

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2026: *Growing in a Relationship With God*

Lesson 2 “To Know God”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 3:1–5; Leviticus 20:26; 1 Samuel 2:2; 1 John 4:7–19; Genesis 1:1; Genesis 2:7; Matthew 1:23; Matthew 28:20.

Memory Text

“ ‘And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’ ” (John 17:3, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Clearer Picture of God
- III. God Is Holy
- IV. God Is Love
- V. God in Creation
- VI. Immanuel, God With Us
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The theme of this lesson is expressed in John 17:3: Eternal life is to know God through Jesus Christ. Having a clear understanding of God’s character is, of course, foundational to having a strong relationship with God. With that in mind, this lesson explores what the Bible says about the character of God, keeping in mind that it “is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. . . . The last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 415. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)

2. In the previous lesson we asked how it is possible to have a living relationship with Someone you can't see, hear or touch? By way of review, how would you answer that question? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. When it comes to our picture of God, theologians offer six major options: Naturalism, Pantheism, Deism, Determinism, Appeasement Theism, and Benevolent Theism. In preparation for the lesson discussion, do a little research on the meaning of those and their implications for what God is like.
4. Read Genesis 3:1-5. What was Lucifer's goal in his conversation with Eve? What lies did he tell Eve about God? How is God's character misrepresented in today's world? (Sunday's Lesson)
5. Holiness is not a word that people use very often today, but it is a word frequently associated with God's character in the Bible. Read Leviticus 20:26, 1 Samuel 2:2, and Isaiah 57:15. What do these texts tell us about the meaning of holiness? (Monday's Lesson)
6. Human ways of defining love are very much distorted and imperfect. How does Paul define love? Read Philippians 2:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. What do they tell us about love? How do these texts expand your understanding of God's character? (Tuesday's Lesson)
7. Compare the descriptions of God in Genesis 1:1 and 2:7. What difference do you notice? Is that significant in any way? (Wednesday's Lesson)
8. In John 14:9 the disciples are told that if they have seen Jesus, they have seen the Father. What did the disciples see? Read John 13:3-5. (Thursday's Lesson)
9. What is the meaning of Jesus' special name in Matthew 1:23? In Matthew, if something is worth saying, it's worth saying twice, or even three times (cf. Matt 18:20; 28:8-20). (Thursday's Lesson)
10. We probably all fail to thank God for so many good gifts in our lives. What strategies have you employed to encourage thankfulness and praise in your life? (Thursday's Lesson)
11. Ellen White highlight quote on the love of God: "All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it. Yet as we study the Bible and meditate upon the life of Christ and the plan of

redemption, these great themes will open to our understanding more and more.”—
Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740. (Friday’s Lesson)

12. What attribute of God’s character has made the biggest impact on your life?
(Friday’s Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: Well, in this connection someone has already asked: “How can you really have a conversation about God? After all, how can we really know God? Take Paul’s statement in Romans 3:11: ‘How unsearchable are His judgments. How inscrutable are His ways,’ the *Revised Standard Version* translates it. If that’s the case, who are we to question? God is sovereign, so why should we be sitting here having conversations about God?”

Graham: Ah, who are we to question the inscrutable ways of God? And that’s in Romans. But I notice in Romans 1, Paul says (in my words), “You’re without excuse if you don’t know God.” So on the principle of taking the Bible as a whole, and not “here a little and there a little,” I would have to put Romans 1 alongside Romans 9 and the other places.

I think when he’s saying God’s thoughts are so far above ours, that is a reverent recognition that God is infinite. Think of all He knows! We’ll never fully understand God; we’re mere creatures. And at times we need to be reminded of His infinite superiority. But then it’s marvelous that the Infinite One would want to be known.

All through the Bible He says, “Israel is destroyed because they don’t know Me,” and “I’ve come to this earth that you may know Me.” So it’s pretty clear God wants to be known. But we shouldn’t pretend we’re gods who could know everything that He knows.

Lou: So we ought not to use that idea of God’s sovereignty, and so on, as an excuse to not think about Him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #1 with Lou Venden, “The Conflict in God’s Family” recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>

Take “to know God.” What’s the difference between really knowing God and really trusting Him? Look for example, at John 17:3: “And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (RSV) As we discussed last time, in the Bible to really **know** someone is to love him, trust him, admire him, to be his friend. That word is even used for the intimacy between a husband and his wife. To really know God is to trust Him, to

love Him and admire Him. I can hear God saying, “If only My children really trusted Me. If they only really knew Me. If they only really loved Me. If they were only willing to listen, and let Me help them. If they would only turn around and come back and stay with Me, and choose to stay forever, I could perfectly heal all the damage done. Everything would be right again. And we could keep it right forever.” Now that’s the whole list, if you want to put it in simple terms.

I often hear God saying in the Bible, “How I wish My children could be My friends once again. And they could see Me as being their friend. And then all would be well.” Can you name anything that would be left out if we, once again, really were God’s loving, trusting, admiring friends? Is there anything He couldn’t do if we honestly regarded Him that way?

