Knowing God Study Guide

An Exercise in Spiritual Growth and Discipleship Using the Book by J.I. Packer

Section One
Know The Lord

by
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For Study Groups or Personal Use
Preface

While many books and authors have passed through Christian awareness over the centuries, periodically a book comes along that strikes a cord deep in the Christian community. Knowing God by J.I. Packer is one such example. This insightful book has stood the test of time and has challenged Christians at every level of maturity not only to know about the God they profess, but to get off the balcony of observation and get onto the road of discovery and come to know their God intimately and personally.

For a detailed view of the life of James Innell Packer see the biography by Alister McGrath. But to help you get started, here is a quick overview of his life.

Packer began life in the working-class neighborhood of Gloucester, England. He never quite fit in, which is not unusual for a bookish child with an intellectual bent, but a “violent collision with a bread van” at the age of seven set him on the course his life would follow. While running away from schoolboys who were taunting him, he ran out into the street and was hit by a van, resulting in a severe head injury. A metal plate was inserted in his head. Exposed and with rubber softening its edges, Packer felt like “A speckled bird,” making it even more difficult to fit in. The restrictions the accident placed on his teenage life, which meant no sports and limited physical activity, steered him instead to a life of reading and intellectual curiosity. At the age of eleven, expecting a bicycle for his birthday, he instead got a typewriter. That, coupled with the results of his accident, sealed his life’s direction. While he had in many ways an extremely difficult life, he had an innate a pluckiness that served him well over the years.

His faith, initially the product of parents with whom he regularly attended church, took a personal turn in secondary school (what we in the U.S. would call high school). In college, reading C. S. Lewis, among others, and his studying the Bible brought him to a point where at a meeting of the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (OICCU, or CU) he finally made, “A personal transaction with the living Lord, the Lord Jesus.” His newfound faith did nothing to mitigate his sense of isolation and that might be why he began to appreciate and study the great Puritan authors, themselves isolated from the mainstream of English society in their lifetimes. Several quotes illustrate his attachment. “The Puritans answered those questions that perplexed me. From the Puritans, I acquired what I didn’t have from the start—that is, a sense of the importance and primacy of truth.” Unlike his Puritan mentors and despite his own isolation, he was ordained in the Church of England. However, it was at an accidental speaking engagement that the course of his life would change. He met his wife Kit and at the same time broke through his long-standing fear of being in large public situations. They were married in July of 1954.

After writing his first book, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, a critique of Christian Fundamentalism, in 1958, he has gone on to author over forty books (and still counting) as well as editing countless others. However, he is best known for the book we are studying. Packer is also well known for his linear “habit of mind” and style of communication. Once he starts speaking on a thought he simply cannot stop until he has carried the thought to its logical conclusion. This predilection has led to many difficulties for Packer over the years. I have a very similar bent and I fully understand the problems this state of mind causes both to oneself and those you interact with.

While reading through Packer’s Knowing God can be memorable, and has been for uncounted numbers of Christians, studying the book chapter by chapter changes lives. I have seen those changes happen again and again over the years as I have lead cover-to-cover studies, using a one week per chapter format. While this takes about twenty-eight weeks to complete (twenty-two chapters,
A prayer for this study

Every meaningful endeavor in life should be grounded in prayer, and this is no different. May this prayer, used as you go through the study, aid you in your efforts.

Dear Lord God, you have challenged us in your Word to study to show ourselves approved and told us to leave aside the milk of the Gospel and mature into its meat. Therefore, open our hearts, O Lord, and prepare us to learn the essence of who you are, to drink deep of your revelation of yourself. And, as we come to know you better, O Lord, may we also come to better know ourselves. Grant us, by your grace, success in our efforts. We thank you, O Lord, for your mercy and patience with us as we struggle to understand both you and ourselves better. May everything we do be done to your honor and glory. Amen.

