



Knowing GOD

What Difference Does it Make?

by Pastor Scott Boerckel

Knowing God is the greatest privilege ever given to human beings. However, knowing God is much more complex than we might imagine.

We can say, for example, that we know a book or a car or accounting. That involves the mastery of a subject. It is altogether more complicated to say that we know a person. When a man says, "I know my wife," he is not expressing the mastery of a subject but rather the depth of life experience, growth of sharing, and the mutual vulnerability that comes over years of life together. And yet, if the man is honest, he will admit that there is still room for growth to know his wife still more.

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"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." A.W. Tozer

There is a certain predictability about how a person lives based on what they believe is true about God. What we think about God determines so much about us. If what we think about God is wrong, what we might get right about anything else really pales in significance.

Our knowledge of God, however, ought to transform us rather than merely satisfy our curiosity or make us unbeatable at Bible trivia. In this edition of the OakLeaf you will be introduced to several attributes of God with the intention of changing the way you live.



Knowing God — What Difference Does it Make?

How much more complicated it is when we move from the world of knowing the inanimate to knowing a person to knowing the person of God! If knowing God is our ambition, we must start humbly, recognizing that there might be complexities in the pursuit of knowing God that we did not even contemplate.

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One of those complexities is in the connection between theology and spirituality. Theology is the study of God. To do theology is to examine the scriptures to determine what God is like, His attributes and His ways. It is a thoroughly delightful pursuit. However, as J. I. Packer notes in his book, “Knowing God,” “one

can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him.” In fact, if we only pursue knowing about God, we will end up cold-hearted, critical, and hardly know God at all.

The word, “spirituality,” is overused these days, and more often misused than used correctly. Here, we want to use the word to describe the growth in experience and intimacy with God that comes from a real relationship with Him. As wonderful as that is, we must be reminded of J. I. Packer’s warning on this matter as well, namely that one can pursue an intensely personal walk with God without much knowledge of God. There can be a focus on experience at the expense of scripture. There can be a focus on the “how to’s” at the expense of theological integrity. It is just here at the connection of theology and spirituality that this edition of the OakLeaf is dedicated. How can the believer properly connect the knowledge about God with an experience with God? The articles here, written by East White Oak people, will each take one attribute of God and point to how we can tie our understanding of God with our experience with Him.

“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).



“Why is it that PhDs in
theology commit adultery?
They don’t know God.
You can read theology
10 hours a day, 40 years long and not know
God as beautiful, all-satisfying, the highest
treasure of your life...” — **John Piper**

Scan the QR code to
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the 2015 Desiring God
Conference.



God is Absolutely Unique

by Pastor Traig Whittaker

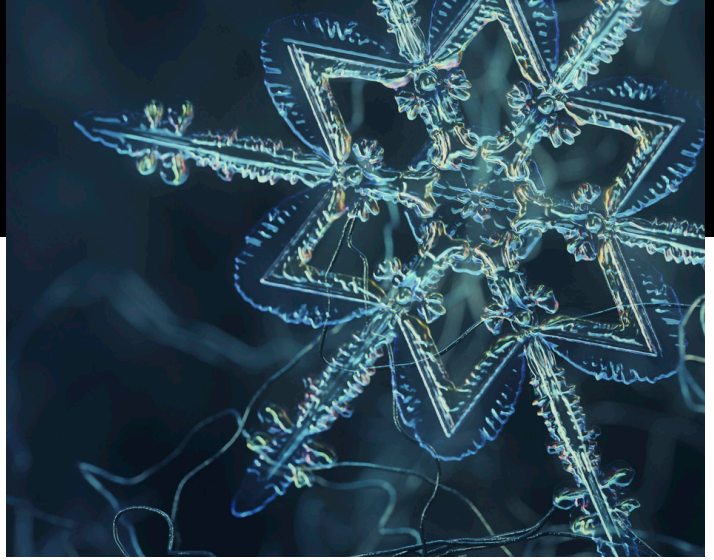
I recently struck up a conversation with someone who told me that he graduated from Brigham Young University. I asked if he would tell me more about Mormonism, and he began by saying that it wouldn't differ much from what I believed since he knew that I was a Christian.

