

# Omniscient

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[ 0 : 00 ] Genesis chapter 3, verses 1 to 13 is a story I think many of you are probably familiar with, but we will take a look at this again from a bit of a different perspective tonight.

Think about God's knowledge, what God knows, and what we know, and what perhaps we should or should not know. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? The woman said to the serpent, We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it or you will die.

You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate.

She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed thick leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

[ 1 : 15 ] Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you?

He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done?

The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. We're going to be thinking tonight about God's omniscience.

The fact that God is all-knowing, that God knows all things. And contrasting God's all-knowingness with the limitedness of our own knowing.

[ 2 : 18 ] Because we all have limits. We have limits on what we can know, and what we should know, and what we do know. But God doesn't have such limits. To help us think about the limits of our own knowledge, and then segue into what God knows, I want to ask you a question, or maybe some questions.

If you could know anything in the world that you don't know already, what would it be? Would it be something about the future? What school to go to? What job to take? Who you marry? How your kids will turn out? When you'll die? Would you want to know a winning lottery number? Answers to a test. What direction a certain stock will go, so you can know whether to buy or sell and make a profit?

Lots of people want to know about the future. That's why people read horoscopes, look at tarot cards, go to palm readers. Or for those of us who are perhaps not into occult or New Age practices, we read business news, or sports assistants, relationship columns.

For academics, there's the never-ending drive to increase knowledge, to keep up in their field, or to have at least as much knowledge, if not more, than their peers, and the desire to get ahead.

[ 3 : 30 ] Why do we want knowledge? Why do we want to know things? It's been said, knowledge is power. Knowledge holds out the promise of security, control, safety.

These are all things that are good, aren't they? Security, control, safety. But can knowledge deliver on these promises? Is knowing more the key to gaining security, control, safety, these things that

we want?

Sometimes we think, if we can just get a little bit more knowledge, then everything will be okay. Sometimes it's a good thing to get a little bit more knowledge. That's just what we need.

But no matter how much we know, our knowledge is always limited. There's always something that we don't know. Always. Our knowledge is always partial. And what we might not know could be a threat to our security, our safety, our control, our status.

We feel like we lack knowledge, so we want to gain more. We feel like we need to know more about something. We might even fight for it. We might get angry. We might get frustrated at those who oppose us in our search for the knowledge of that thing that will bring security or safety or perhaps hope to our lives.

[ 4 : 49 ] So, given the fact that we are in a world of knowledge, and especially now in the information age when there's so much at our fingertips via phone or computer, how do we decide what knowledge we'll seek out and what we won't?

Because we can't know everything. We have limited time, limited capacity. Why do we seek to know the things we know? Is our pursuit of knowledge driven by an inordinate desire for power, safety, control, or status?

Do we seek out more knowledge just because we're afraid? What is appropriate knowledge to seek for and what is not? Because some things we don't know, we probably don't want to know, and it would actually be harmful if we do know.

In order to answer some of these questions, I want us to think about our search for knowledge compared to God's. Does God seek for knowledge?

He doesn't. He has it all already. God is omniscient. So, for our younger members here, or for those who enjoy etymology and Latin, the word omniscience is just two Latin words, omni meaning all, and science or scientia meaning knowledge.

[ 6 : 06 ] So, God is simply all-knowing. We may know people who act like know-it-all, but God does actually know it all.

Our knowledge is limited, but God's is unlimited. God never learns. Now, if we said that about a person, that would be a really bad character trait, wasn't it? You know, so-and-so, they never learn. That means they don't know their limits. They don't know that they need to continue to be learning in order to improve themselves. But God is generally the only being who never needs to learn because he has all knowledge already.

Now, the fact that God knows everything could be either comforting or scary depending upon where we sit and what we know about our own lives.

In the face of difficulty, suffering, hardship, uncertainty, the fact that God knows everything can be very comforting. The Bible says in Matthew 10, 29-31, It's comforting to know that God knows the most intimate details of all our lives.

[ 7 : 23 ] So, he knows what we're going through. And he knows what's ahead. And he knows how to help us. But God, the fact that God knows everything can be very scary as well if we've done something wrong or a lot of things wrong.

God doesn't take lightly our sinful rebellion. He didn't take Adam and Eve's rebellion lightly. And many others throughout history can testify to this fact as well. Now, I want us to think about the difference between our limited knowledge and God's unlimited knowledge.