William Meisheid
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As we begin this study, let’s look at the way Packer structured his material and why this book is worth studying over and over again. Some of you may rightfully ask why is this book worth all of this attention; maybe we could just read it once or twice, but study it over and over again? Well, it is worth it for several reasons:

1. As a study of the nature and person of the Christian triune God, its subject matter is inexhaustible.
2. Its arguments are firmly rooted in scripture and touch almost every area of the Bible where it deals with the nature of God.
3. Every time I have gone through it I have discovered something different about the God who redeemed me and have been confronted with the decision about how I should respond to that knowledge.
4. Some things just need to be done over and over again to keep us on track. This book is like going to theological spring training and as a biblical athlete, I want to get ready for each new season of Christian challenges God brings into my life.

That being said, I just enjoy the way Packer writes, his turn of phrase, his insights. In addition, as I have gotten older I have begun to appreciate John’s statement at the end of his Gospel, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

With John’s statement as a backdrop, there will always be a new book, with a new slant, or a new focus, or some new insight. To the writing of books there is no end. So now, when I find a good book that might be worth studying, I read it, and if it is as good and timeless as I had hoped, I will add it to my list and probably study it several times in the time I have left on this earth. I am reminded of the song that Franco Zeffirelli has St. Francis sing in his movie Brother Sun, Sister Moon. The refrain goes as follows: “Do few things, but do them well, take your time, go slowly.” That thought has stuck with me and as I approach the third stage of my life, rather than rushing around trying to do all the things I think I have missed (the proverbial bucket list), I am actually slowing down and cutting back. I am trying to do fewer things, but to do them well. As to this book, I have decided that knowing a book worth studying very well, is better than knowing a lot of books poorly. If you are wondering what books I consider worth study over and over, I will note them at the end of this entry. For now, let us focus on this book.

Dr. Packer divides his book into three main sections:

**Section One: Know The Lord.** Packer begins by dealing with the nature and focus of the study. He looks at theology and the people who study it. He discusses the nature of knowing and being known and how that applies to our relationship with God. Then he looks at God himself and his revelation about himself as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He introduces the Trinity by way of the incarnation and fleshes it out with the one who testifies, the Holy Spirit. This section is the foundation for the other two sections.

**Section Two: Behold Your God!** After building his foundation in Section One, Packer now addresses the substance of who God is by examining his attributes, both communicable and incommunicable and why the difference matters. For example, in Chapter 10: God’s Wisdom and Ours, Dr. Packer notes that we are created in the image of God, possessing only his communicable attributes, while one of the roots of sin and pride is our (and Satan’s) desire to
possess God’s incommunicable attributes. Packer continually grounds the attributes of God in our relationship with Him, which makes it much easier to understand them, and the God who possesses them.

Section Three: If God Be for Us… In his closing section, Packer takes the knowledge gained in the first two sections and applies it to living out the Christian life. He addresses the heart of the gospel and how that allows us to become Sons of God. He explores how God leads us through our life and gives insights into dealing with the trials and tribulations that will eventually come our way. He closes with our blessed assurance, the adequacy of God for the Christian.

One of the problems I have seen over the years of teaching this study is that people find the end of Section One and most of Section Two difficult and demanding, so if they stay with the study they begin to skim and skip. They pass the time to the “good stuff” in Section Three where we deal with our redemption and God’s grace and love. However, they do so at a terrible price, since without a firm grasp of who God really is, they fail to build the foundations of their understanding on solid rock, ending up with a haphazard and weak footing for their faith.

Please believe me when I say that a diligent study of the first two sections brings several orders of magnitude greater appreciation and understanding of the blessings and truths in Section Three. I remember a biting critique of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians that I heard in the early ’80s. The minister, a Scottish Presbyterian, said that maybe one of the reasons people go flitting from place to place seeking a new and exciting experience of God is because they have failed to know and understand who this God they seek really is and to appreciate the marvelous gift of salvation and new life in Jesus Christ He has given them in the first place. Being Charismatic, I took that admonition to heart and it energized my second effort at studying Knowing God.

In closing I said I would tell you what books I believe are worth repeated studying. Other than the bible, there are four books besides Knowing God that have been significant for me. They are:

- **Knowing Scripture** by R.C. Sproul and Robert Wolgemuth. This short book helps you examine how you approach the bible and introduces hermeneutics in a way that almost anyone can understand.

