



# “Getting to Know God”

## Section 1: What Can We Know About Who God Is?



### Unit 1.1: A Sovereign Starting Point

#### I) It's All About Who You Know

- In the famous opening words of renowned Christian author AW Tozer's landmark book *Knowledge of the Holy*, he boldly proclaims, “*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us*” (p. 1). Taking this concept of the knowledge of God even further, prominent pastor and writer James Montgomery Boice notes in his book *Foundations of the Christian Faith* that knowing God is vitally important for the following five reasons: (1) *It is how we can enter into eternal life*; (2) *It is how we can have knowledge of ourselves*; (3) *It is how we can have knowledge of the world*; (4) *It is the only way to personal holiness*; and (5) *It is the only way the church and those who compose it can become strong* (p. 23-25). Therefore, it is on the basis of this essential need to know our Creator that we begin our study of “*Getting to Know God.*” In this study, we will seek to get to know God *propositionally* (revelation through Scripture) and *experientially* (relationship through intimacy) by addressing the following five questions throughout the series: (1) **What Can We Know About Who God Is?**; (2) **What Can We Know About What God is Like?**; (3) **What Can We Know About Where God Is?**; (4) **What Can We Know About What God Does?**; and (5) **What Can We Know About What God Wants?**

#### II) Created to Be With The Creator

- Possibly the most prolific writing on this topic of having a knowledge of our Creator is J.I. Packer's timeless book, *Knowing God*. In this Christian classic, Packer directly addresses how knowing the Lord is the primary purpose we were placed on this earth. As Packer states, “**What are we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God...What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God**” (p. 33). Scripture fully supports Packer's claims about the preeminence of knowing the Lord as the pinnacle purpose for our existence. As the Lord declared through the prophet Jeremiah to the people of Israel in **Jeremiah 9:23-24**, “*Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 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.*” In the New Testament, the high priestly prayer of Christ on behalf of His disciples also reveals that knowledge of God is not only essential for living but living *eternally*. He states in **John 17:3**, “*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*”

#### III) Knowing God & Knowing Ourselves

- Knowing God is not only important for understanding the purpose of life and inheriting eternal salvation, but if we don't know God we will also never know ourselves. Since we are made in the image of our Creator, we must know Him and His holy standards that we are called to reflect. This is why the Scriptures continue to remind us that we cannot know anything about ourselves or the depravity of our sinful nature without first having God as our measuring stick. **Jeremiah 17:9** states, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*” And speaking about finally understanding his own sin in light of God's holy standards reflected in the laws of Moses, the Apostle Paul remarks in **Romans 7:7**, “*...if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”* Finally, the author of Hebrews clarifies that only God's Word can cut through the blindness we have towards our sinful selves and reveal who we really are at our core. **Hebrews 4:12** says, “*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*”

#### **IV) The Beauty of Being Fully Known**

- In our quest to know more about God and ourselves, we need to pause for a moment and celebrate that despite our lack of knowledge in both areas, God already knows everything there is to know about us. As Packer beautifully explains, *“I know him because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore when his care falters”* (p. 41). In the Scriptures, King David also rejoices in this glorious truth in **Psalm 139** when he begins in verse 1 by saying *“O Lord, you have searched me and known me!”* and then spends the rest of the psalm describing God’s complete and total knowledge of David as someone who as *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* with God’s full understanding and intention.

#### **V) The Danger of Getting God Wrong**

- In **Proverbs 9:10**, the wise King Solomon points directly to a correct understanding of God and a logical response of reverent fear of God as the starting point of all wisdom and knowledge. He states, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”* So, what happens if we don’t know God rightly and therefore don’t have a healthy fear of Him? As A.W. Tozer points out, we will have a low view of God, a high view of ourselves, and not understand our need for salvation. He says, *“Low views of God destroy the gospel for all who hold them”* (p. 3).

#### **VI) Knowing is Not Just “Knowing About”**

- When we talk about “knowing God” this includes a factual knowledge and an experiential knowledge. But, many can easily fall into the trap of pursuing the former and ignoring the latter. Our experiential knowledge of God must be guided by our biblical understanding of who He is, but there is a big difference in knowing “about” God and knowing God Himself. Missionary martyr Jim Elliot perfectly illustrates this in his biography *Shadow of the Almighty*, when he wrote the following words about his father shortly after he returned home from pursuing a biblical studies degree at Wheaton College: *“My father’s religion is of a sort which I have seen nowhere else. His theology is wholly undeveloped, but so real and practical a thing that it shatters every system of doctrine I have seen. He cannot define theism, but he knows God”* (p. 90).

#### **VII) Portraits of People Who Know God**

- So, what is unique about someone who knows God? Once again J.I. Packer gives us valuable insight as he uncovers four keystone characteristics of people who have an intimate knowledge of God. He explains that those who know God **(1) Have great energy for God; (2) Have great thoughts of God; (3) Show great boldness for God; and (4) Have great contentment in God** (p.27-32). Here is a biblical proof of Packer’s claims for each of these characteristics: (1) Great energy for God: (**Daniel 11:32**) – *“...the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.”* (2) Great thoughts of God: (**Psalm 1:1-2**) – *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”* (3) Great boldness for God: (**Acts 5:29**) – *“But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’”* (4) Great contentment for God: (**Psalm 16:11**) – *“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

#### **VIII) On a Mission to Cast a Vision**

- Finally, as we begin this study to seek to a greater knowledge of God, we must remember that God wants to be known and our mission to spread the gospel and make God known worldwide is a mission that God Himself has already initiated. In his book *Invitation to World Missions*, Timothy Tennant reinforces the truth that our mission is always in response to God’s mission. He states, *“God the Father is the Sender and, therefore, the ultimate source of all missionary sending. The Father sent His word through the prophets, He sent miraculous signs and wonders to reveal His glory. Ultimately, He sent His Son into the world as the greatest revelation of Himself”* (p. 76).