However, a core Mormon doctrine is, "As man is now, God once was; as God is now, man may be." Mormon men are taught to follow the same path as "Heavenly Father." They're told it's a path which leads them to becoming a god. Mormons believe that there are many worlds, each with its own god. All these gods were once men.

As Christians, we know that is untrue. In fact, one of God's attributes is that he is absolutely unique. "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God." (Isaiah 45:5)

Knowing God is so integral to our relationship with him that the New City Catechism, which we have been working through in East White Oak's children's ministry since January 2025, says the reason God has created us is "to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him." To "know him" is an essential part of living out our God-ordained purpose.

Mormons neither know nor worship the absolutely unique God of the Bible. They worship a god of their own making. Are we guilty in any way of doing the same? How would we know? Well, does "your" God love America more than other nations? Does "your" God like hymns better than contemporary songs? Is "your" God a lot angrier at some sinners than others? It's nice to have a God who feels the



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same way as we do about stuff (sarcasm intended). Like Mormons, have we concocted a view of God that is untrue, unbiblical?

Worshipping a god of our own making is no worship at all for Mormons or anyone. Only the one true God should be worshipped. Make sure that your God is the God of the Bible. We know Him by being Rooted in Scripture. He is absolutely unique; besides Him there is no God.



Pastor Traig Whittaker has served at East White Oak since 2000. His ministry responsibilities include oversight of the church's Christian Education programs and administrative duties. Traig is married to Laura and they have four adult children.



God is Glorious

by Dr. Jeff VanGoethem

The biblical terms for glory, at their root mean “weightiness” (importance) and “brightness” (heavenly radiance).

I have found it difficult to imagine God’s “weightiness” and “radiance” in the eternal, heavenly realm, where none of us have ever been.

I’ve found that such thoughts draw me toward unhelpful abstractions. After all the Bible says that “God alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light” (1Tim. 6:16).

Thus when I think of God’s glory, I prefer to think of His glorious supremacy which is certainly part of the biblical meaning. God’s glory is more than this of course, but while we live in this fallen and troubled world, one way to apply the truth of God’s glory is to think of supremacy. He is greater, better, higher than the creation we live in and the creatures He has made.

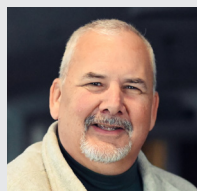
And we should note well that this supremacy does break into our world. That’s when we say “Glory!” His glory, including His supreme love, holiness, righteousness, goodness, justice, beauty, wisdom, et.al., touches our world in a myriad of awesome ways. And so we do see God’s glory. We see His greatness and supremacy in His touch of our world.

Some years ago I worked hard to arrange a tour to Israel. The week before departure, Yasser Arafat started an intifada, on-going violent riots over in Israel. We had to cancel the trip. I took a studied interest in Arafat after that and did not like what I saw. When he finally died, I said, “glory.” God’s glorious justice had finally taken out this wicked, blood-thirsty murderer. I read some years later that he may have found Jesus

through his wife in his last days. I hope it is true. If so, I say “glory” to that too. We see God’s glory in many and often surprising ways as His supremacy over creation and creature is displayed before our eyes.

Thus is God’s glory revealed in this world. His supremacy over creation and creature is evidenced. When a soul is saved, we see the glory of God. When a baby is born, we see the glory of God. When powerful events of nature fall upon humanity, we see the glory of God. When a wicked nation is brought down, we see the glory of God. When a just and righteous law is passed, we see the glory of God. When a brother or sister is raised up from illness or despondency, we see the glory of God. When we see a beautiful work of art or hear a magnificent piece of music, this too is the glory of God. In all such ways, we see the supremacy of God touching and impacting our world through His truth, goodness, justice, love, beauty, etc. The eyes of faith see His supremacy over creation and creature.

As mentioned above, there is a hint in the New Testament term for glory of “radiance” or “brightness.” Yes God is seen, He radiates His glory in the ways and means by which He impacts this world. The eyes of faith see this. Let us pay attention and give Him glory.



Pastor Jeff VanGoethem has been in pastoral ministry for 40 years, including nearly twenty as Senior Pastor of East White Oak. He has returned to East White Oak after pastoring in Dallas, Texas to serve as Associate Pastor of Spiritual

Development and Missions. He is married to Karen. They have four daughters and five grandchildren.