And what knowledge we should seek and what we shouldn't seek in order to honor God and to find what's best for our lives according to God's word. And to do that, I want to come back to Adam and Eve from the passage that we read just a moment ago.

There's some things that God wanted Adam and Eve to know. And there's some things that God did not want Adam and Eve to know. So, what are those things? What did God want Adam and Eve to know?

He wanted them to know him. God wanted to have a relationship with Adam and Eve. In the garden, he talked with them. And he knew them. And they knew him. And there was a relationship of intimacy there.

[ 8 : 40 ] Of communion between God and man. God wanted Adam and Eve to know his provision. God put them in a garden. There was fruit. There was things to eat.

There was a temperate climate. All their needs in life were provided for. He wanted them to know. He wants us to know that he provides for us.

And that he expresses his goodness and kindness to us in his provision. God wanted Adam and Eve to know the benefits of work. Some people think about paradise as a place where we'll never work.

But if we actually look at the account in the beginning of Genesis, in the garden of Eden, there was work. But it wasn't poilsome work. It wasn't work. It wasn't back-breaking work.

It was work that they enjoyed. They got into. They saw the fruit of their labor. And it wasn't burdensome to them. They saw the fruit of what they did with their own hands.

[ 9 : 34 ] God wants us to have and enjoy that. God wanted Adam and Eve to have the joy of human companionship. Right at the beginning, before Eve was created, God said it's not good for man to be alone.

Even though dog may be man's best friend, dog is still not good enough. Not nearly as good as woman. God wants us to be in relationship with other people.

To have friends. For many people, that includes getting married and perhaps having children. He wants us to have relationships with his people. God wants us to know creativity.

God gave to Adam to name the animals. There was a creative process that God was engaged in. He wanted people to know that as well. God wanted Adam and Eve to know the experience of exercising authority and wise management.

In Genesis 1.28, the Bible says, God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

[ 10 : 44 ] Now, in the history of mankind, we haven't done very well in exercising dominion over the earth and caring for the earth and managing resources. And those God has put into our care very well. God wants us to exercise authority and stewardship and management rightly and properly for his honor and for the benefit of other people.

And God also wants us to know. He wanted Adam and Eve to know. And this is where Adam and Eve slipped up. He wants us to know self-discipline and trust.

Right in the middle of this garden of abundant food and everything that they needed, there was a tree of knowledge of good and evil. And that was the only thing that God said, Don't touch this.

This is not for you. And Adam and Eve had not sinned yet, but there was still a test to bring them further on in their perfection in order to be the people that God wanted them to grow into.

So they needed to exercise self-discipline. He wanted them to know this. And he wanted them to know what it was like to trust. Because when God said no, they needed to learn how to trust God.

[ 12 : 01 ] That when God said, You don't need to know this. You don't need to know what comes from this tree. Adam and Eve needed to be okay with that. When God put that tree there and said, Trust me, it was in effect that God was saying, There are some things I want you to know, and some I don't want you to know.

And that's okay. Not to know something. I need you to trust me when I say to you, You don't need to know some things. Don't be afraid at not knowing. Don't be afraid. I'm taking care of you.

Trust me, and be content with the knowledge of the things that I've given you. God's saying, The things I've given you to know, this should be enough for you. Don't look for more than I've given you.

But Adam and Eve sought forbidden knowledge. Because they thought the limits God had put in them constituted a denial of something good. They thought, There's something good out there.

There's something more that we could know that will improve our lives that God is keeping from us. They wanted, like many of us, they wanted more power and control, and God was willing to give them at that time.

[ 13 : 12 ] Like Adam and Eve, we too experience the temptation of forbidden knowledge. In our own wisdom, in our own wisdom, we come up with reasons why we should, why we need to have certain knowledge.

Maybe it's gossip. Maybe it's a certain intimate or thrilling experience that God's word is forbidden. Maybe it's some sort of insider business information, or maybe it's just some trivia on the internet that has no practical and perhaps some harming effects upon us.

There's all sorts of things that we could know, but it's really no benefit to us to know, and that we shouldn't seek out. But sometimes the temptation is not in the knowledge itself, but in what the knowledge can do for us.

Why do we seek the knowledge we do? Is it to be masters of our own destiny? Is it because we don't trust God to take care of us? Because if we have enough knowledge, you don't really need to depend on God, do we?

