

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## Knowing God I: Syllabus

Notes —

### CLASS # 1:

- I. Introduction to Knowing God.
- II. The Doctrine of Knowing God:
  - A. The Importance of Knowing God.
  - B. How Can God be Known?

### CLASS #2:

- II. The Doctrine of Knowing God:
  - B. How Can God be Known? (cont.).

### CLASS #3:

- III. Four Aspects in Knowing God:
  - A. Introduction.
  - B. Awareness.
  - C. Attributes.

### CLASS #4:

- III. Four Aspects in Knowing God:
  - C. Attributes. (cont.)
  - D. Actions.

### CLASS #5:

- III. Four Aspects in Knowing God:
  - E. Attitudes.
- Exam.

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## Knowing God I: Exam

### Possible 20 Point Questions

- 1) Explain the two basic problems in the knowledge of God (pp. 6, 7).
- 2) Using Scripture, develop the idea of the reception of general revelation (pp. 10, 11).
- 3) Explain how the processes of remembering and forgetting work together in knowing God (pp. 30, 31).
- 4) Use 1 Jn 4 to explain the process of knowing God through attributes (pp. 33-35).
- 5) List the three “P’s” that describe our time spent with God and briefly describe each one (pp. 40, 41).
- 6) Discuss the concept of an eternal attitude (pp. 46, 47).

### Possible 10 Point Questions

- 1) Use two Scriptures to show the importance of knowing God (pp. 4, 5).
- 2) Use Ephesians to list three aspects of the mystery of God (p. 5).
- 3) Use two Scriptures to show that it is God who must make Himself known to us (p. 8).
- 4) Define the word “revelation” (p. 9).
- 5) In two or three sentences, explain the idea of progressive revelation (p. 13).
- 6) List three mediums of special revelation (pp. 15-17).
- 7) What is subordinate revelation (pp. 18, 19)?
- 8) Choose two of the “Jehovah” names of God and define and describe them (no Scripture references necessary; p. 28).
- 9) List three negative actions that hinder knowing God (pp. 36, 37).
- 10) Refer to one Scripture to explain how obedience is directly connected to knowing God (p. 39).
- 11) Briefly explain how the principle found in Jn 3:30 affects knowing God (p. 44).
- 12) Why must repentance be an attitude of someone who wants to know God (p. 46)?

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## I. Introduction to Knowing God.

Notes —

### A. The Importance of Knowing God.

1. The topic of knowing God is the most important topic in Christian theology.
2. The topic of knowing God provides the understanding of what leads to salvation and what comes forth from salvation.
3. Eternal life is to know God (see Jn 17:3).

#### Discussion Point

What are the implications of Jn 17:3?

### B. The Contents of this Course.

1. This course is the first part of a two part series.
  - a. This course focuses on the **doctrine and theology** of knowing God.
  - b. Knowing God II focuses on the **practice** of knowing God.
2. This course is divided into two sections.
  - a. The doctrine of knowing God.
    - 1) This portion of the course focuses on the question of how man comes to know God initially.
    - 2) The contents of this portion of the course are used by permission and based on the teachings of Dr. J.R. Williams, who is Professor of Theology at Regent University.<sup>1</sup>

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b. A theology of knowing God.

- 1) This portion of the course develops a systematic way to understand how Christians grow in their knowledge of God.
- 2) This part of the courses is called “The Four Aspects on the Road (or path) to Knowing God.”

## II. The Doctrine of Knowing God.

### A. The Importance of Knowing God.

1. In human reflection.
  - a. History shows us that man has always been preoccupied with the question of the knowledge of God.
  - b. Regardless if the search to answer this question has come through religion or philosophy, the fact remains that man has always considered the question of how to know God as his greatest priority.
  - c. Inevitably, there is something in man that reaches out for this supreme knowledge.

#### Discussion Point

Can you think of ways that man (both Christian and non-Christian) seeks to know God through alternative religious practices, philosophies and sciences?

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## 2. In the Scriptures.

### a. The importance as seen from the human perspective.

- 1) Consider the cry of Job (Job 23:3).
- 2) Consider the heart of Philip in his request (Jn 14:8).

### b. The importance as seen from the divine perspective.

- 1) What is God's opinion of the importance of the knowledge of God (see Jer 9:23, 24)?
- 2) What is God's ultimate desire and intention (see Is 11:9 and Jer 31:34)?
- 3) What does God want from His people more than anything else (see Hos 6:6 and Mt 23:23)?

### c. The tragedy that results from the lack of knowledge of God. (Follow the progression of thought in Is 1:2-7 and Hos 4:1-6).

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## **B. How Can God Be Known?**

### 1. The mystery of God.

#### a. First, we must understand and accept that God can not be known in the exact same way that other things or persons can be known (see 1 Kgs 8:12).

#### b. God's actions always include a certain aspect of mystery.

- 1) There is "the mystery of His will" (Eph 1:9).
- 2) There is "the mystery of Christ" (Eph 3:4).
- 3) There is "the mystery of the Gospel" (Eph 6:19).

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c. There are two problems that add to the “mystery aspect” of knowing God.

1) God is infinite and man is finite.

a) The finite can not reach the infinite. Man, by himself, is not capable of knowing God (see Job 11:7 and 37:23).

b) This truth is clearly stated in Is 55:8, 9.

c) Consider also, the obvious support of this truth in 1 Cor 1:21.

2) God is holy and man is sinful.

a) Man’s sin keeps him from knowing God. In a certain sense, this problem is even more serious than the first problem.

b) Study the context of Is 8:17.

**Discussion Point**

Use the following diagram to explain the problem of a Holy God in relationship to sinful man.

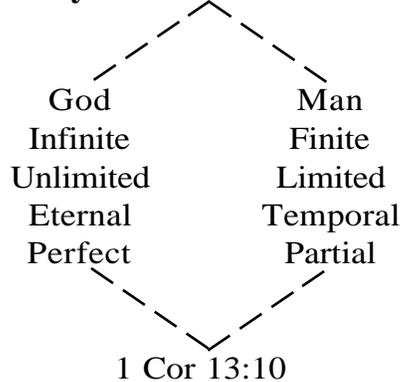
<b>PURITY CAN SEE PURITY</b> (Mt 5:8)	<b>IMPURITY CAN SEE IMPURITY</b> (Pr 17:4)
<u>PURITY CAN NOT SEE IMPURITY</u> (Hab 1:13)	<u>IMPURITY CAN NOT SEE PURITY</u> (Pr 17:20)

**Discussion Point**

Use the following diagram to promote discussion concerning how God overcomes the problems that man faces in his quest to know God.

