

# Review Only - Not for Redistribution



**H**istory began with words. God said, “Let there be light” and with those words began to bring created order from primordial chaos. Through six days of creative labor, God created the heavens and the earth, the seas and the land, the plants and the animals, and then finally, human beings. God brought into existence a man and a woman who were created in his image and after his likeness. These beings were unique in that they were able to speak back, to have a real and living relationship with God.

The great tragedy of this relationship is that these human beings rebelled against their Creator. Already uniquely and lovingly formed in the image of God, they wanted the power and prerogatives of God; they wanted to be their own gods. So they turned on their Creator, making him an enemy, and in so doing they broke the friendship, they broke the relationship.

That could have been the end of humanity or the end of the relationship between God and man. But thanks to God, it was not. How? Why? Read on to find out...

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WHAT WERE WE MADE FOR?

TO KNOW GOD.

WHAT AIM SHOULD WE HAVE IN LIFE?

TO KNOW GOD.

WHAT IS THE ETERNAL LIFE THAT JESUS GIVES?

TO KNOW GOD.

WHAT IS THE BEST THING IN LIFE?

TO KNOW GOD.

WHAT IN HUMANS GIVES GOD MOST PLEASURE?

KNOWLEDGE OF  
HIMSELF.

— J.I. PACKER —

As we consider the spiritual disciplines, or means of grace, it is crucial that we remember not only the great purpose of these habits but also the great blessing they represent. We were made to know God and to be known by God. We were made in the image of God to have a real and living relationship with God. We were the ones who interrupted this relationship through our sin and rebellion, who declared God an enemy rather than a friend. What a blessing, then, that even though we rebelled against God through our sin, he made the way for the relationship to be restored. What an honor that he still invites us to join into that relationship, that friendship. The practices that are the subjects of these devotional writings are the keys to knowing God. It is through the Bible that we learn about the nature of God and the acts of God; it is through prayer that we speak to God and share our hearts with him; it is through fellowship that we join into his body, serve his people, and demonstrate his love. It is because Christianity is intrinsically relational that Packer can say, “What is the best thing in life? To know God.” May we never lose the wonder of that great privilege.

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**When you  
come to knowing God,  
the initiative lies on His side.  
If He does not show Himself,  
nothing you can do will  
enable you to find Him.**

C.S. LEWIS



There are no truly innocent human beings. Each of us has willfully rebelled against God, but even if we hadn't, we would still be tainted by the sin of Adam, for "by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19). In Paul's great letter to the church in Rome, he explains that in our sinful state, we actively suppress any knowledge of God, even denying the undeniable reality of his power and presence in creation. Our thinking about God and the state of our own souls becomes futile, our hearts become darkened, and we behave like fools—for "the fool says in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Yet this is a book about having a genuine relationship with God. How can that be? It is possible only because God has taken the initiative. When we could not and would not reach out to him, he has reached out to us. "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6,8). That's the kind of God we serve—the God who reaches out!

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GOD TAKES US  
INTO HIS CONFIDENCE AND  
SHARES HIS SECRETS WITH US;  
GOD FINDS US IGNORANT  
AND GIVES US KNOWLEDGE.

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THAT IS WHAT REVELATION MEANS.

*J.I. Packer*

God takes the initiative in establishing relationship by reaching out to helpless humanity. He reveals himself to the creatures he has made. But what does it mean for him to provide such revelation of himself? John Calvin began his *Institutes* by saying, “Nearly all the wisdom which we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”<sup>3</sup> This is exactly the knowledge God provides us. He takes us into his confidence to share what would otherwise remain hidden from our understanding. He enlightens our minds to know and our hearts to receive the truth about himself and the truth about ourselves, for these are the keys to any true wisdom. God provides such revelation not because we deserve it or are in any way owed it, but only because he is gracious, because he delights to give us those things we do not deserve. Because of his grace, we have access to information that would otherwise remain hidden, information we need if we are to be saved from our sin. Praise God for revealing himself to us!

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Revelation is the free act of God  
by which He graciously condescends

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**TO DISPLAY AND REVEAL HIS CHARACTER,  
NATURE, AND WILL TO MANKIND.**

*Erwin Lutzer*

God has graciously chosen to initiate relationship with human beings who, left to themselves, deny his power and even his very existence. He does this through revelation—through revealing himself to us. But what is it that he reveals about himself? As Lutzer explains, it is his character, his nature, and his will. I've heard it said that character is who you are when no one is looking. God reveals himself as someone who existed long before there was anyone looking, and then as now, his *character* was marked by love. He has always existed in a loving relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We might say his *nature* is his attributes, or the qualities of his “godness.” And his *will* includes his desires for humanity. As the one who created us, he is the one who has the right to tell us how we ought to live. How does God reveal all of this? Through what we call general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is what God reveals to all of humanity through what has been made and can be observed by all. Special revelation is what God reveals through special means—most notably through Scripture and its revelation of Jesus Christ.

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WHAT ARE THE HEAVENS, THE EARTH,  
THE SEA, BUT A SHEET OF ROYAL PAPER,  
WRITTEN ALL OVER WITH THE WISDOM  
AND POWER OF GOD?