- **A Long Obedience In The Same Direction** by Eugene Peterson. Eugene is best known for his paraphrase of the Bible, The Message. In this book he addresses the failure of Christian discipleship due to corroding effects of our instant society, where instant gratification and immediate results are expected. Eugene uses the Jewish Psalms of Ascent as his source material to emphasize both obedience and the length of the long quest. It is hard for many Christians today to grasp the idea of Christianity being a long quest, but Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey, not a point of arrival.

- **Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible** by James Sire. In this book Sire examines the common methods used to distort the scriptures, which helps to see when others are “twisting scripture”. It also confronts us when we twist or distort the Scriptures to meet our own prejudices.

- **The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog**, 5th Edition by James W. Sire. Sire examines the “set of presuppositions which we hold about the basic makeup of our world.” Our “worldview” or as I like to say, the water in which we swim, colors everything we know and understand about the world. Each new edition of this book adds new and important material and insights.

There you have it. May God bless your efforts as you engage this study. Grace and peace to your day and please keep me in your prayers.
Preface: The Postmodern World

Today’s theme: Pushing back the void with anxious activity.

Scriptural background: Luke 12:29-31, “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Quote for the week

“The ‘system’ must have freedom; it must have abundance, and it must have infinite variety. Profit is the aim, happiness the desire and consumption the means. Hollywood and company manufacture dreams and models for us to mimic or wish for. Desire is awakened, stimulated, encouraged through the perpetual bombardment of images and wishes.” “What is Good and Who Says?” Stuart McAllister, Just Thinking, Spring/Summer 1998, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries

Concern: How modern influences may affect this study

We are all affected by the “water in which we swim” or the gestalt of our daily lives. We cannot avoid our time and how it influences who we are and how we think.

1. Considering the above quote and the pervasiveness of modern influences and intrusions into our lives, how will you find the necessary quietness, clarity, and perseverance to pursue this study?

Interacting With the Text: Knowing God: The Prefaces (1993 and 1973)

Knowing God: The Prefaces (1993 and 1973)

If these kinds of challenges excite you, rouse the best in you, then you are a prime candidate to take this journey with us.

In Packer’s 1993 Preface, he says the editor who commissioned the original articles that became Knowing God wanted something for “readers who were fed up with facile Christian verbiage” [simplistic or too simple explanations]. In effect, Packer was told to write Christian theology for ordinary people who wanted to dive below the surface and see the glories that resided in the deeper waters of the Christian faith. This is the approach to Christian study for people who take Hebrews 6:1-3 seriously.

“Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.” Hebrews 6:1-3
1. With that as background, what things might make it difficult for you to “leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity?” *(Hebrews 6:1)*

2. In Packer’s 1973 Preface, using John Mackay’s illustration, he talks about the difference between a person who merely observes events and one who participates in them. Have you been mostly a balconeer, a watcher, or a traveler, a walker in your life? What is the essential difference between the two ways of living?

3. Packer considers the “spirit of the age” to be a spirit that magnifies the human race and its achievements, while relegating God to an afterthought. Think about why or why not you the “spirit of the age” has affected you in the various areas of your Christian life. If you have been affected, how has it affected you?

4. According to Packer, the Renaissance ushered in an era of skepticism in which naturalistic thought denied God’s direct and complete control of this world. How do you think this skepticism has affected you?
5. Why is theology important for the Christian Church and how has it failed us?

6. What care must we take when we read books like Knowing God? Do you think this is a problem for you personally? Why or Why not?

What to Do Next

You are now ready to dive into our study. Begin Section One by reading the Chapter 1: The Study of God.

Goal: Never forget the task at hand

Think about how the “spirit of the age” and skepticism might be affecting your efforts as you read and think about what is being said. Also remember C.S. Lewis’ sobering words on imagined success as you move forward (see the end of the 1993 Preface).
Section One: Know the Lord

In Exodus 5:2, the Pharaoh of Egypt said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."

In Hebrews 8:11 it says, “No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.”

The following is taken from a poem by Edward William Bok (1863–1930). The Americanization of Edward Bok. 1921. XXXV. At the Battle-Fronts in the Great War.

