

No One Like Him

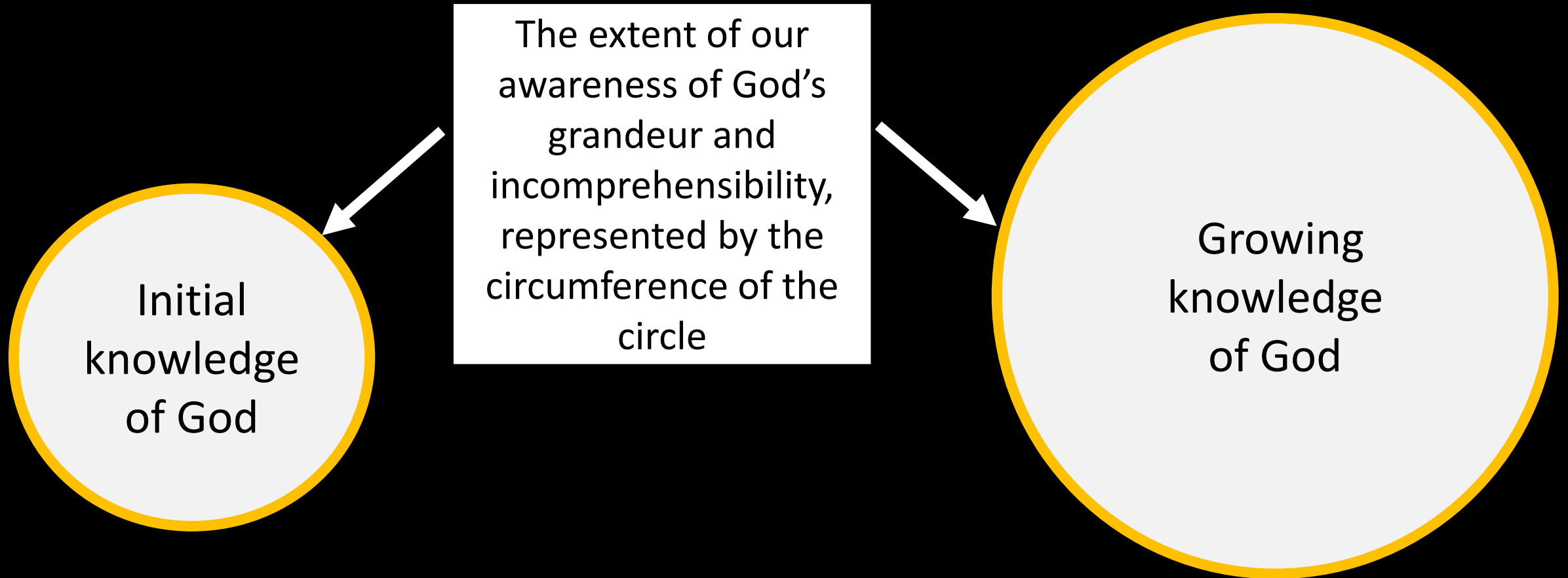
A
Study
of
God's
Perfections

Men of the Word
2022-23

Wisdom

Wednesday,
March 22, 2023

Why do I think I know less about God now than ever?



As true knowledge of Him grows, so does awareness of His incomprehensibility.

