

A Simple Gospel

What is God like?

The answer to this question is that, although you may not know Him as you ought, you already know what He is like! The wondrous design of the natural world, the beauty of a star-studded sky, the fascinating laws of physics all testify to the glory and majesty of God. Every one of us has knowledge of Him. Perhaps you are an artist -- then you have glimpsed the mind of the God who spoke creation into existence. Maybe you enjoy science -- then God's unchanging nature and logical thought are evident to you. A lawyer knows that God is just and will punish evil. A mother knows the gentle nurture of God.

God is all of these and more. He is all loving, all wise, all powerful, fully just, holy, and merciful, and these are just a few of His attributes. To use a parable of Jesus -- God is so great that He is like a treasure hidden in a field and when a man realized just how great that treasure was he went and sold everything he had so that he could buy the field, and with it obtain the treasure (you can look this up in Matthew 13:44). It is an understatement to say that God is worth knowing.

It doesn't seem like I know God

Some may object "it does not seem as if I know God," or even more forcefully, "I most certainly do not know God." Whereas the testimony of our world indeed points to the Creator, we require a special kind of message to understand why our knowledge of God might seem passing, or even non-existent. We hear this message in the Bible, where we are told that "although they knew God," yet they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:21, 18)

Our problem is that we hide our knowledge in deep places -- we suppress it and we believe that we do not know God.

If that seems like a strange concept, consider this analogy: We are like a parent who cannot bring ourselves to admit that our child has a drug addiction even after being presented with a multitude of evidences. Deep down we know it to be true but desire so much that it not be true that we suppress it. In the same way, because of our sinful rebellion against God, we suppress the truth that is evident all around us and claim that we do not know Him.

Why would I suppress this truth?

If it is true that God is indeed as glorious as we have described then it may seem odd that anyone would suppress this truth. How is it that we suppress this truth? Why do we do it? The answer is in Romans 1:18 again: "in unrighteousness."

In other words, the suppression of the truth of God demonstrates our unrighteousness, or sinfulness, or corruptness (or any of a number of synonyms).

We suppress the truth because in our pride we want to reject the idea of a creator and the resulting responsibilities we would then have toward Him. We pretend that the evidences all around us do not exist so that we may live as we please. All of this springs from our heart, which is sinful in every nook and cranny.

To summarize:

God is glorious and worth knowing. He has revealed Himself to us in such a way that we all know Him, but in our sinfulness we choose to suppress this knowledge and live as if we don't.

Isn't that terrible? There is a treasure hidden in a field and we want nothing to do with it.

What has God done about this?

Because of His great love, God set about to fix this problem. He did this by sending His Son Jesus Christ to live a life of obedience and faith on the earth. Not only was Jesus obedient, He was devoted to the true knowledge of His Father, and there was no sin in Him to suppress that true knowledge. Jesus knew the Father in the way we ought to, but don't want to. God then united His people to Christ by faith so that when Jesus was raised from the dead, His people were also raised with new hearts that desire the true knowledge of God. By uniting us to Christ in His death and resurrection, God gave us new hearts that desire Him in a way they couldn't before. He also accounts Christ's goodness to us, as if we had produced it on our own, even though we didn't!

The beautiful irony of heaven is that God's work to rescue His people to a true knowledge served to make Him even more glorious and even more worth knowing. Christ reveals God's glory in a way that was only hinted at in the exodus from Egypt or in the majesty of Solomon's temple. Christ Himself is the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price. In revealing the Father, Christ has revealed Himself to be gloriously worth knowing.

How should I respond?

When confronted with God's glory in Christ, the only response is to repent of the ways you have suppressed His truth in unrighteousness, and trust that in Christ's death and resurrection God has made you new. Obedience and faith spring from this changed heart. The bible becomes a source of an ever deeper knowledge of an intimacy with the Father. This heart says, along with the apostle Paul, "for me, to live is Christ."

Confess to God that you want a true knowledge of Him, thank Him for the death and resurrection of Jesus, and trust that God will do this for you because of Christ!