

## Knowing God – 2 Peter 1:2-3

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Explain God

1. Danny Dutton, age 8, from Chula Vista, California, attended third grade in a Christian school.
2. One night he was given the assignment - "Explain God."
3. The teacher wanted to gauge the spiritual perception of each of her students and figured this was a good way to find out.
4. Danny wrote . . .

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, He doesn't have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk, He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's *second* most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times *besides* bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this. Since He hears everything, not only prayers, there must be a terrible lot of *noise* in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God *sees everything* and *hears* everything and is *everywhere*, which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your parent's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind like His Father and He told His Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said OK.

His Dad (God) appreciated everything that He had done and all His

hard work on earth so He told Him He didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important, of course. You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to hear you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to Church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong! And, besides, the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It's good to know He's around you when you're scared in the dark or when you can't swim very good and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids. But you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and He can take me back anytime He pleases. And that's why I believe in God.

5. Not bad for an 8 year old!

## ***B. Knowing God***

1. Now listen to the words of another young man, this time a 20 year old –

It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man', I will not oppose that idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's people is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and

grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, 'Behold I am wise'. But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation, 'I am but of yesterday, and know nothing', No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God.

But while the subject *humbles* the mind, it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

And, while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consoling. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, an balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is comfort for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Spirit, there is an ointment for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning.

2. With this, 20 year old Charles Spurgeon began his sermon on the Study of God.
  - a. 20 years old!
  - b. no wonder he is known as the Prince of Preachers
  - c. if that's how he preached at the beginning of his career, imagine what he sounded like 20 years later!
3. It's to this subject of knowing God that *we* turn today as well.
4. And as we do, I wish I could muster the eloquence and sense of holy urgency and weight that Spurgeon carried into *his* message.

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 2-3

**<sup>2</sup>Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,**

**<sup>3</sup>as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,**

1. Peter begins this letter as most of the NT letters begin – with a greeting of grace and peace.
2. But Peter adds something – He says that grace and peace are multiplied in the *knowledge of God*.
  - a. God is the *origin* of grace and peace
  - b. and they grow in us as we grow in our *knowledge of the Lord*.
3. Grace is the great need of our *hearts* and peace the need of our minds.
4. If you've been around church for a while, you've probably heard the stock definition of grace - that grace means unmerited, unearned favor and blessing.
  - a. you've been told that we're saved by grace, not by our works
  - b. that God offers forgiveness to us based on the merits of Christ and what *He* did on the cross, not on how many good points *we've* been able to rack up.
5. But when we talk about grace, what's often left out is the *purpose*, the *goal* of grace.
6. You see, the real core of the Greek word for grace means *that which brings delight*.
  - a. the word was used to describe something so beautiful, so attractive & winsome, that when a person saw or heard it, their heart *leapt* for joy.
  - b. grace means unearned favor and blessing, but the *goal* of that favor, the *purpose* of that blessing is to bring about a beauty that brings delight –
  - c. first to God, and then to others.
7. Our society is preoccupied with physical beauty.
  - a. we have a fixation with *youth* and try to hang on to it as long as we can

- b. so store shelves are stocked with row upon row of anti-wrinkle lotions and creams
  - c. we can dye away the gray
  - d. re-grow hair on balding heads
  - e. sign up for a year membership at a local health club to stay in shape
  - f. or we can go to a spa for a mud bath and salt scrub.
  - g. a walk through the mall will tell us what fashions are in and how to dress for success
  - h. and what's the success we're looking for?
  - i. we want to be attractive, we long for beauty.
  - j. this week on the news I heard a report of how some people are injecting poison into the muscles of their face to remove wrinkles!
8. The problem is, we spend so much time on the *exterior*, on our *physical* appearance, we have nothing left for the more important beauty of the *inner* person.
9. It's isn't clothes that make the man – it's *grace* that makes him.
10. Grace is a *spiritual garment* God gives to those who look by faith to Him.
- a. it's God's favor that frees us from the old-self and creates in us *new life*.
  - b. grace is a *spiritual lotion* that smoothes away the wrinkles & blemishes of sin.
  - c. it's a *spiritual tonic* that replaces the ugliness of the Fall with the beauty of God's glory.
11. You may have heard the saying that while beauty is only skin deep, ugly goes all the way to the soul.
12. Grace roots out that ugliness and bestows beauty to the heart, where age and circumstance cannot alter it.
13. The goal of the grace God gives us is to make us beautiful, because as His eternal companion, He deserves a glorious, gorgeous bride!
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14. Not only do we need grace for our *hearts*, we need peace for our *minds*.
- a. we need to have that nagging sense of guilt that plagues us, removed.
  - b. at the core of our being, we need to know that we've

