—we have an unction from the Holy One, enabling us to know all things.

As such, we should turn to Him, just as Philip did, and pray, “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

He asks this of us and assures that our seeking will not be in vain.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find. He has always fulfilled, and will never fail to fulfill, the promises that inspire our hope. “I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light that brings life.” “Then we will understand, if we continue to seek the Lord: his coming is as sure as the morning; and he will come to us like rain, both the former and the latter rain upon the earth.”

This sermon is taken from William Jay’s devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 6, Evening), first published in 1854.