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## Mystery is Produced by the Difference Between God and Man



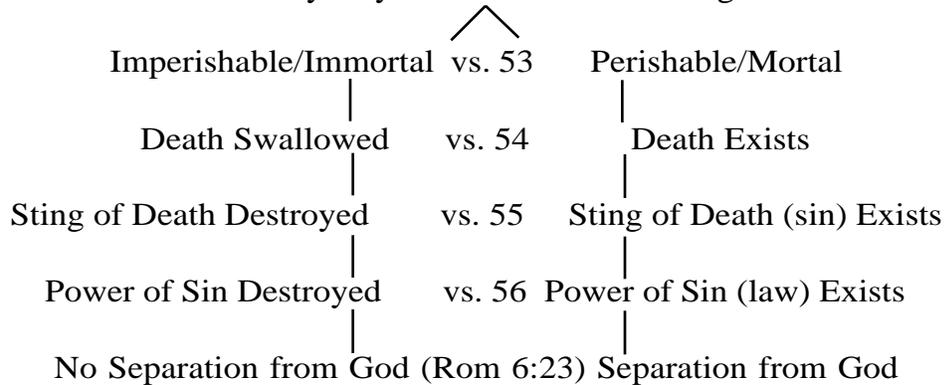
## When the Perfect Comes, the Partial will be Done Away

Why is 1 Cor 13:10 true?

Because the process of knowing God is the process of being transformed into the image of Jesus. This process occurs through revelation or seeing Jesus (study 2 Cor 3:18). Thus 1 Cor 13:12 connects the concept of seeing face to face with the concept of full knowledge. Man can not know God. God must make Himself known. He does this through revelation.

1 Cor 15:51

It is a Mystery but We Shall be Changed



Everything is moving towards knowing God perfectly. The problem is moving towards the resolution. In the end we will be changed and we will know God fully. Meanwhile we are being changed and we know God in part. Through revelation we can know God now. As we see God we experience eternal life now (review Jn 17:3).

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- d. God has provided a salvation that enables us to know Him.
  - 1) How can we know God in spite of the obstacles presented?
  - 2) We can not, by ourselves, know God. God must make Himself known.
    - a) He chooses us. We do not choose Him (Jn 15:16).
    - b) He finds us. We do not find Him (Lk 15:4).
    - c) He draws us. We do not come to Him (Jn 6:44).
    - d) It is His will. It is not our will (Jn 1:13).
  - 3) These truths are hard for man to accept. It means that Jesus is the stumbling block for all mankind; only through Him can man know God. God is the source of all good things (Jms 1:17). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev 1:8).
  - 4) Even the ability to know Him begins with Him. God provides knowledge of Himself because He must provide knowledge of Himself. There is no other way that finite and sinful man can know Him. God must provide revelation.
  - 5) The ultimate revelation of God is Jesus Christ. Christ solves both of the problems that prevent man from knowing God.

**Man's Problem: God is infinite and man is finite.**

**Solution in Christ: Jesus becomes finite.**

**Through the Incarnation God becomes knowable and visible to men (Jn 14:7). God reveals Himself in Christ in a way that man can understand and relate to (Phil 2:7).**

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**Man's Problem: God is holy and man is sinful.**

**Solution in Christ: Jesus becomes sin.**

**Through the atonement God becomes knowable and visible to men (2 Cor 5:21). God reveals Himself in Christ in a way that man can understand and relate to (Heb 4:15, 16).**

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2. God is known by Revelation.
  - a. Introduction to Revelation.
    - 1) "Revelation" means a removing of the veil.
    - 2) In Greek, the word is "apokalupsis" (which means uncovering).
    - 3) The uncovering or revelation is done by God Himself. It is God's manifestation of Himself (see Mt 16:17, Jn 1:13 and Jn 6:44).
    - 4) Mystery and revelation are naturally connected.
      - a) Consider Dan 2:19; Eph 3:3; and Col 1:26.
      - b) Consider how Mk 4:11, 12 shows the futility of man's attempt to know the mysteries of God without revelation.
  - b. General Revelation.
    - 1) The medium of general revelation.
      - a) The General revelation of God is revealed through the heavens and the earth.
        - (1) The heavens: sun, moon, stars, etc.
        - (2) The earth: sea, mountains, forests, harvests, etc.

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## Discussion Point

Use the following Scriptures to consider how God reveals Himself through His creation:  
Ps 19:1, 2; Rom 1:20; and Acts 14:17.

- b) Mankind receives and expresses general revelation.
  - (1) Man was made in the image of God (Gen 1:26), and is therefore a reflection of God.
  - (2) Man can reason. He has a sense of morality (Rom 2:15). He is given dominion over creation. He has a free will.
- c) History expresses general revelation.
  - (1) History is truly **His story**, the story which belongs to God. Thus, God is revealed in it.
  - (2) For example, the justice of God is revealed in the rise and fall of nations.
- 2) The contents of general revelation.
  - a) God's eternal power and deity (Rom 1:20).
  - b) God's benevolence and concern for men (Ps 145:15, 16 and Mt 5:45).
  - c) God's righteousness (Prov 14:34 and Rom 1:32).
- 3) The reception of general revelation.
  - a) Study Rom 1:18-32 to see the weakness of general revelation. Because of his sin, man rejects general revelation.
    - (1) Man suppresses the truth, although God has made it obvious (vs. 18, 19).
    - (2) Man dishonors God and does not show gratitude to God (vs. 21).

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- (3) Thus, man is futile in his thinking and his heart is darkened (vs. 21). He can not know God. General revelation is not enough. Man needs something else.
- (4) The tragedy of this whole process is caused by man's desire to be wicked. Thus, he exchanges the truth about God for a lie (vs. 25). Man is no longer able to know God (vs. 28).
- (5) It must be remembered that man is **without excuse** (Rom 1:20). He is guilty by his own choice.

b) The error of natural theology.

- (1) Natural theology says that man can know God through general revelation.
- (2) Although there is a general revelation, man's sinfulness keeps him from knowing God through it.
- (3) If man were sinless, then He could know God through natural theology.

### Author's Comment:

**It is interesting to think about the symbolic language that is used in Psalms (for example: 65:12, 13; 66:1-4; 96:12, 13; 97:1, 6) and other parts of the Bible. Perhaps when Adam walked the earth before the fall (and in the new heavens and the new earth) the natural creation of God actually spoke forth the greatness of God in a way that enabled Adam to know God (consider Ps 19:1, 2).**

**It is also interesting to realize that a knowledge of God through special revelation allows us to be much more aware of general revelation.**

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c. Special revelation.

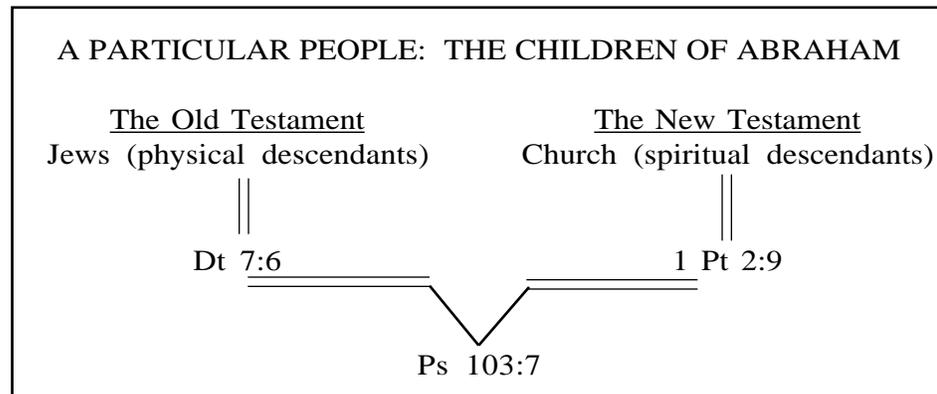
1) The character of special revelation.

a) Special revelation is particular.

