

Getting to Know God

"When God is seen clearly, theology starts dancing..."

1. Theology versus Personal Knowledge

"What God is like" versus "What God likes"

Personal knowledge = **observation of behavior**, plus **personal disclosure**, in a **context of trust**

2. Observation of behavior:

Creation: What does it tell us about God's heart that He made color, music, cinnamon, strawberries, wildflowers, sunsets/sunrises, roses, the Northern Lights, jasmine, honeysuckle?

Redemption-History: Creation of Israel, His chasing after His people by the prophets, the Incarnation/Cross

The life of Jesus: *"He who has seen me, has seen the Father"*

The life of His children...on our better days!

3. He interacts, dialogues, and discloses His heart to His confidants

*I will praise the LORD, who **counsels me**; even at night my heart instructs me. (Ps 16.7)*

*Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You **guide me** with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. (Ps 73.23)*

*The **LORD confides in those who fear him**; he makes his covenant known to them. (Ps 25.14)*

*Then the LORD said, "**Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?** Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. (Gen 18.17)*

*for the LORD detests a perverse man but **takes the upright into his confidence.**(Prov 3.32)*

*He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven **has been given to you, but not to them.** Whoever has **will be given more**, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from (Mt 13.11ff)*

*Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. **If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.**" (John 7.16f)*

*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. **He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.**" (John 14.21)*

*All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too **God will make clear to you.** (Philp 3.15)*

[This is why we refer to it as a "personal relationship with the Living God" instead of the social euphemistic "religious belief system"!]]

A portrait of God

1. His emotional life

- He celebrates

*as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so **will your God rejoice over you.**(Is 62.5)*

*The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. **He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.**" (Zeph 3.17)*

- He grieves:

*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. **The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.** So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth -- men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air -- for **I am grieved that I have made them.**" (Gen 6.5-6)*

*Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: **"I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions."** Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. (1 Sam 15.11)*

*When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, **the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand."** The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (2 Sam 24.16)*

*How often they rebelled against him in the desert and **grieved him** in the wasteland! (Ps 78.40)*

*Yet they rebelled and **grieved his Holy Spirit**. (Is 63.10)*

*'If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for **I am grieved over the disaster I have inflicted on you**. (Jer 42.10)*

*Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me -- **how I have been grieved** by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, (Ezek 6.9)*

*And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4.30)*

- He gets frustrated with us:

*Again and again they put God to the test; **they vexed the Holy One of Israel**. (Ps 78.41)*

***All day long I have held out my hands** to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations -- a people **who continually provoke me** to my very face, (Is 65.2)*

*Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? **Listen, listen to me**, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. (Is 55.2ff)*

*Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. **Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die**, O house of Israel?' (Ezek 33.11)*

***How long, O men**, will you turn my glory into shame? **How long** will you love delusions and seek false gods? (Ps 4.2)*

*"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "**how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.**" Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment. (Mt 17.17)*

2. What He delights in, enjoys

The LORD loves righteousness and justice; (Ps 33.5)

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hos 6.6)

*You do not stay angry forever but **delight to show mercy.*** (Micah 7.18)

*But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and **knows me**, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, **for in these I delight,**" declares the LORD.* (Jer 9.24)

"I will rejoice in doing them good" (Jer 32.41)

*"He will take **great delight in you**, he will quiet you with his love, **he will rejoice over you with singing.**"* (Zeph 3.17; Ps 149.3f)

*But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD **delight** in burnt offerings and sacrifices **as much as** in obeying the voice of the LORD?"* (I Sam 15.22)

*If the LORD **delights in a man's way**, he makes his steps firm;* (Ps 37.3)

*the LORD **delights in those who fear him**, who put their hope in his unfailing love.* (Ps 147.11)

*The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but **accurate weights are his delight.***(Prov 11.1 -- TRUTH)

*The LORD detests lying lips, but he **delights in men who are truthful.*** (Provr 12.22)

*God loves a **cheerful giver.*** (2 Cor 9.7)

And pre-eminently, His SON!! ("And a voice from heaven said, "**This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**" ...Matt 3.17) and those who appreciate His Son: "No, the **Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.**" (John 16.27)

3. God, the hedonist-maker?

*How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink **from your river of delights.***(Ps 36.7)

*Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and **your soul will delight in the richest of fare.*** (Is 55.2)

*On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare **a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine -- the best of meats and the finest of wines.** On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces ;he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." (Is 25.6)*

*You have made known to me the path of life; **you will fill me with joy** in your presence, **with eternal pleasures at your right hand.** (Ps 16.11)*

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, **who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.** (I Tim 6.17)*

[But careful not to confuse the gifts with the Giver: *"lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"* (2 tim 3.4).]

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"All the towering materialism which dominates the modern mind rests ultimately upon one assumption; a false assumption. It is supposed that if a thing goes on repeating itself it is probably dead; a piece of clockwork. People feel that if the universe was personal it would vary; if the sun were alive it would dance. This is a fallacy even in relation to known fact. For the variation in human affairs is generally brought into them, not by life, but by death; by the dying down or breaking off of their strength or desire. A man varies his movements because of some slight element of failure or fatigue. He gets into an omnibus because he is tired of walking; or he walks because he is tired of sitting still. But if his life and joy were so gigantic that he never tired of going to Islington, he might go to Islington as regularly as the Thames goes to Sheerness. The very speed and ecstasy of his life would have the stillness of death. The sun rises every morning. I do not rise every morning; but the variation is due not to my activity, but to my inaction. Now, to put the matter in a popular phrase, it might be true that the sun rises regularly because he never gets tired of rising. His routine might be due, not to a lifelessness, but to a rush of life. The thing I mean can be seen, for instance, in children, when they find some game or joke that they specially enjoy. A child kicks his legs rhythmically through excess, not absence, of life. Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical encore." [Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*]