

**GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING AND IS WISE****PSALM 147:5, et al**

Thomas Aquinas, a medieval theologian, created one of the greatest intellectual achievements of Western civilization in his book, "Summa Theologica." It's a massive work: 38 treatises, 3,000 articles, 10,000 objections answered. Aquinas tried to gather all that's true into one coherent collection. Talk about a phenomenal task. He addressed anthropology, science, ethics, psychology, political theory, and theology from a godly perspective. But on December 6, 1273, Aquinas abruptly stopped his work. While participating in a worship service, he apparently had a spiritual experience in which he caught a glimpse of eternity. Suddenly, he knew all his efforts to describe God fell so far short that he decided never to write again. When his secretary tried to encourage Aquinas to do more writing, he said, "I can do no more. Such things have been revealed to me that all I have written seems as so much straw." Thomas Aquinas didn't write another word and he died a year later.

What is God really like? And what difference does it make to your life or mine? Those are two questions we're addressing in our current message series: *What's Most Important About You? What You Think About God*. Who you believe God to be – or not to be – affects your life profoundly. Today I want you to think with me about the fact God knows everything and, also, that He is wise. If you want to look up for yourself all the Scripture passages I mention, go to our website, click on Stay At Home Resources, click on the Worship tab, and then click on Message Notes. You'll find there an outline of today's message and all the Scripture references. God has three attributes that begin with the prefix "omni." We've already considered two of them. God is omnipotent meaning He's all powerful. God is omnipresent meaning He's everywhere. But God is also omniscient which means He knows everything that can be known. Wisdom – generally speaking – is the proper and effective use of knowledge. It's one thing to know facts about something, but quite another to put that knowledge toward some use, goal, or purpose. Let's be clear about what God's omniscience and wisdom mean.

**WHAT DO GOD'S OMNISCIENCE AND WISDOM MEAN?**

The Bible assumes God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things. In other words, He is omniscient. It says in Ps. 147:5 (NLT), "How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!" Trying to get our brains around the extent of God's knowledge is impossible. Because God is infinite, His knowledge is infinite. Omniscience means God knows every subject comprehensively. God knows everything there is to know about every conceivable subject matter in the universe. And He knows it instantly and perfectly without any effort on His part. God never learns anything. God never studies anything. God never has to seek out information about anything. God never discovers something He didn't know before. Nothing has been or ever will be a mystery to God.

Someone has observed, "Everybody is ignorant – only on different subjects." True enough. You might know a great deal about this or that subject, but there are so many different kinds of knowledge in the universe of which you know very little that it's fair to

say we actually know very little about so very much. When Sir Isaac Newton, the great British scientist, was an old man, someone said to him, “Dr. Newton, you must have a tremendous store of knowledge.” Newton answered, “I remind myself of a little boy walking along the seashore picking up shells. The boy has a handful of shells in his little hand, but all around is the vast seashore stretching in all directions as far as the eye can see. All that I know is simply a handful of seashells, but the vast universe of God is filled with knowledge that I do not possess.” The Bible asks us this question in Is. 40:13-14 (NLT), “Who is able to advise the Spirit of the Lord? Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him? Has the Lord ever needed anyone’s advice? Does he need instruction about what is good?” The obvious answer to those questions? No!

Omniscience means God knows about every event comprehensively. Past, present, and the future pose no barriers to God because He lives both inside and outside of time. God has complete, perfect knowledge of everything that has happened, is happening, or will happen. He also knows the full effects, meaning, and importance of everything that happens. Have you ever been walking along, then turned a corner, and been surprised by something or someone you saw? Sure, you have. Well, God can never be surprised. God’s never had a “surprise around the corner” experience.

Omniscience means God knows everything about what He’s created. God has made all that exists and He knows every single one of His creations down to the smallest atom and molecule. The Bible says God is aware of every star in His universe. Ps. 147:4 (NLT) says, “He counts the stars and calls them all by name.” God knows all about His angels – their tasks, movements, what they think, and how they feel. He even knows everything there is to know about the devil – where he is, what he’s doing, and what his plans happen to be. Obviously, He knows all there is to know about you and me and He knew it long before the world was even created. Do you remember Jesus said God knows the number of hairs on your head or when one tiny bird like a sparrow falls to the ground? God knows instantly, perfectly, and effortlessly all that can ever be known.