I include this because everyone who becomes a child of God and then seeks to know him becomes a soldier in the fight for the Kingdom of God, a warrior standing against the forces of darkness.

“For the passing souls we pray,  
Saviour, meet them on their way;  
Let their trust lay hold on Thee  
Ere they touch eternity.

Holy counsels long forgot  
Breathe again 'mid shell and shot;  
Through the mist of life's last pain  
None shall look to Thee in vain.

To the hearts that know Thee, Lord,  
Thou wilt speak through flood or sword;  
Just beyond the cannon's roar,  
Thou art on the farther shore.

For the passing souls we pray,  
Saviour, meet them on the way;  
Thou wilt hear our yearning call,  
Who hast loved and died for all.”
Chapter 1: Theology and the Study of God

Today’s theme: The difference between knowing about God and knowing God

Scriptural background: Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Quotes for the week

"To know God better is only to realize how impossible it is that we should ever know him at all. I know not which is more childish—to deny him, or define him.” Samuel Butler (1835–1902), British author. First published in 1912. Samuel Butler's Notebooks, p. 194, E.P. Dutton & Company (1951).

"I know things. For instance, there are 108 beads in a Catholic rosary and there are 108 stitches in a baseball. When I heard that, I gave Jesus a chance. But it just didn't work out between us. The Lord laid too much guilt on me. I prefer metaphysics to theology.” Annie Savoy in the movie Bull Durham, 1988

"Theology, not morality, is the first business on the church's agenda of reform, and the church, not society, is the first target of divine criticism." Michael Horton, Reformed theologian and culture critic

Concern: The effects of existentialism

Existentialism pervades our postmodern, post-Christian world and seeps into our thinking through education, media, music, friends, and our general life experience.

Existentialism: n. Philosophy. A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts. Its adherents argue anything spiritual is unknowable and irrelevant to life. Adapted from the American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000.

1. How are you influenced by existentialism? If you think not, why not?

2. How will existentialism influence our thinking in the study of God, and how will that be a problem?
Interacting With the Text

**Goal:** To understand why it is necessary to study God (theology), not just what God asks us to do (biblical ethics - what Christians refer to as holiness or righteousness and is worked out in discipleship).

**Note:** The first three questions address issues leading up to the questions in Chapter 1.

1. We all want to better understand ourselves, to know why we do what we do; so then, why is it necessary to study God to understand ourselves?

2. What does theology mean to you? With that in mind, how does “theology” relate to studying God?

3. Have you ever thought that God is hard or impossible to know? What is Packer’s solution to this problem? What is necessary for you to take his advice?
4. Packer claims that Christians know five basic things (foundational truths) about God and he says that these should guide our study. Are any of these beginning assumptions a problem or difficult for you or do you lack a basic understand of any of them? Which ones and why?

5. For Packer, the study of God requires the study of what source materials? Do you think these source materials are adequate? What others would you add, if any?

6. While studying God, Packer will use three basic themes to approach God. As we begin this study, express these three themes in your own words and explain what they mean to you?

7. Why are our motives and attitudes for pursuing this study important? What, according to Packer, should be our motives and our goal? What are some of the dangers we face?

8. Psalm 119 has some important wisdom to help us understand about our pursuit of the knowledge of God. What is that wisdom?
9. Why does Packer consider meditation important?

10. How does Packer's definition of meditation differ from other forms, such as that practiced in Eastern religions? Can you think of any synonyms that might apply to your “meditating on the truth”? Which synonym works best for you and why?

11. After studying this chapter, how do you think knowing God is going to be different from knowing about God? Can you do this on your own? Why or why not?

What to Do Next

Continue Section One by reading Chapter 2: The People Who Know Their God. Think about how existentialism or self-satisfaction might be affecting your efforts. Begin this week by practicing your Christian meditation using the truth you have learned in Chapter 1.

Goal: Meditation as a habit

Remember, for something to become a habit you have to do it every day for twenty-one days or three weeks is a well-established brain model for effective rewiring of any habit you are trying to establish. One of our primary goals in this study is for proper Christian meditation to become a habit, to become an integral part of our discipleship walk.
Chapter 2: The People Who Know Their God

**Today’s theme:** Pharisees as porch sitters, not travelers

**Scriptural background:** Jeremiah 9:23-24a, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me…"

**Quotes for the week**

"But, with care, knowing danger, I looked at him and saw marriage on his hand." Patricia L Brueckner.


