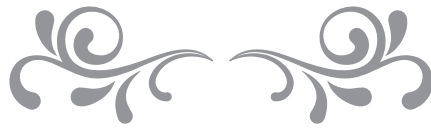




BEHOLD
YOUR
GOD



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First edition published 1980

Fourth edition published 2016

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-59557-204-2

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Published by



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Preface

As the Source of all truth, God is in fact the highest truth we can study. Our view of Him affects every other belief and practice. We therefore wrote this curriculum to inspire students to explore the heights and depths of His majesty—because while God lies above and beyond our understanding, He has also chosen to make Himself known to us.

In Hebrews 11:6, we read that we must accept two things by faith:

- That God exists
- That He rewards those who seek Him

From this starting point, we can begin to study the incomparable God described in Scripture. Like a little child walking alongside her father, we may not understand the height of God's holiness or the fullness of His grace, but we can feel the strength of His hand holding ours.

As Christ prayed for all His followers in John 17:20–26, we pray that you would know God, trust in His love, and be unified together in Him.

Features of This Study

As an academic curriculum and a devotional study, *Behold Your God* presents both factual content and personal application material. Students should complete this course with an introductory understanding of theology proper, but they should also be challenged to better reflect God's character with their thoughts, speech, and actions.

Teacher's Lectures

The lesson content in the Teacher's Manual can help you prepare and present the truths of this study to your students. The lecture material is presented verbatim, although it is formatted with headings and bullets in case you prefer to teach from limited notes.

Each chapter in the Student Manual contains a fill-in-the-blank outline of the corresponding teacher's lesson. Students can use this outline as a foundation for their lecture notes, which will help them study for tests and quizzes. Note that underlined words in the teacher's lesson correspond to blanks in the students' outline.

You can find digital presentations with these outlines on the *Behold Your God* product page at positiveaction.org.

Each teacher's lesson includes Scripture references to support the content framework, along with relevant explanations of the passages cited. You'll also find illustrations and discussion questions throughout the core material, although you can greatly enhance your presentation by adding your own perspective and experience.

We encourage teachers to approach lessons not so much as a fact-finding process as a way to strengthen the students' relationship with God. Perfect truth includes love, and perfect love includes truth, so please take care to present this material in a way that both

encourages and challenges your students. Make time for discussion, and encourage your students to share their questions with the class. We may not fully understand God, but He is certainly bigger than our questions and doubts.

Student Exercises

Almost every chapter in the Student Manual includes exercises that students should complete outside of class. These encourage students to seek God's truth and love on their own, while also reviewing some of the principles from the teacher's lesson.

Toward the beginning of this course, you may want to complete some exercises together with your students.

Each chapter also features additional "Application Activities" that you can assign or modify as needed. These include light research and writing projects, as well as devotional activities that reach beyond the core material.

Testing and Evaluation

For classes that require a score or grade, the Teacher's Manual includes weekly quizzes and unit tests. The course is divided into six units, each of which has its own test. Most chapters also include a weekly quiz, to be taken after students have heard the teacher's lecture and completed the corresponding exercises. Quizzes and tests cover essential themes from both the Teacher's Manual and the Student Manual, with question types including short answer, multiple choice, true-false, matching, and short essays.

Quizzes, tests, and answer keys are at the back of this Teacher's Manual. You can find editable versions of this testing material on the *Behold Your God* product page at **positiveaction.org**.

Note that these materials can help you evaluate students' mastery of factual content but not, of course, their spiritual growth.

Some teachers also grade weekly Scripture memorization and the completion of student exercises and extra activities.

Completed Pages from the Student Textbook

This Teacher's Manual contains a complete copy of the Student Manual. In each chapter, you can find facsimiles of the Student Manual pages with suggested answers filled in.

A digital version of these facsimiles is available on the *Behold Your God* product page at **positiveaction.org**. If presented via projector or screen, these pages can help you review exercises with your students.

Scripture Memorization

At the end of this introduction, you'll find a Scripture memory program with a list of passages that correspond to each lesson's topic. In the past, teachers have used this optional component in the following ways:

- Assign verses to be recited or written in a graded quiz, whether weekly, monthly, or once a semester.

- Assign verses to be written on the back of regular chapter quizzes, perhaps as extra credit.
- Evaluate the students' understanding of the verses by offering a fill-in-the-blank verse test, or one that requires students to match the text of each passage with its reference.

You can find printable verse cards on the *Behold Your God* product page at positiveaction.org.

Selected Bibliography

The following list contains some of the books that were most helpful to the authors who wrote the first edition of this curriculum. While Positive Action does not fully endorse the content of every book, you may find this material helpful as you expand your study and teaching:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Boice, James Montgomery. <i>The Sovereign God</i> . Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1978. | Pink, Arthur W. <i>Gleanings in the Godhead</i> . Chicago: Moody Press, 1975. |
| Clemens, David A. <i>God Encountered</i> . Upper Darby, Pa.: Bible Club Movement, Inc., 1973. | Ryrie, Charles C. <i>A Survey of Bible Doctrine</i> . Chicago: Moody Press, 1972. |
| Evans, William. <i>The Great Doctrines of the Bible</i> . Chicago: Moody Press, 1974. | Strauss, Lehman. <i>The First Person</i> . Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967. |
| Fawcett, John. <i>Christ Precious</i> . Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1979. | Thiessen, Henry C. <i>Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology</i> . Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949. |
| Flavel, John. <i>The Mystery of Providence</i> . Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976. | Tozer, A. W. <i>Knowledge of the Holy</i> . New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961. |
| Packer, J. I. <i>Knowing God</i> . Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973. | Watson, Thomas. <i>A Body of Divinity</i> . Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978. |
| | _____. <i>The Ten Commandments</i> . Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965. |

Format and Grade Level

Although teachers have successfully adapted and taught this study in grades seven through twelve, we recommend this content for the ninth through eleventh grade.

As with any other Bible study, your students' background, Scriptural literacy, and reading level will greatly impact their ability to approach this material. Some students may require additional teacher or parent involvement to understand and complete the exercises in the Student Manual.

Suggested Weekly Schedule

This study includes 35 lessons—one for each week in an average academic year. In general, teachers should present the lecture content from the Teacher’s Manual first, after which students can complete the exercises in the Student Manual, then take the appropriate quiz or unit test. The optional Scripture memory and application activities can expand the students’ individual or group study.

Note that this study likely contains more content than you could cover in depth, especially in a three- or four-day-a-week class. Depending on the needs of your students—and depending on the time you spend in discussion or review—you may need to cover some minor points quickly or not at all.

Three-Day Option

DAY 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce lesson objectives• Teach lecture content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce Scripture memory• Assign student exercises and any additional activities
DAY 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finish lecture content• Review student exercises, as well as content relevant to the quiz or test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Scripture memory
DAY 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administer quiz or test• Discuss any student questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check or quiz Scripture memory• Review any additional activities

Four-Day Option

DAY 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce lesson objectives• Teach lecture content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce Scripture memory• Assign student exercises and any additional activities
DAY 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finish lecture content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Scripture memory
DAY 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review student exercises, as well as content relevant to the quiz or test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Scripture memory
DAY 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administer quiz or test• Discuss any student questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check or quiz Scripture memory• Review any additional activities

Five-Day Option

DAY 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce lesson objectives• Teach lecture content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce Scripture memory• Assign student exercises and any additional activities
DAY 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue lecture content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Scripture memory
DAY 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finish lecture content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Scripture memory• Discuss any extra activities or questions.
DAY 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review student exercises, as well as content relevant to the quiz or test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Scripture memory
DAY 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administer quiz or test• Discuss any student questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check or quiz Scripture memory• Review any additional activities

Feedback

As a non-profit publishing ministry, we consider teachers our co-laborers in the faith. Each curriculum remains a work in progress, and the people who teach these studies have a great impact on the scope and format of every new edition. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us—we'd love to hear from you.

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A Final Word

We pray that this study will help you and your students know God's glory, grow in that knowledge, and share it with others. To benefit the most from this study, we'd encourage you to do the following:

- Spend time each day in the Word. Use the material in this study to guide your devotional reading so that you can present God's truth and love from the heart. Spend time marking and adjusting the lecture content to suit your students' needs.
- Pray for your students, and ask God to grow you.
- Be vulnerable to your students, expressing questions and confidence in equal measure. Encourage them to explore Scripture with you.
- Be the love and truth that you want to see from your students.
- Depend on God's strength and grace, even in your weakness.

Scripture Memory Program

LESSON	CORE VERSES	BONUS VERSES
1	Ephesians 1:11–12	1 Peter 1:15–16
2	1 Corinthians 13:12	John 14:15
3	Philippians 3:8	Hosea 6:6
4	Isaiah 55:8–9	Psalms 139:17
5	Romans 8:28	Psalms 57:1
6	Matthew 6:33–34	2 Corinthians 3:3
7	Psalms 1:1–2	Psalms 1:3–4
8	John 1:18	Psalms 139:7–8
9	Deuteronomy 6:4–5	Isaiah 44:6
10	Matthew 3:16–17	1 Peter 1:2
11	1 John 3:20	Proverbs 15:3
12	Jeremiah 23:23–24	Colossians 1:17
13	Revelation 1:8	Isaiah 46:10
14	Exodus 3:14	Psalms 90:2
15	James 1:17	Hebrews 13:8
16	Isaiah 6:3	Exodus 15:11
17	Deuteronomy 32:4	Matthew 5:44
18	Exodus 34:6	Psalms 103:11
19	Romans 5:7–8	1 John 4:7–8
20	Exodus 20:1–3	Psalms 119:114
21	John 21:15	1 Peter 2:9
22	John 1:1–2	John 1:3–4
23	John 1:14	John 1:18
24	2 Corinthians 5:21	Hebrews 4:15
25	Mark 16:6	Matthew 28:9
26	Acts 1:9	Acts 1:10–11
27	Matthew 7:28–29	Hebrews 7:27
28	John 8:58	Philippians 2:9–11
29	Philippians 2:5–7	Philippians 2:8
30	Matthew 1:23	Isaiah 9:6
31	John 14:16	Ephesians 4:30
32	John 6:63	Job 34:14–15
33	Titus 3:4–5	1 Corinthians 6:19
34	1 Corinthians 6:11	Ephesians 4:4–6
35	Colossians 1:18	Luke 9:62



UNIT 1

The Knowledge of God

“It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular; it is why he does it. The motive is everything.”

