Acquaint Yourself with God

Week One

TO KNOW PEACE AND GOODNESS

The book of Job tells the story of a rich man who lost everything he had—family, riches, and even his personal health—and then gained it all back again, and more. The book paints a clear picture of the great controversy (or battle) between God and Satan. Oblivious to conversations between God and Satan about him, Job doesn’t realize his trial is the result of Satan’s assertion that the only reason Job worships God is that He gives Job good things. This opens the door for heartache and challenges that very few people have ever been asked to endure.

At the apex of this experience, Job’s friends believe that he has offended God. Why else would God allow so many bad things to happen to someone? Chapter 22 records the surprising words of his friend Eliphaz, who is completely wrong in his analysis of Job’s situation but gives the true and most important life counsel: “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21, KJV). The Bible purports that knowing God results in peace.

Societies worldwide have long felt that education is the answer to solving the world’s greatest problems. The cure for cancer, racism, poverty, or corruption all seem to find their answer through education and knowledge. In this sense, the ultimate purpose of education is to produce peace and good. The world and the Bible both agree that some form of education is the key that unlocks peace and goodness. But this week the study looks at the knowledge that Eliphaz counsels—an acquaintance with God.
Write out Job 22:21–30 from the translation of your choice. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, or outline or mind map the chapter.
THE BEGINNING, THE END, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Knowing God is fundamental to education on three specific levels. Job 12:13 states, “With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding.” The implication of this text is that wisdom, purpose, and intelligence belong to God. He is therefore the beginning of education and the end of education. Obtaining His likeness is the goal and purpose of life in this world and in the world to come. In addition to being the beginning and the end of education, God is also the means of education—He is everything in between. Let’s delve deeper into these three levels.

God: The Source

In no uncertain terms, the Bible emphasizes the significance of Jesus Christ as the source of everything that the work of education seeks to accomplish. In Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Jesus as the foundation of education is not just a desirable advantage. Rather, He is the very necessary first component. Wisdom and knowledge are hidden treasures stored up in the person of Jesus Christ. Human power cannot attain these treasures on its own. The only way to access these foundational virtues is through the Source who is willing to share them. Thus, the first work of education must be to introduce the student, the seeker of wisdom and knowledge, to God, who is their Source.

God: The Goal

When God created Adam and Eve, He created them in His image with the purpose of them being like Him (Gen. 1:26–29). Essentially, the Garden of Eden was a school where the first pair could grow in their physical, mental, and spiritual development, gaining greater insights into the power, wisdom, and love of God. Growth into the image of God was their educational objective—their goal in life. Although humanity has fallen, the goal of God-likeness remains the same (Matt. 5:48).

Secular education aims toward empowering pupils to ultimately be agents of peace and goodness. Through the secularization of society, religious and theological components have been slowly excised out of the institutions of education. Essentially, these circles of society seek to separate Christ’s virtues from His person, even though their achievement is impossible without Him. The noble aspirations of education are scripturally tied to Christ (John 14:27; Matt. 19:17). In other words, if the ultimate goal of education is ever to be accomplished, it will only be completed through the achievement of Christlikeness. From this perspective, the ultimate goal of education is to be like Christ.

God: The Means

It is easy for the Christian to make the common mistake of thinking that God is only necessary at the start of the educational journey and that the student must develop, on his or her own, the tools to become like Him. Another ditch one may fall into is to think that mere knowledge on earth can ultimately lead to an acquaintance with God. However, the story of Scripture teaches that God is not only the beginning and the end of education but also the means by which we use what God gives us to become like Him.

Communion with God has been His own method of education: before the fall of Adam and Eve; while walking earth’s dusty roads with His disciples; and in the future Eden. Education was, is, and will be communion with our Maker.
CAN HUMANITY FIND GOD?

One of the key components that makes God who He is comes from the fact that He is infinite. A fundamental problem that human beings might run into on their quest to know God is seen in the question, How can a finite individual ever discover an infinite God? We cannot expect a young child to understand certain complex things until they reach the age of maturity. In other words, in order for a child to understand what it means to be an adult, they must first become an adult. A finite human being cannot expect to discover an infinite God—the idea is more preposterous than an ant discovering the meaning of human life. In this sense, infinite spiritual things can only be understood spiritually.

