

# Christian Ambassador Training

## How We Know God I - Revelation

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 1:1-2** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

### *Review/Preview*

Definition of an ambassador- One who stands between two parties with a message to communicate: the Sovereign being represented is God and the foreign subject is the world (*kosmos* -- order, the world--not just unbelieving “worldly”).

- We already are ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5)
  - We carry the Message of reconciliation (a.k.a. the *Gospel*)
  - Clear parallels to being a witness/defender of the faith (apologist)
- What are the three essentials for a good ambassador?
  1. **Knowledge**
  2. **Wisdom**
  3. **Character**

**Knowledge** – An Ambassador needs to know his Sovereign, his Sovereign’s message, and the subjects to whom he’s called to represent the Sovereign (their nature, culture, and language) so that he can communicate the Sovereign’s message to the people faithfully.

### *Knowledge - “An accurately informed mind”*

Know God (your Sovereign, the King that you represent)

- We need to know our Sovereign’s nature, character, attributes & message!
- How do we acquire such knowledge?

This last question is so important we will spend two weeks on it:

- Revelation--How God reveals Himself (this week)
- Sola Scriptura and the Sufficiency of Scripture (next week)

Afterwards we will spend a week on the basics of God’s attributes. Think of it as two weeks to “teaching a man to fish” and one of feasting on the fish.

## The Doctrine of Revelation

The English word *revelation* comes from the Latin word for ‘**an uncovering, a laying bare.**’

The Oxford Shorter Dictionary defines the word revelation as “**a disclosure or communication of knowledge to man by a divine or supernatural agency.**”

So, revelation is the act of God, uncovering himself, or un-hiding himself from us. God reveals himself, or, discloses communication of knowledge to us about himself. It’s literally that He is totally hidden from us

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 59:2** but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

"Hidden" means beyond human ability or rational deduction. Thus all human ability is excluded. God is the *initiator*; man is the *receiver*.

So, in order to know God, to see him for who he is, to know who He is, what He is like, God must *reveal* Himself to us. It must be His initiative, His work, His doing, not ours. We are totally dependent upon God to reveal Himself. We cannot force Him to, or seek and find him without Him revealing Himself.

Two Kinds: General Revelation and Special Revelation

I. General Revelation is Universal (not dependent on time or space and available to all people of all time)

A. Creation

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 19:1-4** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above<sup>1</sup> proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,

- This communication is wordless and inaudible, yet it is there and it is clear.
- Creation reveals God’s existence, his glory, and the fact that he is a creator (much like this chair points to a chair maker)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 1:19-20** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

B. Providence (protective care)

*Paul had just healed a man, and the people were beginning to call them gods Zeus and*

*Hermes...*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 14:14-18** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, <sup>15</sup> "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to <sup>e</sup>a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. <sup>16</sup> In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." <sup>18</sup> Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

The regularity and order of creation testifies to God's existence, creative power, and mercy and care (see this in seasons, water cycle, crops, fruit, ...)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 17:26-29** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." <sup>29</sup> Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

### C. Moral Conscience (God's moral law, written on our hearts)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 1:29b-32** They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> ***Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 2:12-16** For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup> For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. <sup>14</sup> ***For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires,*** they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. <sup>15</sup> ***They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts,*** while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them <sup>16</sup> on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

- We have the requirements of the law written on our hearts
- We often do, by nature, what is written in the law (we don't kill, steal, lie, etc.) and are offended when others don't.
- We have a sense of right and wrong, which reflects God's moral norm
- All people have this revelation of divine law
- We have broken it, suppressed it, and perverted it by trying to hold others to it, but excusing ourselves from it.