**Concern That I might be a Greek rather than a Hebrew knower of God**

There is a difference between Greek and Hebrew concepts of knowledge. Greeks felt no obligation to or for what they knew; Hebrews did. To know for a Hebrew meant responsibility.

Knowledge for the sake of knowledge—and much of the basis of our current thinking in science and technology—is Greek. With statements like, “Let it take its own course” or “It is not my concern, I am merely an observer,” the Greek view avoids responsibility. The epitome of this paradigm is the news/journalistic cameraman or photographer who just records the horror in front of him without doing anything about it.

For a Hebrew, to know something meant they had the moral and ethical demand to act on that knowledge. This is the basic premise underlying God’s revelation of Himself in scripture and how we must use that revelation (what responsibilities that knowledge imparts to us) as we study to show ourselves approved.

1. Have you been Greek or Hebrew in your past approach to knowledge? What can you do to become more Hebrew in your thinking?

**Interacting With the Text**

**Goal:** You must know your starting point to be able to chart your course. To come to a usable knowledge of God and what He demands from our life, we first have to come to terms with whether we know Him at all and if we do, how well do we know him? In addition, we must accept responsibility for what knowledge we have and what knowledge we acquire.
1. This section begins with a charge against the church as a whole, and specifically against evangelicals. Summarize the accusation. Does it apply to your current church? How? Does it apply to you? If so how?

2. According to Packer, what is the difference between knowledge about God or what God expects and knowledge of God?

3. Think about the Pharisees of Jesus' time. What did they know about godliness? How does Packer's concern over this issue, and using the Pharisees as an example, relate to this study?

4. List the four characteristics Packer says is common to those who know God. Are any of these areas of weakness or strength for you? Explain?
5. Why would knowing God create great energy for God? How does the prophet Daniel illustrate this fact?

6. Where does Packer argue that the real energy to pray comes from? What is the test he says we can apply to our prayers to check out how well we know God?

7. What core truth does the Hebrew prophet Daniel illuminate for us? Why is this important?

8. Packer argues that your prayer life is a window into your relationship with God. What do you see through your prayer window? What can you learn from Daniel to help you?
9. What separated Daniel and his three friends from the rest of Israel in Babylon? How are they different from someone who is just acting foolhardy?

10. We live in a world that cries out for peace: political peace, social peace, and most of all, personal peace. What, according to Packer, is the source of genuine personal peace and what is its true measure?

11. Every journey has a starting point. Packer suggests two things that are necessary to begin this journey. What are they? If you let go of these two things your way ahead will darken. What can you do to keep these two things with you for the whole voyage?

What to Do Next

Continue Section One by reading Chapter 3: Knowing and Being Known. Meditate on what it means to know God and the importance of prayer in your journey.

Goal: Keeping the two things that are necessary ever before us.

Remember, for something to become a habit you have to do it every day for twenty-one days. Every day for the next twenty-one days meditate on the answers to question 11.
Chapter 3: Knowing and Being Known

Today’s theme: The purpose of our existence is revealed.

Scriptural background: 1 Corinthians 13:12. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."

Quotes for the week

"We call that person who has lost his father, an orphan; and a widower that man who has lost his wife. But that man who has known the immense unhappiness of losing a friend, by what name do we call him?" Joseph Roux

"Conversion for me was not a Damascus Road experience. I slowly moved into an intellectual acceptance of what my intuition had always known." Madeleine L'Engle. Anglican Digest, Pentecost 1983.

"Is it sufficient that you have learned to drive the car, or shall we look and see what is under the hood? Most people go through life without ever knowing." Dr June Singer. Boundaries of the Soul, Doubleday, 1972.

