

Knowing God

How can I get to know God? A good question, one that many people ask themselves inadvertently and then push it away to allow other, seemingly more pressing questions to invade. What is the meaning of my life? How can I be loved? What is my purpose? Do I have worth? And yet all of these other questions are tied up in the first one. How can I know God?



Your looking at this brief article suggests to me that you are at least remotely interested in getting to know the Supreme Being in the Universe. And it is actually perfectly natural that you would like to do that. After all, when God created this universe and settled us in it, He designed all human beings with a basic need – a need for Him. Some have called it the “God-shaped hole” that is in each human being. Most of us try to fill up this hole with other things, such as money, friends, our spouse, our children, our job, our leisure time, but in the end – if we’re honest with ourselves – we know that regardless of how much we pour in, it’s never enough. The hunger is there and it longs to be satisfied, a satisfaction that can only come from knowing God. As one great man prayed, “You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.” (Augustine of Hippo)

But then *how* does one get to know God? Many people have discussed various ways of learning about the Divine Being, most of which arise from the speculation of the human mind. The thing is, though, that God has made Himself known to us! The Divine Creator of the universe seeks to have a relationship with us – not just one that spans time, but one that goes on for eternity – and so He has revealed Himself.

“But where has He done so?” you might ask. “I certainly haven’t heard about it.” He did it in two ways.

Written Revelation

First, He had His words written down in a series of books, which have been compiled into the volume known as the Holy Bible. The Bible itself claims to be the Word of God and to contain God’s take on the facts of life. You may say it is the users’ manual for the human being. It makes statements that to us seem far out, but that at the same time claim to be truth, and, when looked at objectively, do make sense. Take, for example the first line of the Bible.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 – NIV)



Here is a statement about the origin of everything. It is simple and straightforward and doesn’t really need any explanation. Today many scientists have theories about how the universe came to be, but none of them match up to the simple majesty of these ten words. It makes a statement about something that no human being can know, since we all agree that there were no humans at the beginning of the universe. So, if the Bible truly is God speaking, wouldn’t He, who happened to be there at the beginning, be the one to ask about how it all started?

The Story of Humanity

God goes on to tell the story of humankind, beginning with His creation of the first man and woman and explaining how things turned out to be the way they are today. When God created our very first ancestors ([Genesis 2](#)) He made them so that He could live in harmony and in a deep personal relationship with them. But love cannot be forced, and so God gave the first man and woman the chance to choose for or against Him by giving them one simple command. They chose to disobey that command and so broke the relationship that they had with God (see here [Genesis 3](#)). And so that God-shaped hole, that had been filled in the life of our first ancestors, was born.

But by no means was He going to give up on His relationship with His highest creation. As we continue to read the Bible, we see the story of how God put into motion a plan of reconciling us humans with Himself. Right at the outset He promises that He will send “the offspring of the woman” who will reconcile the people to Him ([Genesis 3:15](#)). Time and again He attempts to draw all people to Himself, but they are too preoccupied with themselves to listen. As a matter of fact they have drifted so far from God that He has no choice but to judge them for disobeying Him and living contrary to the conscience that He put within them. Our not living the way God intends us to is called sin. It means that we have missed the mark that God has set.



Throughout the ages, though, there have been people who have sought God and have wanted that relationship with Him. God chose one such man, named Abraham ([Genesis 12](#)), and made him the forefather of the nation of Israel from whom God would bring the promised “offspring of the woman.”

God also taught His people about the nature of sin and the fact that He cannot arbitrarily forgive people who have done the things that He has told them not to do, or have not done the things He has told them to. The Bible is unequivocal on that fact. “*For the wages of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23) That means that each person who commits a sin – lives in a way that is not pleasing to God – should have to die for what they did wrong. There is no lenient punishment. However, God, in His mercy, set up a system by which an innocent lamb could take the place of a human and work temporary forgiveness for their misdeeds. To use a modern-day illustration, it is as if Joe has a mortgage and he cannot make the payment, which, according to the contract, is everything he owns. He does, however, have the recourse of giving the bank his most valuable asset to cover that one month's payment. There was no way that this one payment he could make would wipe out his debt and leave him alive.

