

Introduction:

I want to begin this morning by giving you a couple of pop quizzes. This first one is easy:

1. How long did the Hundred Years War last? 116 years (1337-1453 between England and France).
2. Which country makes Panama Hats? Ecuador.
3. What is a camel-hair brush made of? Squirrel fur.
4. What colour is a purple finch? Red.
5. Where are Chinese gooseberries from? New Zealand.
6. How long did the Thirty Year War last? 30 years, of course (1618 – 1648 in Europe, Germany).

Now, for the second quiz, I'm going to give you some clues, and I want you to try to figure out who I'm talking about. As soon as you think you know, go ahead and shout out his name (see, I already gave you the first clue – now you know it's a man).

He was born on November 26, 1922 and died in 2000.

When he was in WW2, he wrote to his son every day.

One of his jobs was as a teacher.

He began every day by reading the paper, having a cup of coffee and eating an English muffin in an ice rink coffee shop.

For the last 50 years of his life, he worked 365 days a year.

His first work appeared in the Saturday Evening Post.

He was given the nickname "Sparky" when one week old and was still called that to the end of his life.

Many years ago, a girl with red hair broke his heart by refusing his marriage proposal.

Charlie was one of his teacher's names.

Do you give up? With all this information, do you know who it is? That's right, it's Charles Schulz – who wrote the Peanuts cartoon strip for 50 years. How well do you know Charles Schulz? You can know a little bit about him by looking at his work – but you can't know who he really is. Actually, the only way to know him is if he decided to open up to you when he was alive, right?

Likewise, the Bible teaches us that God can be known. That's astonishing to think about. The God of the Universe has chosen to reveal Himself to us. He longs for us to know Him more fully, more accurately and more personally.

With that as a background, I want to kick off a new series this morning that I'll call, "**Getting to Know God**". We serve such an amazing God who has done so much for us and has transformed our lives, so over the next few months we're going to get to know Him better. In fact, that's what He wants us to do. We will discover some of His awesome and mind-blowing attributes as is revealed in the Bible. My prayer is that God will use this series to bring us all closer to Him, that the Holy Spirit will reveal the Father more and more to us, and that His amazing attributes will cause us to burn with a fire to share about Him with others. This first message is called, "**Our Knowable God**".

Let's consider five passages that speak of the vital importance of knowing God.

Jeremiah 24:7: "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord." Friends, you and I were made to know God. He has put within each of us a desire to know Him.

John 17:3: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, who You have sent." Our privilege and responsibility is to know God – this is what being a believer it all about.

Ephesians 1:17: "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better." You and I can always know God better than we do right now. This should be our heart's passion.

Psalms 9:10: "Those who know Your name will trust in you." Our knowledge of God should lead to greater faith and obedience.

2 Thessalonians 1:8: "He will punish those who do not know God..." God will judge those who choose to distance themselves from God rather than get to know Him.

I personally have benefited greatly from the writings of several authors on the subject of knowing God. Here are just a few quotes that help me see both the gravity and the joy of knowing Him:

Charles Spurgeon: “Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the deity.”

A.W. Tozer: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us... and the most important fact about any man is not what he at any given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. The heaviest obligation upon the Christian church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him... the gravest quest before the church is always God Himself.”

J.I. Packer: “What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God.

Before we move on, it's important to heed a warning issued by J.I. Packer in his book called, *Knowing God*. It is possible to know about God without knowing God intimately. This is the danger of sterile intellectualism. It's easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that since we know a lot of things about God, that we must know Him well. Just because we've read the latest book, or attended the latest conference, doesn't mean that we know God.

While knowledge about God is good and absolutely essential, knowing God is more than knowing facts about Him. It's like trying to get to know your wife by reading her resume! Having established the importance of knowing God, and making the distinction between knowing facts about God and knowing Him intimately, I want to give you **4 ways that we can know God:**

1. OUR IMAGINATION

The first way is by relying on our IMAGINATION. You might say, “What??” Hear me on this first. Each of us carries around a mental picture of who God is. That picture is a collage of a lifetime of experiences, impressions and assumptions. The process begins early in life as we observe our parents – you know, those seemingly all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present human beings who rule the cosmos of our home – for better or for worse. As children, we instinctively project our view of our parents onto our impression of God.

As we grow up, other information is added to our imagination of God. These include our experiences with churches – all the sights and sounds and symbols and sermons. They significantly shape our image of God – again, either for better or for worse. As we mature, we keep updating our Deity database, by accumulating inferences from our teachers, from movies, from music, from current events, and from our own observations about life.

Everyone has an image of God. Some of us view Him as a rob-cop God, a deity with a big stick who runs around policing the universe. Others envision a Mr. Fixit kind of God, who just fixes problems. Others imagine a Grandfatherly God, from whom there is never a discouraging word.

That reminds me of a man who was talking to God one day. He decided to ask God a questions, “How long is a million years to You? God answered, “Like a second.” The man thought for awhile and then asked another question, “How much is a million dollars to you?” God answered, “Like a penny.” The man, excited now, asked his final question, “Then, can I have a penny?” To which God replied, “In a second.”

What is your view of God? What is He like to you? What does He require of you? What does He desire for you? That's why we're going to spend time in this series called, **Getting to Know God** – because what you think about God may be the most important thing about you.

It's possible for us to think we know Charles Schulz because we looked him up on Wikipedia, or listened to one of his interviews, or have read his comics for years. But we have never met him and therefore don't really know him.

