

**COURSE LECTURE NOTES**

**Course:** Behold Your God **Subject:** BYG – Lesson 1 - Knowing the God of the Bible

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**NOTES**

If there really is a God, He exists for Himself. By this, I mean that God does not need anything or anybody. His delight is in Himself simply because there is nothing or no one higher than Himself in which to delight. Because He is God, He is sufficient in Himself and in need of nothing. So if God chose to create something, He would be under no obligation to reveal Himself to that which He has created.

But suppose God did create humans? And suppose God chose to reveal Himself to His human creatures. If God chose to reveal Himself to us, He would have to take the initiative to make Himself known.

This, of course, is the way it is with people. You can only know someone if they will let you know them. But, if they won't let you get close to them and really know them, then the best you can do is only know about them. And the further a person is removed from us, the more difficult it becomes to know them. So the higher position in life a person has, the more it becomes that person's initiative to make himself known, if he is to be known. Doesn't that make sense? Good!

**A PRESIDENTIAL EXAMPLE**

Let me give you an example. The presidency of the United States is the highest office in the land. Because of his position, the president is not available to the average citizen. You can't just walk up to the White House and say, "Can the president come out and play?" If you are to know the president of the United States, he must take the initiative.

President Carter was a good example of a president who took some initiative so that the average citizen could know him. He conducted town meetings in different cities around the country. He would go to a particular town and hold a meeting where the average citizens of

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that town could come and meet him. After the meeting was over, he would go and spend the evening at the house of a local family. They would talk about things that were near and dear to each other, so that the family got to know the president. But it was the president's initiative that made it possible. They would not have known him if he had not taken the initiative. Now this family may have had a lot of money. They may have had a lot of power and prestige in the community. But from then on, the thing they talked about for the rest of their lives was that they "know the president."

### GOD'S INITIATIVE

In a similar way, God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself to us. He has done so because He wants us to know Him. Many people don't realize that God wants us to know Him. They don't even think they know Him. So now we ask the question, can we know God? The answer is YES!! But let us let God speak for Himself. We find Him speaking the following words through the Prophet Jeremiah,

*"Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the LORD.'"* (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Yes, God says He wants us to know Him. Knowing God means to have intimate spiritual union and communion with Him as a husband and wife know each other. When you come to know God in this way, He will be the only thing you will talk about for the rest of your life. You won't glory in your riches, or your education, or

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your power and prestige. You won't glory in yourself or the things of the world. You will glory in knowing Him.

**HOW GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN**

So now we see that God wants us to know Him in a very personal way. We have also learned that, if we are to know Him, He must take the initiative. Well, I've got some good news for you! God has taken the initiative. God has revealed Himself to us in four ways about which we are going to learn.

**God's Revelation In Creation**

The first way in which God has revealed Himself to us is through His creative order. All we have to do to realize there is a God is to open our eyes and look at His creation. Have you ever wondered how the snow knows just when to fall? How the rain knows just when to drop? How the clouds know just when to open up? How the sun knows just when to rise and set? How the moon knows just when to shine? How the tide knows when it is suppose to be high and when it's supposed to be low? How the seasons know just when to change? How it is that all creation, except man, functions with perfect order and harmony?

Well, the answer, of course, is that there is a God in heaven Who has created all things. And He is a God of order. His creative order testifies to His existence. King David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said it this way, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*" (Psalms 19:1).

A thousand years later, another Jew by the name of Paul said, "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has*

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*been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20).*

**AN HONEST SCIENTIST**

Sir Isaac Newton was a brilliant English scientist. He had made a miniature model of the solar system which he kept in his home. Right in the middle was a large golden ball representing the sun. Smaller balls representing the planets revolved around it. These all operated harmoniously and were kept in proper orbit, by means of rods, wheels and belts all working together.