We can control our own lives. In our seeking after the knowledge that we do, are we saying to God, God, I am not content with the limits you have set for me, so I'm going to seek this knowledge and make a good life for myself, because I know how to make a good life for myself better than you know.

[14:28] But why did God set limits on us? Nobody likes limits. We want to have as much as possible. It's a sinful nature in us. We're greedy. We want to, we're selfish. We want everything. We want to be in control of everything and have nothing that we don't know.

We're not comfortable with being limited. We value freedom and independence or liberty, and we're not content with being in the place that God has for us.

There's some things that God doesn't want us to know, didn't want Adam and Eve to know. What was it that God did not want Adam and Eve to know? What was he keeping from them? He didn't want them to know shame, distrust, embarrassment, conflict, revenge, suffering, and the death that came from sin.

Those are all things that they learned about after they took the fruit from that tree. They knew nakedness. Not physically being naked.

They had that. They knew what it was like to be physically naked before they eat that fruit. But the nakedness that they experienced afterwards was that sense of being exposed and vulnerable to harm.

[15:37] They knew that. We know that now. We may go around fully clothed, but sometimes we have that feeling of being exposed, being vulnerable to harm.

God did not want them to know the burden of feeling that seeking a good life and figuring out how to have a good life entirely rested on their shoulders.

Because if it's up to us to figure out by our own knowledge and our own cleverness how to have a good life, we'll always be in a desperate search for that one more thing, that one more thing that will help us improve our lives.

If you go to many bookstores, there's a huge self-help and self-improvement section. People are looking for that one more thing that will give them that little edge to have a better life.

God didn't want Adam to know evil and wickedness. Pain follows sin. Sin always has consequences. That's why the location of the forbidden fruit was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[16:50] God didn't want them to know evil. Adam and Eve knew good already, but they weren't ready for evil. It's as if they were saying to God, we're not content with you making the buying choices here.

We want to go to the store and see all the options before us and then choose what's the best for us. But God is saying, I've brought you what's good already.

Be content in that fact. In a world that loves to have options, are we content to let God make the choices? It's a really good thing that God knows everything and that we don't.

It's a good thing that God knows everything because he can choose what's best for us and he can steer us away from what's harmful. He is knowledgeable and powerful to do this. And it's a good thing that we don't know everything because there's a lot of knowledge that we don't need.

It's too much for us. It's too painful for us. It's too overwhelming. It's too confusing. It's utterly unhelpful. Now, at this point, I want to stop for a moment and answer an objection because to modern sensibilities, it sounds very strange and even scary to be told there's some things you don't need to know.

[18:09] It sounds like a business or a government that wants to oppress us and take advantage of us. There's too many authorities in this world that have abused people who have withheld information, they've withheld education, they've withheld certain knowledge from people in order to profit from them, in order to oppress them, in order to take advantage of them.

But God's not an authoritarian dictator denying information in order to deny us good. That's not God. God is a loving Father. He's looking out for us as children.

And He's sharing with us only the information that we need to know, what's helpful for us. And He's asking us to trust Him in the matters that He hasn't revealed. And there's actually a lot of things that

we shouldn't concern ourselves with.

If we look in Scripture, there's a number of things that just are really not profitable for us to inquire into. Why am I experiencing more suffering than my neighbor is?

Do we compare ourselves to other people? Do we ask the why question? Why is this happening to me and not them? Why am I going through this? Or the other side of that coin, why did that person have that good thing, that ability, that opportunity, and I don't?

[ 19 : 28 ] When we start playing the comparison game, we try to delve into and scrutinize God's will, why He gives something to one person or why He withholds something. We're going to enter into jealousy and we're going to enter into bitterness and a lot of things that God doesn't want us to know.

When will Jesus return? Many people have gone down that road. They tried to figure out the time and the season, the exact day that Jesus will return. And nothing good has come to that.

Jesus said in His Word, it's not for you to know. Is a particular natural disaster or calamity God's judgment upon us? In the United States, it seems like every time some disaster happens, there's a preacher who gets on TV and says it's God's judgment.

Maybe, maybe not. Do we know this? Jesus, in Luke chapter 13, actually spoke very specifically to how we are to respond to these kinds of questions in the face of tragedy.