(1) God reveals Himself to a particular people. The “people of God” include the physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:7).

## Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to explain how special revelation is particular.



(2) Why is special revelation given to a particular group of people?

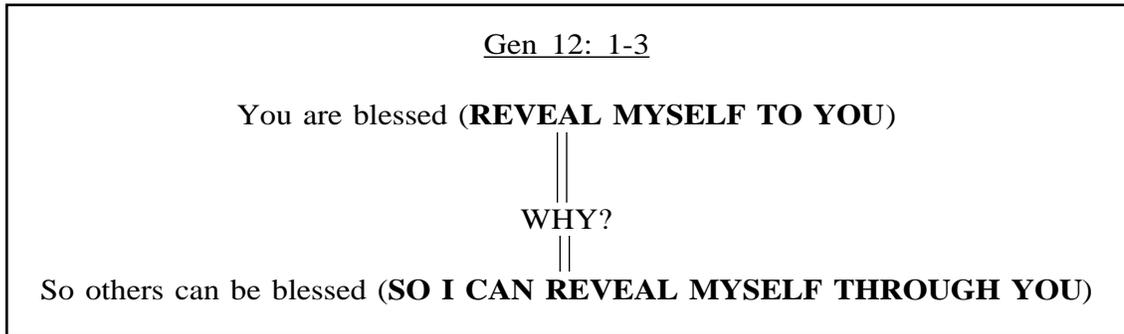
(a) Because God has chosen to use a “vessel methodology,” which means that God works through the vessels of His choosing to make Himself known to all peoples.

(b) Special revelation is given to some, not to exclude others, but to include others. God makes Himself known **through** a particular people.

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## Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to discuss special revelation.



- b) Special revelation is progressive.
- (1) From Genesis to Revelation, special revelation increases.
  - (2) The increase of special revelation is not from truth to non-truth.
  - (3) It is from lesser revelation to greater revelation.
    - (a) Thus, the law is not destroyed or replaced. It is fulfilled.
    - (b) God does not change. Our ability to understand Him changes. The law does not change. Our ability to do the law changes.

## Discussion Point

Use the previous concept to discuss the progressive nature of revelation as revealed in the Old and New Testament.

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c) Special revelation is saving.

(1) General revelation reveals God as Creator and Judge. He is not revealed as Redeemer. Thus, general revelation has no saving power.

(2) Special revelation reveals God as Redeemer.

(a) In the Old Testament, through the atonement sacrifices, the exodus, etc. (see Ex 20:2 and Is 43:3).

(b) In the New Testament, through Jesus Christ.

## Discussion Point

Discuss how you would respond to someone who says they are a Christian simply because they believe that God created the world and is the judge of all people.

d) Special revelation is verbal.

(1) General revelation is not verbal (Ps 19:3).

(2) Special revelation is verbal. The general becomes specific and defined. The indirect becomes direct. The non-verbal becomes verbal.

(3) Special revelation is verbal in the Word of God.

(a) In the Old Testament Scriptures.

(b) In the New Testament Scriptures and in Jesus Christ.

(4) Special revelation is verbal through the Word bearers.

(a) Through the Old Testament prophets.

(b) Through the New Testament Saviour, Apostles, and Church.

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e) Special revelation is personal.

(1) In the Old Testament.

(a) God gives His personal name to Moses (Ex 3:1-14).

(b) God speaks with Moses like a friend (Ex 33:11).

(c) He personally appears to Samuel (1 Sam 3:21).

(2) In the New Testament.

(a) The climax of personal revelation is Jesus Christ.

(b) God becomes flesh (Jn 1:14).

(c) Man sees God (Jn 14:9).

(3) Ultimately, the revelation must be personal, because:

(a) The revelation is to a personal being (man).

(b) It is from a personal being (God).

## **Discussion Point**

Use the previous concepts to promote discussion about revelation of God being verbal and personal.

2) The medium of special revelation.

a) Special revelation was expressed through the Old Testament prophets.

(1) The prophet held a unique position. Consider Amos 3:7 in terms of prophets being special communicators of special revelation.

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- (2) The prophet was important.
    - (a) The prophet was used to put the events of history in divine perspective. Historical events were interpreted by the prophets as special revelations of God's purposes.
    - (b) The prophet declared God's special revelation in many different ways and in many different forms (poetry, law, history, parables, proverbs). The importance of prophecy is not in the form but in the message.
  - (3) The purpose of the prophet was to prepare for the greater revelation of Jesus Christ (Jn 5:39).
- b) Special revelation is revealed through Jesus.
- (1) The climax of special revelation comes through Jesus Christ (consider Heb 1:1, 2).
  - (2) The revelation through Jesus was greater than the revelation through the prophets.
    - (a) It was more direct in that a prophet would say, "thus says the Lord," but Jesus said, "I say to you" (consider Mt. 12:22-24, 28, and Jn 7:46).
    - (b) It was with personal and final authority. A prophet was told something, but Jesus spoke what He was taught and what He had seen (Jn 8:28, 38).
    - (c) It was full. A prophet would say that he knew the way, but Jesus said that He is the way (consider Jn 14:6).

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c) Special revelation was revealed through the New Testament Apostles.

(1) Since the Gospel includes the birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Jesus, the Apostles were needed to make known the meaning of the latter events.

(2) The Apostles were also used to explain such things as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the formation of the Church, and the inclusion of the Gentiles (see Eph 3:4-6).

## **Discussion Point**

Use the previous concepts to promote further discussion regarding the different mediums of special revelation.

3) The contents of special revelation.

a) First, the content is God Himself. More than anything else, special revelation reveals God (see Gen 17:1; 35:7; and Ex 3:6, 14).

(1) This does not mean that there is no more mystery. Even with special revelation mystery remains (see Ex 33:20).

(2) Even with the climax of special revelation in Jesus, mystery still remains (see Mt 17:2, 6).

(3) The content, most specifically is Jesus Christ (Gal 1:16; Acts 9:3,5).

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- b) Second, the content of special revelation is divine truth.
  - (1) It is meaningful revelation, not mystical transmission (see 1 Sam 3:21 and Is 22:14).
  - (2) The law is God's revelation of His divine righteousness. It is divine truth.
  - (3) The Gospel is the climax of the revelation of divine truth (Gal 1:12 and Jn 14:6).
- c) Third, the content of special revelation is the proclamation of God's ultimate purpose (see Eph 1:9, 10).

## Discussion Point

What is God's ultimate purpose?

- d. Subordinate revelation (sometimes called illumination).
  - 1) What is subordinate revelation?
    - a) Subordinate revelation is additional revelation only in the sense that it can further explain and clarify the revelation that already exists.
    - b) This revelation is always subordinate and secondary to the special revelation of the Scriptures. That is, subordinate revelation must be consistent with special revelation. It must answer to it.
    - c) Subordinate revelation consists of things like understanding in Bible study, prophecy, words of wisdom, etc.