Now, the Bible also tells us that God is wise. God not only know all things, but He puts that knowledge toward a perfect goal or purpose. God’s wisdom means He uses His omniscience perfectly to achieve His perfect plan. God is moving everything toward their intended purpose with flawless precision. It may look chaotic, random, and haphazard to us, but it’s anything but that. The Bible celebrates God’s wisdom in Rom. 11:33, 16:27 (NLT), “Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!... All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.” Even though we can never grasp the extent of God’s wisdom fully, it’s good to press in to try and understand it more.

God’s wisdom is demonstrated in both creation and salvation. The Bible says in Pr. 3:19 (NLT), “By wisdom the Lord founded the earth; by understanding he created the heavens.” Here’s one example. Have you ever heard of the albatross? It’s a huge sea bird with a wingspan of up to 11 feet. But those wings are so well designed that an albatross can cover 600 miles with less flapping of its wings than a sparrow needs to cross a street. An albatross can fly and sleep at the same time. It has a built in

autopilot thanks to a small wind speed recorder in its bill that sends data to its brain, allowing it to make wing adjustments as the wind shifts. An albatross even has a built in desalinization factory. When it scoops up a mouthful of ocean, a series of tubes and membranes in its bill processes the water and gets rid of any excess salt! All around us in everything God has created, we see marvelous demonstrations of His wisdom.

But God's wisdom is most clearly demonstrated in how He's made it possible for us to have a relationship with Him. When it comes to your salvation and mine, the Bible says in Eph. 3:10 (NLT), "God's purpose in all this was... to display his wisdom in its rich variety." Isn't it amazing to see how God's wisdom made it possible for Jesus' death and resurrection to give us the opportunity to know Him eternally? What looked like Satan's greatest victory – the cross – became his greatest defeat. The finality of death was defeated. The power of sin was defeated. Once, we were spiritually separated from God and destined for Hell. But through God's wisdom we've become His children and now the chief announcers of God's glory and honor. The sheer irony of how God secured our salvation takes our breath away! In it, God's wisdom is on full display.

God's wisdom is also defined by His power and goodness. What good is wisdom if you can't use it and if you can't use it for a good purpose? God does both perfectly. In Is. 46:10 (NLT) God Himself says, "Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish." If God is wise, but He only has limited power, He'd be kind of pathetic. He'd hardly be worthy of our worship. But if God has all power, but is limited in His goodness, He'd be frightening. He might do something evil. If God is wise, but not perfectly good, it would be hard to trust God. What if He was tricking us? Or, taking advantage of us? But, then, if God is perfectly good, but not completely wise, we couldn't be sure He's actually doing everything in the best way possible. Rest assured. God is perfect in His power. God is perfect in His goodness. And He's also perfect in His wisdom.

God's wisdom is never disproved by the presence of evil. Many still ask, "If God is so wise, why is there such evil in the world? Why are tyrants allowed to kill and injure thousands of people? Why are there pandemics like COVID-19 that kill millions? Why are there natural disasters that kill thousands and destroy property?" Those are important questions that deserve a fuller answer than I can give today. But let me observe quickly that in order to have creatures that chose to love and know Him of their own free will, God – in His wisdom – had to allow for the existence of evil and at least the opportunity to choose evil and its consequences. You know the sad story of how our first parents – Adam and Eve - chose evil. And the fact is human beings continue to choose evil and its consequences every day. So much of human suffering is either the result of rejecting God or living in a world that must deal with the consequences of that rejection. So, there's a snapshot into what God's omniscience and wisdom mean. But the next question is an obvious one. Let's ask it and see if God's Word answers it.

## **WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES GOD'S OMNISCIENCE MAKE?**

When theologians discuss God's attributes, they sometimes differentiate between what are called "communicable" and "incommunicable" attributes. We're actually getting an unwanted education into the meaning of those words at this very time. The COVID-19 virus is highly communicable meaning it's easily transferred from one person to another. Incommunicable refers to a disease or something else that can't be transferred from one person to another. God's omniscience is incommunicable. He doesn't expect you to be – and you can never be – omniscient. God's omnipotence and omnipresence are likewise incommunicable. You will never be all powerful or possess the ability to be everywhere in the universe at the same moment. Some things are true of God alone.