**THOMAS BROOKS**

Thomas Brooks pictures God's creation as a great sheet of the highest-quality paper that has been set apart for the most noble purpose. This royal paper, paper that's fit for a king and written on by a king, describes the wisdom and power of the one who is over all kings. In Brooks's metaphor, this paper does not contain words, but works—the creative works of a powerful God. On the paper are the innumerable stars, each one made by God, each one known by God, each one named by God (Psalm 147:4). On the paper is the earth itself with its countless plants and animals, its majestic mountains and deep valleys, its tall trees and bright flowers, each of which God declared good and very good (Genesis 1:10,31). On the same paper are the mighty oceans and still seas, the running rivers and great lakes, the many waters teeming with life. Together, the heavens, the earth, and the seas are like words on paper that tell of the surpassing wisdom and inexhaustible strength of a mighty God.

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EACH OF US IS UNDER A DIVINE  
MANDATE TO BECOME AN AMATEUR  
ASTRONOMER, TO PEER INTO THE  
INCALCULABLE DEPTHS OF SKY  
& SPACE TO BEHOLD THE HANDIWORK  
OF OUR OMNIPOTENT CREATOR.

*Sam Storms*

The great poet David looks to the night skies and pours out his heart in praise to God: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2). Notice all the ways that creation is communicating: The heavens are *declaring*, the sky is *proclaiming*, the day is *speaking*, the night is *revealing*. And then notice the content of this communication: The heavens are declaring God’s glory, the skies are proclaiming the fact that he has created them, the day and night are revealing the knowledge of his existence. This is exactly why Sam Storms can say that each human being is under a mandate to become an amateur astronomer, to look to the heavens, to see what God has created, and to learn the lessons he means for us to learn. And just as we must look up to the skies, we must also look down to the microscopic world, out to all the plants and animals, and even inward to the human body and soul. In all of it, we see God’s handiwork. We see that God is communicating that he exists and that he is powerful.

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## TO PUT IT IN SIMPLE TERMS,

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GENERAL REVELATION PROVIDES ENOUGH KNOWLEDGE OF GOD TO GET REBELLIOUS PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME INTO TROUBLE, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO GET US OUT OF IT.

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## WE NEED SOMETHING MORE.

*Daryl Wingerd*

God has created a beautiful world that is full of wonders, and these wonders serve a purpose—they are meant to evoke awe, which in turn is meant to provoke worship. This was the experience of King David, who said, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:3-4). It is difficult to think great thoughts of ourselves as we gaze into a starlit night sky or stand before the Matterhorn. In this way David studied God’s creation, marveled at what he saw, and was stirred to worship. Yet for all the beauty of creation and all it communicates to us, God has deliberately limited its message. Through creation God has revealed “his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature” (Romans 1:20). But through creation God has *not* revealed his plan of salvation. He has not revealed how sinful man can be reconciled to a holy God. For that, there must be another kind of revelation.





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WHILE GENERAL REVELATION  
IS INDEED IMPORTANT,  
IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT IN ITSELF.  
IT IS THROUGH SCRIPTURE,  
NOT NATURE ALONE,  
THAT WE COME TO KNOW AND  
ARTICULATE THE PARTICULARS OF THE  
GOSPEL MESSAGE AND ARE CALLED  
TO UNIQUELY RESPOND TO IT.

SAM STEPHENS

General revelation serves exactly the purpose God intended for it—it reveals his power and divine nature. But as Sam Stephens points out, its message, though important, is insufficient. Though it tells us about the existence of God, it does not tell us about how to be reconciled to God. To know the message of the gospel, the good news of salvation for sinners, we must have more. Thankfully, God has provided not only general revelation but also special and specific revelation in the Bible. It is in the Bible that we learn more about God and more about ourselves. It is in the Bible that we learn how God has intervened in this world to save us from our rebellion. Ultimately, the Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Savior of humanity and the King of the world. Where nature is insufficient, the Bible is sufficient—it tells us everything we must know if we are to respond to God in repentance and faith.

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**For the living God to be known,  
He must make Himself known,  
and He has done this in the**  
—— *acts and words* ——  
**recorded in Scripture.**

DONALD BLOESCH



Part of the joy of reading biography is having the opportunity to learn about a person who lived before us. An exceptional biography makes us feel as if we have actually come to know its subject, so that we rejoice in that person's triumphs, grieve over his failures, and weep at his death. There is a sense in which the Bible is a biography, in which it is the story of God. It reveals God by describing what he has done and what he has said, for if the living God is to be known, "He must make Himself known, and He has done this in the acts and words recorded in Scripture." The Bible begins with God speaking: "Let there be light." And the Bible ends with God speaking: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon'" (Revelation 22:20). Between those two declarations are 66 books; 1,189 chapters; and just over 31,000 verses, each of which exists to tell us who our God is and what our God has done. If we are to know God, he must make himself known. Through Scripture he has done exactly that.

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**GOD'S WORD DOES NOT**  
MERELY IMPART INFORMATION;  
**IT ACTUALLY CREATES LIFE.**  
IT'S NOT ONLY DESCRIPTIVE;  
**IT'S EFFECTIVE TOO.**  
GOD SPEAKING  
**IS GOD ACTING.**

Michael Horton



The Bible may be a book, but it is a book unlike any other. The Bible is inspired—breathed out by God—and in that way perfectly reflects the mind and will of God. The Bible is also complete, sufficient, inerrant, and infallible. Because the Bible is all these things and so many more, it is powerful and effective. Because it is *God's Word*, it comes with all the power and authority of God—power and authority sufficient to change us from the outside in. As we read the Bible, the Bible reads us. As we study the Bible, the Bible studies us. As we examine its every word, it examines our every thought, our every action, our every desire, our every inclination. It identifies our shortcomings; it calls us to change. But more than that, it provokes and promotes and *causes* that change. How do we know? Because “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). As God speaks through the Bible, God acts through the Bible, for “God speaking is God acting.”