One day a friend called on Sir Isaac. Now it happens that the friend did not believe there was a God Who created the universe. But when he saw the miniature model of the solar system and how it all worked together in perfect harmony, he said, “Newton, what a fantastic model of the solar system. Who made it?” Now Sir Isaac was a bit of a tease. And to show his friend how foolish was his disbelief, he responded with a serious tone, “Oh, nobody made it. I just got up one morning and here it was in the study. All the balls and cogs, belts and gears just happened to come together. And then, wonder of wonders, they all began revolving in their exact orbits with perfect timing.” His friend got the point. Do you?

***Gods’ Revelation In Instinct***

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The second way in which God has revealed Himself to us is through instinct. We call it our conscience. All of us have a built-in God-consciousness. No matter how far away we may be from God, we still know that He is around. Our conscience, regardless of how hardened it may be, constantly reminds us that there is a God in heaven Who created us in His image.

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But what does it mean to be created in God’s image? It means that we are spiritual and moral beings. God has created us with a sense of right and wrong so that we make moral judgments. We may not do right and our understanding of what is right may be blurred. But we know we ought to do right. You who are reading this know you ought to do right. But who told you that you should do right? Well, nobody told you. You just know. But how do you know? You know because there is a God in heaven Who delights in doing right and He has put this same sense of right and wrong within each of us. The result is that we make moral judgments. The further we get away from God, the less right are the judgments we make. But we still know we should make them.

Now let’s see how the Apostle Paul says this in Romans 1:18-19, *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”*

The Apostle Paul says it again in Romans 2:14-15, *“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”*

Because of God’s witness to Himself through creation and instinct, the Bible never attempts to prove God’s existence. It assumes His existence and simply states that anyone who thinks otherwise is a fool. *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’...”* (Psalms 53:1).

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**A CURIOUS NATIVE**

There is only one problem with God’s revelations of Himself through creation and instinct. They are incomplete. They only help us to know about God. It’s as if a native on some remote island found a watch that drifted ashore. He can observe that watch and see that there is some kind of order to the watch. He would know that someone “way out there somewhere beyond the vastness of the ocean” made that watch. He would probably begin to wonder about the person who made it. He would form mental images of what this person is like. But most of what he pictured in his mind about the watchmaker would not be right. In other words, the native cannot know the watchmaker just by having the watch. He will remain ignorant of the one who made it.

But, suppose as he examines the watch, he notices a small piece of paper with some writing on it. It says, “This watch was made by ‘So-and-So’, whose family has been making watches for the past one hundred years. His picture is enclosed. ‘So-and-So’ takes great pride in his craftsmanship and personally inspects each watch before pronouncing it good. To keep it in working order, read the following instructions.”

Well, with this extra bit of information, the native can begin to know the one who made the watch. He’s got something in writing about the watchmaker, in addition to his picture. Now when he wears the watch and thinks of the one who made it, his mental image of the watchmaker will be correct.

This illustrates how God has revealed Himself to us. We are like the curious native and God’s creative order is like the watch. Creation and instinct tells us about God, but they can’t help us know Him. Creation and instinct tells us that God is “way out there somewhere beyond the vastness of the sky.” We form mental images of what this

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God is like. But as with the native, most of them are wrong. God remains the unknown God.

The Apostle Paul met a group just like this in Greece. They were a very religious group because they had many altars. Paul noticed that one of the altars was dedicated “*to the unknown God.*” They recognized the existence of God. But they did not know Him, so they worshipped Him in ignorance. Paul took advantage of the opportunity and began to tell the group about “*the unknown God.*” “*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being...*” (Acts 17:24-28).

***God’s Revelation In Writing***

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Since creation and instinct were not complete revelations, God determined to reveal Himself to us in a third way. He sent an instruction book to accompany the watch of His creative order and man’s instinct. This instructional book is actually God’s autobiography. We call it the Bible. It claims to be the inspired Word of God. (See 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16). When we open the Bible we find that it says, “*The world was made by God who takes great pride in His handiwork. And when He finished, He personally inspected it and pronounced it ‘good.’*” To keep it in working order, read the following instructions. (See Genesis 1-2).

