

6.3.07      *Ten Things You Should Know About God* Ephesians 1:15-23

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As we have been going through the books of the Bible we have been learning about the God we meet in the pages of scripture. As Christians we believe in one God. The God we meet in Genesis is the same God we find in the book of Revelation. The majesty and mystery of God is experienced in a host of ways by different people who describe God in a variety of ways. Writers inspired by God have said that we worship the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth (Isaiah 40). One who is wise in heart, mighty in strength, who acts with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth (Jeremiah), a God whose mercies never come to an end (Lamentations). That sounds like a pretty good God to believe in, worship, and serve. Those descriptions of God come from the Old Testament. In the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians we find a prayer which is densely packed with things Paul wants the believers to know about God. The church is commended for their faith and love for which Paul gives thanks and then he offers a prayer for them.

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put **this power** to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and **power** and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

In Ephesians 1:15-23 there are at least 10 Things we learn about God. Obviously if I am going to mention 10 things that leaves me barely a minute or two to cover each one so today's sermon will be more about a sweeping picture of the horizon than a dive into the depths. Before I list them I want to say something about sharing our faith with others. Many of us feel inadequate about talking to other people about our faith or God or what we believe. We will talk about virtually anything else – the weather, sports, politics,

personal problems, other people, food, or family. If people *do want* to talk about God, faith, or spirituality, we may not feel able to concisely, clearly, or convincingly express exactly why we believe in and worship God, or why we take the time to get up and go to worship on Sunday or why we try to live in a way that pleases God each day or what difference God makes in our life. I am going to walk us very quickly through Ephesians 1:15-23 and identify 10 things about the God Christians worship. If you ever wished you had an easily accessible reference to help you explain God to someone else, you may want to use your worship bulletin to write down these ten things.

## **Ten Things You Should Know About God**

### **1. We pray to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

We believe in a God who wants to be in relationship with us, in communication with us. We pray and communicate with the kind of God who would send a beloved Son to live among us full of grace and truth, to teach, heal, love, and forgive. A God who would express the greatest self-giving love, for the greatest amount of people – for the world; by giving the greatest gift – a Son, that anyone who believes in him may have the greatest reward – eternal life. We believe in a God who practices sacrificial love and calls us to do the same. Joseph the earthly father of Jesus was told to give his son that name because “he would save his people from their sins.” He is Lord because he is to be our leader, our sovereign, the one to whom we give our loyalty and allegiance. We pray to the God of self-giving love who saves us from our sins and invites us to follow Jesus for the rest of our lives.

**2. The Father of Glory.** Glory has many definitions including: great honor, praise, or distinction. Adoration, praise, and thanksgiving offered in worship; majestic beauty and splendor. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who has shown such great self-giving love, is worthy of honor and distinction. The Father of glory longs for our complete and heart-felt adoration, praise and thanksgiving when we come together in worship and throughout our week. We are to continually offer praise to God. Have you noticed how loud the birds are early in the morning – today they were already singing outside my window at 4:27 a.m. celebrating the gift of light and another day? We are to join in creation’s chorus of praise. How do we greet the new day - by saying, “*Good Lord, morning?*” or “*Good Morning, Lord!*” God is characterized by majestic beauty and splendor. That’s why we sing at times, “*Early in the morning, I will celebrate the light.*”

*The heaven's are your tabernacle, I will call your name by night, God of wonders..." Or "Father all glorious come and reign over us, Ancient of Days."*

**3. God who gives you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation.** Wisdom and revelation are different aspects of knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge and experience that is applied to life. People who are wise not only know what to do, how to behave, how to speak – they actually do it, act that way, and speak that way. Revelation is knowledge or insight that is given; it is not based on experience or education. Revelation can come in a flash. Paul is telling us that God gives us a spirit of wisdom and revelation – that the Holy Spirit assists us both by helping us learn from life and experience how we are to live and be as followers of Jesus as well as by providing at times revelation through prayer, God's word, or even the godly counsel of another believer. Paul frequently challenges us to live as wise people, making the most of the time we have to live. It is heartbreaking to see how many people suffer and die needlessly because they make foolish, unwise decisions. God gives us a spirit of wisdom and revelation that we are to pay attention to, listen to, and follow.

**4. God who desires to be known by us.** Paul prays "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him." This is a simple but important point – God desires to be known by us, God wants to be known. God sent Jesus and gives us the Spirit so we can know God. We don't worship a God who makes us play hide and seek. Yes, there are mysteries about God that we will never know or be able to understand or explain, but there is plenty *that we can know*. We believe in a God who knows us personally and who desires to be known by us personally. Our Creator wants us to invest time in a personal relationship with the One who gave us life. The better we know God, the more we will love and to seek to please God.