I. Definition of Divine “Wisdom”

A. What wisdom means.

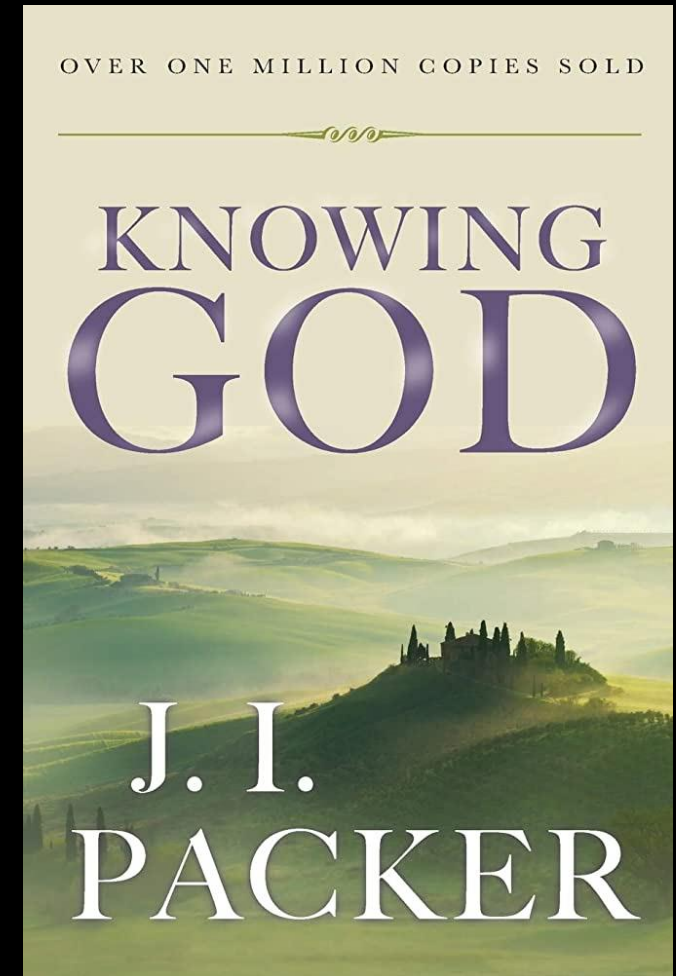
- **The wisdom of God refers to the perfect manner by which God achieves His purposes.**
- In particular, God’s wisdom is the outworking of His omniscience, omnipotence, and goodness.
 - **OMNISCIENCE:** God’s perfect and absolute knowledge of all things.
 - **OMNIPOTENCE:** God’s ability to accomplish anything He pleases.
 - **GOODNESS:** God’s disposition to treat His creation generously.



- God *knows all things*.
- God not only knows all things but *can do all things*.
- God not only knows all things and can do all things, but He always intends and achieves what is *inherently good*.
- Thus, God always knows what *goals* are best and which *means* most perfectly achieve them, and He never lacks the power to implement these means.

“Wisdom without power would be pathetic, a broken reed; power without wisdom would be merely frightening; but in God boundless wisdom and endless power are united, and this makes him utterly worthy of our fullest trust.”

—J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 91





- The primary word to describe God’s wisdom in the Old Testament (and wisdom in general) is the Hebrew term ***hokmāh*** (חִכְמָה).
- The word refers to “skill in technical matters; practical experience,” and describes “skill in living well.”
- It entails “a practical knowledge that helps one know how to act and how to speak in different situations. Wisdom entails the ability to avoid problems, and the skill to handle them when they present themselves” (Tremper Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*, 14–15).



- The New Testament term, ***sophia*** (σοφία), also denotes “the capacity to understand and function accordingly.”
- Ultimately, wisdom = *skill* and *success*.

- God's *ends* (purposes) are always true; His *means* (resources) are never inadequate; His *ways* (strategies) are always good.
- **J. L. Dagg:** "God is infinitely wise, because He selects the best possible end of action . . . [and] because He adopts the best possible means for the accomplishment of the end which he has in view" (*Manual of Theology*, 86–87).
- **Louis Berkhof:** God's wisdom is "that perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most" (*Systematic Theology*, 69).
- **John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue:** God's wisdom is His "perfect knowledge of how to act skillfully so that he will accomplish all his good pleasure—to glorify himself" (*Biblical Doctrine*, 180).

B. What God's wisdom does not mean.

- That God is all-wise does not mean that His good purposes must be instantly recognized or realized (see Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 5:6).
- That God is all-wise does not mean that He cannot utilize the evil actions of others to achieve His good purposes (see Genesis 50:20).
- That God is all-wise does not mean that He is responsible for the evil that occurs in creation (see James 1:13).
- That God is all-wise does not mean that He must answer to an external standard of wisdom (see Proverbs 29:30; Romans 9:20).

II. Biblical Testimony to God's Wisdom

A. God Himself is the source of all wisdom.

- **Job 28:12–28** – “But where can wisdom be found? . . . Where then does wisdom come from? . . . God understands its way, and He knows its place. . . .”
- **Proverbs 2:6** – “For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.”
- **Proverbs 8:22–24** – Lady Wisdom speaks, “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.”