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- 2) What is subordinate revelation for?
  - a) It is to give the Christian believer a clearer revelation of Jesus (Eph 1:17).
  - b) It is to edify the Christian community (1 Cor 14:26).
  - c) Also consider how prophecy is related to subordinate revelation (1 Cor 12:10).
- 3) A balanced understanding of subordinate revelation.
  - a) Subordinate revelation is not additional revelation in the sense of “new revelation.”
  - b) God’s truth has been fully declared in His Word.
  - c) It is not new truth. It is a deeper appreciation and understanding of what has already been revealed.
  - d) At the same time, we must accept the existence and the importance of subordinate revelation.
  - e) We must be balanced in our view of subordinate revelation.
    - (1) We must not fall into the extreme that uses subordinate revelation to gain “new” knowledge that is not consistent with or goes beyond the Scriptures. There is a “sufficiency” about Scripture, what we need to know can be found in God’s Word.
    - (2) We must not fall into the extreme that understands the closing of the “canon” (Bible) as signifying the closing of God’s mouth. This extreme says that God no longer communicates with His people or reveals Himself. The “sufficiency” of Scripture does not cause God to stop revealing Himself, His ways, and His direction through a variety of means (the content of which is consistent with Scripture).

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## Discussion Point

Use the previous concepts to promote further discussion about subordinate revelation.

3. God is known by Faith.
  - a. Faith is the instrument or the vehicle through which the knowledge of God comes.
  - b. There is mystery in the knowledge of God because it is the knowledge of what can not be seen (consider Heb 11:1). Nevertheless, when revelation passes through the instrument of faith, it produces a beautiful song of the knowledge of God.

### Author's Illustration:

Faith is necessary in the process of knowing God in the same way that a gift needs a recipient before it is really a gift.

Faith is like the antenna of a television. The show may be being transmitted over the airways, but if your antenna does not work, then your television will not receive the program. It is the same way in knowing God.

### Insert Your Illustration:

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- c. Faith is the exact opposite response to what we see in Rom 1 with respect to man's response to general revelation.
- 1) Instead of suppressing the truth, faith recognizes the truth.
  - 2) Instead of showing dishonor and ingratitude to God, faith glorifies and thanks God for His manifestation of Himself.
  - 3) Instead of exchanging the truth for a lie, faith affirms and responds to God's self disclosure.

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## Discussion Point

Study Heb 11:6 and use the following diagram to explain knowing God through faith.

**Faith** = **Believe that He is**  
| |  
**Please God** = **He who Comes to God = Those who Seek Him**

Note: Faith and relationship with God (knowing God) are directly connected. Faith starts the receiving part of the process. Faith pleases God because faith results in knowing God, and knowing God is what God wants for us and from us more than anything else.

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## III. Four Aspects in Knowing God.

**A. Introduction:** This section introduces four aspects in knowing God: Awareness, Attributes, Attitudes and Actions.

### 1. The reality of knowing God.

a. It is true and it must be said, **God is incomprehensible.**

1) God is incomprehensible in the sense that there will always be those things that finite man will not be able to know or understand about an infinite God (review 1 Kgs 8:12; Is 55:8; Rom 11:33).

2) He is incomprehensible in the sense that He is God and can not simply be known in the same way that we know each other.

3) He is incomprehensible in the sense that the knowledge of One who is infinite must be infinite itself. That is, we can never come to the end of knowing God.

a) A doctor of Theology once described this truth in the following way: “The process of knowing God is like the process of education. I have completed my doctoral studies and the greatest thing that I have learned is that the more I know, the more I know that I do not know. It is the same way with knowing God. The more I come to know God, the more I come to know how much I do not know about Him.”

b) This is certainly true in the sense that the closer we get to God, the bigger He becomes. Since there is no end to His getting bigger, He is indeed incomprehensible!

b. At the same time it must be said, **although we can not know everything that God knows, we can know Him.**

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- c. There is a great difference between our God who is incomprehensible and a God who is impersonal.
  - 1) Our God is incomprehensible. However, He is not impersonal.
  - 2) He is a personal God. He wants to have a relationship with His creatures. Thus, we can know God. Indeed, we must know God (review Jer 9:23,24; Hos 6:6; Heb 11:6; Jn 17:3).
  - 3) There is no higher goal than to know God (Phil 3:10).

## Discussion Point

Everybody has goals in life. Some are good goals. Some are bad goals. What are your goals? What is your highest goal that all other goals depend on? Is it to know God?

- 2. A review of the beginnings of knowing God.
  - a. To **know** God is very different than to **know about** God.
    - 1) The difference is the difference between being saved and being lost. It is the difference between Christianity and religiosity (outward religious practice, without an inward relationship with God).
    - 2) Christians are not simply involved in religion. We are involved in relationship.
  - b. In salvation (that is, in Jesus), the knowledge of God is revealed to us (Mt 11:27; 1 Jn 5:20). Salvation (eternal life) is to know God through His Son Jesus.
  - c. The **only** way to know God is to know Jesus (Jn 14:6; 8:19; 2 Cor 4:6; and 1 Jn 5:20).

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## Author's Comment:

The modern trend is toward a deification of humanistic tolerance and worldwide “brotherhood.” However, the modern Church must return to an understanding of the truth. The Church must not weaken before the worldly temptation to exhibit the false love of humanism (The philosophy that says - I am O.K., you are O.K.). We can not turn our heads while people are going to hell. We can not say “you are O.K.” when the person is going to hell.

We must hold strongly to the implications of the truth that **Jesus is the only way**. We must boldly declare it to a needy world even if it is against the prevailing philosophy to say such a thing.

## Discussion Point

Use the previous concepts to promote discussion about **knowing vs. knowing about** God. Also, discuss whether a person can know God if they have not yielded their life to Jesus or have not even heard about Jesus yet.

3. The road (or path) to knowing God.
  - a. The road (or path) to knowing God begins at the cross and continues in Jesus.
  - b. The Holy Spirit moves us along the road (path) to knowing God. He is the motivator and the One who enables us to have a growing relationship with God.

## Discussion Point

Consider 1 Cor 2:11 and Eph 1:17 and discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us to grow in our relationships with God.

