

Christian Ambassador Training

How We Know God - Week 2

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

WATCH MARK DRISCOLL ON SOLA SCRIPTURA

Review

- 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.
- 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**

Preview

Knowledge – An Ambassador knows **his King**, his **King’s message**, and the **subjects of the foreign land** (their language and culture) so that he can communicate the King’s message to the people in a winsome and understandable way.

Knowledge - “An accurately informed mind”

Know God (your Sovereign, the King that you represent)
(His character, attributes & message)

Before we can dig into His Character, Attributes & Message, we must first ask:
Question: How do we know, know about, or learn about God?

Answer: God must reveal himself to us.

An overview of 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 (Is 59:2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you) "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

- General Revelation is Universal (not dependent on time or space and available to all people of all time)
 - Creation -
 - Psalm 19:1-4
 - 1 The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
 - 2 Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
 - 3 There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
 - 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
 - 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)
 - Romans 1: (19-20) For what can be known about God is plain to

them, because God has shown it to them. 20For 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.

- **Providence** (protective care)
 - **Acts 14:14-18** (Paul had just healed a man, and the people were beginning to call them gods Zues and Hermes) 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 15 “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 a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 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.” 18 Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.
 - **Acts 17:26-29**
 - 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,
- **Moral Conscience** (God’s moral law, written on our hearts)
 - **Romans 1:29b-32**
 - **Romans 2:12-16** - 14 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. 15 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
 - We have the requirements of the law written on our hearts
 - We do, by nature, what is written in the law (we don’t kill, steal, lie, etc.)
 - 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.

The question is then: Has God revealed himself enough through General Revelation for us to know Him sufficiently enough for salvation by examining salvation and applying

human reason? **NO.**

All we know naturally is that we have a creator, that we are accountable to, that will Judge us, and that we are guilty.

PRAISE BE TO GOD THAT HE DIDN'T LEAVE US, WITH ONLY GENERAL REVELATION.

- **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.
 - **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)
 - **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.
 - **Scripture: The Word (essence, attributes, divine self expression) of God in Written form**
 - **1 Tim3:16** - 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.

ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL OR SPECIAL REVELATION?

Now, all of this Doctrine & Theology about revelation and the Scriptures is - very unpopular today-

-Why?

Because We've found easier and more personal ways to get a word from God.

- EXAMPLES? -
 - God told me (GIVE EXAMPLE OF PICKING A CHURCH)
 - SUMMARIZE PIPER'S EXPERIENCE. AND READ CONCLUSION.
 - What I've always been taught (tradition)
 - This is what I've always believed (tradition),
 - Our personal preference (I like to think of God as...)
 - Domestication of God (no wrath, no judgement)

The Source of God's Revelation of Himself = **The Bible + NOTHING**

Whenever you have the **The Bible + Something**, the **Bible** *always* loses out.

Example of college students singing "speak to us" over and over, while their bibles sat idle on their chairs behind them.

As a protestant church, we hold strongly to "Sola Scriptura" - ONLY SCRIPTURE.

- You've probably seen the Solas on the poster's throughout the church.
- Can anyone tell me where those are from?
- **Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura, Sola Deo Gloria**
- We are saved **By Grace Alone, Through Faith Alone, In Christ Alone, as Revealed in the Scriptures Alone, for the Glory of God Alone.**

The **Cambridge Declaration** puts it this way: (objective gospel website ->"Doing Church"
(from: <http://www.objectivegospel.org/church/CambridgeDeclaration.shtml>)

The work of the Holy Spirit in personal experience cannot be disengaged from Scripture. The Spirit does not speak in ways that are independent of Scripture. Apart from Scripture we would never have known of God's grace in Christ. The biblical Word, rather than spiritual experience, is the test of truth.

Then, it goes on to affirm the Solas of the Reformation, beginning with Sola Scriptura, it says:

We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation."

Ron Giese, our Elder over staff and leadership development, in his leadership course, put it this way: "(Sola Scriptura) means that Scripture is our sole basis for authority in terms of doctrine (truth). We don't look to tradition (the past), or own human reason, logic, or common sense (looking within ourselves), we only look up, to God. And how do we do this? By looking at what He has revealed, which we call the Bible."

ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT SOLA SCRIPTURA?

Another closely related doctrine to Sola Scriptura is "The Sufficiency of Scripture" Wayne Grudem, in his Systematic Theology book defines "The Sufficiency of Scripture" by saying that this means "that Scripture now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."

The main two texts on the Sufficiency of Scripture are :

- 2 Tim 3:16 as I quoted above which says that by the God-breathed Scriptures, we are "equipped for every good work"
- Psalm 119:1 "Blessed are those whose way is blameless who walk in the law of the Lord!"

This emphasis, and really, overemphasis on Sola Scriptura and the Sufficiency of Scripture were a reaction in the 1500s and 1600s by the Reformers because the tradition of the Catholic Church had been elevated to the level of, and even beyond the level of the Scriptures. The Reformers claimed boldly, and even died boldly to defend the teaching that Scripture, not man, not the church, not the pope, was the final authority on revelation and truth from God.

Today, the pendulum has swung too far the other way. Much of evangelicalism in America has slipped into a practice that finds meaning and authority from within themselves, and they either ignore the Scriptures, or project this meaning onto the Scriptures.

