

## #2 THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

**Q** Is God a mystery?

**A** No, God created us to know Him, though we are unable to completely know or understand the depths of His being.

**Q** How can we know God?

**A** God reveals Himself through His creation, the Scriptures, our conscience, and His Son, Jesus.

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"But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." **JEREMIAH 9:24**

"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them." **ROMANS 1:19**

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### THEOLOGY: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

God's presence and glory is all around us. The Psalmist says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork*" (**Psalm 19:1**). God works through nature to display His Glory and reveals Himself to mankind. Man is unique from all other creatures in that he has been given the ability to reason. The Apostle Paul speaks of God writing His law on the human heart (**Romans 2:12-16**), where He implants an understanding of Himself in the human mind. God demands obedience; however, natural man intentionally suppresses his knowledge of God (**Romans 1:18-23**). He foolishly declares: "*there is no God*" (**Psalm 14:1**) to justify his disobedience. Conversely, the person who rightly recognizes the God-creature relationship - his knowledge of God grows to a longing for God as He works in him. "*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*" (**John 17:3**).

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### APPLICATION: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Understanding Him in His Glory**— God and man are not equals in the story. The Creator-creation distinction is everywhere present in the pages of Scripture. That God can be known by those He created is humbling, and when finite man begins to understand the glory of who God is, he wants to know Him more.

**Worshipping Him in His Glory**— For as much as man can know about God, He is forever mysterious to man. For as much as man can comprehend about God, this knowledge is but a drop in the ocean. To know the God of glory is to bow the knee in worship. The primary response to knowing God is always to be awe.

**So What?**— It is glorious beyond comprehension that man can obtain a knowledge of God leading to salvation. When by grace created man comes to understand the Creator God, he declares, *"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8a). So, count it all loss, and pursue knowing Christ!



"God wants man to know Him."

- *What part does the creation play in revealing God?*

- *How does this image represent a Creator?*

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### FURTHER STUDY

**R. C. Sproul**, *The Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), 11, 12, 15.

In biblical theology we distinguish between two types of general revelation- that which is communicated through an intermediary and that which is direct. When we speak of mediate general revelation, we refer to revelation that is transmitted through something. When the heavens reveal God, they become the medium or mean through which God displays His glory. In this sense the whole universe is a medium of divine revelation. The creation bears witness to its Creator.

The Bible says that the whole earth is full of the glory of God. Sadly, we often miss the very glory that surrounds us. We tend to live on the surface of things. We are asleep to the wonder and awe that God provides in His glorious creation. We have tuned out. We are out of touch. Religious ideas are worthless if they do not express something real.

The sublime presence of God is all around us. Yet we are blind and deaf to it. We don't understand it's language. It takes more than stopping to smell the flowers. A flower contains more than a sweet aroma or fragrance. It exudes the glory of its Creator. We are all in touch with divine revelation when we are aware of God's glory in nature. Nature is not divine. But God's glory fills nature and is revealed in and through it.

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### FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

**Wayne Gruden**, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 56, 57, 70.

People can obtain a knowledge that God exists and a knowledge of some of his attributes simply from observation of themselves and the world around them. David says, "The heavens telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps.19:1). To look at the sky is to see evidence of the infinite power, wisdom, and even beauty of God; it is to observe a majestic witness to the glory of God.

Paul says, [Rom. 1:19-21] not only that creation gives evidence of God's existence and character, but also that even wicked men recognize that evidence. What can be known about God is "plain to them" and in fact "they knew God" (apparently, they knew who he was), but they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him." This passage allows us to say that all persons, even the most wicked, have some internal knowledge or perception that God exists and that He is a powerful Creator. This knowledge is seen "in the things that have been made," a phrase that refers to all creation, including mankind.

The consciences of unbeliever's bear witness to God's moral standards, but at times this evidence of God's law on the hearts of unbelievers is distorted or suppressed. Sometimes their thoughts "excuse" them, Paul says. The knowledge of God's laws derived from such sources is never perfect, but it is enough to give an awareness of God's moral demands to all mankind. (And it is on the basis that Paul argues that all humanity is held guilty before God for sin, even those who do not have the written laws of God in scripture.)

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### FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

God says [Jer. 9:23-24] that the source of our joy and sense of importance ought to come not from our own abilities or possessions, but from the fact that we know him. Similarly, in praying to his Father, Jesus can say, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The promise of the new covenant is that all shall know God, "from the least of them to the greatest" (Heb. 8:11), and John's first epistle tells us that the Son of God has come and given us understanding "to know him who is true" (1 John 5:20; see also Gal. 4:9; Phil. 3:10; 1 John 2:3; 4:8). John can say, "I write to you, children, because you know the Father" (1 John 2:13).

The fact that we do know God himself is further demonstrated by the realization that the richness of the Christian life includes a personal relationship with God. As these passages imply, we have a far greater privilege than mere knowledge of facts about God. We speak to God in prayer, and he speaks to us through his Word. We commune with him in his presence, we sing his praise, and we are aware that he personally dwells among us and within us to bless us (John 14:23). Indeed, this personal relationship with God the Father, with God the Son, and with God the Holy Spirit may be said to be the greatest of all the blessings of the Christian life.

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### FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

**J.I. Packer**, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993) 9, 10.

God's world is not a shield hiding the Creator's power and majesty. From the natural order it is evident that a mighty and majestic Creator is there. Paul says this in Romans 1:19-21, and in Acts 17:28 he calls a Greek poet as witness that humans are divinely created. Paul also affirms that the goodness of this Creator becomes evident from kindly providences (Acts 14:17; cf. Rom. 2:4), and that some at least of the demands of his holy law are known to every human conscience (Rom. 2:14-15), along with the uncomfortable certainty of eventual retributive judgement (Rom. 1:32). These evident certainties constitute the content of general revelation.

General revelation is so called because everyone receives it, just by virtue of being alive in God's world. This has been so from the start of human history. God actively discloses these aspects of himself to all human beings, so that in every case failure to thank and serve the Creator in righteousness is sin against knowledge, and denials of having received this knowledge should not be taken seriously. God's universal revelation of his power, praiseworthiness, and moral claim is the basis of Paul's indictment of the whole human race as sinful and guilty before God for failing to serve him as we should (Rom. 1:18-3:19).