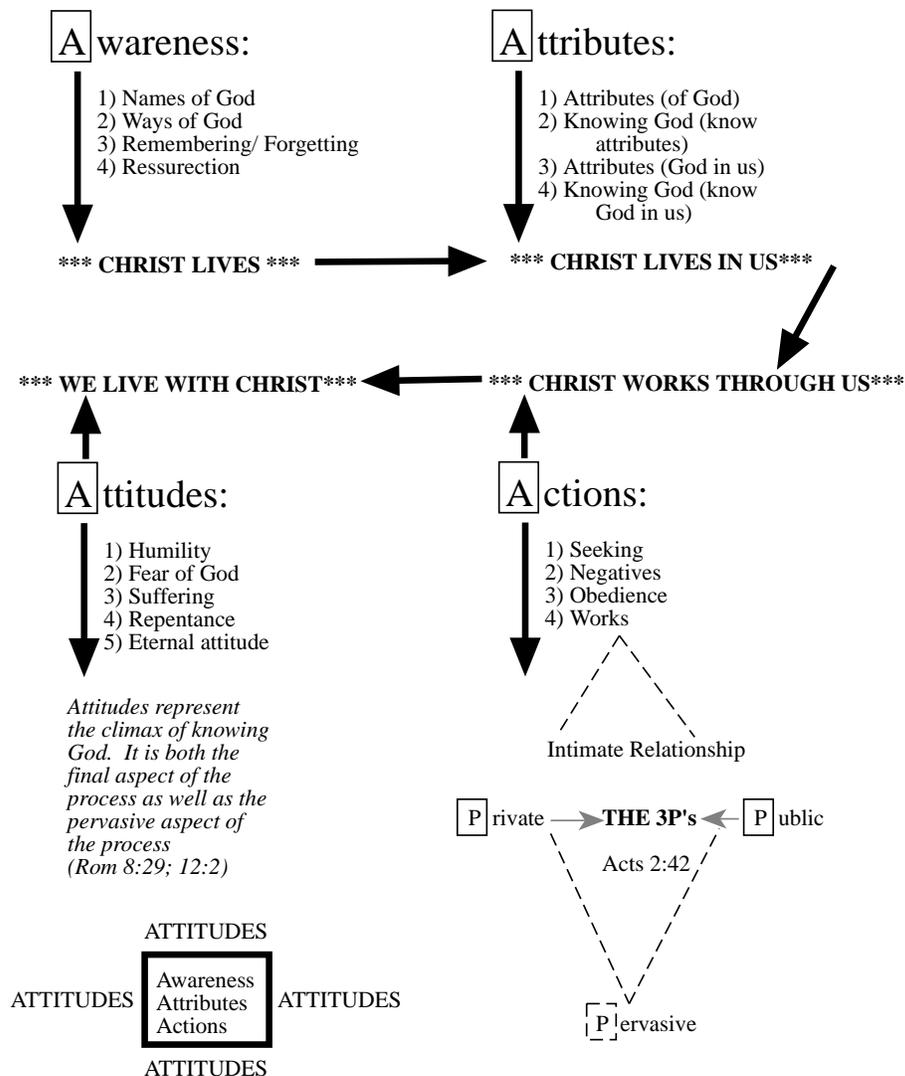
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- c. Once we have accepted the fact that God can be known, we should begin to develop a systematic theology concerning how to increase our knowledge of God. That is, how to build a relationship with Him. That is the goal of studying the four aspects to knowing God: Awareness, Attributes, Actions, and Attitudes.

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## Discussion Point

The following diagram should be referred to throughout the rest of this course. It shows both an outline of the materials of this section as well as the flow of thought of the concepts. It shows the “system” used in this systematic theology. “So let us know and let us press on to know the Lord (Hos 6:3).”



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## B. Awareness.

### 1. The Names of God.

a. We are concerned with being aware of the aspects of God that will enable us to know Him better. Awareness of the names of God will enable us to know Him better because His names describe who He is. God's names are very important.

1) In Ex 20:7, it is the **name** of God that we are warned about.

2) In Mt 6:9, we are instructed to pray, hallowed be thy **name**.

3) In Ps 69:36, we are called to love His **name**.

4) In 2 Thes 1:12, we are called to glorify His **name**.

5) In Ps 18:49, we are called to praise His **name**.

6) In Acts 2:21, we are called to act upon His **name**.

7) In Heb 13:15, we are called to give thanks to His **name**.

8) In 1 Jn 3:23, we are called to believe on His **name**.

b. We need to have an experiential awareness of the names of God.

1) Remember, in the Hebrew culture a name was very important. It represented the very existence of a person. It represented that person's character.

2) God uses His names as a way of revealing Himself to us. It is the meaning of the name that adds to our knowledge of Him. Moreover, it is experiencing in our own lives the need for God with respect to what a particular name of God represents.

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- 3) Thus, as we say “El Shaddai” we remember Abraham (Gen 17:1), who was too old to have a son. We realize that God’s power is made perfect in man’s weakness.
- a) It is when we are aware of that power in our own lives that we begin to grow closer to God. As we become aware **in** (as opposed to only being aware **of**) the names of God, we will necessarily know Him more fully.
  - b) We see in Mt 18:20 that where two or three of us are gathered together **in** His name, He is there relating to us.

Notes —

## Discussion Point

Discuss the Biblical concept of a person’s character being associated or identified with their name.

### Author’s Suggestion:

Use a topical index or other encyclopedic reference tool to find the various names of Jesus that are in the Bible. There are at least 52 different names (for example, **The Lord of Peace** and **The Good Shepherd**).

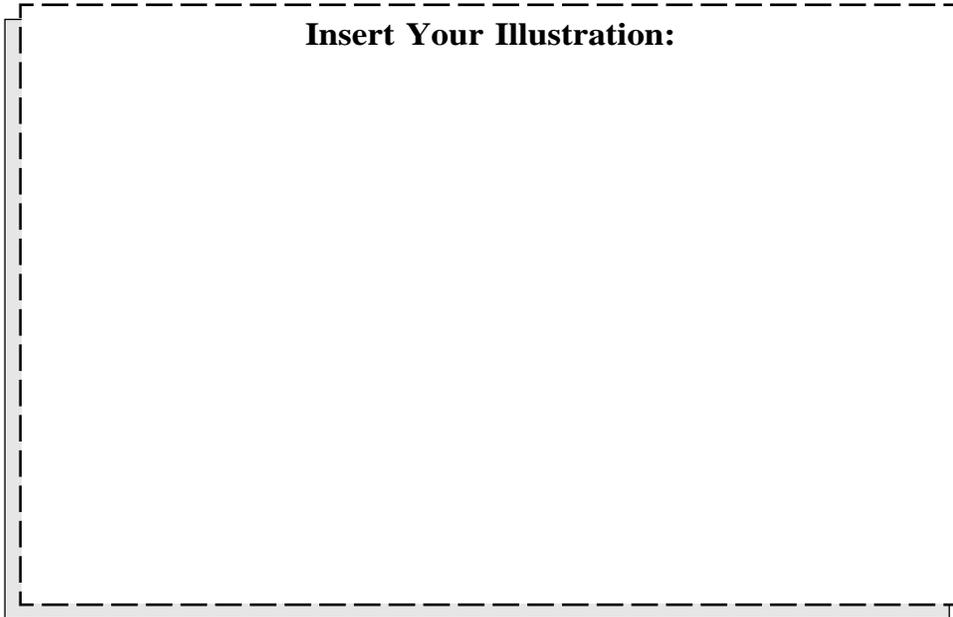
Memorize one name each week for a year. During the week take time during your prayer time to meditate on the significance of the name.

At the end of your prayers, use that particular name of Jesus.

For example, if you are praying for the peace of God in your life, then end the prayer **in the name of the Lord of Peace**. When your prayer is answered you will begin to experience (and therefore know) God more specifically in that particular area.

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**Discussion Point**

Use the following diagram to study the “Jehova” names of God. Apply what you have studied to your own life. For example, allow God to be “Jehova Jireh” your provider. As you are experientially aware of the names of God, your relationship with Him will grow.

