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“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God,” I Corinthians 2:12.

You Can Know God

Lesson Aim: To aid the believer’s spiritual growth by showing how one may know the things of God.

L132. Date: March 1975. **Text:** I Corinthians 2:6-16.

Topic: God: Knowledge of; Wisdom.

“Why didn't God write the Bible so a man like me could understand it?” The tone of my friend's voice carried a note of frustration.

“What kind of man are you?” I enquired.

“I'm just like everyone else. I'm just a natural man.”

“Then, that is the problem. The Scripture declares, “. . . **The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,**” I Corinthians 2:14.

Such an imaginary conversation underscores a truth expressed in this study. God cannot be known by man's unaided intellect. God can be known only by revelation. When Job asked, “Canst' thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” Job 11:7. The only answer man can give is, “No, I can know God only as He reveals Himself to me.”

God wants you to know Him. He is not hiding from you. (Genesis 3:8-10 shows who is doing the hiding!) That is why He has revealed Himself through nature, through the spoken word, through the written Word (the Bible), and through the Living Word (Jesus Christ).

God will not change the Bible so you can understand it by unaided human wisdom, but He will change you so you can understand it by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Today's study aims to aid your spiritual growth by showing how you may know the things of God. It is one of the most important lessons you will study. Pursue it with prayer, please.

I. HIDDEN WISDOM, 2:6-8

You can know God by understanding of divine wisdom. “. . . **We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory,**” 2:7.

Many people in the “intellectual world” think Christians are unscholarly because they believe the Bible and are slow to accept the fads of man’s wisdom. They do not realize the Christian is wise in a different area. I Corinthians 2:6-8 proves the error of secular thinking along that line by setting forth three great truths.

(1) Christians are not ignorant. “. . . **speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world. . .**” verse 6. Paul declared that Christians have a wisdom which surpasses that of the world. They have the wisdom of God! Such wisdom is shared among those who are “perfect.” (“Perfect” does not refer to sinlessness, but to those who have reached the goal of adulthood in Christ; those who are spiritually mature.) The wisdom of the world will “come to naught”—be made inoperative by virtue of the superior wisdom of God. That wisdom of God is now shared by believers. No, Christians are not ignorant; they have superior wisdom.

(2) Christians have been informed of God’s mystery, “hidden wisdom,” which God planned to share with them from before the foundation of the world, (verse 7). God’s revelation was no afterthought. In sovereign purpose, He planned all the while to reveal Himself to man as Sovereign and as Savior. Many wise men in the world reject Him. Is that the real wisdom? How much wiser it is for one to receive the eternal and unadulterated wisdom of God than to reject it in dependence upon man’s limited and sometimes erroneous knowledge.

(3) Christians know what the natural man’s wisdom can never find (verse 8). Concerning God’s wisdom it must be said “. . . None of the princes of this world knew. . .” Why? It can be known only by divine revelation. Remember how Jesus prayed upon the cross, “**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,**” Luke 23:34. Had they had true wisdom, the rulers would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (verse 8).

Be careful about trusting your wisdom in those areas where God has spoken. “**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes. . .**” Proverbs 12:15. “**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof**

are the ways of death,” Proverbs 14:12. How much better it is for me to hear God say, “. . . **This is the way, walk ye in it . . .**” Isaiah 30:21.

Be open for God’s instruction. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding,” Proverbs 3:5. If unbelievers discredit your faith, do not be disturbed. You know something they do not! You know God and are taught by Him the truth which is in Christ Jesus.

II. NATURAL INCAPACITY, 2:9, 10

You cannot know God through mere human intellect. “. . . **As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,**” 2:9.

How does a person learn? The Apostle Paul listed three common sources of knowledge: sight of the eyes, sounds on the ears, and reasonings in the mind. Through these members of the physical body, man becomes cognizant of material things.

Things of God are not comprehended by physical means. Eye has NOT seen, ear has NOT heard; the thought has NOT entered, the mind of man, which grasps the limitless things of God. Things of God are unseen, unheard, and unimagined for the person who is not taught divine truths by the Spirit.

Praise God that those things which were unseen, unheard, and unthought are now know by men. How? “**God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. . .**” verse 10. What has God revealed? He has not only revealed what heaven will be like (a common interpretation of “the things which God hath prepared”), but any and all the wonderful truths of God. A person can know “the things that are freely given to us of God” (verse 12) because God makes them known to him by the Holy Spirit.

The revelation of God has already been made. Many have received the personal knowledge of God. Many others have not. What is the difference? Consider this illustration. Radio waves are everywhere through the air. Why do you not hear all the sounds broadcast? You must be tuned in on the right wavelength with the right instrument to pick up the sounds. God has given the revelation of Himself. That revelation is “picked up” by the Holy Spirit in the believer and “played” upon the believer's heart. Only in that way can the believer know the things given him of God. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit who makes real to you the things of God.

Human intellect is important in understanding divine things, but human understanding must be aided by divine enlightenment. Use your mind in

Bible study. (1) Investigate the dictionary to find the exact meaning of words. (2) Consider such grammatical insight as you can determine. (3) Compare the teaching of one passage with that of another. (4) Meditate upon the truths you can glean. Use your mind in Bible study (II Timothy 2:15).

Above all else, pray to be taught by the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Spirit of truth would guide you into all truth (John 16.13). Ask Him to teach you. The same Holy Spirit who gave the Bible by inspiration will give its message to you by illumination. Know how blessed is the experience of being taught the truth of God by the Spirit of God.

III. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT, 2:10-13

You can know God through the teaching of the Spirit of God. “. . . **The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received . . . the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God,**” 2:11, 12.

How does God make Himself known to a man? Paul answered, “. . . by his Spirit.” No Christian can take pride in his knowledge of spiritual truth. His wisdom has not produced his understanding. No, it was made known to him by another, even the Spirit of God. Natural man depends upon the spirit of the world for knowledge. Spiritual man depends upon the Spirit of God. Are you available to be taught the truth of God by the Spirit of God? That is the only way you can truly know Him.

How can the Holy Spirit teach you of God? Verses 10 and 11 reply that God's Spirit can teach of God because he “searches” out the depths of God's divine person and “reveals” those deep things of God to men. Things which are hidden because they are beyond the scope of man's understanding, the divine counsels of the eternal God, are thus made known to man.

You are the only one who truly knows your inner self. No relative or friend, however intimate may be your association, can know the “real” you. Likewise, only God can know Himself. Only the Spirit of God can communicate to man what God is truly like. As you reveal your inner self by your words and deeds, so the Spirit reveals God by what He says and does.

The spirit of material things (science) cannot speak of the deep things of God. Only the Spirit of God can do that. He takes the things of God and puts them in words which are understood by man. The process is not “**in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (men),**” verse 13.

Do not misunderstand. Unsaved people can understand many Bible truths. They can receive much good instruction from its pages. They cannot

comprehend the spiritual significance, nor gain the full message, of the Word apart from the instruction of the Holy Spirit.

It is important, therefore, that you be available to be taught by the Holy Spirit. He is already within you: **“We have received . . . the spirit which is of God,”** verse 12. You can know the things which are given of God. Do not grieve, quench, resist nor tempt the Spirit upon whose ministry you are so dependent for an understanding of divine truth.

IV. CHRISTIAN ENDOWMENT, 2:14-16

You can know God personally and intimately, if you are saved. **“. . . We have the mind of Christ,”** 2:16.

Two types of men inhabit the earth. There is “the natural man” who “receiveth not the things of God.” There is “the spiritual man” who has “the mind of Christ.” (1) The natural man is the unregenerate man. He is a man whose original depraved human nature has not been renewed in salvation. The term does not mean he is necessarily desperately wicked—only that he is without spiritual life or discernment. (2) The spiritual man is not a sinless man. He is a man whom the Spirit of God indwells. The natural man does not welcome spiritual things; the spiritual man finds them his delight.

Why does the natural man not receive (welcome) spiritual truths? He does not because he cannot. It would be like picking up radio signals without a radio receiver. The natural man does not have the capacity to “pick-up” the signals of spiritual truths because He is without the Spirit within. He judges by his nature rather than by the Holy Spirit; he is unable to discern spiritual truth. Take note of that truth: “The man whose equipment is only of this world, the man who has not received the Holy Spirit of God, has not the ability to make an estimate of things spiritual”—Leon Morris.

On the other hand, **“He that is spiritual judgeth all things. . .”** verse 15. “Judge” does not mean “critical decrees,” but to understand and discern. It refers to the ability to sift truth from error and retain the truth. The Holy Spirit enables the Christian to have “the mind of Christ” in that he can evaluate things as Jesus does. Such powers are not a natural endowment, but the working of the Spirit of God within. Enabled to judge (discern) “all” things, the believer has a spiritual outlook upon what men call secular as well as sacred.

The natural man does not understand the insight and spiritual mindedness of the believer. For that reason, the Christian “is judged (understood and discerned) by no man.”

What did Paul mean in writing, **“We have the mind of Christ”?** It

does not mean that believers know all that Jesus knows. It means the Christian does not view things from the worldly viewpoint, but from the viewpoint of Christ. A Christian does not interpret things in the same manner as the non-Christian. He has the mind of Christ. Do not be unduly disturbed by the doubts or objections of unsaved men. If a scientist, college professor, or other learned man rejects the Word or denies the gospel, do not be disturbed. He just does not know what he is talking about. He is looking at things from a natural, not a spiritual, viewpoint. Do not let the doubts of others hinder your faith.

Consider how highly privileged you are. You have the mind of Christ because the Spirit of God lives within you to interpret to you the things of God. That is a blessed privilege! You are not alone. You do not have to depend upon your intellect and powers of discernment. God has committed Himself to reveal Himself to you and to lead you into all truth. Be sure you follow as He leads.

“You can know God!” Consider the implications of that statement. YOU can know God. You CAN know God. You can KNOW God. You can know GOD.

You cannot know God apart from saving faith. You cannot know God except as you are taught by the Holy Spirit, but you can trust Jesus as Savior right now. The Holy Spirit comes to live permanently within you the moment you are saved.

With such a divine Teacher, do not be content to remain in spiritual infancy. Move on to maturity. You can know God!

Questions

1. What is a natural man?
2. What is a spiritual man?
3. What does I Corinthians 2:14 mean to you?
4. In what sense do Christians possess a “hidden wisdom?”
5. What warning is found in Proverbs 14:12?
6. How does the Spirit teach a believer?
7. Why are you dependent upon the Spirit's teaching about God?
8. In what way have you “received” the Spirit?
9. In what sense do you have “the mind of Christ?”
10. How can you know God better?