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Well, now we can begin to know the One Who made the world. We've got something in writing about Him. Now we can have correct understanding of Him. As we read God's Word, we find that He is different from His creatures. He's not at all what we've imagined Him to be.

His mighty acts of miracles tell us that He is all-powerful. He says that He counts the stars and calls them by name to tell us that He is all-knowing. He tells us that He is everywhere present so that we can know there is no place we can go and be out of His sight. He says that He raises up kings and nations and puts them down to show us that He is sovereign. He demonstrates faithfulness to His Word to show us that He never changes.

He also tells us that He is love. He's not some distant deity who stands apart and aloof from our trials. Nor does He sit sternly in condemnation over us. On the contrary, He completely understands us and is able to fully identify with all of our trials.

Since He made us, He understands our limitations. So, He is sympathetic to our struggles. He remembers that we were born in iniquity. He knows that our brief journey on earth is but a fleeting moment in which we constantly war against the attacks of the world on our soul.

He knows our hearts because He knows our makeup. He was there before we were formed in our mother's womb. Therefore, we can come to Him without pretense, just as we are. He will receive us with compassion, kindness, affection, and understanding.

He is merciful and gracious towards us. He is slow to anger. He is good and ready to forgive. He has plenty of mercy. His lovingkindness is always extended to us.



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He is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. Therefore, we can trust Him to always do the right thing by us.

Because He loves us, He must discipline us, but His discipline is always perfectly just. It is always fair and consistent for our own good. We can trust Him to move all events for the purpose of sharing His glory with us.

We are the constant object of His love and attention. His concern and care for us is never-ending. His everlasting patience, compassion, mercy, fairness and understanding are always extended to us. And even though He knows the worst about us, He still loves us. We can always expect a warm reception from Him.

Whatever our situation, we can have a calm assurance that He is ours and we are His. And as we get to know Him, His perfect love casts out all fear we may have of Him.

Is this the God you know? It can be. Because this is what God says about Himself in His autobiography. But even after reading it, man is still like the island native. He has learned a lot by reading the book, but he does not yet fully know God the way he should. He thinks that God is primarily concerned with outward acts. So, man tries to approach God through religious ceremony and empty rituals. But God, through the Prophet Hosea says, *“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.”* (Hosea 6:6). You see, God was interested in man’s heart, not his outward acts of religion.

***God’s Revelation In His Son***

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So, in order for man to fully know God, God decided that He would hold a town meeting. The town was planet earth. God left His home in glory – the Capitol of

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Capitols – and came to planet earth to live among us so we could know Him. He prepared a body for Himself in which to live. He called Him “*Emmanuel*” which means “*God with us.*” He went by the name Jesus of Nazareth. (See Matthew 1:23-25).

The Apostle Paul describes what took place at this town meeting, which lasted for 33 years. In Philippians 2:6-11, he writes this about the Messiah, “*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Messiah Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

Toward the end of that town meeting, one of Jesus’ disciples by the name of Philip said to Jesus, “‘*Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied.*’ Jesus said to him, ‘*Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me, Philip? He who 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 in Me?...*’” (John 14:8-10).

Drawing from our illustration of the island native, the watchmaker was here in the person of Messiah Jesus.

**JESUS REVEALS GOD**

John wrote about Jesus, “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*” (John 1:18). Paul wrote in Colossians 1:15 that Jesus is the “*image of the invisible*

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God.” The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus “*bears the very stamp of God’s nature.*” (Hebrews 1:3)

These phrases refer to the engraving on a coin. The engraving came from a stamp that was used to make the impression on the coin. Unless you work in the mint where the coin is made, you have never seen the stamp. But you can know exactly what it looks like, by looking at the coin.

Likewise, no one has ever seen God. But we can know exactly what He is like in His personal and moral being by looking at Messiah Jesus. This likeness in Messiah Jesus has given man a picture to intimately know God and help mankind to develop a personal revelation of his Maker. He is the picture of the creator that goes with His instruction book.