—A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

Laying the Foundation

“Glorifying God has respect to all the persons of the Trinity; it respects God the Father who gave us life; God the Son, who lost His life for us; and God the Holy Spirit, who produces a new life in us.”

—Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*

Lesson Objectives:

- To lay the groundwork for the course
- To define and distinguish *knowing*, *being*, and *doing*
- To establish the God-ordained goal for every student—that is, to glorify God in everything
- To outline the roles of the Trinity within the doctrine of individual holiness
- To challenge the students to reflect God’s holiness on a personal, practical level

Before beginning our study of the Person, character, and work of God, we must first lay some groundwork. What motivates our study of God? What drives us to love and know Him?


Our Goal

Let’s start with some big questions.

Q: What is your purpose in life? What’s the target you’re aiming for? What’s your life goal? *Discuss.*

A: Read **Ephesians 1:11–12**, which gives us an answer. For those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior, God redeemed us to reflect His own glory. He bought us back so that we could exist as *living praise* to His majesty. That is the purpose for our new life in Christ.

That may be our life’s goal, but does it affect what we’re doing right now? Does this purpose have anything to do with our day-to-day lives?

 **Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.** Our highest purpose—that is, glorifying God—should apply to anything and everything we do. Eating and drinking may serve an earthly function, such as sustaining our health. But the *purpose* behind all activity should be to reflect the goodness of God. We might be working, studying, eating, or just walking down the street, but we should do so to show God’s love and truth. We learn, we teach, we strive, we rest, we fellowship, and we love in order to glorify God.

Our Goal: To glorify God in everything.

This principle drives the good things that we do, but it also limits us. If the purpose behind our life is to glorify God, then if a particular thing or activity does *not* glorify God, we should not do it. If something does not glorify God, then it cannot be good, true, or loving. Truth, love, and goodness all belong to God, and something is good, true, or loving only as long as it reflects God's own character.

Knowing, Being, and Doing

Note that Ephesians 1:12 said that we should *be* to the praise of God's glory. This is our identity as Christians—that is, who we *are*. But that is just one of God's concerns. It's also important to consider what we *know* and what we *do*.

- **Knowing**—our knowledge of truth and doctrine, most importantly about God
- **Being**—our identity as children of God; the holiness He grows within us
- **Doing**—our actions; what we do to reflect God's character, whether through studying the Bible, serving others, sharing the gospel of Christ, or whatever else

Q: Which of these three responsibilities do you think is most important?
Discuss.

Ephesians 1:12 reflects what God considered most important. He sent His Son, first, to change *who we are*. Jesus also came to Earth so that we could know God, and so that we could, by His grace, obey Him (John 1:14–18; 17:20–26). But knowledge and actions are pointless if our souls are still lost in sin. Christians are Christians not because of something they did, but because of how Christ changed them. Being is the most important.

Q: Let's explore this idea. Can someone do right things and yet not *be* right?
Discuss.

The Pharisees are an example of a group that tried. They did almost everything right. They may have been the most outwardly righteous group of individuals who ever lived.

Note some of the things that Jesus said about them in **Matthew 23**:

- They studied the Scriptures diligently (v. 2). They were the universally recognized experts on Old Testament Law.
- They converted people to their religion (v. 15).
- They gave a tithe from all their material goods (v. 23).
- They maintained a perfect public testimony (v. 27). Other people thought that the Pharisees were very holy.

Even Jesus said that they were clean—at least outwardly. If the Pharisees lived today, we could imagine them studying, teaching, memorizing Scripture. You would see them teaching at the best universities and writing the most scholarly books on religion, all while living a life filled with seriousness, piety, and generosity, donating exactly ten percent of their paycheck. We'd all rightly admire their knowledge and discipline, and we'd feel a little guilty for not living as perfect a life as they did.


But Jesus reserved for them His harshest condemnation. He called them fools, snakes, and hypocrites.

Q: Why did He call them these things if they did so much good? *Discuss.*

A: Look at Matthew 23:27–28. Christ called the Pharisees white-washed graves. On the outside, they seemed spotless, but on the inside they were full of dead bones. Outwardly, they gave others a picture of righteousness, but inwardly they were lawless hypocrites. In their innermost hearts, they did not reflect God’s holiness, God’s thoughts, or God’s character. Jesus told them that unless the inside is clean, the outside cannot truly be clean, either (v. 26).

Jesus compared them to blind guides who led others while pretending to see (vv. 24–26). It was bad enough that the Pharisees were liars and hypocrites, but worse was the fact that they had convinced others to mimic the same kind of false holiness. They led other people to rely not on God’s grace but on their own outward righteousness. As Jesus explained it, the Pharisees not only refused to enter God’s kingdom, but they also shut the door in the faces of others (v. 13).

God is more concerned about who we are than what we do. We can try to do right things and yet still not *be* right. As Isaiah 64:6 describes it, anything good that we try to do in our own power looks like a dirty, filthy rag to God.

 **Read Ecclesiastes 7:15–18.** Here Solomon says that he’s seen two odd things in his life. The first thing is an outwardly righteous person who dies early, perhaps because of all the effort spent doing right. The second odd thing is a wicked person who, despite being wicked, lives a long time. Solomon warns against both extremes. Wickedness leads to spiritual destruction, and righteous acts can be a waste of your time and your life. No matter which route you choose, you’ll perish without God.

We can become so busy—so intent on *doing*—that we forget about God’s work in our inner being. Indeed, too much doing is as much a danger as too little doing. We should make time to rest, reflect, and fellowship in silence with God—like David did when he sought the silence of the wilderness, or like Christ did when He took time from His ministry to rest and pray on a mountain. If Jesus—who fit the most important ministry in the history of the world into just three short years—thought that it was important enough to make time to rest and reflect, we should, too.

But it’s an attractive lie that we can *be* better or *feel* better simply by *doing* more stuff. If we can just keep busy, we’ll automatically be holy, right? Imagine a pot filled to the brim with water. If you boil it long enough over hot coals, the water will bubble up over the edge of the pot and run down into the coals, possibly even extinguishing them. Likewise, we can be so zealous about something, so passionate and fierce, yet if it is not a good goal, or if we do not pursue it while resting in God’s grace, our passion can boil over and put itself out. We grow disappointed, bored, tired, or burned out. We wonder why we even bothered trying in the first place.

📖 **Read Proverbs 4:23.** Guard your inner being. Who you are in your mind, in your heart of hearts, affects everything you do.

Do not misplace your passion. Keep focused on God. Seek Him. Depend on His grace, not on your righteousness. Obey Him because you love Him, because you know that disobeying Him would be a betrayal of everything He's done for you. Talk to Him, listen to Him in the Word—not because doing those things makes you holy, but because you trust Him to make you holy as you walk with Him.

If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, if God has redeemed to you Himself, then He has already blessed you more than you could possibly imagine (Phil. 4:19). He loves you. He will never stop loving you. And nothing you did earned that love.

Never forget the importance of *being*.

The Doctrine of Holiness

God Calls Us to Holiness (1 Pet. 1:14–16)

📖 **Read 1 Peter 1:14–16.** This passage tells us one thing that we should be—that is, one quality of God's character that we should embody: we should be holy.

Q: What is holiness? *Discuss.*

A: In this passage, we're commanded to be holy for one big reason—because God is holy. So to understand our own holiness, we should first examine God's holiness.

When the Scriptures describe God as holy, it refers to two main ideas.

📖 **Read 1 John 1:5.** God is perfect, and without sin. He is all light and no darkness, all truth and no lies.

📖 **Read Isaiah 57:15.** God is exalted above all. He is special, set apart, the most important Being ever. He is unique.

God's holiness is His most important attribute. He could not be perfectly loving unless that love came from a truly perfect, truly good Source. He could not be all-knowing or all-powerful unless He were the pre-eminent One, the God before and above us all. He could not be perfectly just unless He was Himself the very definition of justice. Everything we know about God flows from our understanding of His holiness, His perfect exaltation as the Creator and God of the universe.

Q: God says that we should be holy. But we're not perfect or exalted above everything. So what does holiness look like in our lives? *Discuss.*

A: The word for “holy” that is used in the Greek New Testament is *hagios*. In some versions of the Bible, you'll also find it translated as “sanctified,” “sacred,” or “set apart.” As Christians, we are *hagios* because God has set us apart for His purpose. We're set apart from sin, set apart from judgment, set apart from everything else that kept us from a relationship with God.

From this idea we get the word *saint*, which refers to people that God sets apart. To be a saint is to be someone that God has made holy and has fashioned for His good purpose.

Personal holiness—that is, our own holiness—is . . .

- The work that God performs in us
- To set us apart *from sin* and *to* righteousness
- So that we reflect God's character
- Our holiness is the result of God's grace in our lives. He sanctifies us to provide a glimpse of His character—a glimpse of His love, His truth, and His mercy.

Jesus Redeems Us to Holiness (*Eph. 5:25–27*)

📖 **Read Ephesians 5:25–27.** When Christ died for us, thereby paying the penalty for our sin, He provided a way for us to be sanctified, set apart, holy. Christ did not merely save us from sin and the judgment it calls for. He saved us *to* something, as well—a relationship with God that would grow us into a better, holier image of Himself.

That is the positive direction of our salvation. We tend to emphasize the negative—we're saved *from* sin, hell, and eternal separation from God. And when we talk about repentance, we say that we turn *from* sin. But more importantly, when we repent, we should turn *toward* God (Acts 20:21). Of course, in order to turn *toward* God, we must necessarily turn *from* sin.

These ideas are two sides of the same coin—one can't be true without the other—but it helps to focus on the positive. If we understand what God says is good and ideal, we don't need to spend all of our time pointing out what is bad. We can see God's standard, then trust Him to move us toward it. And as we grow and develop and learn more about God, we can rejoice not only that our sins have been forgiven, but also that we have been redeemed to be part of God's family. We are therefore heirs to all the riches of God's grace, and we have the hope of a future with God in heaven.

God's Spirit Perfects Our Holiness (*2 Cor. 3:18*)

📖 **Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.** As we learn more about God, He will transform us into a better reflection of Himself. This work of sanctification—this setting apart—is done primarily by the Holy Spirit.