Concern: There are no secrets from God

"For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known." Luke 12:2

Knowing God and being known by Him is a two-way street; He reveals himself to us and we expose our innermost fears, desires, thoughts, and feelings to Him. We often act as if we could really hide these things from God, but in the end that is just not possible. Part of the journey of discipleship is coming to terms with our inherent nakedness before God and learning to be willing to give Him ready access to what He already knows. This is important for us, for our growth, not for God.

1. Why do we try to hide something from God?

2. What do you think God would do if you had a change of heart and openly shared with Him what you are hiding?
Interacting With the Text

Goal: To come to terms with what it means to be a creation of God. He created us for a purpose. Can we embrace that purpose with every fiber of our being? Are we willing to be as much a God-designed human being as an oak tree is willing to be a God-designed oak tree? We rebelled; creation was subjected to futility for us. It never rebelled.

1. What is the main business of the Christian life? What thing, though true and not specifically stated but only inferred in Packer’s text, is a staggering revelation to those who learn it?

2. What does Packer say exposes whether a person is unregenerate (unsaved)? Do you agree?

3. From what ills infecting the world today should the Christian be immune? What should this immunity mean when dealing with the problems of daily living, the briars and brambles of the human condition?

4. What, according to Packer, does “knowing God” involve?

5. What is the significance of a covenant partner? Why does this matter to our journey of coming to know God?
Chapter 3: Knowing and Being Known

6. How does the Bible "flesh out" the picture of God for us? Is this enough to really know Him like we know other people in our lives? Why or why not?

7. How is knowing God intertwined with knowing Jesus Christ? Why is this important?

8. What special insight does Packer give us about the resurrection of Jesus (think about the original disciples)?

9. What three things compose the knowing of God? How are each of these important?

10. What separates those who relate to God directly (know Him) from those who have correct notions about him?
11. What are the three aspects of relationship that enter into knowing God? Which one has been least accepted throughout the history of the Church?

12. What is unique about our relationship with God and how does grace figure into it?

13. What is the most important thing happening here, which brings utter humility to all who confront it?

What to Do Next

Continue Section One by reading Chapter 4: The Only True God. Meditate on what it means to believe that there is only one true God. Consider the relevance of the second commandment to your efforts at knowing God.

Goal: Never forgetting that God first loved us.

Remember, you did not first seek out God, He sought out you and the fact that you are graven on His palms should forever be part of your understanding of who you are and who He is.
**Chapter 4: The Only True God**

**Today’s theme:** To God alone be the glory.

**Scriptural background:** *Exodus 3:14.* "And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you."

**Quote for the week**


"God creates, I do not create. I assemble and I steal everywhere to do it—from what I see, from what the dancers can do, from what others do." George Balanchine. *New York Times*, 16 Dec 63.

“…he wanted to know the names of the things he loved…Taking the trouble to know the names of things was a way of paying them respect.” Dean R Koontz, *Breathless*, Bantam Books, New York, NY.

**Concern: I have not apprehended the uniqueness of God**

God is. God is before all else, the first cause, the first mover, the first everything.

"He created all that is, seen and unseen." Nicene Creed


2. What is the difference between doubt and unbelief? Why is this distinction important?

**Interacting With the Text**

**Goal:** We all need to come to terms with the idolatry in our lives. Then we can grasp how this failure separates us from the intimate relationship we seek to have with God and how coming to terms with our idolatries is an important step as a traveler along the road of discipleship.
1. According to Packer, what are the two parts of idolatry?

2. How can something be OK and not be idolatry unless it is part of worship?

3. Think about music videos and how they affect your mental imagery when you later hear the same music without the video (this could include music used in movies). With this in mind what inherent dangers are there in images?

4. In what ways might images dishonor God?
5. In what ways might images mislead us?

6. How can metaphors and mental images (our private imaginations) be dishonoring to God?

7. Explain this statement and its significance: “God is not the sort of person we are.”

8. What test can we apply to ourselves to judge whether or not we are keeping the second commandment?
9. How can you reconcile the second commandment and Christian art that attempts portrayals of God and Christ? What is meant by symbolic, rather than representational, art?

10. How would you relate a movie like *The Passion of the Christ* or the recent *The Nativity* to the concerns of this chapter?

