

How can I know?

How can I know God as God really is, if there is a God at all?

How can I know Christ as God's Son; the way, the truth and the life, the light of the world?

How can I know the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and Christ, the life-giving Spirit of truth?

How can I know the Church as God's people, the body of Christ, the pillar and bulwark of the truth, "the fullness of him who fills all in all"?

Orthodox Christian scriptures, saints and spiritual teachers advise us to do the following things as faithfully and honestly as we can, and then see what happens.

1. Truly desire to know, and be prepared to do whatever it takes to know. Humbly and courageously put into practice what you come to know, whatever the cost. Do not lie to yourself. Do not argue with others. Do not engage in religious or theological disputations.
2. Pray for enlightenment, even if your prayer is "to whom it may concern." Pray something like this: "God, if you exist, reveal yourself to me, show me your truth." If you somehow believe in God, pray "God, reveal yourself to me as you really are. God reveal your Son Christ to me." Do not look for anything particular to happen. Let whatever happens happen. And go with it.
3. While praying this way, read through the New Testament very slowly **at least three times**. This will prove that you really want to know. Take the time and make the effort to do this. Be patient and proceed slowly. Do not be bothered about what you don't understand. Try to put into practice what you do understand. Whatever is clearly an understandable teaching of Christ or one of the apostles, like St. Paul or St. John, try to put it into practice. For example, do not lie, do not steal, do not fornicate. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you, forgive those who hurt you. Strive to have love, truth, joy, peace, goodness, purity, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, self-control.
4. Go to Orthodox Church services as you can. Just be there and listen. Do not judge the people who are there in any way. Do not be bothered about what you don't understand. Don't pay much attention to the singing or the rituals. If you are a confused and troubled member of the Orthodox Church, do not serve, read or sing in the choir during this period. Also, do not participate in church councils, committees, organizations or activities. Just be there.

5. Do not lie about anything, do not consciously harm anyone, try to be kind and good to everyone you meet, without exception, especially difficult people. If possible, do some good work for others, even if just for an hour or two a week, as secretly as possible. Try not to let people see or praise what you are doing. Also if possible, give away some money secretly to those in need.
6. If you are not married, do not engage in any sexual acts at all, of any kind, even with yourself alone. If you're married, let your conjugal love be pure. Act for the good of your spouse, not yourself. When you fail in any of these things, don't "freak out" or get depressed, but calmly start again to try to keep yourself pure.
7. Do not eat too much. Don't eat unhealthy foods. Don't get drunk. Don't take drugs. Try to eat and drink less than normal a couple of days a week, e.g. on Wednesdays and Fridays. Be thankful for the food and the drink that you have.
8. Sit in total silence at least 10 to 15 minutes a day, or even up to 30 minutes a day if you can, watching the thoughts that come to your mind and letting them go with a prayer: "God [if you are there] enlighten my mind. God [if you are there] help me with this. God [if you are there] help these people who come to my mind."
9. Try to speak as little as possible without irritating others. Try not to make your opinions known or accepted in conversations, unless you are asked. Listen to others. Be attentive to their presence and their needs. Don't argue with anyone about anything. Don't condemn anyone for anything, no matter what.
10. Find someone that you fully trust and share with them your thoughts, feelings, dreams, hang-ups, compulsions, etc. in detail. Don't go into detail about sexual things, or about other people. Discuss in detail your family of origin and your childhood experiences, good and bad. Focus on what memories distress and sadden you, and what memories bring you joy.
11. Do a "check list" for possible food, alcohol, drug or sex addictions, and other addictions that you think you may have, like, e.g. rage, gambling, or shopping. If you see that you are compulsively addicted in some way to eating, drinking, drugs, engaging in sex, etc. enter a treatment program and get help.
12. Do your work and/or your studies to the best of your ability; carefully, responsibly, conscientiously and devotedly. Live a day, even a part of the day, at a time. Focus fully on what you are doing at any given moment. Focus on good things. Fill your life with good things. Do not think much about bad things or bad people. Let go of falsehood, evil and darkness, and cling to goodness, truth and light.