God's Spirit sets us apart (Rom. 15:15–16), strengthening us so that we can better know God's love and show God's love to others (Eph. 3:14–19). His work bears fruit in our lives—fruit that shows itself in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). This inner holiness is His goal.

Where, then, does *knowing* fit in?

As we see in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we first know God to be like Him, and then we do the things He wants. We know to be to do.

We behold God's glory, studying Him in His Word, learning what He says is good and what He says is bad.

He then works in our hearts, transforming us into a better reflection of His goodness.

And as we grow, we then act out His goodness and grace, showing love and truth to the people around us.

Knowing, being, and doing are all important. We can't glorify God if we neglect even one of them.

.....

Challenge

Imagine a boy who wants to know the secret of success. He asks his father, who replies simply, "Keep your hand to the plough."

He asks his mother. She responds, "Keep your eye on the goal."

When he then asks his grandmother, she says, "Keep your mind on the job."

The boy might be confused at getting three different answers, but they all basically said the same thing. Stay focused, stay determined, and keep working toward what's good.

All relationships take work. Ask any parent if raising children is difficult. Ask a married couple—let's say, two people who have been married ten years or more—if keeping their relationship healthy and good takes effort. Even simple friendships can be hard to maintain.

Likewise, your relationship with God will take some effort. Not that you can work to earn God's love or God's favor—those He gives freely. He accomplished the difficult work of salvation on the cross, and He continues to work in your heart to sanctify you and make you more like Him. He'll do all the work for your *being*.

But as for *knowing* and *doing*, those don't happen by accident. It takes effort to study God's character. It takes effort to serve Him and do loving things for other people. If you want to abide close with God, you can't simply ignore what He's said in His Word. You have to open the Bible and focus on what God says. No other relationship, no other goal, no other activity is more important to your wellbeing.

This study is designed to help you do just that. As you work through each lesson, you'll explore how the Bible is not simply a collection of stories or rules, but rather a window to God's own majesty. He gave us His Word, first and foremost, to reveal Himself to us, so we will study how the Bible displays His Person, His character, and His work.

Know that if you have accepted Christ, and if you commit yourself to this study, God will change you. *You* can't make yourself more holy, but *He* can, and He *will*.

He will show you parts of your life that do not reflect His character—things that are hateful, degrading, harmful, and sinful. He will also show you parts of your life that are unhelpful—things that may normally be good, but are now keeping you from being and doing the best that you can. And just as importantly, He will show you the blessings of His grace:

- The liberty we have to love and serve outside of sin's bondage

- The peace we have in the protection of God
- The fellowship and unity we have with other believers
- The strength we can lean on since we are so weak
- The hope we have of a future together with Christ

Ask God to focus your study, to give you wisdom as you seek truth and love. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you. And ask Him to change you so that you can better know, love, and serve Him for the sake of His glory. Then trust Him to work through you—to make you holy, because He is holy.

CHAPTER 1

Laying the Foundation

“Glorifying God has respect to all the persons of the Trinity; it respects God the Father, who gave us life; God the Son, who lost His life for us; and God the Holy Ghost, who produces a new life in us.”

—Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*

Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish historian and philosopher in the nineteenth century, wrote,

“The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder—a waif, a nothing, a no man. Have a purpose in life, and, having it, throw such strength of mind and muscle into your work as God has given you.”

This advice is especially important for Christian teenagers. You stand at the edge of adulthood, with growing liberties and growing responsibilities. You’ve begun to realize that life extends beyond your day-to-day experiences—that what you do now will impact your life weeks, months, and even years in the future. So many activities and amusements and causes clamor for your attention, and perhaps you’ve begun to ask yourself, “How do I choose from all this? What purpose guides my choice?”

God has a purpose and plan for each of His children, and we’re responsible to discover that purpose—and pursue it. Our focus and goal will then guide how we work, how we serve others, how we rest, and how we grow.

The teacher’s lesson for this chapter establishes the highest purpose for every Christian—namely, to glorify God. In everything we do, we should reflect God’s character.

To do this, however, we depend on His Spirit to mold us into a better image of Him. We depend on His Word to help us know Him, personally and intimately. It’s not enough to know *about* God—we must know God *Himself*.

Keep this goal in mind as you proceed through this study. Seek God, not simply knowledge about Him. Know His work in your life. Discover the truth He’s placed in His Word for you. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you, and ask Him to help you reflect His love and truth.

Student Work

We Can Seek God Only Through Faith

Why is faith necessary to seek God? While the Bible points to a great deal of *evidence* that God exists, it does not try to *prove* that He does. From the very first verse, Scripture simply assumes His presence. Genesis 1:1 states that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth—no introduction necessary. From the rest of Scripture, we learn more about who God is and what He does, but nowhere in these words does God lay out a systematic proof of His existence.

Further, we can find no definitive proof for God in either science or philosophy. As much as we can see order in the universe, as much as we can feel that we were created for some higher, spiritual purpose, as much as we know in our heart of hearts that life means something more—these signs all point to God, but they do not prove beyond all possible doubt that He is there. Many people see this evidence, yet never believe in God.

But why can’t we write a step-by-step proof that God exists?

Only God Can Prove Himself

We are not the judges of God. Even if we could somehow establish beyond all doubt that God exists, that still wouldn’t be enough to sustain our belief. How could we possibly prove that this God is the God that the Bible describes?

To explore this idea, let’s look at a few passages that describe God’s power.

God Is Omnipotent

| *omni* / all | + | *potent* / powerful |

- ✍ Read Exodus 6:2–3. By what name did God appear to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? **God Almighty**

This is one of God's most important names—rendered in Hebrew as *El Shaddai*. God is the all-powerful Creator of the universe (Jer. 32:17). With Him, all things are possible. He can do whatever He wants to do (Ps. 115:3).

God Is Omniscient

| *omni* / all | + | *science* / knowledge |

- ✍ Read 1 John 3:20. What does this verse say that God knows?

All things

- ✍ According to Psalm 147:5, is there any limit to His understanding?

No.

Nothing is hidden from God's sight (Heb. 4:13).

God Is Eternal and Immutable

| *eternal* / enduring / everlasting / without beginning or end |

| *immutable* / unchanging |

Further, we read in Psalm 102:12 that God endures across eternity. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). He has always been, and He will always be (Rev. 4:8). He calls Himself the forever "I AM" (Exo. 3:14; John 8:58).

How could we prove that a Being is all-powerful, all-knowing, and transcendent above time itself?

- Would we force God to *do* everything He could possibly do? Would we be like Gideon in Judges 6:36–40, asking God to prove His power by keeping a fleece wet or dry?
- Or would we ask Him to recite all knowledge—to give us the position and properties of every bit of matter and energy in the universe?

- Would we ask Him to justify His every thought and action in terms we could understand?
- Would we then travel across all time—and whatever lies above and beyond time—to prove that God has never changed, nor ever will?

How could we even begin to absorb all of the information required to pass judgment on such a Being? A person would have to stand *above* God to witness the scope of His power—and no such person could exist. As we read in Job 39 and 40, no one can ever begin to comprehend even a fraction of God's power.

And the attributes mentioned above speak only to God's ability. We haven't even touched on His holiness, His love, the rest of His character, or the scope of His work in our hearts. How could we prove that He is loving, just, and true?

Only God can answer that question—we can't depend on our own wisdom. While we can find many things in this world that tell us that our belief in God is good and reasonable, and while we can admire how God has preserved the truth and consistency of His Word, the Bible, we shouldn't expect to find proof that negates our need for faith.

- ✍ Read the summary of Enoch's life in Hebrews 11:5–6. According to verse 6, what two things can a person believe only through faith?

That God exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him

God Asks Us to Trust Him

God chose to provide us with His goodness and grace through *faith*—that is, our trust in Him.

- ✍ Read Hebrews 11:1. What is faith? **The confidence, or assurance, of the things we hope for; the belief in things we cannot see or know**

- ✍ According to verse 3, what is one of the first things we accept by faith?
That the universe was created by the word of God—that the visible world was made from something that couldn't be seen
-
-

God asks us to believe Him when He says that the physical universe—the things that we can see and touch and detect—originally came from Him. No matter how far back scientists and philosophers try to peer into our past, they will always reach a point of uncertainty, a place where geology and mathematics and physics break down, where they can only guess and speculate as to what came before. When we reach that point, and when we wonder what or Who began all this, Scripture asks us to accept God as the answer.

Science and philosophy can only bring us so close to God. He's chosen faith as the invisible bridge to lead us the rest of the way.

Is this a blind faith? Does the Creator of our minds and our eyes expect us to ignore logic and evidence? Certainly not.

God Gave Us His Creation

- ✍ According to Colossians 1:16, why did God make all things?
For Himself
-
- ✍ So what then does Psalm 19:1–6 say the heavens show us?
The glory of God; His handiwork
-
- ✍ And according to Romans 1:19–20, where can we find another glimpse of God's character or attributes?
In ourselves; in the way God made us
-

All of nature exists as a celebration of God's majesty. While the world has fallen under the curse of sin, and it is no longer a perfect reflection of its Creator, we can still see a glimpse of God's power and character in the visible universe.

God Gave Us His Word

In the Bible, we find 66 books written by men and women across three continents over roughly 1,500 years. But in this veritable library of Scripture, we can find a consistency and a cohesion explained only by the inspiration of God (1 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:21).

He guided the experiences and thoughts of these writers to give us a sufficient account of His character and work through history—an account more specific and helpful than the glimpse we see in Creation.

And most importantly, God's Word reveals the cornerstone of our faith—Jesus Christ.

God Gave Us His Son

To be clear—when we say that Jesus is God's Son, we do not mean that Jesus is somehow the biological offspring of God the Father. In the New Testament Greek, the phrase υἱὸς εἰ τοῦ Θεοῦ (*huios ei tou theos*; “the Son of God”) is used to describe Jesus as being of the same *nature*, or likeness, as God. He is *from* God, because He *is* God Himself.

If that sounds confusing, it's because it is. But don't worry. We'll explore the doctrine of the Trinity later—specifically, that God exists eternally in three Persons, though also as one united Being.

In Jesus we see God revealed as a Man—as a Person who faced temptation, hunger, and all the hardships we know, and yet still perfectly reflected the love and truth of the Father.

