

# How to Know God



Norm Geisler | Chris Haun

## *We can Know*

Can a creature really know its Creator? Perhaps that is like wondering whether a dab of paint on a canvas can know its Painter or if a speck of clay in a sculpture can know the Potter. But we mortals are very different from paint and clay. We have minds that wonder, ponder, learn, and understand.

When a skeptic asserts “we can’t know anything,” or “we cannot know anything about God,” we can know that they claim too much. In claiming to know with certainty that nothing can be known with certainty, they undermines the validity of their own claim. Yes, it is *possible* to know something about God.

## *Creation implies Creator*

We can know that if that our universe had a beginning it must have also had a Beginner. Creation always implies a Creator. Effects always have causes. We should know that nothing cannot produce something. From the fact of creation we can know that our Creator possesses an unfathomable amount of power. The fact of

creation also lets us know that the Creator is not just a powerful, impersonal force but is a thinking Being that made a conscious choice between creating and not creating.

### *Design implies Designer*

As we learn more about our amazing universe, spiral arm galaxy, solar system, planet, the cell, the code in the double-helix, atoms, and the quantum world, the designs we recognize points to the intelligence of the Designer. It requires a tremendous amount of faith to believe that the designs we see everywhere are the result of random, accidental, chaotic, mindless, unthinking, uncaring, purposeless happenstance. We can know that our Creator is not a purposeless force but a purposeful Being.

### *Only a Mind can create minds*

Clearly we were created as persons; we think, make choices, communicate, feel, and care. The fact that we were endowed with these abilities is a proof that our Creator is also a personal Being. Causes cannot give to

their effects what they themselves do not have to give. The impersonal and mindless forces that govern our world could not invent us if they would, nor would they if they could. It's more reasonable to believe that a great Mind created minds than to think that non-mind could or would create either minds or matter. As we begin to realize that it takes a personal being to choose to create our world and beings like us, the tantalizing possibility arises that we can go beyond merely knowing about God and into knowing God in a person-to-person kind of relationship!

*He has not been silent*

Some will object to this saying that God surely must be too holy, good, big, different, spiritual, and transcendent to communicate with us puny mortals. And, if so, we cannot successfully reach out to him. But what if God decided to reach out to us? What if he took the initiative to break the silence and make himself known to us in some way? Surely if he wanted to he could find one or more ways to at communicate some truths about himself to us. Others might object that we live in a “closed universe” that God cannot reach into it, speak into, or even

affect indirectly. However, the one who is great enough to create a world can communicate with the world.

Over the last few thousand years, hundreds of men and women have claimed that they heard from God and speak for him. It's an easy claim to make. But it's not an easy claim to substantiate. Very few prophets had their claims authenticated by something unequivocally supernatural. We can know a prophet speaks for God if he or she exhibits a clear knowledge of the future (that only God could know) or performs miraculous acts (that only God's power could perform). The Bible is a collection of books written by prophets and apostles who were authenticated in these ways. One prophet who predicted the future in flawless detail many times also told us that knowing God is possible and valuable:

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Paul, another one of God's few messengers who was vindicated by miraculous signs and knowledge of the future, indicated that God did provide us with some clues in nature that point to him (2 Corinthians 12:12). Even the rain and sunshine that produces the food we enjoy every day is evidence that God cares about us.

. . . you should turn from these vain things [idols] to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

Acts 14:15-17

### *Why we don't know*

Paul also said that we *should* already know several things about God by considering the world he created. The problem is not that God's fingerprints are not left all over creation; the problem is that we tend to suppress that knowledge. We replace the infinite God with finite things. We replace the uncreated Creator with creatures. Instead of seeking God and thanking God, we turn away from him and try to forget him.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Romans 1:19-21

### *Seek and find*

We encourage you to take the first step towards knowing God. Turn towards him and begin seeking him diligently.

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:13

And he made from one man every nation of mankind . . . that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:26-27

Anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

### *The problem of sin*

As we begin a sincere search for God, we realize there is more than distance between us. The moral obstacle of sin looms large. We need forgiveness of our sins before we can begin to enjoy a friendly relationship with God.

Behold, the days are coming . . . when I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

This dilemma should not surprise us. From the sense of right and wrong inside us all, we can and should know that our Creator is concerned about the decisions we make. God is the moral being who created us as moral beings. He is the one who encoded that intuitive sense of “treat others as you would have them treat you” deeply into us. Knowing that he sets standards for righteousness

and justice, we can expect that he cares about those standards. Moreover, knowing that none of us have always done and said what we know we should have, it takes no stretch of the mind to think that we may need to dare to hope for clemency and forgiveness from God.

