



JOURNEY BASICS: KNOWABILITY OF GOD

DEFEATER BELIEF

"I have never seen the slightest scientific proof of the religious ideas of heaven and hell, of future life for individuals, or of a personal God. So far as religion of the day is concerned, it is a damned fake... Religion is all bunk." - Thomas Edison

Does this quote surprise you? Have you ever heard similar things? If so, who/where in your life?

Does this sound familiar?

"There is no God, and if there is, your God is just one of many Gods or spirits. And even if your God exists he is unknowable."

In our post-modern, post-Christian culture, God is all too often negated and discarded as myth or legend. Read Psalm 14:1. **Journal** what the Bible says about those who deny the existence of God.

The truth is that apart from Christ, people deny God in several ways.

- The **agnostic** may admit there is a god but is completely unknowable.
- The **atheist** doesn't believe (with full faith!) in any god- let alone the Trinity.
- The **Muslim**, the **Buddhist**, the **Wiccan** etc beliefs are all apart from Christ.

The question we ask ourselves is how do we respond to these people in our lives?

When we speak of the True God we are theologians. We are theologizing! That is why it is important that we search the scriptures to answer the world's questions, as well as our own questions.

A Brief Response: There is a God and He has spoken

Read *Genesis 1:1*. The Bible never makes a case for God's existence rather it assumes it. Read *John 17:3*.

Journal in your own words, what does Jesus assume about God's know-ability?

God has graciously revealed himself to his creation. The Self-Revealing God has made himself known through his works and his Word. Read *Psalm 19:1-4*. How is God being gracious to us when He is revealing himself continuously, day after day, versus a one-time event (like creation)?

How do we know that God exists?

'The first verse of Genesis does not present evidence for the existence of God but begins immediately to tell us what he has done: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." If we are convinced that the Bible is true, then we know from the Bible not only that God exists but also very much about his nature and his acts.' (Grudem)

As we have just read in *Psalm 19*, God is revealed in his works and in his Word. There are essentially two ways in which God reveals himself to his creation: General revelation and Specific revelation.

General Revelation can be defined as the knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law that comes through creation to all humanity.

Special Revelation is God's words addressed to specific people, including the words of the Bible. This is to be distinguished from general revelation, which is given to all people generally.

General Revelation: God the Creator

Read *Acts 17: 16-34; 14:15-17* and *Romans 1:19-20*. The Bible affirms that the natural world reveals God its creator.

Journal, where in creation do you personally most encounter the handiwork of God and why?

The Bible says ALL people have an inner sense of God. We are His creatures and He is our creator. Yet man still denies the true and living God.

Read:

- *Romans 1:19* *What can be known about God is plainly visible.*
- *Romans 1:21* *For although they know God they ignore Him.*
- *Romans 1:18* *Sin causes us to deny our inner sense of God.*
- *Romans 1:24-25* *We choose a lie instead of the truth.*
- *Romans 1:32* *Our denial is a willful suppression of the truth.*
- *Romans 1:20* *Those who do this are without excuse.*

Journal, if all people have an inner sense of God, why do they reject Jesus?

Special Revelation: God the redeemer is revealed to those who hear

Miracles reveal God:

Read *Joshua 10:12-14*. We see God extending natural laws. 'The stood still'. We see God making exceptions to natural laws, an example of this is the 'floating axe head' in *2 Kings 6*.

Jesus reveals God:

Read *John 1:18; 14:9; Hebrews 1:1*. Scripture as a whole reveals God as we read earlier in *Genesis 1:1*.

Journal why you think God decided to reveal himself to us?

Can We Really Know God?

For us to know God He must graciously reveal Himself to us. 'Reveal' means to unveil.

The truth is that God has fully disclosed himself to humanity. But the reality is this: apart from God's self-revelation it is impossible for us to apprehend God. Everything we know about God has been revealed to us AND is not obtained by human wisdom. Read *John 1:18*.

Journal how we know anything that we know regarding God?

Read *1 Corinthians 2:14*. The Bible says that spiritually dead people are incapable of accepting spiritual things.

Journal how should this truth affect the way we pray and/or evangelize the lost?

We can never *fully* know God (meaning the finite apprehending the infinite), we can *truly* know God because God chose to reveal himself to man. Read *Matthew 11:27; Exodus 3:1-6, 13-14; Deut 29:29*. Consider the following,

God made man in His own spiritual image with the ability to relate to Him through the mind, will, emotions and personality. Read *Genesis 1:26-27*.

God communicated with man in understandable language. Read *Genesis 2:15-17* and *Exodus 3:4-6*.

God desires man to seek Him and find Him. Read *Jeremiah 29:13* and *1 Corinthians 2:10-13*.

We can personally know God, not just true facts about him. We can know God himself. Read *Jeremiah 9:23-24*. We are given the ability to know Him. Read *1 John 5:20*. God dwells WITH us and IN us. Read *John 14:23*. At the end of the day, our acceptance of the existence of God is a matter of faith as the writer of Hebrews tells us. Read *Hebrews 11:6* and hold that truth in your heart!

Journal your responses: Would you call your present relationship to God a personal relationship? If so, how are you sharing that with others? If not, what is impeding your relationship with Him from being personal, or what is holding you back from a decision to follow Christ?

What is God Like?