But that doesn't mean God's omniscience has no significance for us or effect on us. It means, first of all, we can't hide anything from God. The Bible says in Heb. 4:13 (NLT), "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable." That's both a comforting and uncomfortable truth, isn't it? On the comforting side, it means I'm completely and comprehensively known by God. He knows me far better than I know myself. He knows where I am and He's always with me. On the uncomfortable side, however, it also means I can't keep any secrets from God. I can never hide any sin from Him. I can never deceive or trick Him as to what I've done or my motivations as to why I did it. He knows exactly and completely – and far better than I do - what I did and why I did it. It's really dumb to try and justify or excuse yourself before God. He already knows the thoughts and intents of your heart and mine. The Bible says in Ps. 139:4 (NLT), "You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord." It's best to be as real and honest before God as possible, because He knows the truth anyway.

I understand many people in Ghana, a country in West Africa, are very devout Christians. Sometimes that gets expressed in the names they give their businesses. You can get your faucet fixed by the Hail Mary Plumbing company, your clothes cleaned at the Love Jesus Dry Cleaners, and your gas tank filled at the God Is Great gas station. This unique custom is also reflected in personal names. One man was given the name of God Knows Setordzi. That really was his first name legally – God Knows. He said it proved to be a powerful personal reminder. When he was tempted to do something bad, he'd remember God knows. If he felt unappreciated or discouraged, he was comforted by the fact God knows. Well, whatever your name might happen to be, it's always helpful to remember God knows, isn't it?

God's omniscience means, secondly, God loves you and me regardless. This is really wonderful news all the way around! Think about it. God knows all the dirt on you and me better than we do. Nevertheless, He still loves us more than we're capable of loving ourselves. If you're not a follower of Jesus today, He loves you despite your ongoing rejection of Him. If you are a follower of Jesus, He loves you even though you still disappoint, grieve, and fail Him at times. I'm humbled and grateful beyond words today to know God continues to love me fully, greatly, and comprehensively despite all my faults and flaws. Surely, God loves me not because of what He knows about me, but despite what He knows about me. His love for us is beyond our comprehension.

God's omniscience means, thirdly, it still makes sense to pray. Maybe you've asked this question, "If God already knows everything, why bother praying?" Fair question. True, when you pray, you're not telling God something He doesn't already know about. God never says, "Goodness, I didn't know about that need" or "I never looked at that request in quite that way until Rick brought it to My attention." But here are some reasons to keep on praying even though God is omniscient. First, God commands us to pray. So do it. Second, prayer is more about getting us aligned with God than getting God aligned with us. Third, God – in His wisdom – has decided that our prayers are a primary way He gets His will accomplished here on Earth. When we pray, we become God's means to accomplish God's will. It's a participation, cooperation, sharing together kind of thing. Here's a final question both to ask and try to answer.

### **WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES GOD'S WISDOM MAKE?**

Remember what I said about communicable and incommunicable attributes of God a few minutes ago? Wisdom – unlike omniscience – is a communicable attribute of God. In other words, it's definitely something about God Himself that He wants to share or transfer to us. Of course, we will never attain God's level of wisdom, but it's something that can grow and develop in us as we follow Jesus faithfully. Just like God's love, God's goodness, or God's faithfulness. Pr. 9:10 (NLT) says, "Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment (or wisdom)." Eph. 5:15 (NLT) says, "So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise." God wants us to be wise and become wiser.

Here are four examples of godly wisdom. First, it enables me to come to God in the way He's provided. People persist in believing the lie that you can discover a relationship with God in your own way and on your own terms. No, there really aren't one hundred different ways to God. Jesus put it simply and plainly in Jo. 14:6 (NLT), "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." Why fight it? If God said there's only one way to Him, don't be a fool by thinking you're wiser than God. Come to Him in the way He's provided. The single wisest act you can ever do is to surrender your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior. The single most foolish thing you can ever do is to reject Jesus. You may have an IQ of 200, have educational degrees coming out your ears, or just be highly intelligent, but to pretend you're wiser than God about how to discover Him is the greatest foolishness imaginable.

Second, godly wisdom grows in the knowledge of God's ways. Do you know what's the primary way to get wisdom – to gain a greater knowledge into God's ways? The Bible. Here's what 2 Tim. 3:15 (NLT) says, "You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus." What will make you and me wise? Not life experience necessarily. Not reading Christians books. Not hanging around wise people. Not even listening to great messages from pastors and other Bible teachers. All that can help, yes, but God only made you and me a promise about getting wisdom as it relates to His Word. If you will meditate on and marinate yourself in this book regularly and then seek to obey its teachings, what will happen? Over time you will become wise in God's ways.