So, God has revealed Himself to us in a fourth way, through His Son the Lord Messiah Jesus. Colossians 2:9 says that “*all the fullness of God*” dwelled in Messiah Jesus. He is the final and complete revelation of the unseen, unknown God. John 1 states that Messiah Jesus is the Word of God Who became Flesh to dwell among His creation to demonstrate the grace and beauty wrapped up in Himself as God’s Holy Word. (See John 1:14, 17).

***How to Know God***

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Jesus said in Matthew 11:27, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” In this statement, Jesus says that He alone knows God. He further declares that no one can know God unless He (Jesus) makes God known to that person. But then He goes on to say that He desires to make God known to everyone. For His very next statement is, “*Come to Me,*

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*all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Jesus says that He will reveal God to anyone who will stop trying to find God in their own way and come to God through Him. In John 14:6, Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

Again He said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”* (John 10:27-30).

But then Jesus told His disciples that He would have to leave them. They didn’t understand why He would leave them. He explained with these words, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who love Me. And he who love Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”* (John 14:15-21).

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In these verses, Jesus was talking about sending the Holy Spirit to live in all who would receive Him. In the Hebrew Scriptures God was for us. In the New Testament He was with us. But now, God desires to be in us. By sending the Holy Spirit to live in us, Jesus would bring us into union with God so that we might know Him. This is how we come to know God. God will make Himself known to all who will come to Him through Messiah Jesus. And you will know that you know Him because His Spirit, who will come to live in you, will reveal God to you with a personal intimacy which will bear witness to your heart that you have come to know God. (See Romans 8:14-17).

This was Jesus' great prayer for us in John 17:1-3, *"Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Messiah Jesus whom you have sent.'"*

So yes, God wants us to know Him. He wants us to have intimate fellowship with Him. And this fellowship with God is available through the Lord Messiah Jesus. When we ask Him to come into our life, He gives us the very Spirit of God. Jesus said it this way, *"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."* (Revelation 3:20).

Do you know God in the way I have described Him in this lesson? If not, please stop and pray right now, with a humble heart, for God to make Himself known to you. And then as you continue to read these lessons, it is our prayer that God will show Himself to you in a glorious way which perhaps you have never known before. May

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God bless you as we continue to look into the heart of God.

**PRAYER**

Avinu Malkeinu, our Father our King. Blessing and glory and honor to Your Name. May Your kingdom and Your will be established in heaven and on earth and in my life in this world and the world to come.

Bless you for Your love that moved You to create the heavens and the earth and Your will to share Your life with mankind by making us in Your image. Bless You for Your power revealed in creation. All of creation is a witness to Your glory and handiwork. You created the world out of nothing. The power of Your word spoke it into being. All nature obeys You and You uphold all creation with Your spoken word. Your people stand in awe of the greatness and goodness of Your creation.

Bless You for placing within our hearts a knowing that we are made in Your image. You made us moral beings with a sense of right and wrong. Help us to choose good over evil so that we can use our mind and will to think your thoughts and live a life that is pleasing to You.

Bless You for giving us a written record of Your nature, character, and purpose for creating us. Thank You for preserving Your word through the ages so we can have it to study. Give us the desire, discipline and delight to study and apply Your word to our lives so that You may be glorified in our every word, thought and deed.

Bless You for coming to the earth in human flesh through Your Son, Jesus, the Messiah-Redeemer of Israel and Light to the nations. We acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and Savior Who has given us the Holy Spirit through Whom we can know You and have intimate fellowship with You. We invite His presence in our lives. Amen!

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**PERSONAL STUDY REVIEW**

1. What does God mean when He says He wants us to *know* Him?
2. List the *four ways* in which God has made Himself known. Give a brief statement about each explaining how it is a revelation of God.
3. How can you apply this knowledge to your life?