In the same way, you and I have accumulated an imagination of God – one that can be based on hearsay, or inference, or perceptions. Our knowledge of Him may only be second-hand. And our personal picture of God may be factual or faulty. When we rely on imagination alone, we can deceive ourselves into thinking that we really know God, when we don't.

2. GOD'S INVITATION

There are better methods for getting to know God. One is when, instead of relying on human imagination, we rely on God's INVITATION. Let me explain. Suppose I set as one of my life's goals the desire to get to know Anthony Albanese. Where would I start? He has a very busy schedule, he's busy and he's running the country. And he has layers of security people around him. How in the world could I even hope to spend some time with him? I'd probably not even try because it would be too difficult and even presumptuous to think that he'd want to spend some time with me.

There's really only one way I could get to know Anthony Albanese. It would be by his invitation. He would have to take the initiative. Friend, the same is true for God. We can't begin to get to know Him unless He extends an invitation. Over the years, we have accumulated inferences and images of what God is like. And we may not want to disturb our carefully constructed conclusions, lest a change in how we think compels us to change the way we live.

God understands our reluctance. So He makes the first move. As Isaiah 1:2 says, "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken." He extends an invitation to us – He wants us to listen to Him and respond to His initiative. Listen to His many invitations:

- [Matthew 11:28-30 NASB](#) "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
- [Isaiah 55:1 NASB](#) "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost."
- [John 7:37-39 NASB](#) Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "[a]If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.
- [Revelation 22:17 NASB](#) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.
- [Isaiah 1:18 NASB](#) "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

It is not we who makes friends with God, but God who makes friends with us. To know God is to enter a relationship, which He Himself initiates. Have you accepted God's gracious invitation to get to know Him more fully, more accurately, and more personally?

3. GOD'S REVELATION

After accepting God's invitation, then phase 3 of knowing Him kicks in. That's when we rely on God's REVELATION. Let me illustrate. Suppose you accepted an invitation to spend some time with Anthony Albanese. Imagine that you arrive to find him alone by his Balinese Hut in his back courtyard, and He invites you to sit down. He could tell you anything he wanted to because you are there at his invitation. He could choose to keep the conversation on the surface, he could choose to tell you things about his childhood, or he could tell you about his job as the Prime Minister of Australia. He could take his mask off and share with you things that concern him, dreams that he has hoped for, and experiences that bring him joy.

Whatever he would say would be up to him. You can't read his mind. What you would know about him would depend totally upon his self-disclosure. In other words, you could only receive what he chose to reveal. In a similar way, what we can know about God comes by way of His revelation. God is so far above and beyond us that we are totally dependent on His self-disclosure. If He doesn't choose to reveal Himself, we could never know about the things that concern Him, the things He hopes for, and the things that bring Him joy.

Thankfully, God has revealed Himself! He has done it in at least 3 ways:

1. One way God reveals Himself is through creation – **Romans 1:20**. But, this natural revelation of God is limited. We can know the power of God by observing His creation, but we can't know His love.
2. For this we need the Bible. God has supernaturally revealed Himself through the Scriptures – **2 Timothy 3:16**. If you want to get to know God, you do it by getting to know this book. If you want to hear from God, then read this book. The Bible is bursting with direct statements from God about God – and it reveals His mind, His heart, and His will for us. Friends, you cannot possibly know God apart from knowing Him through His words. The more you know about the Bible, the more you will know about its Author.
3. God's primary vehicle for self-disclosure is through Jesus Christ – **Hebrews 1:3**. Jesus reveals who God the Father is. As Jesus said in John 8:19, "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." Once we get to know Jesus, we get to know the Father.

So, God is knowable. We can get to know Him through imagination which can be helpful but it can also be harmful. We really get to know God by His personal invitation and through His special revelation.

4. OUR INVESTIGATION

That leads to a final way to know God – by personal INVESTIGATION. Everyone has an equal ability to know God. You don't need a Bible College degree. All you need is a desire to know Him. Jeremiah 29:13 says, **"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart."** Friends, if you are serious about getting to know God, you will get to know Him. He promised us. I urge you to read and study this book like you never have before – when you read it, ask God to reveal Himself to you through it.

You see, the question is not so much, "Do you know God?" but rather "How well do you know Him?" Even for those amongst us who have been believers for some time now, the adventure of knowing God never ends. One of Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:17, shows that our pursuit of knowing God is to be on the front burner all the time: ***"I... keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better."***

So, start where you are. Expose your mind to the Bible. Permit God to correct your mental image of who He is. Allow Him to cut away any perceptions that are improper. Accept His invitation to personally know Him, and let Him reveal Himself to you.

CONCLUSION

Maybe you remember Jimmy Bakker, the televangelist who built the huge PTL empire spent 5 years in prison for mail fraud and for defrauding his followers out of millions of dollars. In his book called, "I Was Wrong", he admits that his whole view of God was faulty. As he recounts his spiritual journey behind bars, he finally comes to the conclusion that God sent him to prison for a very specific purpose. He had become so concerned with building a name for himself that he somewhere along the way forgot all about God. According to Bakker, God sent him to prison so that he could get to know God for who He really is. It's simple as that.

If knowing God is that important, I wonder what He'll have to do to get your attention? Our biggest problem is not that God isn't speaking, it's that we're so busy we can't – or won't – slow down long enough to hear His voice. **Psalm 46:10 urges us to “Be still and know that I am God.”**

We started this morning with a couple of quizzes. At some point, each of us is going to have to take another exam. This one will really count. There will be just one question on the sheet and here it is: Do you know God through Jesus Christ?