Third, godly wisdom does what God says regardless. Jam. 1:5 (NLT) says, “If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” God wants to give you His wisdom. The problem is that many times we conclude we’re actually smarter than God. For example, here’s a Christian man who refuses to tithe his income to the Lord. Despite the Bible’s clear teaching and its promises that God will bless those who tithe, this man says to himself, “But I couldn’t possible survive on only 90% of my income. I know more about this than God does.” Of course, he will then wonder why God doesn’t deliver him out of the financial messes he finds himself in or why he suffers from a nagging sense of conviction when it comes to money. Or, here’s a Christian woman who is going to go ahead and marry a man who’s not a follower of Jesus. Despite the Bible’s clear warning against being partnered up with someone who doesn’t share your faith, she says to herself, “But I love this man. Besides, I can witness to him every day we’re together and he’ll eventually come to Jesus. I know more about this than God does.” And, of course, she will wonder why her husband has no use for God whatsoever and why God doesn’t answer her prayers for his salvation. We can all be guilty of thinking we’re wiser than God. The circumstances change, yes, but the attitude is all too familiar. But, then, we find out the hard way too many times that we aren’t wiser than God. We come back to Him, ask His forgiveness, and start to do what God says to do regardless. You can save yourself a lot of needless misery and heartache in life. How? Do what God says regardless.

Finally, godly wisdom trusts God even in the midst of tough times. We can do what God says regardless and still run into failure, disappointment, opposition, and adversity. Now, I love to be happy. I love to be comfortable. I love it when everything is going great in my life. Don’t you? That’s why when I begin to experience something difficult or painful, I have to remind myself that God has a greater purpose for my life than to make me happy. He wants me to be holy – or to put it another way – to resemble Jesus in my character, in my inner person. The fact is He uses failure, disappointment, opposition, and adversity and other “un-fun” things to accomplish that purpose. That’s how He develops the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That’s also the way He gets us to stop relying on ourselves while deepening our trust in Him – by bringing us through painful stuff. That’s sometimes the way God draws us closer to Himself so we can discover that He truly meets all of our needs. Sometimes God uses hard things to prepare us for some future service or ministry that we’re ignorant of today. Our lives have been disrupted and made more difficult by this pandemic, true enough. But God has a purpose in it. Of that we can be very sure. Yes, it’s likely you will feel confused and bewildered by some of the things God allows into your life, but God knows exactly what He’s doing and why He’s doing it. That’s God’s promise to you and me in Rom. 8:28 (NLT), “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

Charlie Steinmetz had one of the greatest minds in the field of electricity this world has ever known. In his day, no one knew more about electricity than he did. Steinmetz built the great electric generators for Henry Ford’s first automobile factory in Dearborn,

Michigan. When Steinmetz was done, the assembly line worked like clockwork. Thanks to his electrical genius, cars began to roll off the production line and profits began to pour into the pockets of Henry Ford. Everything went smoothly for months. But suddenly – without warning – everything stopped. Ford Motor Company went dark. One electrical mechanic after another was unable to locate the problem. Henry Ford was most frustrated. He was losing money. Finally, he contacted the brains behind the system. Charlie Steinmetz showed up and immediately went to work. He fiddled with some switches and a gauge or two. He tinkered with this electrical motor and then that one. He pushed a few buttons and messed with some wires. Then, he threw the master switch. The factory lights blinked on, engines began to whirl, and everything returned to normal.

A few days later Henry Ford received a bill from Steinmetz for \$10,000. Although Ford was a very rich man, he was also frugal. He couldn't believe Steinmetz had charged him such an exorbitant amount of money for what appeared to be such a small amount of work. He returned the bill with a note attached: "Charlie, isn't this bill just a little high for a few hours of tinkering around with a few wires and switches?" Steinmetz rewrote the bill and sent it back. It read: "For tinkering around with the motors: \$10. For knowing where to tinker: \$9,990. Total: \$10,000." Henry Ford paid the bill in full.

God know everything and He is wise beyond all measure. That means God knows where to tinker, when to tinker, and how to tinker in your life and mine. He created you. He sent Jesus to save you. He loves you. He's good all the time and all the time He's good. And that's why you can trust Him today and everyday.