- ✍ Read John 17:3–4. Here Jesus prayed to the Father on the night before His crucifixion. What do these verses say about Christ's purpose for coming to Earth?
He came to Earth to glorify God; to connect people with the Father; to give them eternal life.
-
-

Christ came to Earth to connect us to God—so that we could be free from the bondage of sin, and so we could be holy like Him.

In Jesus we see the abstract doctrines of God made clear and real. We see God's holiness in the way Christ lived without sin, in the way He preached righteousness and called others to do the same.

We see God's love in the way He reached out to sinners, the lost and the forsaken, and how He gave up His life to redeem us.

And we see God's power in the way He healed the sick, fed the hungry, calmed the storms, raised the dead, and indeed conquered Death itself by rising from the grave.

The ancient world did not turn upside down over a myth or legend. Thousands and even millions of people did not risk imprisonment and death to follow a mad itinerant preacher—they responded to the calling and work of God Himself.

God Gave Us His Spirit

When Jesus ascended back into heaven, He did not leave His followers alone.

- ✍ Read John 14:16–17. What did Jesus promise that God would send after He left? Be specific.

A helper, comforter, or advocate; the Spirit of Truth

- ✍ And in Acts 2:1–4, how did God's Spirit first mark His arrival?

The believers heard a sound like a rushing wind, and tongues of fire rested over each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages so that others could understand them.

God showed everyone in Jerusalem that these believers were His children, gifted with the ability to reach across languages and culture to share the new gospel of Christ.

And today He performs an equally amazing miracle in those who have accepted Christ—He makes us *like* Jesus. He sets us apart (Rom. 15:15–16), strengthening us so that we can better know God's love and share that love with others (Eph. 3:14–19). He grows within us love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). He makes us holy.

If there's one thing we can learn from culture, politics, and indeed all of anthropology (*anthropo* / humanity + *-logy* / learning / study)—it's that people can't change themselves in any meaningful way. We're all destined to fail and disappoint each other if we work in our own power.

But the Spirit guides us to a truer and better purpose. And as we see His work in our lives, we learn to trust God with our minds and with our hearts. We are the blessed ones whom God leads to believe in Christ, even though we have not yet seen Him with our eyes (John 17:20–21; 20:29).

God Will Reveal Himself Fully Later

One day, we will have no need for faith. At the end of all things, God will reveal Himself to all people, establishing once and for all His majesty (Rev. 21:3–4). Every knee will bow to God, and every tongue will confess that He *is* (Rom. 14:11–12).

God has chosen to delay His final revelation until that time, when all will be explained, when all will be answered—and when every tear will be wiped away from our eyes (Rev. 21:4).

Jesus will not arrive on Earth, ready to usher in His eternal kingdom, only to find that we have proved all there is to know about Him. He will not break apart the heavens only to pat us on the back for everything we've discovered. Rather, He will destroy the wickedness gathered against Him (Rev. 19:11, 19–20), and He will build a new Creation, one where God and humanity can finally dwell together (Rev. 21:1–5).

Challenge

God created us to glorify Him. To glorify Him, we must be like Him. To be like Him, we must know Him. To know Him, we must love and trust Him in faith.

Make no mistake—this study can help you learn about God, but you'll need His grace to love Him, trust Him, know Him, reflect Him, and glorify Him. As you read and study His Word, ask God to keep you close to Himself.

This will not be easy. As we read in 2 Peter 3:4–9, people will mock our faith, tempting us to doubt Christ’s promise to return, or to forget His rule over Creation.

But God is not slow to fulfill His promise. Time means nothing to Him. He has appointed a day for His judgment, and He waits only because He is patient to receive any who repent and turn to Him. We serve the almighty, eternal God, and His promises are as sure now as they will be when we see them fulfilled.

✍ What is the purpose of our faith? Read Philippians 3:8–11, and write verses 10 and 11 below.

Text will vary by translation.

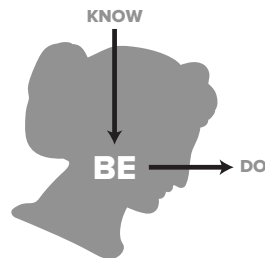
Seek God in faith, and ask Him to glorify Himself in you.

Notes from the Teacher’s Lesson

Our Goal

- **To glorify God in everything (Eph. 1:11–12; 1 Cor. 10:31)**

Knowing, Being, and Doing



- Knowing:
Our knowledge of truth and doctrine, most importantly about God
- Being:
Our identity as children of God, and the holiness He grows within us
- Doing:
Our actions; what we do to reflect God’s character, whether through studying the Bible, serving others, sharing the gospel of Christ, or whatever else
- Which is most important? **Being** (Eph. 1:12)

The Doctrine of Holiness

- God **calls** us to holiness (1 Pet. 1:14–16).
 - God’s holiness encompasses two main ideas:
 - God is **perfect**, without sin (1 John 1:5).
 - God is **exalted** above all (Isa. 57:15).
 - Our personal holiness is . . .
 - The work that **God** performs in us
 - To set us apart *from* **sin** and *to* righteousness
 - So that we reflect God’s **character**
- Jesus **redeems** us to holiness (Eph. 5:25–27).
- God’s Spirit **perfects** our holiness (2 Cor. 3:18).

.....

Application Activities

1. Make eight separate lists, labeling each with one of the following headings. Give yourself plenty of room for each list.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Health & Fitness ◦ Financial & Material ◦ Social ◦ Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Career & Calling ◦ Academic ◦ Spiritual ◦ Other
--	--

 - Under each label, list your hopes, dreams, and goals.
 - Then for each item, ask yourself, “Can I pursue this goal to God’s glory?” If not, strike it from your list. But if so, write a brief explanation of how the goal will help you better reflect the love and truth of God.
2. Read Job 38–40. In these passages, God appears to Job, a good man who lost his riches and his family, and who had begun to question God’s wisdom.
 - Write a brief summary of God’s response to Job, using two paragraphs or less. Note especially Job 38:4–7; 40:2, 8–14; and perhaps Job 42:10–17.
 - If you believe any other passages in the Bible might give us a more complete perspective on God’s plan, list them below your summary.
3. In Thomas Watson’s *A Body of Divinity*, read or skim the chapter entitled “On Man’s Chief End.”
 - List from the chapter the four things that Watson argues are part of glorifying God.
 - List also the seventeen ways he suggests that we can glorify God.
 - If you find something in this chapter with which you disagree, write a short counterargument, supported by Scripture, below your list.

Getting a Right Focus

“God must be the Terminus ad quem, the ultimate end of all actions.”

—Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*

Lesson Objectives:

- To establish God as the focus of our Bible study
- To outline wrong emphases commonly taught by Christians
- To illustrate some of the negative consequences of wrong emphases
- To introduce the results of a proper focus on God

Begin with the following object lesson.

Hold up a framed picture or painting, one that is protected behind a transparent pane of glass. Ask your students what they see. Most will refer to the content of the picture—“It’s a tree,” or “It’s a lake”—though some might refer to the picture frame itself. You can also hold up a device with a screen that displays some sort of picture. Most students will again, when prompted, say that they see the objects depicted in the picture.

Explain that it’s natural for us to perceive higher meaning in an object such as a canvas or screen. Instead of focusing on the frame or the pane of glass through which the picture shines, we concentrate on what the picture depicts. And instead of seeing individual brushstrokes or pixels, our mind sees the object almost as if it were right in front of us.

In this lesson, we’ll discuss how the Scriptures are, in a way, just like this picture frame or screen. It is through the Bible that we catch a glimpse of God. He gave us His Word so that through it we could better know Him. While studying the Bible is certainly good, we should do so primarily to see the God behind it all. Our focus is critical.

The Word of God as a Glass

First Corinthians 13:12 compares the Word of God to a glass, a mirror. What you see when you look in the glass is actually more important than the glass itself.

When people read the Word of God, they might see a variety of different things. And what they see is often the thing they consider to be the most important.

It’s like when a million people all listen to a popular love song. They respond to the music and the lyrics in a million different ways, depending on their experience, their mood, and their life philosophy. Some might think that the song is a little too sappy for their taste. Others might think that it perfectly describes the relationship they’re in now. And still others might feel a sense of nostalgia for a person now long gone.

Likewise, people will get different impressions when they read Scripture. In one sense, that's good—the Holy Spirit can direct our attention to the truth that's most helpful to us right now, and it might be something that others don't notice at first. But that doesn't mean we can make the Bible say whatever we want it to say.

As we study the Word, and as we grow in Christ, we will learn to read the Bible with a right focus, interpreting God's Word in the way He intended.

The Results of a Wrong Focus

Focusing on Holiness

In the 1800s, there was a growing interest in what we might call today “personal holiness.” Churches and schools, especially in England and the United States, held large meetings and conventions on holiness.

People looked at the phenomenon as a holiness revival. Pastors, scholars, and lay people alike all searched the Bible to discover every possible bit of doctrine on the subject. They preached and taught holiness with fervency, and people struggled to practice holiness as best they could. This movement lasted well into the twentieth century.

The Result:

- Dependence on feelings
- Neglect of evangelism

But when people focused exclusively on holiness, several problems began to emerge. This emphasis gradually led some people to become feeling- or experience-oriented, to the point that they valued subjective emotion more than objective truth in the Word.

Are emotions bad? Certainly not, but we do not value our feelings more than we value what God says is true. If we've accepted Christ as our Savior, we are the children of God, even if we sometimes don't feel like it. And if we haven't accepted Christ, we are *not* redeemed, even if we feel close to God.

As more people got excited about “being holy,” some of them neglected the call to evangelism. As one lady of the 1800s said, “I've become so thrilled with this glorious holiness teaching that I seem quite beyond any interest in meetings just for the converting of sinners!” Some people thought that to be holy, they needed to distance themselves from all non-Christians—to the point that they barely shared the gospel, if ever.

The problem was not holiness but a wrong focus.

Focusing on the Word

Then around 1925, shortly after the First World War, some prominent scholars and teachers began to question the consistency and inerrancy of the Bible, pointing out what they thought were mistakes in translation or even in the original text itself. And with recent advances in science, they thought that they could no longer believe the supernatural elements shown in the Bible, such as miracles, the creation of the world, or even Christ's literal, bodily resurrection. They taught that the Bible was a good book, perhaps even

guided by God Himself, but that it was ultimately a flawed and unreliable picture. This kind of teaching wasn't new, but it gained new popularity in the Western world.