God is Holy

by Pastor Justin Waples

Let's explore together the holiness of God! This is a concept so profound and vast that it often feels beyond our full understanding or ability to explain.

Living in a world heavily contaminated by sin, even those considered righteous find their perception of God's holiness diminished, often losing the awe and reverence it deserves. Divine holiness is unlike anything else; it is infinite, unapproachable, and incomprehensible. We are like blind people groping in darkness, desperately trying to grasp the true essence of God's holiness.

A.W. Tozer wrote: "The natural man is blind to it (the holiness of God). He may fear God's power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine. Only the Spirit of the Holy One can impart to the human spirit the knowledge of the holy. Yet as electric power flows only through a conductor, so the Spirit flows through truth and must find some measure of truth in the mind before He can illuminate the heart....The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth. It is possible to have some truth in the mind without having the Spirit in the heart, but it is never possible to have the Spirit apart from truth."

Romans 10:17 reminds us that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." The Bible serves as the ultimate source of truth regarding God's holiness. It uses terms like "holy" and "holiness" approximately 654 times, emphasizing the concept of being set apart or separated.

God's holiness is not something He strives for; it is intrinsic to His very nature. Holiness is simply who He is. His love for holiness and His desire for His people to reflect that holiness serve as evidence of His own divine character. This holiness should evoke in us a sense of awe and majesty, recognizing God's absolute otherness. Reformed theologian, Louis Berkhof, notes that this realization awakens in

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humans a sense of "absolute nothingness"—a creaturely humility and self-abasement.

What does this mean for us? A true response to God's majestic holiness involves both reverent awe and humble acknowledgment of our own impurity. It calls us to worship and to live holy lives—separated from sin and surrendered to God's will. As Leviticus 19:2 commands, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Embracing God's holiness transforms our hearts and directs our lives toward genuine worship and righteousness.



Pastor Justin Waples is East White Oak's Outreach and Discipleship pastor. He is married to Abigail and they are blessed with five children. Justin is passionate about equipping the saints for ministry and helping each member reach out to their neighbors and community.



God is Merciful

by Dirk May

Imagine that you are a King. The subjects of your realm are in a great rebellion against you. You quash the uprising. Without question it is your right to exile, imprison, or even execute the lawbreakers.

The Living God faced this situation. However, His response was shocking. The Lord opened a way to bring back the rebels into right relationship with Him.

The devil might say “no skin off God’s back”. He can just look the other way and forgive the wayward subjects. Yet, this overlooks the righteousness of God and the deep cost. The Godhead had to send the Son, Jesus, from the grandeur and Holiness of heaven to the lowly earth, as a man. The Father had to agree and watch His son suffer and die a horrible death, and the Holy Spirit had to dwell in man.

“More than an abstract theological concept... the mercy of God should shake us to the core and cause us to live differently.”

No cost to man, supreme cost to God. This is what is called the mercy of God. Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.”

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More than an abstract theological concept, an academic pondering, the mercy of God should shake us to the core and cause us to live differently.

First, when we look in the mirror we will see the devastation of sin and ask the Lord to remove any longing we have for it. Second, our lives should be full of thanksgiving and joy. From exile to close relationship with our Maker, Savior, and Comforter. From bondage to freedom in Christ. From death to real life. Third, our lives should be marked with the same mercy of God toward others. Jesus gave the parable of the one who was forgiven a great debt, and in turn refused to forgive the minor debt of another. Would we fail to forgive the wounds another man might inflict on us, in the light of God’s great mercy toward us? Fourth, our prayers should be populated with requests for God’s mercy on others. We are surrounded with family members, co-workers, friends, and neighbors who need God’s mercy of salvation. May we cry out for them to the One who is willing and able to supply His endless mercy.

Brothers and Sisters, let us live in the joy of God’s mercy.



Dirk May serves as an elder and Small Group leader. He enjoys spending his free time laughing with his wife, Sue, and playing with their grandchildren.

God is Sovereign

by Doxa Kudari



“Whatever Yahweh pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” Psalm 135:6

When we consider the sovereignty of God, we acknowledge that God has the absolute right to rule over all creation, encompassing everything, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy, and over the entire visible and invisible creation. The sovereignty of God extends not just over physical or created realms but also to every spiritual matter, such as redemption, calling, election, justification, judgment, and glorification.