Before we can begin to enjoy a friendly relationship with God, we need to come to terms with the fact that, from God's standpoint, we are enemies of God, sinners, strangers, and exiles. We are not good in his sight.

No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.

Romans 3:10-12

### *The solution*

The good news is that God already opened the door to reconciliation, forgiveness, and the possibility of beginning a personal relationship with him!

. . . while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.

Romans 5:10

. . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. . . . We

implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from [obeying] the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.

Philippians 3:7-11

### *Knowing God by knowing Jesus*

God made himself known to us not just by leaving a witness for us to ponder, and not just by speaking to and through a few prophets and apostles. He made himself known to us by sending his Son to becoming one of us!

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact

imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Hebrews 1:1-3

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works [miracles]. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. . . Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest [make known] yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

John 14:6-11, 22-23 (emphasis added)

### *Accept the free gift*

Some might naturally think that if the obstacle is our lack of righteousness that the way to remove the obstacle of sin is to try harder to become righteous. We think that if we can just stop doing some of the bad things we do and start doing more good that somehow this

“cleaning up our act” will make us more acceptable to God. But the opposite is true. Only God can clean us up. Only God can deal with the problem of sin. God offers us his righteousness and his forgiveness as free gifts!

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For . . . all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [declared righteous] by his grace [generosity] as a gift, through the redemption [setting free from slavery] that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [satisfaction] by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.

Romans 3:21-27

To begin to know God personally, the only thing you need to do is to humbly accept this free gift with an empty hand and a trusting heart. Simply thank Him for his generosity, mercy, and love. We cannot earn a gift; we can only accept or reject it.

The wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, [so] that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

### *Accept Jesus*

We accept the free gifts of righteousness, forgiveness, and adoption by accepting Jesus. We accept Jesus by believing in him. We encourage you to trust him and welcome him.

But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

### *Talk to God*

Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 10:13

Personal relationships involves communication. God has already broken the silence and reached out to us. We urge you to turn your heart towards him and talk to him. As you begin communicating with God, consider praying along the following lines in your own words:

*Dear God,*

*I know you created this world and have made us in your image. But we have sinned and rebelled*

*against you. In spite of this, you loved each one of us—even me. You sent your Son to die for my sins. You raised him from the dead and will raise me from the dead someday too. I hereby repent of my sins and trust Christ alone for my righteousness, forgiveness, and salvation. Thank you for your great gift. I thank you in Jesus' name.*

*Please help me to know your better. And please teach me from your word, guide me in your work, and help me to walk in your way.*

*Amen.*

### *Growing in the Knowledge of God*

Peter urges those of us who have begun to know God to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” As the primary way to know more about Jesus is the reading and studying the Bible, Peter warns us that there are many who “twist” the Scriptures.

There are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. . . . But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. 2 Peter 3:14-18

It's important to find Bible teachers who shed light upon the Bible while letting it speak for itself rather imposing a foreign meaning upon them. It is also vitally important to be connected with a solid community of solid, growing Christians who live by God's Word.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25

While it is usually pretty easy to find church buildings, it is not always easy to find a church that is filled with people who have found peace with God through Christ and are eager to grow in the grace and knowledge of him. Look for a church that is alive and teaches the Bible as the Word of God.

### *Baptism*

Getting baptized in water may seem a little strange at first. But it is something Christ commanded us to do (Mt. 28:18-20). So, after you find a good Bible-teaching church, ask one of the spiritual leaders how you can be baptized.

To be clear, baptism does not save you. It is a work of righteousness (Mt. 3:15) and we are **not** saved by performing “works of righteousness” (Titus 3:5). We are saved by the grace of God alone. We are saved through the gospel (Rom. 1:16) and baptism is not part of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17). We are saved through faith alone (Rom. 4:5) not by any action or ritual.

Water baptism is a public testimony that you have been buried with Christ and have risen with Him to walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). It is a sign to others. It’s a bit like the person who gets married and begins wearing a wedding ring to inform others about that personal relationship. Similarly, baptism is a visible symbol of the relationship you have begun with God.

### *Additional Resources*

A great first step in your new spiritual life is to read [the Gospel of John](#). It is the fourth book in the New Testament of the Bible. It was written by one of Jesus’ apostles so that we “... may believe that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

To help you think through the tough questions about God, Jesus, and the Bible, consider these books that have helped thousands:

*Twelve Points that Shows Christianity is True*  
by Norman Geisler ([Bastion Books](#): 2012)

*I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*  
by Geisler and Turek (Crossway: 2004)

*A Popular Survey of Bible Doctrine*  
by Geisler and Potter ([Bastion Books](#): 2015)

For advanced studies consider:

*The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*  
by Norman Geisler (Baker: 2012)

*Systematic Theology: In One Volume*  
by Norman Geisler (Bethany House: 2011)

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