These questions drove other scholars to dive deep into the Bible—to study the mirror itself, as it were. People analyzed Scripture with a degree of criticism perhaps never seen in any other religion. They read it, dissected it, and found new reasons to defend its truth.

So for the next fifty years, rather than focusing on holiness, many teachers and preachers emphasized doctrine about the Word itself. Believers united or divided over concepts like “inspiration” and “the authority of the Word.” Churches defined their position in large part over how they believed God recorded and preserved His Word for us.

The Result:

- Dead orthodoxy (*ortho* / right + *dox* / teaching)

But again, the focus was on the wrong thing. As people studied the Bible merely for the sake of study, or just to defend its truth, they neglected the reason God gave us His truth in the first place. Yes, the Bible itself represents a miracle of God's power and grace, but we cannot forget that the miracle points toward Him.

It's great to view the Bible with an academic or literary eye, but we cannot forget that this perspective should help us understand the God behind it all.

Otherwise, we fall into dead, dispassionate orthodoxy. We might know all the right Bible doctrines and Bible facts, but we have little excitement for God Himself. We might be able to name all the books and authors in the Bible, and we might be able to use all of the right theological terms, and we might know all the talking points to answer the attacks on our faith, but we have little joy or delight in the gifts God gave us. Our hearts can easily grow cold, and we can fail to grow in our faith, much less share it with others.

Focusing on Love

Other people look into the Word and filter everything they see with one word—*love*. Love is critically important—it's one of God's defining attributes (1 John 4:8), and Jesus taught that people would recognize His followers by how they loved each other (John 13:35). Indeed, God's greatest commandment is to love Him, and the second is to love others as much as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:35-40).

The Result:

- Redefinition of godly love
- Neglect of God's truth

But we find a danger when people deify love, defining it the way they want and forcing Scripture through their own definition. They might say that love is a feeling. They might think that love means never correcting a person's sin. They might think that love can ignore what the Bible teaches us about morality and holiness. They might think that love gives people what they want, instead of what they need.

True love, however, is a decision—namely, to reflect God’s goodness to others, even if we must sacrifice to do so. And God’s goodness includes the truth from His Word. Godly love will always include God’s truth. Likewise, godly truth will always include God’s love.

Not every teaching in the Bible is easy to receive, but we must study it all to have a better picture of God’s character. God hates sin, so to be truly loving, we must help others climb out of it.

Focusing on Rules and Laws

Some people consider the rules and regulations in God’s Word to be more important than anything else. They focus on the “do’s” and “don’ts”—even some, like the rituals and civil codes of the Old Testament, that no longer apply today.

The Result:

- Legalism

As we discussed before, one group in Jesus’ day—the Pharisees—exemplified this wrong viewpoint. Although we should obey God’s moral commandments—after all, Jesus taught that our obedience was an important sign of our love for Him (John 14:15)—we can become very pharisaical when we make these rules our primary focus.

This can lead to legalism, which is the idea that we can earn salvation or God’s favor by obeying His commandments and doing good works.

Rules don’t make us more holy. Rather, God gave us the Old Testament Law to teach us that we couldn’t make ourselves holy by trying to follow rules. We cannot save ourselves with rules, nor can we earn God’s favor by following them.

Christ offers us salvation through His sacrifice, and only He can make us more like God. If we accept Christ, we depend on Him alone, not on ourselves.

Focusing on Doing

Still other people tend to focus on great deeds, with the idea that we glorify God primarily through big, showy acts for Him. Such teachers emphasize one or two good works that are most important to them, such as sharing the gospel in a certain way, preaching with a certain style, singing, tithing, attending church faithfully, or other things.

Q: Are these activities important? Should we teach people to serve God in these ways? Do we sin when we do not live our faith and share it with others? *Discuss.*

A: Yes, but we cannot focus solely on Christian duty.

The Result:

- Directionless duty

Christian duty is important, but we should not serve simply for the sake of service. We cannot stay busy for the sake of busy-ness—just to fill our time or make ourselves feel important.

Christ explained to His earthly parents in Luke 2:49 that He was busy with His Father's business. Likewise, we should direct our activity toward His work—reflecting His truth and His love, not puffing ourselves up with our own works, or leading others to believe that they can earn salvation by fulfilling some misguided duty.

Focusing on Being

Finally, some people are convinced that we should focus our attention entirely on the person we want to become.

The Result:

- Self-improvement without sanctification

In the previous lesson, we discussed that God cares more about who we are, but we are mistaken if we think that the Bible is only a tool for self-improvement. God does use His Word to correct us, grow us, and improve us (2 Tim. 3:16), but only to the extent that we read it to discover Him.

Summary

We've looked at six things that, for the most part, we'd want to find in a Christian's life—holiness, an appreciation for the Word, a loving attitude, a respect for God's commands, a faith that animates itself through action, and the desire to improve ourselves.

But we can pursue all of these things in our own power and still not have fellowship with God. Any of these doctrines can lead us to an improper, unbalanced faith if we let them become our sole or primary focus.

The Right Focus

Our focus should rest on God Himself. Through His Word and His Providence, we seek His glory and grace.

Teacher's Note: For the rest of the lesson, you may find it helpful to refer to this study's Master Chart on page 26 of the Student Manual. This illustrates that God's glory is both the cause and the effect of our personal holiness, and we must rely on Him to know, love, and serve Him.

On a Person: God

As we learned in the previous lesson, God called us to holiness (1 Pet. 1:15–16). Jesus Christ provided the way for our holiness (Eph. 5:26–27). And today, God's Spirit perfects that holiness in us (2 Cor. 3:18).

Q: Read **Philippians 3:13–14, 20–21**. Where did Paul rest his hope?

A: In Christ. He sought to know Jesus on Earth (v. 10), and he looked forward to the day he could be with Christ forever and indeed be *like* Christ. Note also 2 Peter 3:18.

To glorify God, we must focus on Him. We must seek Him and know Him, and then trust Him to mold us into a better image of Himself.

Through the Word


Q: How does a Christian “see” the Lord? *Discuss.*

A: The clearest way to see God is through His revelation in the Word.

Note **1 Corinthians 13:12**. The glass, or mirror, in this verse is God’s written Word.

Q: What do you think Paul is trying to see through this mirror? What can be seen dimly now, but will later be clear?

A: Note a similar passage in 2 Corinthians 3:16–18. Here Paul describes how Christ removes the “veil” from our understanding—so that we Christians can now see the glory of God in Scripture, which can then transform us to reflect that same glory. We read to discover God in His Word.

 **Read John 5:39–40.** The Pharisees studied the Old Testament Scriptures, but they failed to see Christ in them, so they refused to accept the life that Christ offered.

The Pharisees concerned themselves with the brushstrokes or the pixels that made up the picture—instead of focusing on the form and meaning of it all. They saw rules and regulations, but not the character of the Person behind them. They looked for eternal life in the words, not in the Person who spoke them.

Through Providence

We also learn about God through the instrument of Providence. We’ll examine this topic more closely in a later lesson, but for now, let’s simply define providence the way Thomas Watson did in *A Body of Divinity*:

“Providence is God’s ordering all issues and events of things, after the counsel of His will, to His own glory.”

The Results of the Right Focus

Let’s consider the results of a focus on God. When we look at Scripture and our circumstances with an eye for His glory, we discover some wonderful things.

A Love for God

The more we see God in His Word, the more we love Him.

Q: Read **1 John 4:19**. Why do we love God?

A: Because He first loved us.

Q: Read **John 17:24–26**. Why did Christ make God’s name known (v. 26)?

A: That God’s love would live in us.

To know God, we must love God. And to love God, we must know God. It’s cyclical—our knowledge of Him grows our love for Him, which then drives us to learn about Him even more. That cycle should continue our entire lives, with our love overflowing out into the lives of other people, as well.

Genuine Holiness and Service

 **Read 1 Corinthians 13, which briefly outlines the characteristics of godly love.**

- Love does not envy the person loved (v. 4).
- Love is not proud (v. 4).
- Love is not rude (v. 5).
- Love is not selfish (v. 5).
- Love is not easily provoked to anger (v. 5).
- Love does not think evil toward the object loved (v. 5).
- Love does not enjoy sin (v. 6).

And as we study the way God shows love to us—the way Christ loved people, the way that the Spirit works in God’s children—we learn to show this same kind of love to others.

Challenge

Let’s review some of the major points from the last two lessons.

Q: What is our purpose as children of God?

A: To glorify God

Q: How do we glorify God?

A: By being holy; by reflecting His love and truth

Q: What leads us to love God more?

A: Our knowledge of Him

Q: What drives us to know God more?

A: Our love for Him

Q: Through what instruments, or means, do we know God?

A: Through His Word and Providence

Q: Who redeemed us to make all this possible?

A: Jesus Christ

Q: Who makes this process work today?

A: The Holy Spirit

In your Student Manual lesson, you’ll study Psalm 119, which is a brilliant passage about David’s attitude toward the Word of God. You’ll learn that David did not read Scripture merely to learn facts and rules. Rather, he loved the Word because it brought him face to face with God.

📖 **Read Psalm 119:1–3.** In this passage, David ties his concept of personal holiness with the desire to seek God. We are holy when we, by *His* grace, keep *His* laws. We follow *His* way. With our whole heart, we seek *Him*.

Rather than seeking holiness or service for their own sake, David sought the Lord Himself. He focused on what he could see of the glory and majesty of His God. And because of that glimpse, we have a psalm that is not only a magnificent description of God's Word, but also an incredible view of the Godhead.

We can see this focus by skimming through the first verses of other psalms:

- Psalm 7:1—The psalmist places his trust in the Lord God.
- Psalm 8:1—The Lord's name is excellent, or majestic, through the entire earth.
- Psalm 9:1—The psalmist praises the Lord with his whole heart. The psalmist shows God's marvelous works.
- Psalm 18:1—The psalmist loves the Lord, who is his strength.
- Psalm 19:1—The heavens declare God's glory.
- Psalm 23:1—The Lord is our shepherd.
- Psalm 25:1—The psalmist lifts up his soul to the Lord, whom he can trust.
- Psalm 27:1—The Lord is our light and salvation; whom will we fear? The Lord is the strength of our lives; of whom will we be afraid?
- Psalm 30:1—The psalmist praises the Lord because God lifted him up.
- Psalm 42:1—The psalmist longs for God like a deer longs for water.