Most protestant, evangelicals would agree with Sola Scriptura (**in theory**), but then have odd ways, **and really, unbiblical ways**, of applying it.

“For some, the Bible is primarily a book that magically supplies guidance for personal problems, or a sourcebook for ethics or politics, or a mysterious or poetic guide to meaningful personal experience.” – McCartney ‘Let the Reader Understand’ p. 44

- **Ouija Bible** – some folks treat their Bibles like a Ouija Board – scan through it looking for personal private messages in the text.
- **This method has no regard for original intent of the author, the occasion it is being written for, or the audience it was intended for, in other words, no regard for context.**

(Examples of Bad Bible use and interpretation)

1. There was a married woman....“put on the new man” (Colossians 3:10)
 2. There was a single guy... “Grace be unto you” **(WATCH REACTIONS)**
 - Are you offended by the application or are you offended by the method?
- Of course, the Bible does provide guidance for ethics, politics, personal experience and personal problems, but that is not it’s primary purpose. As we said earlier, it is God’s story of His redemptive plan for mankind.
 - **And we’re not saying that God cannot, and does not speak to individuals, or lead an individual, in some miraculous way that affirms the written word and directs the person to obey it (visions for Muslims, subjective leading by God).**
 - **But, anytime we are tempted to seek a ‘new’ or ‘unique’ communication by God, and worse, elevate this ‘new’ or ‘unique’ revelation above that which we have in Scripture, we should stop and remember that God has already spoken to us, in a very clear, and authoritative, and sufficient way.**

^{ESV} **2 Peter 1:16-21** 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and**

*the morning star rises in your hearts,²⁰ **knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.**²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. [emphasis added]*

DO YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF LOOKING FOR A SPECIAL, AUTHORITATIVE WORD FROM GOD OUTSIDE OF SCRIPTURE?, OR EVEN RANDOMLY, DISREGARDING CONTEXT WITHIN SCRIPTURE?

A Common Cop out to seeking meaning from Scripture, in context is = “The Holy Spirit is my teacher”

The most often heard justification for Ouija Bible interpretation is that they just pray and ask God to teach them the meaning of the text—and cite John 14:26.

^{ESV} **John 14:26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

This is unbiblical and slothful. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are commanded to be diligent (“study” KJV) to be able to rightly handle the word of God. Yes, the Holy Spirit teaches us the meaning of the text, but that meaning is the meaning intended by the original author in the original context as he was “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21), and the means by which God intended for us to learn his message is by diligent preparation, not “drive by” interpretation. (Now, I am as guilty as anyone in this regard, and am corrected, even as I try to teach this to you now.)

If you took Ron’s leadership seminar, you know the answer to this: When it comes to discovering meaning of the Bible, Context is _____.

So, are we saying there are No personal or (subjective) experiences?!

Again, we are not saying that there are no personal or subjective experiences involved here. We believe God’s Spirit often enlightens us to the truths in Scripture or to new applications of those truths in our lives (the light goes on, exciting, ...).

This is different from determining meaning of the text. To claim that a verse has one meaning for you and another for someone else is **relativism**, a product of the postmodern culture. A passage may certainly apply differently (admonitions to husbands are applied differently by men and women, etc.), but it cannot have a different correct meaning.

The key to remember here is that meaning is one and application can be many. So be careful not to mistake meaning for application.

(love your neighbor means self denial, service, affection. For me, that may mean that I watch less sports in order to serve my wife, for my wife, it may be applied differently, but the principle behind it, or its meaning, is the same for us both)...

All of this talk about Sola Scriptura and the Sufficiency of Scripture has strong bearings on how we make decisions and how we discern the will of God for our lives.

For more on this topic as it relates to decision making and discerning the Will of God, see:

- Our seminar on the topic: *Decision Making and the Will of God*¹
- *Just Do Something: How to Make a Decision Without Dreams, Visions, Fleece, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, etc.* by Kevin DeYoung

Disciplines through which you can Know God better, as He has revealed himself in the Scriptures:

1. Personal Bible reading
 - a. Remember, Context is _____.
 - b. Find out the author, occasion, and purpose of each book (ESV Study Bible is a great place to start)
2. Meditation (not mystical mindlessness, but focused concentration on God and His Word and quietness)
3. Studying
4. Memorization
5. Listening to it (in your car, while you work, while you fold laundry, work out, do dishes..)
6. Weekly preaching of God's word in a local church
 - a. Pay close attention, pray as you listen, and take good notes.

Review:

- Doctrine of Revelation
- Sola Scriptura – Bible + Nothing
- Sufficiency of Scripture
- Conclusion:
 - We should look to Scripture alone for authoritative Revelation from God
 - We should be slow and deliberate to study and learn about God from Scripture

Discussion questions:

¹Go to objectivegospel.org and click on the Training menu and select “Decision Making”

1. Do you ever find yourself using your Bible more like a Ouiji Bible than the historic revelation of God and His plan? And how He has created, judged, and will redeem the world?
2. Are you looking for a personal, private message in the text, or are you looking for the objective meaning based on context?
3. Do you feel like your intake, study, and knowledge of God through the Scriptures is adequate to make you a good ambassador for Christ?

ANY QUESTIONS?

Verses to pray when you approach God's Word:

^{ESV} **Psalm 119:36** Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

^{ESV} **Psalm 119:18** Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

^{ESV} **Psalm 90:14** Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

^{ESV} **Psalm 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.