NAME OF GOD	MEANING	SCRIPTURES	DESCRIPTION
Jehova-Jireh	Jehova sees; provides	Gen22:14	Father
Jehova-Rophe	Jehova heals	Ex 15:26; Is 61:1	Doctor
Jehova-Nissi	Jehova my banner	Ex 17:15; Ps 20:5	Warrior
Jehova-M'Kaddesh	Jehova who sanctifies	Lev 20:7,8	Sanctifier
Jehova-Shalom	Jehova is peace	Jdg 6:24; Is 9:6	Comforter
Jehova-Tsidkenu	Jehova our righteousness	Jer 23:5,6	Advocate
Jehova-Rohi	Jehova my shepherd	Ps 23; 1 Pt 2:25	Pastor
Jehova-Shammah	Jehova is there	Ez 48:35	Shadow

**Discussion Point**

Can you say that you know God as your Father? Your doctor?  
 Your warrior? Your sanctifier? Your comforter?  
 Your advocate? Your pastor? Your shadow?

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## 2. The Ways of God.

- a. To know God we must be aware of His ways.

### **Discussion Point**

Use Ex 33:13, Ps 25:4, and Is 58:2 to provide introductory discussion about the ways of God.

- b. Just as we come to know someone better as we begin to know that person's "ways," so too we will know God better as we become aware of His ways.
  - 1) God has certain ways that He does things. We might say something like, "that does not seem like God." This type of statement is an evaluation of God's ways.
  - 2) How do we know someone's "ways?" We are most aware of the "ways" of the people who we spend the most time with.

### **Author's Illustration:**

For example, I am very aware of the ways of my wife. I know her habits, customs, and style of doing things. She is very calm and does not lose her temper. If someone told me that they saw her on the street shouting at someone in anger, then I would have a difficult time believing it. Why? Because that is not like her. That is not her way.

It is the same with God. The more time we spend with Him, the more we will come to know His ways. As we come to know His ways we will grow in relationship with Him.

Notes —

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —

**Insert Your Illustration:**

**Discussion Point**

Use Ps 95:10 to discuss the importance of being aware of God's ways.

3. Awareness of God by Remembering and Forgetting.
  - a. Remembering and forgetting are opposites.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

b. Both are necessary for knowing God.

- 1) Being aware of God requires remembering God and his past actions. Knowing is historical. As we remember God and His acts we draw closer to knowing Him. If we do not remember God and His actions, then we will fall into sin.
  - a) This is what happened to the Israelites. They did not remember how God had delivered them miraculously from Egypt. They began to murmur against God because they did not remember His way of provision. So, only four months after the parting of the Red Sea, they committed the great act of idolatry with the gold calf.
  - b) We are just like the Israelites. The solution is to continually remind yourself of God and His past actions. Cultivate an awareness in terms of remembering.
- 2) Being aware of God requires forgetting certain things. To know God better we must forget ourselves. We must forget what we have “lost” in giving our lives to God. We must practice the awareness of Paul in this regard, who was more than willing to forget himself and his past in order to gain Christ.

## Discussion Point

Study Phil 3:8-10 and its context. Discuss the idea of forgetting yourself and your past in order to know God.

**Insert Your Illustration:**

Notes —

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## Notes —

4. Awareness of the Resurrection.
  - a. In Phil 3:10 we see that Paul desired a very specific awareness. That is, an awareness of the power of His resurrection.
  - b. The reason that Christianity is what it is and other religions are what they are is because Christianity has a **living God** (who was resurrected) and other religions have dead gods.
    - 1) To be aware of the resurrection is to be aware that **He is alive**. To know God you must be able to say that Jesus is alive in your own life. You can not have a relationship with a lifeless god. You can not know something that is not alive.
    - 2) The first disciples were radically changed when they became aware of the resurrection. They went from being a defeated, depressed, and confused group of doubting “disciples,” to a victorious, joyful, and mission oriented group of believing disciples. How? Because of their awareness of the resurrection.
    - 3) This same thing happens to us when we increase our awareness of the resurrection. We grow in our relationship to God.

### Discussion Point

In knowing God, we need awareness of the names of God, the ways of God, remembering/forgetting, and the resurrection.  
Discuss any questions related to these areas.

### C. Attributes.

1. The aspects of God’s Person that define who He is may be referred to as His attributes. Throughout the Bible, we notice that these attributes are linked to knowing God.
  - a. We can know God by knowing His attributes (see Hos 2:20 and Jer 9:24).
  - b. When we know God by knowing His attributes then His attributes begin to be lived out in us. This results in a greater knowing of God (see Jer 22:16 and 1 Jn 4:7).

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2. The process of knowing God through His attributes.
  - a. Where does the process begin? Can man know God through his attempt to live out His attributes?
    - 1) The answer is clearly **No!** (Consider Is 19:21).
    - 2) God must act in order for us to know Him. The process begins with God. It is because He first shines His attributes on us that we are able to know His attributes experientially in our own lives.
    - 3) In 1 Jn 4:19, we see that we are able to love only because He first loved us. How, then, can our love increase?
      - a) According to the principle of 1 Jn 4:19, our love could only increase if God's love for us increased.
      - b) Can God's love for us increase? **No!** Then what must increase?
      - c) Here we see the importance of revelation in knowing God. God's love for us can not increase, but our perception (or revelation) of that love can increase. If our revelation of God's love for us increases, then our love for God and others can increase.

Notes —

## **The Apostle Paul's Understanding:**

Paul understood the principles that our love increases as our perception or revelation of God's love for us increases. Thus, he prayed that the Ephesians would be able to comprehend and know the love of Christ (Eph 3:18, 19).

We must apply this prayer to our lives while on the road (or path) to knowing God.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —

b. Examples of the process.

- 1) Let us use 1 Jn 4 and the attribute of **love** to show examples of how the process of knowing God through His attributes works.
  - a) The process begins in the existence of the attribute of God. “God is **love**” (1 Jn 4:8).
  - b) We can know God through knowing His attribute. “And we have come to know the **love** that God has for us”(1 Jn 4:16; and Eph 3:19).
  - c) When we know God’s attribute, we can then experience that attribute in us. We can **love** (1 Jn 4:19).
  - d) When we experience the attribute of God in us, then we can know God more fully. “Everyone who **loves** knows God” (1 Jn 4:7).
- 2) Now let us use one specific verse from 1 Jn 4 (vs.16) to show the flow of the process.
  - a) The attribute: “**God is love.**”
  - b) We know God by knowing the attribute: “**we have come to know the love.**”
  - c) We experience the attribute working in us: “**the One who abides in love.**”
  - d) We know God more fully: “**God abides in him.**” The result of the process is that God is closer to us.

## Discussion Point

Discuss ways in which you can apply the preceding process to your own life.  
Discuss ways in which the Awareness level of knowing God leads to the Attributes level of knowing God.

3. When God acts on our behalf, He is expressing His attributes. This expression is directly connected to knowing God.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## Discussion Point

Notes —

Consider and discuss the following examples of how God's expression of Himself is connected to man's knowing Him.

Knowing Him as Reviver: Hos 6:1-3.

Knowing Him as Provider: Ex 16:12 (also see Dt 29:5).

Knowing Him as Deliverer: I Kgs 20:13 (see Ez 13:21).

## D. Actions.

1. Introduction to knowing God through our actions.
  - a. It is certainly Biblical to say that we can know God by our own actions. We have introduced this concept in our study of knowing God through His attributes.
  - b. Now let us focus on knowing God through our actions.
2. Seeking God.
  - a. Many Bible passages encourage us to seek God in order to know Him.
  - b. These Scriptures are not inconsistent with our previous conclusion that God is the starting point in the process of knowing God (see Jer 24:7).
  - c. Even the desire and ability to seek God comes from God. We could say, **we seek God because He first sought us** (and gave us a desire to seek Him).