We hope that this study will help lead us to greater holiness, but we will be holy only by being closer to God. Seek God first. Focus your attention on His glory, and ask Him to grow in you a love that reflects His own.

CHAPTER 2

Getting a Right Focus

“God must be the Terminus ad quem, the ultimate end of all actions.”

—Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*

We are sacred beings, not in the sense that we have some sort of mystical power, but that God created us to reflect some higher, spiritual meaning. When He made Adam and Eve, He gave them both His image (Gen. 1:27)—that is, the capacity to in some way reflect His thoughts. We exist as flesh and blood, but through Christ, our spirit can commune with God (John 4:23–24).

Just like a painting is more than colorful brushstrokes on a canvas, we are more than atoms or cells or organs. We represent the design of a good and creative God, and our thoughts of love and grace can mirror His own, at least in a small way.

This spiritual dimension to our being lets us look at the world in a way that animals could not. We see order and beauty in nature and in art. We resonate with the themes of literature, delving into the meaning of language and exploring concepts that could never be captured by the written word. And when we look at other people, we see men and women blessed with the image of God—people we should respect, love, and cherish.

Likewise, when we look at the Bible, we can focus beyond its immediate value to its eternal purpose. We see more than a body of literature—more than a set of stories and rules. We find in Scripture a glimpse of the God who gave us His Word so that we could better know and love Him.

We honor the commandments in the Bible because we honor our holy God. We learn from the stories because we want to learn from their Author. We rejoice in the gospel of grace because we rejoice in its Architect. We do not merely study heroes and villains, prophets and kings, apostles and teachers, but rather the God who used imperfect men and women to showcase His glory.

Student Work

Our Goal

- ✍ Read Ephesians 1:3–6. What happened because God chose us? That is, how did He affect us (v. 4)?

He made us holy and blameless before Him.

- ✍ And what was the ultimate reason for adopting us into His family (v. 6)?

To reveal His grace to us; for His own glory

God sanctified us—that is, He set us apart in holiness—for His own glory, and so that we could share in His grace. Our goal, likewise, should be to magnify His glory.

The Path to Our Goal

Love

Our love for God fuels our desire to be like Him—to *be* holy and then reflect His holiness with our actions.

- ✍ Read 1 John 4:7–12. According to these verses, how did God show love to us (vv. 9–10)?

By sending Christ to take the punishment for our sin

- ✍ What should be our response to God’s love for us (v. 11)?

To love each other

- ✍ And as we show our love for God by loving other people, what two things does God do for us (v. 12)?

He dwells in us, and He perfects His love in us.

As we love the same way that God loves us, He will work in our hearts.

We see the same principle between a married couple. As they love each other over many years, they can gradually think, act, and sometimes even look alike.

The Word

In the life of David, we find an example of a person who . . .

- Studied the Word
- Saw God in the Word
- Grew to love God
- And therefore sought to be holy like God
- And then serve God

While David was far from perfect, the attitude he demonstrated in Psalm 119 serves as an excellent model for us today.

The Object of His Focus

✍ In Psalm 119:1–3, how does David describe those who are holy, and therefore blessed?

- v. 1—They are blameless and undefiled as they walk in the way.
They walk **in the law of the Lord**.
- v. 2—They keep **His statutes, or testimonies**.
They seek **God** with all their heart.
- v. 3—They do no **wrong**.
But they instead **walk in God's way**.

✍ Whom must we follow to be holy? **God**

✍ What do you think it means to seek God?

Answers will vary.

The Method of His Focus

✍ How did David “see” the Lord? Verses 11, 15, and 16 suggest four ways. Read each of those verses, then look at the following methods of study. Write a phrase from the psalm that most closely matches each method.

1. Memorizing the Word:

Hiding the Word in our hearts

2. Meditating on the Word:

Meditating on God's precepts

3. Enjoying the Word:

Delighting in God's statutes

4. Reviewing verses for memory's sake:

Not forgetting God's Word

We do not love God simply by studying the Word. We study God in His Word so that we love Him even more.

✍ What other—less helpful—reasons might people have to study the Bible?
Answers will vary.

✍ Can some good come from this kind of study? **Yes / Possibly**

✍ But did God give us His Word primarily for those reasons? **No**

✍ Read verse 18. What does David ask God to help him see?

Wondrous things from God's law, or Scripture

Some of the later verses give us an idea of what these were. Read each verse below, and record what David wanted to see.

- v. 27b – **God's wondrous works**
- v. 41 – **God's love, mercy, and salvation**
- v. 52 – **God's laws, or judgment**

The Result of His Focus

As David meditated on what he saw of God, he grew to love God more. In each of the following verses, what part of God's work or character did David see?

- v. 62 – **God's righteous laws, or judgment**
- v. 68 – **God is good and does good**
- v. 73 – **God made us, and He can give us understanding**
- v. 77 – **God is compassionate and merciful**
- v. 88 – **God is loving and kind**

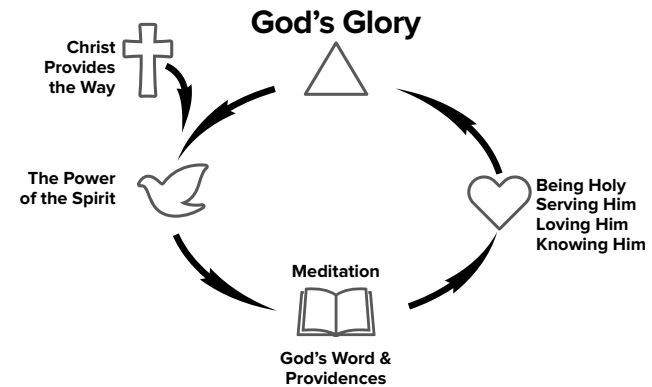
This love in turn drove David to confess the following:

- v. 94 – I am **Yours**.
- v. 125 – I am **Your servant**.

As we focus on God in His Word, He grows our love for Him, which in turn fuels our desire to be like Him. And as He makes us more holy, we serve Him and magnify His glory to others.

We call this process of increasing holiness *sanctification*.

Notes from the Teacher's Lesson



The Results of a Wrong Focus

Wrong Focus	Common Result
Holiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependence on feelings Neglect of evangelism
The Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dead orthodoxy ortho / right + dox / teaching
Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redefinition of godly love Neglect of God's truth
Rules and Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legalism —dependence on our own works for salvation and holiness

Wrong Focus	Common Result
Doing	• Directionless duty _____
Being	• Self-improvement without sanctification _____

The Right Focus

- On a Person: **God** _____ (Phil. 3:20–21)
- Through the **Word** _____ (1 Cor. 13:12)
- Through **providence** _____

The Results of the Right Focus

- A love for **God** _____
- Genuine **holiness and service** _____

Application Activities

1. Read the first verse of every psalm listed below, and record on a separate sheet everything mentioned about God. Be sure to include the reference next to each truth. Then find at least five more psalms that open with a truth about God, and list those, as well.

Psalms 7, 8, 9, 18, 19, 23, 25, 27, 30, and 42.

2. Read Philippians 3:4–15, and then answer the following questions about the passage.
 - A. In what things did Paul take pride before he accepted Christ?
 - B. Where did he focus after he was redeemed (vv. 8, 10)?
 - C. Toward what goal did he strive after his salvation (vv. 13–14)?
 - D. What do you think Paul meant by what he wrote in verse 15?
3. Jesus Christ sought to do the will of His Father (John 5:30). Based on your knowledge of the life and ministry of Christ, describe briefly how He pursued this mission in each of the following situations. Cite an example from Scripture for each item.
 - A. When He was angry
 - B. When He ate and fellowshiped with others
 - C. When He faced temptation
 - D. When He heard about others' misfortune
 - E. When He heard about others' blessings
 - F. When He prayed

In what ways can you better follow Christ's example?

Knowing God

“To glorify God is to have God-admiring thoughts; to esteem Him most excellent, and search for diamonds in this rock only.”

—Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*


Lesson Objectives:

- To describe and illustrate what the Scriptures mean—and do not mean—by the call to know God
- To note the limits of our knowledge of God
- To challenge students to develop a personal relationship with God in true and loving fellowship

In the previous lessons, we’ve covered the following truths:

- God calls us to be holy.
- Christ redeemed us to be holy, and the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify us.
- To be holy, we must know God and love God.

All of these points are important, but knowing God is the initial step. As we seek Him, He develops a greater love and holiness within us.

 **Read Jeremiah 9:23–24.** In this passage, God warns us against being proud or boastful of three things:

- Those who are wise shouldn’t boast in their wisdom (v. 23)
- Those who are strong shouldn’t boast in their strength (v. 23)
- Those who are wealthy shouldn’t boast in their wealth (v. 23)

Wisdom, strength, and wealth are all good gifts from God, but we shouldn’t look at them as examples of our own glory. If you’re intelligent, talented, or financially secure, be thankful, not prideful.

Don’t glory in any of these things. As we read in verse 24, we should revel instead in something else—our knowledge and understanding of God, who exercises love, justice, and righteousness in this world. Those are the things He delights in, and those are the things we should delight in.

Q: What are we talking about when we use the phrase *knowing God*? A special kind of emotion? Shivers down our backs? A dreamy, floating, out-of-body feeling? Do we hear a voice? See a vision or flashing lights? *Discuss.*

Knowing God—What It Isn't

Q: How many of you know the president (or prime minister) of this country? Most, if not all of us, know the name of this person. Some of us might be able to explain this person's positions on social or political issues. And a few might even be able to tell us this person's life story. But it's unlikely that any of us know this leader personally—enough, say, to invite ourselves over for dinner or to buy the person exactly the right present for Christmas.

Here's the key distinction—knowing someone is different from knowing *about* someone. You could name all the books and themes of the Bible. You could outline the gospel backward and forward. You could list and describe every known attribute of God. You could memorize all 150 psalms. You could write a brilliant essay on the interplay between divine sovereignty and humanity's will. But if you have no relationship with God—if you haven't humbled yourself, approached Him in faith, and accepted the sacrifice of Christ for your sins—you do not *know* God.