***Discussion 1 -- General Revelation***

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 1:18-20** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

- If what Paul says here is true, would you characterize the unbeliever’s problem as *ignorance*? [Do they have the truth of God’s nature and law “clearly perceived”?]
- If not ignorance, what is the real issue? [suppression of the truth--rebellion/pride]
- When we talk about “Law” and “Gospel”
  - Is the *Law* sufficiently revealed by general revelation? [yes see “C.”]
  - Is the *Gospel* sufficiently revealed by general revelation? [not at all... it is the gaping hole, it is what we are left desperately in need of!]
- Then what is the purpose of the Law? [Gal 3:24 - our guardian/tutor/schoolmaster to lead us to Christ]

<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 3:24** So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

[Rom 3:19-20; 7:7 - to put a halt to self justification and bring us an awareness of sin (and need for a Savior)]

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 3:19-20** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being<sup>1</sup> will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 7:7** What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet ***if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.*** For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

God’s law acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ that we might be justified through faith in His blood. The law doesn’t help us; it just leaves us helpless. It doesn’t justify us; it just leaves us guilty before the judgment bar of a holy God.<sup>1</sup>

--Ray Comfort, “Hell’s Best Kept Secret”

<sup>1</sup> Ray Comfort’s *Hell’s Best Kept Secret* sermon audio, video and manuscript are available here: (<http://www.livingwaters.com/learn/hellsbestkeptsecret.htm>). God used these messages powerfully and formatively in my life and I’m forever grateful to God and His servant Ray for this message.

II. **Special Revelation** is Particular (dependent on time and space, and available to a specific people) Any disclosure (or revealing) of God's person or will historically given to a particular person or group.

A. **Historical**

- **Hebrews 1:1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.
  - Visual Manifestations of His presences
  - Visions, trances, and dreams
  - Lots (dice)
  - Miracles
  - Angelic Messenger
  - Audible speech from God
  - Prophetic Oracle (thus says the Lord)

B. **In Christ: The Word (essence, attributes, divine self expression) of God in bodily form.**

- **Hebrews 1:2** - but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- **John 1:1-5** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **John 1:14-18** 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

C. **Scripture: The Word (essence, attributes, divine self expression) of God in Written form**

- **1 Tim 3:16** - 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God be competent, equipped for every good work.

By God's grace, and by His Spirit, He has given us divine revelation in the Scriptures, and promised to teach us through them by His Holy Spirit.

**Scripture** is God's word to God's people communicating His plan of redemption (namely, the creation, fall, and salvation of mankind). And we have this, in our hands, to read, to listen to, to memorize, to meditate on, and to study. And as we do, we ask God to incline our hearts to it, to teach us by His Spirit the truths that are in it, and that He would use it to transform our lives.

## Discussion 2 -- General & Special Revelation

- Returning to “Law” and “Gospel”
  - What is the purpose of the Law (again)?
    - Ought we to be proclaiming the Law? If so, to what end? [*Yes! -- See the purpose. -- This is worth repeating as we are so used to shying away from Law proclamation*]
    - What’s the difference between this and legalism? [*Though preaching/using the Law to bring knowledge of sin may get you accused of legalism, it is not true. Legalism is teaching obedience as a means of salvation... we’re talking about using the Law as the means to demonstrate lostness! Piper’s dad the evangelist paraphrase: “Getting people saved is easy, the hard part is getting them lost.”*]
  - Is the *Gospel* sufficiently revealed by *special* revelation? [*Yes--we’ll talk about this next week... Sola Scriptura and the sufficiency of Scripture*]

### Application Questions

- How ought this to affect our message as ambassadors? [*less time “convincing” people of what they already know deep down, more time preaching to the conscience (2 Cor 4:2).*]  
<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:2** But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but **by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience** in the sight of God.
- Who is the Law (bad news) designed for? [The Proud]  
<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:9** understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, ...
- Who is the Gospel (good news) designed for? [The Humbled/Broken]  
<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 4:16-21** And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, <sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me **to proclaim good news to the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim liberty **to the captives** and recovering of sight **to the blind**, to set at liberty **those who are oppressed**, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." <sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

*“Law to the proud--grace to the humbled”*

– Summarize the implications:

- sinners have the knowledge of God, we're called to preach to the conscience
- God's Law was given for the purpose of revealing sin and leading us to a knowledge of our need for a Savior (leaves us guilty and helpless!)
- The Law revealed in general and special revelation is not the Gospel. It is the bad news that makes the Gospel (good news) make sense.
- Start recognizing how consistently this is the Biblical model. Bringing a knowledge of sin (through appeal to God's Law explicitly or implicitly) and calling to repent and believe the Gospel.