## Discussion Point

Ask different students to read the following verses. Pause after the reading of each verse and discuss the opportunity we have to know God through our own actions:

Prov 2:4, 5; Lk 11:10; Heb 11:6; Is 58:2; Acts 17:26, 27;  
Amos 5:4; Prov 8:17; 1 Chron 28:9; Mt 7:7; and Jms 4:8.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —

## 3. Negative actions.

- a. Some of our actions can hinder our relationship with God.
- b. It is just as important to not do these actions as it is to do the actions that lead us to God.

### 1) Sin.

- a) The tragic reality of sin is that it separates us from God (Rom 6:23).
- b) It does this by darkening or hardening our heart toward God (Rom 1:21; Eph 4:17, 18; Heb 3:13).

### 2) Idolatry.

- a) Idols hide God from us. They become a false substitute and lead us away from God.
- b) God is a jealous God. What is He jealous for? He is jealous for His people to know Him and only Him (see Ez 39:25).

#### **Author's Comment:**

Remember, idols come in many different forms. In a pagan culture they may take the form of trees or stones. In a religious culture they may take the form of jewelry, paintings, or statues. In a hedonistic culture they may take the form of drugs, alcohol, sex, or money. In the life of a Christian they may take the form of an habitual sin, or even a vision from God, or the ministry itself. Anything that is put ahead of God, or instead of God, can be an idol and can separate us from God.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

**Insert Your Illustration:**

**Notes** —

3) Neglect.

- a) The lack of action is perhaps the most negative action. Many psychologists say that the opposite of love is apathy or not caring (instead of hate).
- b) Neglecting God is the quickest way to destroy a relationship with Him.
- c) We must, instead, remind ourselves of the presence of God. Brother Lawrence called this kind of habit development “practicing the presence of God.” We must realize it is rude and insulting to ignore someone who is “with you always (Mt 28:20).”

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —

## **Author's Illustration:**

Wives despise it when their husbands are so absorbed in a football game that is on television that they do not even acknowledge their presence in the room or know that they are talking to them. Negligence destroys marriage relationships.

At times, husbands should be ashamed of themselves.

How much more does God despise it when we simply ignore Him? We are so often like Martha (Lk 10:38-42). We are so busy in what we are doing for God that we forget that He is right next to us trying to get attention. Negligence grieves the Spirit.

How much more should we be ashamed of ourselves?

## **Insert Your Illustration:**

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## 4. Obedience.

- a. In general, we can refer to those actions that lead to knowing God as actions of obedience.
  - 1) In a sense, obedience is the foundation of the knowledge of God. Consider how this was true in the case of the first disciples (Lk 5:11).
  - 2) Obedience is directly connected with knowing God. (Consider the types of connections in 1 Jn 2:3, Mk 3:35, and Lk 10:27, 28).
    - a) The condition for knowing God in Prov 2:1, 5 is obedience.
    - b) Even Pharaoh understood that there was a direct connection between obedience and knowing God (see Ex 5:2).
- b. Friendship and love are two strong descriptions for the idea of relationship. Note how both of these descriptions are related to obedience in Jn 15:14 and 14:15.

## 5. Works.

- a. Obedience necessarily includes good works.
  - 1) Because God has chosen to work through his vessels (vessel theology), good works are connected to knowing God.
  - 2) Indeed, relationship with God that does not result in good works is no relationship at all.

### Discussion Point

Use the following Scriptures to discuss the preceding concept:  
Jms 2:20, Jer 22:16, Tit 1:16, and Jn 5:36.

- b. The most important good work that we can do is to spend time with God.
  - 1) Study Jn 6:28, 29. Remember that “believe” is directly connected with relationship with God (Heb 11:6).

Notes —

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## Notes —

- 2) This time spent with God should be intimate and personal. It can not be superficial and institutional.
- 3) The three elements of our time spent with God: **Private**, **Public**, **Pervasive**.
  - a) Our time spent with God should be **Private**.
    - (1) Jesus had a private relationship with the Father (see Lk 5:16; 4:42; Mk 1:35; and Mt 14:23).
    - (2) God's desire for us to be alone with Him can even be understood in terms of secrecy (see Mt 6:1-6).
    - (3) Best friends are often defined as those selected few who share your most treasured secrets.
    - (4) It is humbling to think that is what God wants from us. It is humbling to think that God wants to be our best friend.
  - b) Our time spent with God should also be **Public**.
    - (1) We must avoid making the same mistake that Peter made. An intimate relationship with God must have a public aspect.
    - (2) Consider the connection between knowing God and having a public relationship with Him (Lk 22:34). (Also see Mt 10:32, 33.)
    - (3) In our public proclamation of Him, we become more dedicated to Him, and we know Him more fully.
    - (4) The better or more that you know Him, the better or more that you will make Him known. The better or more that you make Him known, the better or more that you will know Him.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

c) Our time spent with God should be **Pervasive**.

Notes —

(1) Pervasive in quantity.

- (a) We are told to pray at **all** times (1 Thes 5:17; Eph 6:18) and to acknowledge God in **all** of our ways (Prov 3:6).
- (b) Consistency of recognizing God should be a top priority for the person on the road (or path) to knowing God.

(2) Pervasive in quality.

- (a) Study Acts 2:42 and consider the four elements described (prayer, fellowship, Bible study, and breaking bread or thanksgiving and praise).
- (b) The “Knowing God II” course examines these elements in detail. Let us briefly mention these activities now.
- (c) Prayer is the primary tool or activity in knowing God. To go to prayer is nothing less than to go to where Jesus already is (Heb 7:25).
- (d) Praise and worship and knowing God are inseparable. Praise magnifies God. Somehow it takes our finite minds one step closer to the infinite nature of God.
- (e) Fellowship with others who have Christ in them is a real way of having fellowship with Christ Himself.
- (f) Bible study is more than an intellectual practice. Only the spiritual mind can understand spiritual things. Bible study is the study of the Word. It is the study of Jesus Himself.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —

## Discussion Point

Use the previous concepts to promote discussion on the private, public, and pervasive elements of spending time with God.

### E. Attitudes.

#### 1. Attitude of Humility.

- a. There are certain **attitudes** that should “**be**” in our lives (**Beatitudes**). (See the course called “Sermon on the Mount” Mt 5-7). The first beatitude encourages us to have the attitude of humility.
  - 1) Our attitudes affect our walk with God every step of the way. For example, consider how humility affects our awareness level of knowing God (Ps 25:9).
  - 2) Without humility, a man can not know God. To know God we must be humble enough to die to ourselves and live to God. We must put on Christ. Only the poor in spirit can do this because only the poor (empty) in spirit are available for this.
  - 3) A vessel must be emptied before it can be filled up with something else (2 Tim 2:20, 21). The way to know God is to be full of Jesus. God is searching for empty (humble) vessels to fill up with Jesus.
- b. Recall the earlier statement, “the more I learn the more I find out what I do not know.” Within this remark is an attitude of humility.
  - 1) There is a similar effect on the road (or path) to knowing God (consider Jn 9:39-41 as related to an attitude of humility).