**5. God who enlightens and transforms us.** "so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened," this is an interesting image. "*With the eyes of your heart enlightened.*" In biblical terms the heart is not merely a blood pump – it is the source of one's will, the seat of our emotions and identified with one's character. We still use the phrase this way today when we say, someone "has a good heart," or "I love you with all my heart." You don't look at your beloved and say, "*I love you with all my blood pump.*" We worship a God who can change our hearts, our will, our emotions, and character – A God who can help us to see ourselves, our family and friends, and the world in a whole new way. God enlightens and transforms us from the inside out.

**6. God who gives us hope and calls us to hope.** “so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.” The God Christians believe in is a God of hope. God reaches out to us in our moments of despair, discouragement, and grief to give us hope. Having a sense of hope is vital to our mental and emotional health. People who feel hopeless have a difficult time with motivation, energy, and focus. As Christians we have hope even in difficult circumstances. We believe that as long as there is life there is hope and that even after life is over God has more in store for us.

**7. God who gives us a rich and glorious inheritance.** To inherit something means to come into possession or to possess it. When we inherit something it means we receive it from someone who has gone before us, usually someone who loves us or cares about us. Have you ever inherited something? When my father’s sister died last spring her son, my cousin Chris, gave us her car which was very generous and totally unexpected. The sad thing about an inheritance is that to receive it means that someone we love has died. I would much rather have my Aunt still living than be driving her car. Yet every time we see or use the car it is a reminder of my Aunt and my cousin that makes me feel good. Bea Tilga passed away last week and her daughters mentioned in reading her will that she had included in her estate a gift of \$10,000 to Brewster Baptist Church. I would much rather have Bea around than the generous gift from her and Walter, yet her gift will be gratefully received and a reminder of their love. As Christians we have a rich and glorious inheritance in Christ which is generous and unexpected, but it is given to us because someone who loved us, Jesus, died on the cross. We don’t earn or deserve an inheritance, it is a gift. We’ve all seen bumper stickers that say, “*I’m spending my children’s inheritance.*” As a child I don’t expect my parents to leave me anything materially – they have already given me life, love, faith, values, and so much more. God gives us a rich and glorious inheritance –abundant, eternal life. Hope on earth and joy in heaven. Not a bad deal.

**8. God of great power for those who believe.** The interesting thing about this thought is that God is a God of great power not for everybody but only *for those who believe*. That’s why believing is important. If someone came into your home and had no idea why there were little holes located low on the wall of each room they wouldn’t know that there was power available in the form of electricity that could run all kinds of amazing devices such as computers, light, refrigerators, and televisions. In a similar way, like electricity, God is a source of great power to those who believe that God is exists and

who tap into God for power for living. God wants to be and can be a source of great power for everybody, but the Lord's power can go untapped and unutilized by those who don't believe. While electrical current can be measured, the power of God is beyond our calculation. Paul calls it "the immeasurable greatness of his power." Paul is very focused on power, he mentions it four times, especially noting that "God put **this power** to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead, which is the ninth thing we should know about God.

**9. God who raised Jesus from the dead.** God's power and God's love are shown in the resurrection of Jesus. This is one of the defining things about God – that God not only creates life, God can bring something redeeming even out of death. We believe this because after his death on the cross, Jesus was seen by many of his followers who were transformed from frightened, fearful individuals at the time of Jesus' death to bold witnesses proclaiming publicly that God raised Jesus from the dead. They were willing to brave ridicule, imprisonment, riots, beatings, and risked dangerous journeys all to tell others about the power and hope that are available to those who believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. According to the Book of Acts, it was in the city of Ephesus that the silversmiths rioted at the threat of Paul's belief in one God because it was a threat against their income from making miniatures of their idol Artemis so they dragged Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, into the center of town before the town clerk was able to calm the mob (Acts 19:23-41). Christians believe there is hope even in the worst circumstances, and that even death itself is not the end of our hope because God raised Jesus from the dead. God can bring life to situations and people that seem hopeless. The final or tenth thing we learn about God in this prayer is that we worship the

**10. God who made Jesus head over all things for the church.** God has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. The church is to be the visible and working body of Christ in the world today. The church is not a building, the church is people. We don't go to church, we are the church and Jesus is the head of the church. He is in charge. What he wants, we will seek, what he asks we will do, where he sends, we will go.

These are ten things in a brief prayer that we should know about God. We believe in the God of Glory who sent Jesus Christ and gave us the Holy Spirit. We believe in a God who gives wisdom and revelation, who transforms, enlightens, and gives hope. A God of great power who gives a rich inheritance to all who believe. A God

who raised Jesus from the dead to make him head over the church. Our God is an awesome God.

Prayer: O God of our Lord Jesus Christ, reveal yourself to me and grant me wisdom so that the eyes of my heart may be opened and enlightened. By your Spirit, may I know the hope and inheritance which you have given me and may the greatness of your power that is at work in Christ who is the head of the church also be at work in me.

Blessing Ephesians 6:23-24

**“Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.”**