“Anyone who denies the Trinity is in danger of losing his salvation, and anyone who tries to understand it is in danger of losing his mind.” St. Augustine

In discussing the attributes of God it is important that we understand the attributes within the knowledge that God as a being has always existed as more than one person. In fact, God eternally exists as three distinct persons in one being. The nature of God as existing in three persons, or the plurality of the Godhead, is commonly known as the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Trinity	God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet he is one God.
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When we speak of God's attributes- his mercy, his love, his holiness- these attributes are experienced perfectly within the Godhead. Also, God's attributes are true of all three persons of the Trinity, for each is fully God. Thus, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are also eternal, infinitely wise, love, holy, omniscient, and so on.

God is three distinct persons in one being. Read *John 6:27*. The Father is declared to be God. Read *Hebrews 1:8*. The Son is declared to be God. Read *Acts 5:3-4*. The Holy Spirit is declared to be God. Yet the three persons are identified equally as one. Read *Matthew 28:19* and *2 Corinthians 13:14*.

Do you treat the person of the Holy Spirit a 'second class citizen'? Do you view the Father as more powerful than the Son? If so, where does this occur in your theology? In prayer? In function (salvation, creation, etc...)? In how you view God working in your life?

Journal your response: Do you sometimes elevate one person of the Godhead over the other?

The doctrine of the Trinity is arguably the most important doctrine of the Christian faith. To study the Bible's teachings on the Trinity gives us great insight into the question that is at the center of all of our seeking after God: What is God like in himself? Here we learn that, in his very being, God exists in perfect community within himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

How is God different from us?

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” - Richard Dawkins

When we begin to try and grasp who God is and what He is like we must begin with one simple question: What is it about God that makes Him God?/what is the essence of God?

There are two categories of how we describe what God is like:

- Incommunicable attributes (attributes which God does not share with any other)
- Communicable attributes (attributes more in common with humanity).

Five things about God that make him God:

- *John 4:23-24* The gospel writer says that, *God is* _____
- *John 5:26* John claims that, *God is* _____
- *Matthew 5:48* *God is* _____
- *Isaiah 40:25* The prophet claims that, *God is* _____
- *Psalm 90:2* The psalmist praised, *God who is* _____

*Answers: Spirit. Life. Perfect. Unique. Eternal

Caution: We must be mindful to not elevate any one attribute of God above any other. No one attribute fully describes God. All of God's attributes exist equally and at the same time in His nature. When God reveals one attribute He does not cease to possess others. God is greater than the sum of all His attributes.

God's Incommunicable Attributes:

- Holy, Transcendent
- Self-Sufficient
- Infinite
- Immutable
- Omnipotent
- Omnipresent
- Omniscient
- Sovereign

God's Communicable Attributes:

- Good
- Love
- Mercy (Gracious, Patient)
- Peace (Order)
- Righteous
- Just
- Jealous
- Wrathful
- Free
- Perfect
- Beautiful
- Glorious

Journal three specific incommunicable or communicable attributes from the lists above, if you are unfamiliar with a term, research it and explain how a greater understanding of these attributes might enhance/change/affect your prayer life?

THE BIG IDEAS

God is not an impersonal force or principle but a divine relational being who is present and involved in His creation, AND who desires to communicate and commune with us.

We only know God because he has revealed himself to his creation.

God is Trinity: three distinct persons in one being, AND all three persons are equally God.

Reflection

Read and reflect upon the following scriptures: *Jeremiah 9:23-24; Psalm 145:1-3; Isaiah 46:9-11; Psalm 102:25-27; Exodus 34:6-7.*

Special Terms

Trinity	God eternally existing as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet he is one God
Agnostic	A person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable; broadly: one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or the nonexistence of God or a god
Atheist	One who believes that there is no deity
General Revelation	The knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law that comes through creation to all humanity
Special Revelation	God's words addressed to specific people, including the words of the Bible
Incommunicable	Attributes which God does not share with any other
Communicable	Attributes of God that are more in common with humanity

Additional Study

Further Study: The Forgotten Trinity by James R. White; The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship by Robert Letham

Advanced Study: Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem; The Tri-Personal God by Gerald O'Collins

Sources: Bible Doctrine Survey, BTCP; The Ryrie Study Bible; Essentials, R.C. Sproul; Survey of Bible Doctrine: God, Biblical Studies Press; Systematic Theology, W. Grudem; Who Needs Theology, Grenz & Olson.

JOURNEY BASICS: KNOWABILITY NOTES

THE BIG IDEAS

God is Knowable

- A) For us to _____ God He must graciously _____ Himself to us. Consider the following:
- i. We are made in God's _____ with abilities to _____ to Him.
 - ii. He communicates to us with _____ we can understand.
 - iii. He desires us to _____ Him and _____ Him.

God has revealed Himself to His creation

- B) _____: through His _____.
- i. The natural world _____ God it's Creator.
- C) _____: through His _____.
- ii. _____, _____, & _____ reveal God.

God is Trinity

How do we know that God is Trinity?

- i. _____.
 - ii. _____.
 - iii. _____.
 - iv. _____.
- D) Each Person is _____ from the other.
- E) Each Person is _____.
- F) Though each Person is _____, there is _____ in relationship.
- G) What differentiates each Person is their _____ to each other.