What to Do Next

Continue Section One by reading Chapter 5: *God Incarnate*. Meditate on what it means when we say that God become flesh in Jesus Christ. Think on the meaning of the verse of the Christmas hymn *O Come All Ye Faithful*: “Lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb.”

**Goal: Strive never to fall into the trap of idolatry.**

Remember, when God told Moses "I AM WHO I AM" He meant it. He is not who we think He is, no matter how lofty our image. He is who *He* says He is. That has a lot of ramifications for us.
Chapter 5: God Incarnate

Today’s theme: The Word became flesh.

Scriptural background: John 1:14. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Quotes for this section

"I have always had a dread of becoming a passenger in life." Princess Margrethe of Denmark. "On necessity of independent achievement." Life, January 12, 1968.

"Charm is a glow within a woman that casts a most becoming light on others." John Mason Brown. Vogue, November 15, 1956.

"You can get help from teachers, but you are going to have to learn a lot by yourself, sitting alone in a room." Theodor Geisel (“Dr Seuss”). "On becoming a writer," NY Times, May 21, 1986.

Concern: Do we really understand who Jesus is?

"True God, from true God." Nicene Creed

Theologically we could say he is the human expression of all that is knowable of the Godhead.

1. Do you ever doubt that Jesus is God? Why do you think some people claiming to be Christians do not accept his unique divinity?

2. What is the difference between being divine and being God? Why is this distinction important?

Interacting With the Text

Goal: To come to terms with the great mystery of creation, that God should become a creature for any reason, not the least of which was to die for me.
Interacting With the Text

1. What four difficulties does Packer argue are not the real issue? Are any of these a problem for you?

2. What is the supreme mystery of the Bible and the centerpiece of the New Testament? What does this mystery uniquely reveal about God?

3. Why is this mystery the cornerstone of Christian belief?

4. How is the Sonship of Jesus unique? Why is it important to understand the distinction?

5. What seven things are revealed about the Word in John’s prologue that enlighten our knowledge of incarnation and Jesus’ Sonship? Why are these things so important to our understanding of the second person of the Trinity?
6. What is the fundamental reason for the incarnation?

7. What biblical passage best interprets the incarnation? Explain?

8. Why is the incarnation important to us? What relevance does it have in your daily life?

9. Why is the kenosis theory a problem? What important consideration did it attempt to address? What is the solution to the problem it raises?
10. How does how we view Jesus' “emptying” determine our view of scripture? Why is this important?

11. What is the significance of the incarnation to the celebration of Christmas? Why can't it just be a pretty story filled with “Christmas spirit”, whatever that is?

What to Do Next

Continue Section One by reading Chapter 6: He Shall Testify. Meditate on the “three in one” and what that means to the Christian’s understanding of the nature of God, and especially of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Goal: Never diminish the significance of the incarnation or the awe it inspires.

When Paul suggests that we should have the same sacrificial attitude as Jesus Christ when he laid aside his Godly prerogatives, how can we deny anything that he asks of us after considering what he was willing to do for us?
Chapter 6: He Shall Testify

Today’s theme: Giving a proper place to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit

Scriptural background: Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 20; 3:6, 13, 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Quote for the week

"The Holy Spirit makes a man a Christian, and if he is a Christian through the work of the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit draws him to other Christians in the church. An individual Christian is not Christian at all.” John Rudolph Brokhoff, Author, seminary professor and pastor.

“When, God knows, I'm toss'd about
Either with despair or doubt;
Yet before the glass be out,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!”

From Litany to the Holy Spirit, Robert Herrick. 1591–1674

Concern: The Holy Spirit will either be too important or not important enough

We err when we either elevate too highly or reduce the stature and ministry of the Holy Spirit. For some Pentecostals, it is as if they Holy Spirit is all that matters, while for many liturgical Christians the Holy Spirit is almost an afterthought.

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Nicene Creed (see Resources)

1. Why is a balanced view of the Godhead important? Have you been able to maintain that balance in your own life? How or how not?

2. When did the Holy Spirit become personally real for you? What prompted this beginning?
Interacting With the Text

Goal: To learn about the Holy Spirit so that we can grasp His purpose and activity in the life of Christians.