How then can any human become acquainted with a God who is, humanly speaking, undiscoverable? God must reveal Himself. It must sink into the mind and heart of every individual that a revelation of God can only be a reality if it is a revelation by God. We find this in Luke’s story of the lost sheep (Luke 15). Although the sheep may know its lost condition, it cannot find its way back to God. The divine Shepherd must reveal Himself to the sheep or else it perishes in its lostness. No amount of human intelligence can discover God—He must make Himself known. And God makes Himself known through communion.

Communion is God’s method of education. In the Garden of Eden, face-to-face communion with God was the privilege of Adam and Eve. As they spent time with God, they learned more of His power, wisdom, and love. As they learned more about God, they yearned to become more like Him. As they longed to become more like God, they were empowered to grow into a more perfect form of His likeness.

However, God never stopped using this method of education. We see examples of this communion in the creation of the Sanctuary, which was constructed so that He could be with them (Ex. 25:8). Also, when He walked on earth with His disciples, communion was likewise His method of education (Luke 6:13). What is powerful about communion with God is that it can be experienced everywhere and through everything, aside from the blight of sin. Our knowing God is not confined to a classroom with a theologian or a teacher. Even Scripture, although it is the ultimate revelation Christ, is not the only one. Moment by moment and hour by hour, God reveals Himself to the individual who searches for Him with the whole heart (Jer. 29:13). The effect of such communion on body, soul, and mind is beyond human estimation, for the finite mind is miraculously enabled to receive the things of the Infinite.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Proverbs 2:1-6
Matthew 19:16, 17
John 14:25–27
John 17:6–19

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with knowing God?

THE MISTAKE OF MORE

Knowledge is so important to God that He made it a critical part of Adam and Eve’s experience at Creation by placing a tree of knowledge in the middle of the garden (Gen. 2:9). Satan’s attempt to deceive Eve was on the basis of knowledge. He claimed that if Eve partook of the fruit of the tree, she would be like God and would have the ability to know good and evil. Up to this point, Eve was only exposed to God’s creation, which was declared to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Satan’s argument was that she needed additional knowledge in order to become greater (Gen. 3:5).

We learn from the story of the fall of Adam and Eve that “more” is not necessarily more. Satan would have us think today what he tricked Eve into believing in Eden: that knowing more things is better than knowing only good things. We must beware of false comparisons. Many are still tempted to compare good and evil as two things of equal value, thinking by logic that two is better than one. But this is where the ultimate deception lies.

In the narrative of Scripture, God’s value system contrasts the eternal with the temporal. Gaining the wisdom to differentiate between eternal things and temporal things is the first work of education. It equips us to see things from God’s perspective instead of our limited viewpoint. The prophet Isaiah stated it this way: “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isa. 55:2).

It is in Jesus that critical things about knowledge become clear. First, not all knowledge is of equal value. A person may know a lot of things about an endless number of subjects that would make them wealthy, famous, and powerful in this world. However, a knowledge of all these things will not put them a fraction closer to the realm of eternity. These two worlds do not match. Eternal life comes not through a knowledge of many things but through a knowledge of One—that is, Jesus (John 17:13; 1 John 5:11, 20).

Second, not all life is of equal value. The value of heaven is not only measured in the quantity of days that we’ll enjoy but also in the quality of life we will experience with the unrestrained opportunity to grow in Christ’s likeness throughout eternity. Jesus promised this as the more abundant life (John 10:10), and it is thus drastically more valuable than a million years of temporal living. The two cannot be compared. Fanny J. Crosby understood this when she wrote the song, Take the World, but Give Me Jesus:

Take the world, but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through eternal years the same.
THE POINT OF THE FOCUS

“Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come. . . .

“The source of such an education is brought to view in these words of Holy Writ, pointing to the Infinite One: In Him ‘are hid all the treasures of wisdom.’ Colossians 2:3. ‘He hath counsel and understanding.’ Job 12:13.

“. . . As the moon and the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world's great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world. . . .”

“In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. . . . “

“In this communion is found the highest education. It is God’s own method of development. ‘Acquaint now thyself with Him’ (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. . . .

“The true ‘higher education’ is that imparted by Him with whom ‘is wisdom and strength’ (Job 12:13), out of whose mouth ‘cometh knowledge and understanding.’ (Proverbs 2:6).”

(Education, 13, 14)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Why is communion with God such a difficult concept to understand?

What do we use to replace our communion with God?

How does modern education seek to excise God from education?

How should godly education result in goodness and peace?

What was/is the ultimate goal of your educational experience?

What is our role when God is the source, the goal, and the means of the spiritual educational journey?

In what way has communion with God affected your body, soul, and mind?

What can God do with our regrets of past educational experiences?