Now the Bible describes one such friend. And what an honor in the Bible to be so listed. Moses was such a friend. And he’s described in Exodus 33:11, 17. Let’s look at just a little of it:

The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. . . . And the Lord said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.” (NIV)

You see how being a friend is the same as being known? And I think trust is being loved, and all those other things.

Now surely such trust, and such friendship with our God is no “leap in the dark,” as some people describe faith. Does God ask us to gamble when we trust Him? Has God left us in the dark? Surely we have been warned that it is not safe to trust someone we do not know. And God doesn’t ask us to trust Him as a stranger. Romans 10:17 is another key text we all know so well. Where does this trust come from? “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.” (RSV) Or some manuscripts say “the word of God.” And it’s the same in effect, isn’t it? “Faith comes from what is heard” because they didn’t have copies of the Bible, or Bible Reference Sheets the way we do. They had to go and listen as the scriptures were read. And as they listened they heard the truth. They heard the evidence. And some were won to repentance and to trust, particularly when they heard the truth revealed by the Son of God Himself. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, “All God Asks Is Trust” recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

So if we desire to know God, and learn the answers to the questions in the Great Controversy; if we want to see Christ; if we want to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit; if we want to let Him lead us into truth; there is only one way, and that is to read the Bible. As we read all sixty-six books we will discover how true that last verse is: Hebrews 1:1:

In many [very many] and various [very various] ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets [you see that is demonstrating in many and various ways over a long period of time, and under a great variety of circumstances; that's what Hebrews 1:1 is saying. In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets], but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son [or by His Son]. (RSV)

You don't find claims in there. You find demonstration, over many centuries of time and certainly under a great variety of circumstances. The very length of the sixty-six books speaks well of our God. The very existence of the Bible says that God is not trying to lead us to trust Him without evidence. If God offered us only claims, the Bible would be only a paragraph long. How moving it is to us to realize that the Infinite One has chosen to win His family by being a humble teacher. By stooping to meet us where we are, speaking a language we can understand, leading us no faster than we are able to follow, and running grave risks of being misunderstood—especially when we are so noisy that He has to raise His voice to get our attention, and then tell us that He does not like to raise His voice at all! A teacher like that could be trusted. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Do we need to fear how Jesus will treat us in the hereafter, if He would treat Simon that way? Even people who couldn't be saved and did not become His followers. Look at those Pharisees who brought that poor woman. Look how He treated them. How did He treat Judas? You remember when Judas went to betray his Lord? Jesus had so covered for him that the other disciples thought he'd gone to make an offering to feed the poor. Now, that's how Jesus covered for Judas. And there are many more stories like this. This is the clearest evidence the universe will ever see, or ever need, as to the kind of person our God is. And what I like is, it's not so much in words as it is a description. It's stories. That's why it's such a shame to collect the key texts, the statements, and skip the stories. "The stories are for the children." The stories are the evidence. The recounting of the story of the woman taken in adultery, the story in the upper room, and the story here of the woman who anointed His feet. It's the stories that are such compelling evidence, and based on that evidence, we have the statements that God is love, and so on.

That statement that God is love doesn't mean too much apart from stories like this. Love covers a multitude of sins, and so on, it says. Well, watch Him do it! We can count on it. In the hereafter, we have no need to fear the infinite memory of God. However, it does also mean that no one could be safely admitted to the hereafter who could not be entrusted with the

memory of other people's sins, and treat them with all due respect. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Intertestament Period & Matthew, recorded March 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I wonder if tonight we could think back in imagination to the very dramatic events of that first week of this earth's history. The war had begun already up in heaven. Satan had already leveled his charges and his accusations. One-third of the angels had already agreed with him that God is not worthy of our love and our trust.

Right in the middle of that devastating crisis, God invites His family to watch Him as He creates yet another world—this time, ours. How easily He could have created our world with a snap of His fingers, in just an instant of time. But in the dramatic and significant setting of The Great Controversy, He chose, this time, to do it in six twenty-four hour days. On the first day, all He said was, "Let there be light." That's all. And then days two, three, four, and five, God in unhurried majesty and drama unfolded His plans for our earth. By the sixth day, what a beautiful place this was. Where now were Satan's charges that God was selfish?

I mean, look at the freedom. He created us in His own image with power to think and to do. And we know from human history that He created us free to either love and trust Him, or hate Him and spit in His face, because it has been done. He created us able to do it. God even allowed Satan to approach our first parents at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And He didn't hide that tree in some dark corner of the garden; He put it right in the middle near the Tree of Life, so that Adam and Even would see it every time they came to that other tree. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #10, "The Reminder of the Evidence" recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/10MMCAG>

And I think that Paul's great concern here in Colossians is that the one who came to clear up all the questions about God was God Himself, or our questions have not really been answered. Because our questions are not about the second in command. They're not about an angel. Our questions are about God. So those who believe that someone less than God came have either different questions or they don't have the answers.