Knowledge About God

Again, this is a distinction that many people do not grasp. We find plenty of examples in Scripture of people who knew about God but did not take the time to know God.

📖 **Read John 5:39–40 again.** It was impossible for the Pharisees to read and study the Old Testament without learning at least some truth about God, but when they saw God made manifest in the flesh—Jesus Christ Himself—they rejected Him. Why? Because they didn't know God well enough to recognize Him walking, talking, teaching, preaching, healing, serving, loving, weeping, dying, and rising again *right in front of them*.

If they had only taken the time to know Christ, they would have known God. As Christ taught in John 14:6–7, He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to God the Father, except through Jesus. If we've seen Jesus, we've seen God.

But simply knowing about God does not mean that we know God.

- We can know that God is holy—yet still not reflect that holiness in our lives.
- We can know that God is powerful—yet still not acknowledge His sovereignty.
- We can know that God is merciful—yet still not take refuge in the safety He offers.
- We can know that God is gracious—yet still depend on rules and regulations to save us.
- We can know that God responds to prayer—yet still not cast our cares and concerns on Him.
- We can know that God offers wisdom—yet still not ask Him for wisdom through His Word.
- We can know that God gives good gifts—yet still not see His hand in our lives.
- We can know that God is wondrous and majestic—yet still not delight in His glory.

Knowledge About Good Works

Likewise, it's not enough to know about what God says we should do. Righteous works, for their own sake, mean nothing.

📖 **Read 2 Timothy 3:1–5—and note especially verse 5.** There will always be people who can make a show of fake godliness, but they will deny its purpose and its root in God's own nature.

We act in a right and godly manner to reflect God's character, not to earn His favor, to act important, to make our lives easier, or to impress others. Good works may result in those things—intentionally or not—but those shouldn't be the reasons behind our choices.

Of course, Christian culture in the West may seem to have refined good works to a fine art. We can find no shortage of books that tell us how to . . .

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| • Pray | • Memorize Scripture | • Exercise spiritual gifts |
| • Study | • Prepare sermons | • Manage depression |
| • Have a happy marriage | • Share our faith | • Live |
| • Raise children | • Tithe | • Die |

Teachers have refined and polished the techniques of “Christian living” to a fine luster. But are these techniques so fine that we no longer need God? Can we present the gospel in so clear and persuasive a way that we no longer need the Spirit to move people to repent? Are our church programs so effective that we don't need God to sanctify us?

We can teach the best lessons, preach the best sermons, and live the best lives, but unless we rely on God to do the work, our efforts are wasted. Like the house described in Psalm 127:1, unless God builds it, those who labor on their own do so in vain. We rest on the rock of God's truth, not on the shifting sand of our own sinful frailty (Matt. 7:24–27).

You can read an entire library of biographies and books by godly people—and you probably should. But they can give us only second-hand knowledge of God. It's one thing to eat a feast and quite another to listen to others tell you about a feast. Too many people today have only heard about God's blessing, while rarely tasting His mercy and grace for themselves.

We must know more than ideas about God or rules for how we should live. We must seek God and know Him.

Perfect Knowledge of God

This goes without saying, but we should be clear—to know God does not mean to know *everything* about God.

📖 **Read Isaiah 55:9.** God's thoughts are immeasurably higher than ours.

📖 **Read Romans 11:33.** We cannot hope to fully understand God's wisdom, knowledge, and judgment.

📖 **Read Ephesians 3:19.** We cannot even grasp the height of Christ's love for us.

So much remains to be answered. So much of God's glory rests above and beyond our capacity to understand. But like a child who holds her father's hand, with only a partial understanding of his love for her, we can trust our Heavenly Father's love for us, until the day we see Him face-to-face, and our faith becomes sight (1 Cor. 13:12).

Knowing God—What It Is

A Personal Relationship (*Matt. 11:27*)

In our natural, sinful state, we have cut ourselves off from God. He is holy, and we reject that holiness with our sin. We live in darkness. We have no access to God, no means of reconciling ourselves to Him, no way to know Him—except through Christ.

Through Jesus, we see a path into the light. If we follow Him, He brings us along. If we see ourselves as the sinners we are, if we accept Christ's sacrifice for us, if we trust Him to be our Savior, He will guide us to God. He will make us joint-heirs of God's blessing, adopted children of the Heavenly Father. He will give us—through no merit or effort of our own—a relationship with a holy God, who now sees our sins washed away by the blood of the perfect sacrifice.

This establishes a relationship. It is the first way in which we know God. And if you have never taken this step, nothing in the rest of this study will be of any good to you. Knowledge *about* God will mean little if you do not see His hand moving in your life.


A Personal Fellowship (*2 Cor. 3:18*)

But now that you have this relationship—now that you have the grace, peace, and liberty found only through Christ—then what? Do you now know God as much as you'll ever know Him on Earth?

Certainly not. Imagine if a married couple adopted a boy who was about twelve or thirteen. At that age, he might have a number of friends, and he's developed his own personality, and perhaps a habit of living on his own. But wouldn't it be weird if, after being adopted by his new mother and father, he refused to get to know them or spend any time with them? What would that indicate about his gratitude or love for them?

Or consider a man and a woman that meet, get to know each other for a while, and then decide to marry. Wouldn't it be weird if the husband, right after the wedding vows, decides he no longer wants to spend any time with his wife?

When God establishes a relationship with us, that's just the beginning of a long and glorious journey to know Him better.

 **Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.** As we seek God more and more throughout our lives, His Spirit will transform us into a better reflection of Him. We do not cause this change—nor do we earn this change—but it occurs as we draw closer to God in love and fellowship (James 4:8).

When we fellowship with others, we spend time with them often. We take time to know what they like and don't like. We know what they think and why they think that way. We know how they respond to different situations. We know that we can talk with them about things and that they will offer us advice when we need it. We're sensitive to each

other's feelings. We enjoy each other's company. We have a mutual fellowship, a two-way relationship.

Good relationships take time and work. Even people who are born into a family have to spend many years going through a variety of personal experiences before they can know and appreciate their parents. A small child might recognize her father now, but unfortunately, if the father were to leave or die, the child might grow up to say that she never really knew her father. If she wanted to feel some connection with him, she would need to go through his personal effects—pictures, videos, writing—or talk to others who knew him.


Q: Since the time Christ redeemed you into God's family, have you sought a more intimate knowledge of God? Are you closer to Him in knowledge, character, and passion?

Challenge

 **Read Hosea 6:6.**

Q: What did God want from His people?

A: Not sacrifices and offerings—but a love and a knowledge of Him. Our relationship with God does not depend on rituals, but rather an openness and intimacy with Him. We seek Him because He sought us. We obey Him and reflect His holiness, not because we think that it will save us, but because we delight in His character.

 **Read Matthew 7:21–23.** Not everyone who claims to follow God is actually a follower of God. Not everyone who mimics godliness actually has a relationship with Christ. And in the day of judgment, only those who know God—and who are personally, relationally known by God—will stand.

 **Read Philippians 3:7–10.**

Q: What did Paul value more than his former status and accomplishments?

A: The tremendous privilege of knowing Jesus Christ, his Lord. In comparison, everything else seemed like rubbish. Only by knowing Christ do we find salvation, righteousness, and eternal life with God.

Why do we study Scripture? Why do we listen to the teaching of godly Christians? Why do we even call ourselves Christians?

Because we seek God in faith, and having found Him in Christ, we abide in a relationship of love, truth, and holiness.

Seek to know God, not just things *about* Him. Seek His hand in the world around you. Seek His character in the Scriptures. And recognize His love and grace in your own life. Rest in the knowledge that He loves you, and that His plan for you is good and sure.

CHAPTER 3

Knowing God

“To glorify God is to have God-admiring thoughts, to esteem Him most excellent, and search for diamonds in this rock only.”

—Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*

The last chapter challenged you to know God. But you might ask now, “Isn’t God too big, too powerful, and too complicated for anyone to know Him?”

And you’d be right. No one could ever fully grasp the enormity of God’s character and power. But as A. W. Tozer, a twentieth century preacher and author, wrote in his book *The Pursuit of God*:

To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction . . . but He remains personally unknown to the individual. “He must be,” they say, “therefore we believe He is.” Others do not go even so far as this; they know of Him only by hearsay. They have never bothered to think the matter out for themselves, but have heard about Him from others, and have put belief in Him into the back of their minds along with the various odds and ends that make up their total creed. To many others God is but an ideal, another name for goodness, or beauty, or truth; or He is law, or life, or the creative impulse back of the phenomena of existence.

These notions about God are many and varied, but they who hold them have one thing in common: they do not know God in personal experience. The possibility of intimate acquaintance with Him has not entered their minds. While admitting His existence they do not think of Him as knowable in the sense that we know things or people.

Christians, to be sure, go further than this, at least in theory. Their creed requires them to believe in the personality of God, and they have been taught to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven.” Now personality and fatherhood carry with them the idea of the possibility of personal acquaintance. This is admitted, I say, in theory, but for millions of Christians, nevertheless, God is no more real than He is to the non-Christian. They go through life trying to love an ideal and be loyal to a mere principle.

Over against all this cloudy vagueness stands the clear scriptural doctrine that God can be known in personal experience. A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree of immediacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience. The same terms are used to express the knowledge of God as are used to express knowledge of physical things. “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces.” “My sheep hear My voice.” “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” These are but four of countless such passages from the Word of God. And more important than any proof text is the fact that the whole import of the Scripture is toward this belief.

If God did not want us to know Him personally and intimately, why then did He give us the Scriptures? As we read in Romans 1:18–20, people can see the evidence of a Creator within Creation—isn’t that enough?

We see in the world around us a glimpse of God’s power and authority, but those concepts lack direction or depth without the specific revelation of God’s Word. In the Bible, we see not only God’s work, but also the reasoning and purpose behind it. We see not only His might, but also His love—and the hope of a future with Him.

As Tozer wrote in the preface of his book:

Sound Bible exposition is an imperative must in the Church of the living God. Without it no church can be a New Testament church in any strict meaning of that term. But exposition may be carried on in such way as to leave the hearers devoid of any true spiritual nourishment whatever. For it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God Himself, and unless and until the hearers find God in personal experience, they are not the better for having heard the truth. The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts.