When we ponder how God exercises His sovereignty, we observe in the Scriptures that He, being sovereign, does not negate the responsibility of the creations, such as humans. We remain responsible for being faithful to what we have been entrusted with, including mundane responsibilities and spiritual disciplines. This seemingly contradictory idea of God’s sovereignty and the responsibility of created beings gives rise to several questions or, at times, misunderstandings. Although I grew up in a Christian home and attended a believing church, I am still growing in my understanding of reconciling these two aspects. I realized that the extreme views of this can lead to fatalism or legalism. I have been listening to several theologians and reading books, both for academic and personal growth, to deepen my understanding of God’s sovereignty. The more I grapple with this topic, the more it increases my confidence in the Lord, both during the good and difficult times. Going to college and living away from home, I have experienced both personal and spiritual challenges. However, the understanding of God’s sovereignty has helped and sustained me on my journey.

For instance, I have seen and been around several deaths of my friends’ family members, plane crashes of fellow students, serious health issues, and emotional and mental

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health struggles. These often evoke a lot of different emotions and fears. Most of those things are beyond one’s control, which really made me consider many things. However, knowing the One who is sovereign over everything helps to maintain steadiness. Sometimes it is difficult to explain how I can maintain peace during these situations. I attribute that to the God who supernaturally governs all things and meets all our needs. The more I grow in understanding, the more I realize what I know is just scratching the surface. My desire is to grow more in learning and experiencing the sovereignty of God. I am certain, based on my very limited experience, that such endeavors will tremendously encourage you, as they have me.

“...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” *Philippians 2:12-13*



Doxa Zaneta Kudari is the daughter of Elia and Jyothi Kudari. She has two sisters, Hannah and Joy. She has been attending East White Oak since 2008. She is currently attending college at Cedarville University. In her free time Doxa can be found reading, playing music, and spending time with her family.



God is Gentle

by Anna Meyer

In a world of unfriendliness and endless noise, the idea of gentleness is somewhat foreign. Repulsive, even.

So it makes sense that we as Christians, especially in Western culture, often struggle to even see God's gentleness in our lives, let alone understand it. But God's gentleness surrounds us, especially during our regular Bible reading.

When reading Scriptures regularly, God's gentleness **gives us confidence to approach Him honestly.** People like Moses (Numbers 11:11-12), David (2 Samuel 6:8), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), and even Jesus Himself (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) don't hold back when sharing what they're feeling or experiencing. Neither should we. God understands that we will experience challenges in life. He wants us no matter how negative our circumstances (or emotions) are.

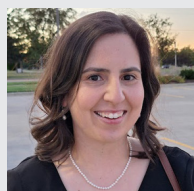
God's gentleness can also help **make us more receptive to accepting the truth of God's Word.** Sometimes the truth is a tough pill to swallow. But God's gentleness gives us room to admit when we've messed up. He doesn't look down on us in mockery or frustration as we wrestle with conviction. He's a good Father who cares for His children and takes into account their limitations, as David describes in Psalm 103:13.

God's gentleness also helps us **understand His Word more clearly when we're reading Scriptures.** Sometimes research and extensive study aren't enough to help us understand a particular story or passage. But we can pray and ask Him to help guide us. As Jesus promises us in Matthew 7:7, we will get an answer, even if it takes time.

"People like Moses, David, Elijah, and even Jesus himself don't hold back when sharing what they're feeling or experiencing. Neither should we."

One of my favorite examples of God's gentleness is when he spoke to Elijah in a "low whisper" (1 Kings 19:12, ESV). The greatness of God isn't solely based on His ability to split seas and hold the sun still. It's based on His dramatic displays of power *and also* His willingness to show up in the quiet, subtle moments of our lives.

So as Instagram-cliché as it might be to read your Bible outside on your porch on a nice sunny day, it's also a tremendous opportunity to experience God's gentle impact on your life. Or at your dining room table. Wherever. I'm 99% sure God is flexible. 😊



Anna Meyer and her husband, Chris, have been members of East White Oak Bible Church since 2021. She serves on the worship team and supports various aspects of the music ministry. After seven years in retail, Anna now works from home as a freelance copywriter. In her free time, she enjoys photography, creative writing, and taking walks with their American Akita, Zeus.



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