- discovered who we are, why we're here, and where we're going.
- c. until we have these questions answered, there's an anxiety that eats away at the corners of our soul and leaves us haunted with the feeling we're missing something –
  - d. that there's some grand purpose to our lives but we don't now what it is.
  - e. like we're playing a game but don't know the object *or* the rules.
15. Peace only comes when we finally discover *who* we are and *why* we're here.
  16. And Peter gives us that in these two verses -

**2Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,**

**3as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,***

17. Grace and Peace come by KNOWING GOD.
18. It's THROUGH KNOWING HIM that we obtain all we need for life and living!

***B. Why Knowing God Is Crucial***

1. If you've ever traveled to another country, you know something of the *alienation* that comes from being stuck in an unfamiliar surrounding.
2. It would be extremely cruel to take a tribesman from the Amazon rainforest and plunk him down in the middle of Times Square New York! [\[1\]](#)
  - a. he knows nothing of the United States, American English, our customs or laws.
  - b. it would be inordinately difficult for him to fend for himself.
3. In the same way – we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing God.
  - a. the world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life turns into a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know God.

- b. if we disregard God we sentence ourselves to stumbling and blundering our way through life.
- 4. But as Peter says in v. 3, through the knowledge of God comes all that we need to live life as He designed it to be lived.
- 5. Jesus said it this way in Matthew 6:33 –

**Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all [the] things [you need for life] shall be added to you.**

- 6. The bottom line of all life is to *Know* God!
  - a. not merely in an intellectual way – but *experientially*.
  - b. the Greek word for knowledge Peter uses here speaks of a knowledge that has moved beyond the head and entered the heart.
  - c. it's the kind of knowledge that's marked by *personal experience*.
- 7. If you've ever taken a lab class or gone on a field trip, then you know the difference between mere head knowledge and experience.
  - a. I took several geology classes in college as that was my major
  - b. we spent a lot of time sitting in the classroom of Fullerton College, reading the text and listening to lectures
  - c. we saw slides and learned all about minerals and fossils
  - d. the professors even had samples they would pass around so we could see and touch them
  - e. but then, 3 or 4 times each semester, we went on field trips and had a chance to actually climb into old mines or dig fossils out of road-cuts.
  - f. on one field trip, we actually *mapped* an entire mountain.
  - g. on those field trips – my knowledge of geology went from mere head knowledge to personal experience.
- 8. God doesn't want our knowledge of Him to remain merely intellectual: He wants us to *experience* Him.
  - a. going to Church can unfortunately be little different than attending class at school.
    - 1) we arrive before the starting song, grab a seat,
    - 2) and prepare for a *lecture* about the Christian faith
  - b. our Bible reading can be little different from reading a textbook
  - c. we can even read theology books and learn all about the nature