The situation with sin is similar. There is no payment that a human can make that will wipe out all their sin, unless they shed their own blood and died for it, which would result in continued separation from God after physical death, because it would take an *eternal* death to pay for sin. However, the blood of one innocent animal would work forgiveness for one sin. It would have to happen over and over again so that the people could have a relationship with God. But He wanted an end to the bloodshed, wanted sin to be dealt a decisive death-blow forever. And so He sent the Promised One.

Physical Revelation

As the Bible continues, more and more is revealed about this Promised One, who would reconcile the humans to God and enable them to know Him. This Promised One will be a king that will rule over all the earth for eternity ([II Samuel 7](#)). He will be gentle, though, and it is even clear in Scripture that He will have to die to make this reconciliation possible ([Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12](#))! It was also very clear from Scripture that it was God Himself who would work the forgiveness of sins. The question was *how* would God do that?

That brings us to the second way that God revealed Himself. He came to our planet, invaded our sphere, you might say, by becoming one of us! About the turn of the age, a baby boy was born in a little village in the Middle-East, called Bethlehem. His birth was unusual for the simple fact that his mother was a virgin when she became pregnant. This “offspring of the woman” was the only being to whom the sinful nature of his first ancestor had not been passed on. He was *perfect* in every way. The name of the child was Jesus.

While the Bible is silent about how Jesus lived when he grew up, it is unequivocal about what happened in His life at the time He was about 30 years of age. The four Gospels, entitled Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, tell four different perspectives of His remarkable life, focusing on the three years of His public life among the Jewish people. Jesus fulfilled every prophecy that God's messengers had given the Israelites about the Promised One. He lived a perfectly sinless life among the people. He was gentle, and yet He condemned sin forcefully. He healed the sick, cured the insane, and broke the power of sin and Satan over people. He taught things that no prophet ever could teach, because He was not merely a man, He was also God.



And when the time for the climax of his ministry came, Jesus blew the minds of all His followers. They were expecting a conquering king, but Jesus was meant to be the suffering lamb, the perfect, eternal sacrifice that would take care of the sin problem once and for all.

Because of His immense popularity, the Jewish leaders became very jealous of Jesus and so had Him arrested on false charges and brought before the Roman governor, who bowed to their wishes and had Jesus killed ([Matthew 26-27](#); [Mark 14-15](#); [Luke 22-23](#); [John 18-19](#)). He was crucified, suffering the most horrible death that any human being could ever conceive of. But even in His death He was highly unusual. While other victims of crucifixion cursed their executioners, Jesus said twelve words that have become immortal, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) Neither Jesus' accusers, nor His executioners understood *why* He was really dying. To the former He was an agitator that had to be gotten rid of, a blasphemer who must die, to the latter He was merely one more Jewish criminal who was getting his just desserts.

With His own blood, Jesus, the perfect human being and God in the flesh, purchased eternal forgiveness for the sins of *all* human beings. And to show that He had truly done so, He rose again from the dead after being in the tomb for three days ([Matthew 28](#); [Mark 16](#); [Luke 24](#); [John 20-21](#)), appeared to His disciples over a period of about forty days, and then returned to heaven, where He is still alive today.

How to Know God

Now, how does this help us *know* God? God has revealed Himself to us and He has provided a way that we can know Him and get right with Him. The Bible says, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 6:23) God offers us a matchless gift, the gift of His personal presence in our lives in this age and the possibility of spending eternity with Him. He offers us the gift of *knowing* Him as no one else can. The question is, how do we accept this gift? The answer: by faith.

“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,

and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:8-11)

Faith is accepting what God has said as truth and acting upon that truth. In other words, you must choose to accept as truth that Jesus Christ has died for your sins, personally, and then allow God to work the changes in your life so that your life conforms to that belief. (For more on faith and how it works, take a look at J.M. Diener's "Faith: Taking God at His Word and Acting Upon It"¹.) One way of doing that is telling God that you accept His offer and then telling other people about your faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

It seems awfully simple, doesn't it? But it's the way that God has given us and who are we to say of God that the way He gives us is too easy. If God Himself came all the way to earth to die for us, then the only thing we should be able to do is accept that gift, humbly and with gratitude. And my prayer for you, my friend, is that you will do just that.



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