1. What unique doctrine of God does Christianity rest upon? Why is this doctrine important to the church? Why is it important to you personally?

2. According to Jesus, when he promised the Holy Spirit to the disciples, he said the Spirit was not the comforter but another comforter. What is the importance of Jesus calling the Holy Spirit, "another comforter?" What does this description of the Holy Spirit mean to us?

3. Is it really necessary to see a distinction between the work of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
4. What is the significance of the Old Testament parallels between the word and breath of God? Think about hovering and falling upon (OT) and indwelling (NT). Why is this distinction about the activity of the Holy Spirit important?

5. How is the Holy Spirit related to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? e.g. see Lk 12:12, Jn 14:26, 16:7-8. What phrase in the Nicene Creed codifies this relationship?

6. Packer claims the Holy Spirit is “divine yet ignored.” Do you agree? Why or Why not? Do you or your church “ignore” the Holy Spirit in any way?

7. According to Packer, can you be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit? Why is his argument significant?
What to Do Next

8. From this chapter, what would you say is Packer's opinion of Apologetics? Why?

9. How do we honor or dishonor the Holy Spirit in our daily walk? How should we relate to the Holy Spirit?

10. Explain the Trinity in your own words. Try to use plain English. Why is it important for you to try and do this?

What to Do Next

Review Section One: Know The Lord. Consider what God has revealed to you about Himself in your study of this section and how it might change your life going forward.

Goal: Always give the Holy Spirit His proper place in the Godhead.

Remember, Jesus called the Holy Spirit counselor, the one who would guide us into all truth. How can He do his proper work within us if we do not respect him and listen to him?
Review of Section One: Know the Lord

Today’s theme: Pondering the significance of knowing the Lord and not just knowing God.

Scriptural background: Psalm 89:8 “O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.”

Quote for the week

"The Holy Spirit makes a man a Christian, and if he is a Christian through the work of the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit draws him to other Christians in the church. An individual Christian is not Christian at all." John Rudolph Brokhoff, Author, seminary professor and pastor.

“If there is one God, and one Lord, then those who celebrate and worship this one God and Lord become one people, transcending differences of race, gender, class and geography.” N. T. Wright, Ex Auditu, “Christology and the Incarnation.” Volume 7, 1991

Concern: That we never forget God’s Lordship

Remember that among all of the things that are true about God is the primary fact of His Lordship. It is interesting that we call the prayer that Jesus taught us The Lord’s Prayer. While it is true that Jesus is Lord, the prayer itself harkens not just to our Father, but also to He who is hallowed, who is coming, and to whom and whose will we need to submit ourselves, in essence the Lord of Lords.

1. When you think of the Lord, have you always thought of Jesus in that category or have you also considered the Father as Lord also? Has your view changed as you have studied this section?

In Review of Chapters 1-6

1. Do you now consider yourself a traveler? Why or why not?
In Review of Chapters 1-6

2. Do you know any balconeers? What do you think makes them that way?

3. Is your view of theology any different than when the study began? Why or why not?


5. After completing this section what is the difference from your perspective between knowing God and knowing about God?
6. How strong is your immunity to the briars and brambles of the human condition? Explain.

7. What do you now consider idolatrous? Why?

8. Is there anything you used to think was idolatrous that you believe is not? Why?

9. What new aspect of the Incarnation is now part of your thinking? Explain.
What to Do Next

10. How has the meaning of Lord changed for you? If not, why not?

11. Have you learned anything new about the Godhead: Father, Son, or Holy Spirit? If so, what?

What to Do Next

Begin Section Two by reading Chapter 7: God Unchanging. Meditate on what it means when Scripture says that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Think about how this truth should impact your daily life.

Goal: Always remember that God “is” and the beginning of His isness is His Lordship.

Remember, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In order for any of the other aspects of God, His relationship, and revelation of Himself to have meaning in our lives, He must first be our Lord.
Lord’s Prayer

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil."

Nicene Creed

I/We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I/we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I/we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I/we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I/we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Creed of Saint Athanasius

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible,
The Creed of Saint Athanasius

and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be both God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion, to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another; But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved is must think thus of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood; Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.