

King's Online Bible School
Doctrine 101: Learning about God

Unknowable but Knowable (adapted from Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrines*)

1. The Existence of God

a. Humanity's inner sense of God (Rom 1:18-25)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them (Rom 1:18-19).

Every human being has an inner sense that there is a God. Everyone is accountable, whatever their background, however they may have been raised, and whatever they have been told. "They are without excuse." No one can complain that there is insufficient evidence and that they had no way of knowing that God exists.

Every human being who has ever lived has known there is a God. But this is knowledge that some willfully reject because they are unwilling to submit to Him. The Bible describes those who say that God does not exist as fools (Ps 14:1).

This inner awareness gets stronger and clearer as we become Christians, but it is there in every person in a way that has to be purposely ignored or rejected by those who deny His existence.

b. Evidence in nature (Rom 1:20; Ps 19:1-2)

The things that have been made reveal God's power, His attributes and His Deity.

Wherever we look in nature, we see the evidence of creation by a Person Who has amazing wisdom and Who possesses the power to create and sustain matter and life in complex and intricate systems He has designed.

But man himself, made in the image of God, is the most powerful witness to God's existence. Every time we meet a human being we should, if we are thinking correctly, see that such an intricate, skilful, communicative, living creature must have been created by an infinite, all-wise Creator.

Not everyone sees this evidence. It is there, but Paul explains that not everyone sees it because they suppress this knowledge. In their minds they have excluded this way of looking at things because they want to live apart from God.

c. Evidence in Scripture (Gen 1:1)

The Bible does not begin with a list of proofs that God exists. It simply introduces Him as the One Who always has been. "In the beginning God" (Gen 1:1). For everything and everyone else it was the beginning. For God it was not. He is the necessary Personal Cause for all other existence: All of life that we know is constant proof that He is. The Bible teaches us to be aware of the evidence of His presence and His rule throughout the created universe.

Evidence of God's existence is found throughout Scripture. The Bible is a record of God's revelation of Himself. It reports what He does and preserves the words He has spoken.

If we trust the Bible, then we know with certainty that God exists and we have access to all the truth He has revealed about Himself. Obviously, the Bible is able to communicate far more knowledge about God and much more specific understanding than nature can.

2. The Incomprehensibility of God

God is "incomprehensible" in the sense that he is unable to be fully understood. Recognizing His incomprehensibility does not suggest that He is unable to be understood at all. God is knowable, but He is only knowable to a certain point.

a. God (being infinite) cannot be fully known by man (being finite).

We cannot even imagine infinity. God is so big that human minds are not able to understand or grasp His immensity. God is so infinite that Only He, in His infinite capacity to understand, can understand and know Himself completely.

b. We can never fully understand God

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.
His greatness is unsearchable (Ps 145:3).

Paul says the same thing about God's thoughts and actions. We cannot gain complete understanding of them or discover them all.

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Rom 11:33)

c. We can never understand fully any single thing about God.

The verses above single out specific aspects of God that are beyond our ability to fathom (*e.g.*, greatness, understanding, knowledge, wisdom). We know something about God's power, love, wisdom, *etc.*, but we can never know even one of these attributes exhaustively.

We know enough and we grow in our knowledge of God. But we will never know it all. Even in eternity we will not know everything about Him because, while we will live forever, we will still be finite and He will still be infinite. The finite can never reach that far! But we will have all eternity to come to know more and more about Him. And we will never run out of further truths to know and understand about Him and the riches of Who He is.

3. The Knowability of God

Even though we cannot know God exhaustively, we can and do know true things about God. Even if those things that we know are incomplete, whatever He has revealed to us is perfectly true.

Most things in life are this way. We have limited knowledge but, nonetheless, accurate knowledge about them.

We must realize that there is an important difference between the things we can learn about God and the things we can know about this world and about our lives in this world. We can only know about God because he has chosen to reveal Himself. We only know that which he has chosen to reveal. This is the importance of the Bible. It is the record of His disclosures and His revelation to man.

a. The Bible tells us about God, and all that it tells us is true.

For example, Scripture tells us that God is love (1 Jn 4:8), that He is light (1 Jn 1:5), and that He is righteous (Rom 3:26). It reveals more understanding about each of these attributes, and His revelation presents accurate knowledge and understanding.

Even those who have spent their adult lives studying Scripture have not come anywhere near having complete knowledge of any of the things God has revealed. One of our joys and duties as His children is to explore and discover more and more of what He wants us to know about Him already while we are living here in this world.

Along with that comes another important responsibility. As we add to our knowledge and understanding of God, His nature, His ways, His will, and His life, we must always take care to ensure that our way of thinking about His truth fits what the Bible is saying.

b. We can know God Himself, not simply facts about God.

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only True God and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

The Christian life is a personal relationship with God, which is a far greater privilege than knowing about God. We speak to Him in prayer; He speaks to us in His Word; we commune with Him in His presence; we sing His praise; and we sense Him personally living in us, being present among us, and acting around us.

God not only reveals truth to us increasingly. He desires a closer, deeper personal relationship with each of us. His Spirit dwells in us to make our knowing Him and our knowing about Him an ever growing impartation and experience of eternal life.