- of God
- d. but we never go on any field trips to encounter or engage Him.
  - e. our knowledge of the Holy One remains tucked away in a safe compartment of our heads, and never drops into the experience of our hearts.
  - f. just like countless numbers of college students take classes that are not part of their major but are required for getting a degree.
  - g. they have no interest in *experiencing* the subject, only gaining the knowledge to pass the class.
9. Oh friends – God isn't some interesting subject to investigate.
    - a. He wants us to EXPERIENCE Him!
    - b. He wants our knowledge of Him to be far more than a collection of facts.
    - c. He wants that knowledge to be personal, real, and warm!
  10. As we've used the illustration so many times – it's the difference in knowing *about* someone and actually knowing them *first-hand*.
    - a. we all know President Bush;
    - b. that is – we could pick him out of a crowd, we could discern his voice, and even know something of his personal history and values.
    - c. but I don't think anyone here actually KNOWS George W in the sense of being a personal friend and companion.
  11. Peter says that the power of God which releases to us all things for life and godliness come through the *experiential knowledge* of God.
  12. Let me extend the illustration a bit further.
    - a. we all know President Bush because he's probably this nation's most notable public person.
    - b. but that knowledge doesn't do much for us if it doesn't gain for us any real *personal* benefit.
    - c. if, however, we did know the President personally, that relationship would open up some doors for us.
    - d. just our association with the President of the United States would mean certain *privileges* and a new realm of power and opportunity – all because of who we know and who knows us!

### III. CONCLUSION



## **A. The Bottom Line**

1. In John 17:3, Jesus prayed for the disciples and said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You.”
2. The essence of life, *all* life, is to know God.
3. This is what and why human beings were created.
  - a. we weren’t created to wear ridiculous looking baby clothes,
  - b. go to school and learn about the history of the cotton gin,
  - c. provide income for the makers of acne medication,
  - d. and spend our weekends pulling weeds and watching the St. Louis Rams get humiliated by the New England Patriots.
4. There’s a purpose for every man and woman who has every lived – to KNOW GOD!
5. All of life, at least the life that *God* ordained and designed, flows from knowing and experiencing Him.

## **B. How Do We Know God?**

1. So, how do we *know* God?
2. Our knowledge of God grows as we meet Him in His Word, prayer, fellowship, and in simple meditation on Him, listening to the still small voice of His Spirit calling to us in the midst of the spiritual wilderness of this world.
3. Lately some of my ideas about God have been greatly challenged.
4. Recently I’ve taken some time to just be still and wait before the Lord and as I’ve done that I realized that my knowledge of God had become *stale*.
5. I’d managed to construct a neat little theological cage for Him to live in and then proceeded to live my life with “God in the box.”
  - a. but God doesn’t dwell long in the box we try to confine Him to.
  - b. His glory fills the heavens and He delights in bursting through the walls we keep sticking Him behind.
6. God is infinite, and it’s a shame when we come to the place of thinking we’ve learned all we can, that our puny little bucket has drained dry the well of the knowledge of God.
7. Lately I’ve come to a lesson I thought I’d learned long ago, but had forgotten – That God is *dangerous* – that He’s unpredictable and that all the while that He calls us into a deeper knowledge of Himself, there’s a mystery there that’s both *unnerving* and *enticing*!
8. There is no greater *adventure*, no greater *quest* than the pursuit of

- God.
9. And I'm ashamed of the fact that for some time now I've been content to live with a tamed down version of God.
    - a. I had taken the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and caged Him, cut off his claws and blunted His fangs.
    - b. in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the first of CS Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, Lucy is being told about Aslan the Lion, who represents Jesus Christ in the story.
    - c. Lucy is rightly afraid of lions and asks, "Is He safe?"
    - d. the reply, "Safe? No, Aslan's not safe! But He's good!"
  10. I fear that too many Christians believe in a *safe* God – a domesticated, toothless and clawless old lion.
    - a. our God isn't safe - but He's GOOD!
    - b. and we were created for nothing less nor more than to *Know Him*.
  11. Life, real life, life as God originally designed for us, is the grand adventure of pursuing Him while He leads us ever onward into deeper and deeper levels of knowing and experiencing Him.

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[1] Illustration drawn loosely from J.I. Packer's *Knowing God*