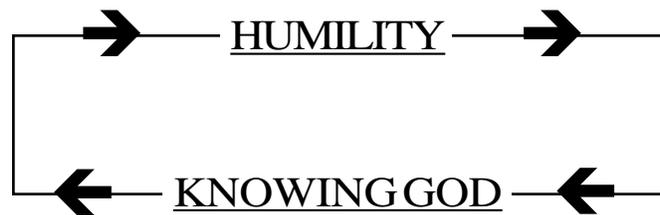
# KNOWING GOD: PART I

- 2) To some degree, the process of knowing God becomes the process of knowing His infinity. Indeed, a large part of knowing God is knowing who we are in relation to Him.
- a) We must realize our smallness, our inadequacy, our finiteness, our imperfections, our uselessness, our hopelessness (apart from Him); so that we can begin to see: His greatness, His adequacy, His infinity, His perfection, His effectiveness and His hope.
  - b) To see His perfect power, we must see our weakness (2 Cor 12:9).

Notes —

## Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to promote discussion of the various points that are listed above.



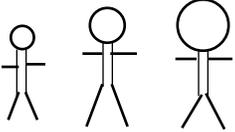
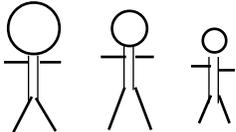
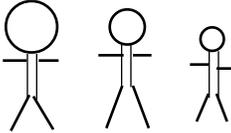
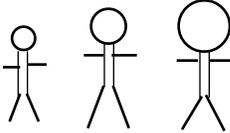
Note: An attitude of humility will bring us to God. We will then know God. The more we know God, the bigger God becomes. The bigger God becomes, the more humble we become. The more humility we have, the more we will come to God. The more we come to God, the more we will know Him, etc.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —

## Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to continue the discussion.  
 First, study the principle that is found in Jn 3:30  
 (only one of us can increase, the other must decrease).

Perception of Myself	Perception of God	Status of Knowledge
		Decrease in knowledge as God becomes smaller because you become bigger— <b>PRIDE</b>
		Increase in knowledge as God becomes bigger because you become smaller— <b>HUMILITY</b>

- c. Our humility is consistent with the Biblical model of the relationship between God and man.
  - 1) The Bible offers four main analogies to describe how we know God:
    - a) A son knowing his father.
    - b) A wife knowing her husband.
    - c) A subject knowing his king.
    - d) A sheep knowing its shepherd.
  - 2) For example, consider Ps 100:3.
  - 3) All of the Biblical analogies point to the knower looking up to the one who is known. They all focus on the humility and submission of the knower.

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## 2. The Fear of God.

- a. The attitude of humility yields a correct perception of God. He is a big and awesome God. Thus, the result is an attitude of fear (respect, awe).
  - 1) Above, we noted that one of the Biblical analogies of how we know God is that of a wife knowing her husband. With this in mind, consider Eph 5:33.
  - 2) Furthermore, note the strong connection between the knowledge of God and the fear of God in Is 11:2, Prov 1:7, and Ps 25:12, 14.
- b. An attitude of respectful fear is necessary to have on the road (or path) to knowing God.

### Discussion Point

Use the previous concepts to discuss knowing God as it relates to having respectful fear of God.

## 3. Suffering.

- a. Since “the fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Prov 8:13), the person who desires to know God must avoid sin. How do we avoid sin? One way to do it is to have the attitude of a sufferer.
- b. Review Heb 5:7, 8 and recall our previous study of this passage related to how Jesus suffered in order to avoid sin. Jesus had the attitude of a sufferer.
- c. Paul understood this connection and desired to have this very same attitude (Phil 3:10). He wanted to have the light (knowledge) that comes from suffering (see Job 3:20).

Notes —

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## Notes —

- d. Peter stated that we should “share in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Pt 4:12, 13).
  - 1) Note how this declaration is made in the context of 1 Pt 4:1. The attitude of the sufferer is used to avoid sin. Avoiding sin is connected to fearing God. Fearing God is a result of humility.
  - 2) Thus, we see the connection between the first three attitudes on the road (or path) to knowing God.
4. Repentance.
  - a. Jesus did not need to include this final attitude (for himself) in the list of attitudes that we are developing.
  - b. He was tempted in all things. Thus, he needed the attitude of humility, fear, and suffering. Yet He was without sin (Heb 4:15). He did not need to have the attitude of repentance.
  - c. We have been tempted in all things also. However, we have sin.
  - d. Thus, we must include an attitude of repentance. Without an attitude of repentance our relationship will be halted after every sin. We will not move ahead on the road to knowing God.
    - 1) To repent is to turn away from the wall that stands between us and God.
    - 2) To know God is to turn to Him (consider Hos 6:1, 3).
5. The eternal attitude.
  - a. Finally, let us consider the most important attitude that we can have if we want to know God. We will call it **the eternal attitude**.
  - b. Setting our minds on eternal things brings us closer to the Eternal One. Thus, Paul instructs us to set our minds on eternal things (Col 3:1, 2; and 2 Cor 4:18).

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- c. It is an awesome thing to realize how close we actually are to God by having an eternal attitude. We can actually live with Christ in heaven now (see Col 3:1; 1 Cor 15:48; Eph 1:3; Eph 2:6; and Jn 14:3).
- 1) According to the Scriptures we have been raised up with Christ and we sit with Him in the heavenly places. This should be no surprise, since we know that eternal life (heaven) is to know (sit with) God (see Jn 17:3).
  - 2) We can not get closer to God than the immediate closeness of sitting with Him. This is as close as we can get.

Notes —

## Discussion Point

In 1 Cor 13 an eternal attitude is an attitude of faith (by faith we know God: Heb 11:6; Phil 3:9, 10), hope, and especially love.

What kind of attitude do you have? Is it a worldly attitude that focuses on the rewards of this world? Or is it an eternal attitude that focuses on eternal rewards and the things that will last?

### G. Conclusion.

1. As we walk along the road (or path) to knowing God, our relationship grows more and more.
  - a. On the level of **Awareness**, we know that **Christ lives**. Christ is in heaven and we are on earth, but we can have a relationship with Him.
  - b. On the level of **Attributes**, we know that **Christ lives in us**. He is in heaven, but by His Spirit He lives in us and we live in Him.
  - c. On the level of **Actions**, we know that **Christ works through us**. He still walks the earth through an intimate relationship with His people.
  - d. On the level of **Attitudes**, we know that **we live with Christ**. We have reached the climax of knowing God. Incredibly, we leave the worldly realm and live with Christ in the heavenlies. We live the eternal life as we know God.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

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2. Growing in relationship with God is an inexpressible joy. Certainly it is the cry of every Christian's heart.

## Discussion Point

Hopefully, as this course concludes, we can all commit to the following prayer:

**My God, I want to know you more.  
I need to know you more. I have to know you more.**

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

## Knowing God I: Endnotes

Notes —

<sup>1</sup>J. Rodman Williams, Basic Christian Theology: Part One - class notes from Regent University course (Virginia Beach, VA: CBN University Media Center, 1986). The flow of the major points of the outline in this part of the course are adapted directly from the teachings of Dr. Williams. Used by permission.

# KNOWING GOD: PART I

Notes —