- **Daniel 2:20–23** – “Daniel said, ‘Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king’s matter.’”
- **James 1:5** – “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

B. God's wisdom is displayed in the beauty of creation.

- **Psalms 104:24** – “O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your possessions.”
- **Psalms 136:5** – “[Give thanks] to Him who made the heavens with skill, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”
- **Psalms 139:15–16** – “My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, *and* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them.”
- **Proverbs 3:19** – “The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.”

“God is the supreme artist. Just as a human artist realizes his idea in a work of art, so God creates all things in accordance with the ideas he has formed. The world is God’s work of art. He is the architect and builder of the entire universe. God does not work without thinking, but is guided in all his works by wisdom, by his ideas.”

—Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.206



C. God's wisdom is manifested in the intricacies of providence.

- **Genesis 50:20** – “As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”
- **Proverbs 16:9** – “The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”
- **Proverbs 21:1** – “The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.”
- **Romans 8:28** – “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

“The wisdom of God is . . . manifest in the creation, ordering, guidance, and government of all things. Wisdom is and remains the ‘master worker’ (Prov. 8:30), the ‘fashioner of all things’ . . . which creates and governs all things, leading them onward to their destination, which is the glorification of God’s name.”

—Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.207



D. God's wisdom is apexed in the incarnation of His Son.

- **Galatians 4:3–6** – “So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”
- **1 Corinthians 1:24** – “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
- **1 Corinthians 1:30** – “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”
- **Colossians 2:3** – Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”



E. God's wisdom is vindicated in the salvation of sinners.

- **Ephesians 3:8–10** – “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*.”



- **1 Corinthians 1:18–25** – “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.’ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

III. What Wisdom Demands from Us

A. God's wisdom should be the cause of fervent worship.

- **Psalms 136:5** – “[Give thanks] to Him who made the heavens with skill, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”
- **Daniel 2:20-22** – “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.”



B. God's wisdom should make it easy for us to be content in our circumstances.

- Our confession of God's wisdom—*His perfect skill*—must lead to the silencing of our complaints.
- **Isaiah 40:13–14** – “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding? And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?”
- **Romans 9:20** – “Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it?”



- Our confession of God's wisdom fuels a dynamic faith that accepts the fact that His ways—though often hid from our sight—are perfect.
- **Deuteronomy 29:29** – “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”
- **Proverbs 3:5–6** – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”
- **Romans 8:28** – “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”



“For the truth is that God in his wisdom, to make and keep us humble and to teach us to walk by faith, has hidden from us almost everything that we should like to know about the providential purposes which he is working out in the churches and in our own lives.”

—Packer, *Knowing God*, 106

“Do not presume to be the governor of the world, but leave the reins of government in his hands who made it, and best knows how to rule it.”

—*Martin Luther*

“We must suffer God to be wiser than ourselves, and acknowledge that there is something sovereign in his ways not to be measured by the feeble reed of our weak understandings.”

—*Stephen Charnock*

“How happy are they who can resign all to him, see his hands in every dispensation, and believe that he chooses better for them than they possibly could for themselves!”

—*John Newton*

“God Moves in a Mysterious Way” (William Cowper, 1774)

[1] God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

[2] Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.

[3] Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

[4] Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

[5] His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

[6] Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain

C. God's wisdom should motivate us to acquire the wisdom He shares.

- Wisdom is a communicable attribute.
- Remember, wisdom is “a practical knowledge that helps one know how to act and how to speak in different situations. Wisdom entails the ability to avoid problems, and the skill to handle them when they present themselves” (Longman).
- **Proverbs 4:5, 7** – “Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. . . . The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.”
- **Proverbs 8:10–11** – Wisdom states: “Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold. For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.”

- **Q:** How is that wisdom acquired?
- **A:** First and foremost, through the means of prayer and God's word:
 - **James 1:5** – “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”
 - **Psalms 19:7–9** – “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.”

“Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God’s holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours.”

—J. I. Packer

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**“Let the name of God be
blessed forever and ever,
for wisdom and power
belong to Him.”**

—Daniel 2:20