But if we really want to know about God, what God is really like, then it would mean everything in the world to believe and understand that the one who came to this earth and walked among

us was that God. And so, when Jesus was here, and we realize it's God, and you watch Him treat sinners so graciously, did anybody intercede with Jesus to forgive somebody? No. Nobody had to plead with Him to forgive, ever. It was in His heart to forgive. No one had to plead with Him. But somebody has to plead with the Father, right? If Jesus is fully God, as emphasized in all these passages, and nobody had to intercede with Him, then we know no one has to intercede with God. And yet they weren't getting that point. And so Jesus had to say, in John 16:26, "You know that if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. And you realize the implications of this? There's no need for me to intercede with the Father when I get up there, for the Father's just like me. In fact, I am God." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Ephesians and Colossians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God's arbitrary rule. Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine (RH June 4, 1901). {1BC 1084.2}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. {DA 22.2}

Holy angels often visited the garden, and gave instruction to Adam and Eve concerning their employment and also taught them concerning the rebellion and fall of Satan. The angels warned them of Satan and cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. The angels also enjoined upon them to follow closely the directions God had given them, for in perfect obedience only were they safe. Then this fallen foe could have no power over them. {EW 147.1}

We are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. {RH, April 5, 1887 par. 10}

Satan was artful in presenting his side of the question. As soon as he found that one position was seen in its true character, he changed it for another. Not so with God. He could work with only one class of weapons,—truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not,—crookedness and deceit. These are the very weapons that he uses in our day to make the truth of none effect. When the truth is presented to the people, it seems to many to be consistent and right; and if the enemy and his followers did not come in and oppose it by every means in their power, where there are now ten who take hold of it, there would be thousands. {RH, March 9, 1886 par. 6}

Today the truths of Scripture are to be brought before the great men of the world in order that they may choose between obedience to God's law and allegiance to the prince of evil. God sets everlasting truth before them—truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not force them to accept it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings. {AA 241.2}

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. {DA 759.1}

God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {AG 313.5}

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. “Come now, and let us reason together,” is the Creator’s invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He can not accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. {BTS, December 1, 1908 par. 5}

He desires that all the inhabitants of the universe shall be convinced of His justice in the final overthrow of rebellion and the eradication of sin. He purposes that the real nature and direful effects of sin shall be clearly manifested to the end that all may be assured of the wisdom and justice of the divine government. {BTS, December 1, 1908 par. 6}

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings. {PP 33.2}

The heart of Infinite Love yearns after those who feel powerless to free themselves from the snares of Satan; and He graciously offers to strengthen them to live for Him. “Fear thou not,” He bids them; “for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” . . . {CC 235.4}

In the councils of heaven it was decided that principles must be acted upon that would not at once destroy Satan’s power, for it was His [God’s] purpose to place things upon an eternal basis of security. . . . God’s order must be contrasted with the new order after Satan’s devising. The corrupting principles of Satan’s rule must be revealed. The principles of righteousness expressed in God’s law must be demonstrated as unchangeable, eternal, perfect.—*Manuscript 57, 1896 (Manuscript Releases, vol. 18, pp. 360, 361).* {CTr 13.6}

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation. {HP 16.4}

God has given us these precious things as an expression of His love. The Lord is a lover of the beautiful, and to please and gratify us He has spread before us the beauties of nature, even as an earthly parent seeks to place beautiful things before the children that he loves. The Lord is always pleased to see us happy. Sinful as it is with all its imperfections, the Lord has lavished upon this earth the useful and the beautiful. The beautiful tinted flowers tell of His tenderness and love. They have a language of their own, reminding us of the Giver. {TDG 241.3}

But not to any class is Christ’s love restricted. He identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. {DA 638.4}

God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love. {MB 77.2}

God is love, God is life. It is the prerogative of God to redeem, reconstruct, and restore. {HP 291.2}

When Adam's sin plunged the race into hopeless misery, God might have cut Himself loose from fallen beings. He might have treated them as sinners deserve to be treated. He might have commanded the angels of heaven to pour out upon our world the vials of His wrath. He might have removed this dark blot from His universe. But He did not do this. Instead of banishing them from His presence, He came still nearer to the fallen race. He gave His Son to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. . . . {AG 176.4}

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time except as He is revealed through Christ. {8T 265.2}

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made "in the image of God," and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth (RH Feb. 11, 1902). {1BC 1081.3}

Next to the angelic beings, the human family, formed in "the image of God," are the noblest of His created works. {FLB 29.6}

God is a being, and man was made in His image. After God created man in His image, the form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it had no vitality. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, breathing, intelligent being. All parts of the human machinery were put in motion. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the perceptions of the mind, the senses, were placed under physical law. It was then that man became a living soul. {TDG 273.4}

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. {DA 25.3}