



# “Getting to Know God”

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



### Unit 1.2: Knowing the Unknowable One

#### I) Solving a Sovereign Mystery

- Before we continue our journey of getting to know God, we must first pause and acknowledge an unavoidable tension revealed in Holy Scripture: Our Creator claims to be both *unknowable* and *knowable* at the very same time. First, God is a sovereign mystery because the depth of His being and power transcends human comprehension. As **Job 11:7-8** proclaims, “*Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?*” However, while the Bible declares the majesty of God’s infinite mysteries, the Scriptures also present God as a personal being who desires to be known and worshiped by His creation. When the prophet Jeremiah foretold of a new covenant between God and His people that would later be fulfilled in Christ, he stated in **Jeremiah 31:33-34**, “*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.*” Therefore, since we have assurance from God Himself that we can actually know Him despite the fact He is unknowable, let us take a closer look in this unit about how the tension between these two truths can be reconciled.

#### II) Distinguishing Drops from the Ocean

- When we think about our knowledge of God, a helpful illustration to consider in human terms would be drops of water extracted from the Pacific Ocean. While we can certainly build large containers to store many drops of Pacific blue, there is simply no container large enough that could store even 0.1% of the 63 million square miles that the Pacific covers here on earth. This image of drops in the ocean helps us to understand what theologians call the *incomprehensibility* of God. By saying that God is incomprehensible, it does not mean He is completely unknowable, but instead it means that there is not one aspect or attribute of God that can be fully grasped by human beings. As Greg Allison states in his book, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith*, this incomprehensibility of God is an unavoidable reality because of two factors: (1) Finite creatures can never fully understand the infinite God, and (2) Human creatures suffer from the intellectual effects of the fall such that their understanding of Him is distorted. As Allison points out from Scripture, we can never fully understand any single thing about God including His *greatness* (**Psalm 145:3**), His *understanding* (**Psalm 147:5**), His *knowledge* (**Psalm 139:6**), His *ways and thoughts* (**Isaiah 55:9**), and His *riches, wisdom, and judgment* (**Romans 11:33**) (p. 69). This truth is further explained in the famous words of early church father Saint Augustine who declared, “*We are speaking of God. It is any wonder if you do not comprehend? For it you comprehend, it is not God you comprehend...To attain some slight knowledge of God is a great blessing; to comprehend him, however, is totally impossible.*”

#### III) Savoring What He Has Shared

- If God is so massive and mysterious that He transcends the human mind, how is it even possible that we can know anything about Him at all? The answer is found in *divine revelation*. In an act of unspeakable love and grace, our Creator condescends to us as His creation to uncover aspects of His personhood and divine will that can be perceived clearly enough for us to understand him truly (**John 8:31-32**) and worship him rightly in spirit and truth (**John 4:23-24**). This does not mean that we will ever know even one thing about God *fully*, but we can rejoice that we know *truly*. As the Lord reminded His people in **Deuteronomy 29:29**, “*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”

#### **IV) Everybody's Got a Hungry Heart**

- Indisputable evidence throughout creation that God not only exists, but that He created us to know Him personally, is found in the deepest yearning of our human hearts. As French philosopher Blaise Pascal stated, *"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."* In other words, we all have a heart that universally hungers for God by His design, and that hunger leads us to seek to satisfaction through relational worship. As prominent Baptist theologian John L. Dagg noted in his timeless book, *Manual of Theology*, *"There have been tribes of men without literature, and, to a great extent, without science and arts; but the notion of an invisible, over ruling power, with some form of religious worship, has been nearly, or quite universal"* (p. 53). While this certainly does not mean that everyone has true knowledge of God or worships Him rightly, this innate desire to have a real relationship with our Creator does mean that knowing Him was first *His* idea and *His* priority.

#### **V) Trouble with Handling the Truth**

- The question about knowing God now becomes, if we have a yearning to know Him and He also wants to be known truly and personally, then why is relational knowledge of God so rare in human history? The first reason lies in the texts of **Romans 1:18** and **John 3:19**, where Scripture reveals that human beings *suppress the truth* of God because they desire to live ungodly lifestyles, and therefore they prefer to *remain in darkness* instead of turning towards light. As James Montgomery Boice explains in *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, *"Sufficient knowledge has been given about God for people to turn from themselves and their own way of life to God and begin to seek Him. But this knowledge, like a great spring, has been pressed down. Now the spring threatens to leap up and demolish the views and lifestyles of the one repressing it. So, the person holds it down, suppressing it"* (p. 32).

#### **VI) Casting Pearls Before Pigs**

- The second reason most do not know the truth about God is because of *disobedience* to the truth they already have. The Bible warns believers not to quench the Holy Spirit (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**) or grieve Him (**Ephesians 4:30**) when we have been convicted to repent of our sin and turn towards the Lord in obedience. Scripture warns us over and over again that if we don't obey God with what we already have, we will not receive anything more and what we do have will be taken away. This reality is illustrated in Christ's parables of the Sower (**Matthew 13:1-23**) and of the Talents (**Matthew 25:14-30**). Simply put, knowledge of God is the most precious commodity in this world, and He will not waste it on those who will not fear Him and obey Him. As Christ warned his disciples, we are not to throw His pearls before pigs (**Matthew 7:6**) because only the pure in heart will ever have the privilege of seeing God (**Matthew 5:8**).

#### **VII) The Results of Rejecting Revelation**

- There are several miserable realities that result from human beings who reject divine revelation because of their desire to suppress God's truth or blatantly disobey His commands:
  - a) **Immature Christianity (Hebrews 5:11-14)**: Those who remain spiritual babies on milk
  - b) **Idolatry (Romans 1:25)**: Those who replace God with a false religion, person, object, or experience
  - c) **Agnosticism (Acts 17:22-32)**: Those who remain non-committal about God's existence or truth
  - d) **Atheism (Psalm 14:1, Psalm 53:1)**: Those who flat out reject God's existence altogether

#### **VIII) So, Seek Him Like Silver**

- So, if God is knowable, and we can worship Him in spirit and truth if we seek Him through repentance, faith, and obedience, the only suitable response is that we seek Him now with everything we have. As David told Solomon in **1 Chronicles 28:9** to search God *"with a whole heart and with a willing mind,"* and Solomon later proclaimed in **Proverbs 2:1-5** to seek God's wisdom *"like silver"* and *"search for it like hidden treasures,"* we too will find true knowledge of our Creator if we search fervently and obey faithfully. In our quest to know the Unknowable One, may our hearts echo these words of Francis Brook in his hymn, *My Goal is God Himself*: *"My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace, Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God; 'Tis His to lead me there—not mine, but His—At any cost, dear Lord, by any road."*