That is the goal of this chapter—and indeed this entire study: that you will know God and delight in His presence. As you do so, you'll find that He will transform your thoughts and your inner being to better reflect Him—which will lead you to seek Him even more.

Student Work

Knowing God Involves a Personal Relationship

To truly know people, we must regularly interact with them. We learn not only by hearing what they have to say about themselves, but also by seeing them react and respond to various situations. We see them when they're happy, when they're sad, when they're angry—in every instance learning more about how they view the world and what exactly they value most.

And for us to say that we have a relationship, we must develop a *mutual* acquaintance with the other person—a two-way, face-to-face friendship. Friends are friends because they open up their thoughts and dreams to each other, then go through life with a shared awareness of each other's companionship.

As the teacher's lesson for this chapter pointed out, it is therefore important not only that we know God, but also that *He knows us*. Of course, being

omniscient, God already knows everything about everyone. But He does not have a Father-child relationship with those who reject Christ.

- ✍ Read Matthew 7:21–23. According to these verses, is everyone who calls Jesus Lord actually part of His kingdom? **No.** _____
- ✍ Can people prove that they follow God by performing miracles or good works? **No.** _____
- ✍ What does God tell these people at the final judgment?
I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers. _____

This gives rise to a question: “Whom does God know?”

- ✍ Read John 14:6–10. How must we approach God the Father?
Through Christ; by knowing Jesus _____
- ✍ Who was the source of everything Jesus said on Earth?
God the Father _____

To know Christ is to know God. He was and is completely, entirely *God in the flesh*, the living definition of love and truth. Only those who truly know Jesus truly know God.

God Is Holy

We face many challenges in knowing God. He is not only invisible, having chosen to reveal Himself through faith, but He is also holy, as we learned back in Chapter 1.

Read 1 Timothy 6:15–16. Here we find a terrific picture of God's holiness and transcendence. Note in particular verse 16. God's holiness is so fierce and pure that humans, in their physical, bodily form, could not even come close to His glory. This matches what we find in Exodus 33:20, when God told Moses that no one could see His face and survive. God instead revealed Himself in the Old Testament with signs of fire, wind, and smoke—supernatural events that communicated His power, but obscured the holiness that people could not yet know.

Humans Are Sinful

To complicate the matter further, we are by nature sinful. Our sin represents the opposite of holiness. Holiness is the manifest character of God, whereas sin is a rejection of everything He says is good and right. God's holiness does not allow sin anywhere close to it. The "anti-holy" cannot approach the holy, or the holy would no longer be so. God is God in part because no sin exists in His exalted presence.

- ✍ Read Isaiah 6:1–7. Why did the prophet Isaiah despair when he saw the throne of God?

Because he was a sinful person, as were his people.

But God in His grace forgave Isaiah, purging him of his sin (v. 7) and giving him a chance to declare God's message to His people.

In our sin, we could no more endure a moment in the exalted presence of God than a piece of tissue paper could survive a minute in a blazing furnace.

Christ Is the Mediator

Christ serves as the bridge to our holy God.

- ✍ Note 1 Timothy 2:5–6. What does verse 5 call Christ? **A Mediator**

- ✍ Look up this word in a dictionary. How is the term defined?

Answers will vary. A mediator serves as a go-between for two parties during an attempt to resolve a disagreement.

- ✍ According to verse 6, how then did Christ serve in this role?

He gave Himself up as a ransom for all.

- ✍ He sacrificed Himself to pay the price for our sin. According to Colossians 1:20–22, He did this to reconcile us to God—and then present us to God in what way (v. 22)?

Holy, blameless, and above reproach

When we accept Christ as our Savior, He restores our relationship with God, bridging the chasm caused by sin and enabling us to know God—imperfectly, for now, yet still intimately, like a small child can know and trust a parent.

Knowing God Involves Personal Fellowship

As the teacher's lesson explained, Christ gives us a relationship with God, but that is just the first step in knowing Him. A person born or adopted into a family is just as much a family member as anyone else—yet it takes years of personal fellowship for those people to truly know and love each other well. An infant does not know his parents as well as a teenager, and a teenager does not know his parents as well as an adult who has endured the same kind of struggles and hardship.

In the same way, we can say that, right after the moment of our salvation, we know God. But it takes years of study, years of answered prayer, years of grace through hardship, and years of delight and communion before that knowledge grows up, flowers, and bears fruit.

How then do we grow in our knowledge of God? Well, in one sense, He does the growing *for* us. Remember, just as we can't save ourselves, neither can we make ourselves holy. But God also does not force us to fellowship with Him. He reveals Himself to us as we choose to abide in Him, and that abiding can include the following activities.

Through a Meaningful Prayer Life

In the Old Testament, God made His presence known to the people of Israel by a cloud of smoke that rested over His tabernacle. The same kind of sign appeared in some of the temples that followed in later years, but it was hidden behind a thick fabric veil in a room called the Holy of Holies. The Law prescribed how and when a priest could enter this chamber—usually just once a year, and only after rituals that symbolized deep purification.

But when Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman in John 4, He explained that people would soon worship God directly—not in a temple, but in spirit and in truth. They could commune with God wherever they were, and God's presence would reveal itself wherever His Spirit rested in the hearts of His children.

That's why, when Christ died on the cross, the veil in Herod's Jerusalem Temple ripped open, from top to bottom. No longer would God interact with humanity merely through rituals and symbols, but through direct, personal fellowship.

- ✍ Read Hebrews 10:19–22. Because of Christ's sacrifice, where can we now go (v. 19)? **Into the holiest, or holy place**
- ✍ And how does verse 22 describe the purification that allows us to enter this place?
Answers will vary by translation. We have a true, sincere heart, full of faith; with hearts cleansed of a guilty or evil conscience, with bodies washed with pure water.

What once was represented by physical purification is now a spiritual reality for all Christians. Christ has washed away our sin, and we can draw close to God by speaking directly with Him.

- ✍ Read Hebrews 4:14–16. How does this passage say we can approach God's throne of grace? **With boldness / confidence**
- ✍ And as we approach His throne in prayer, what does He give us?
Mercy and grace, which help us in times of need

Through prayer we know God more intimately. As we unload the burdens of our hearts, and as He responds to our prayers with the help we need, we learn more of His kindness, grace, and mercy.

Do you approach God with boldness, confident that He will provide you everything you need (Phil. 4:19)? Or do you speak to Him out of duty or obligation, as if He were an aging relative you visited out of routine, rather than love? Do you understand how much you need Him—how much you depend on this relationship for your spiritual well-being? Do you enjoy Him, or do you harbor unconfessed sin in your heart?

Through a God-Centered Reading of the Bible

In previous chapters, we learned that we do not merely study the Word—but God through His Word. When we seek Him, He draws close to us (James 4:8). Through reading His Word we see His power, love, omniscience, faithfulness, and a thousand other qualities and attributes, some of which we'll examine in later chapters.

Through Difficulties

Psalm 119:65–72 illustrates the goodness of God even in difficult times of life.

- ✍ What was David's condition *before* he was afflicted—that is, before he endured suffering (v. 67)? **He went astray.**
- ✍ What did his affliction cause him to do (v. 67, 71)?
Keep God's Word; learn His statutes
- ✍ And what did he learn from the Scriptures (v. 68)?
God is good, and does good.

As Christ taught His disciples in John 9:1–3, not every trouble we face in this life results from our sin. Some troubles, like the persecution faced by David, exist to encourage us to depend on God, who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). We need Him always, regardless of whether we think we're having a rough time.

But in all things, we can be confident that God is working for our good (Rom. 8:28). That doesn't mean we seek out trouble for its own sake. As Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:2, we should prefer a quiet and peaceful life. And we shouldn't needlessly endure abuse, either. As stewards of God's image in us, we should remove ourselves from people who cause us serious harm. Like David, we should trust God and honor authorities, but we should also dodge javelins (1 Sam. 18:11), make known the dangers to other authorities, and flee to a safer place with people we can trust.

And like David, we can record and recount God's work in our lives. Here a notebook or journal can be helpful, one that includes struggles, requests, and

examples of God's faithfulness. Such a record can, over the years, remind us and teach us of God's goodness.

Challenge

What is your *relationship* to God? Do you still reject Christ, or have you accepted His sacrifice for you? If you have not yet depended on Jesus for your salvation, you can do so now. Simply trust what He did on the cross as payment for your sins—sins that you should now reject. And recognizing that you can do nothing to save yourself, ask Christ to redeem you into God's family.

What about your *fellowship* with God? Do you seek Him in His Word? Do you listen to what He says? Do you think about what you find, carefully, critically, and with an attitude of devotion?

Do you depend on God through prayer? Or do you allow sin to distract you (Ps. 66:18)? Confess your sin, and abide with God.

Notes from the Teacher's Lesson

Knowing God—What It Isn't

- Knowledge about **God** _____ (John 5:39–40)
- Knowledge about **good works** _____ (2 Tim. 3:1–5)
- Perfect knowledge of **God** _____ (Isa. 55:9; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:19)

Knowing God—What It Is

- A personal **relationship** _____ (Matt. 11:27)
- A personal **fellowship** _____ (2 Cor. 3:18)

Application Activities

1. Read Chapter 4 of Tozer's *The Pursuit of God*. Using Tozer's ideas as a starting point, define in your own words what it means to be "otherworldly." How does such a mindset affect our hopes, thoughts, and actions? Are there drawbacks to such a perspective? Write three or more paragraphs.
2. Write a short essay explaining how we can know God better through each of the following:
 - A. Praying
 - B. Studying Scripture
 - C. Hearing the Word taught and preached
 - D. Interacting with fellow believers
 - E. Enduring hardship
3. List three things you have wondered about God. What doesn't make sense? What don't you understand? Keep these items in your notes, and as you learn more about God throughout this study, jot down any verses or insights that help you understand Him better.

God is bigger than our questions and our doubts. The limitations in our understanding do not trouble Him—nor should they trouble us too much. But we can still seek Him in His Word, learn from the insights of mature believers, and trust Him to reveal His wisdom in His timing.

4. Choose one of the following, and explain how such a focus could corrupt our study of the Bible. What are the dangers of such a perspective?
 - "I'm looking for verses to prove my ideas correct."
 - "I want to learn more about King David. He's the perfect role model for me."
 - "I'm looking for verses that tell me the exact words I should pray."