Luke chapter 13, verses 1 to 5. Now there was some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?

[ 20 : 39 ] I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. For those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. When there's a great disaster, we shouldn't try to figure out why did this disaster happen.

But Jesus says what we should realize is that unless we repent, unless we're right with God, that kind of disaster or something works, God's judgment will fall upon us.

That's the lesson we're supposed to get out of disasters. It's supposed to remind us and humble us before God's face and remind us to repent and turn away from our sin.

Not stand in judgment over what people who were caught up in disaster may have done or not do. When there's a disaster, it's time to show compassion. One of the fascinating verses, I love this verse because it really reminds us of the limits of our knowledge and God's wisdom and revelation.

[ 21 : 47 ] It's in Deuteronomy 29.29. It's nice that it's 29.29, but it's easy to remember. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Now, there's some things that God has not revealed, but there's a lot of things that God has revealed. He's given us a whole book of things that he's revealed to us and he wants us to know and he wants us to respond to.

There's many people who agonize over, you know, what is God's will for my life? What should I do? But they hardly opened the Bible. God's already given us a lot that he wants us to know.

As we read this, it builds our wisdom and builds our understanding of ourselves, of God, of the world around us. And God builds us in wisdom and understanding as we study his word.

We need to be content with what God has kept secret and be content and study diligently and seek to know more of what he has revealed to us. Sometimes our hearts will tell us to do something.

[ 22 : 51 ] Sometimes the world around us will tell us to do something. But we need to be content with the knowledge that God has given us and walk in that way even though other so-called knowledge which conflicts with God's word is saying to go in a different direction.

Proverbs 3, 5-6 says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him and he will make your path straight. We need to seek appropriate knowledge for the glory of God and with trust in him we need to try to make wise decisions about what we'll try to find out, what we'll try to know and what we won't know.

Some people might hear this and say, Well, there's things we're not supposed to know. Does the Bible want us to be Luddites and Ignoramuses? Is the Bible against progress?

Should we lock ourselves down at a certain point in history and just refuse to know anything more? No, that's not what the Bible is saying. Proverbs 25, 2 says, It is the glory of God to conceal a

matter.

To search out a matter is the glory of kings. We should learn. We should do science. We should seek to work, make the world a better place. The Bible is not against progress.

[ 24 : 07 ] It's not against knowledge or acquiring knowledge. But we should know the limits of our knowledge and be wise in what knowledge we gain because there's a lot out there we could know.

We should spend more time looking at scripture and seeking out useful knowledge. Maybe gaining a new skill or studying a language or investing time in becoming more knowledgeable in our professional field.

Maybe spend more time on things like that and less time clicking on those articles about five amazing bathing costume fails or a quiz on which haughty Harry Potter character we are.

Are those things we need to know? Maybe we spend less time on reading about politics and following celebrity news or movies TV's video games and more time in the Bible and prayer in building relationships with the people around us.

Instead of trying to gain more and more connections with followers maybe just spend more time with the people that God has put across the street in our own church community. Because we're in such an information rich age and there's so much out there we could know and so many of us spend time on the computer on the internet increasingly with smartphones we need to be ever more discerning about the knowledge we've taken.

[ 25 : 34 ] It's very easy to quickly just do a quick check of email or Facebook or Instagram or whatever whatever internet or social media site that you like just do a quick check I'll take five minutes behold an hour and a half later what have we done?

We've lost half our day already it's as if we've overeaten and we push back from the table and think what have I done? I've just wasted so much time I'm not against social media or entertainment per se but there's so much there's such a thing as too much of a good thing food is good and necessary but there is junk food there is poison food there is such a thing as overeating and that's called greed and gluttony we can be greedy for knowledge and knowledge that really doesn't benefit us in any way if we spend time gaining useless knowledge or even harmful knowledge our minds are cluttered our hearts are cluttered with these things and the stress and distraction that it brings and so the internet especially can be a massive time suck and consume our hearts and minds in gaining knowledge that we think might be useful or helpful now if it's clicking on a link about which Harry Potter character we are that's sort of an easy target it's like okay well that's kind of useless but what if it's an article vaguely related to our field or what if it's about parenting or what if it's about health we can easily justify well this is a good use of my time is it maybe it is maybe it isn't we need to think carefully about these things because everything we choose to spend our time on learning and knowing it's less time we can think about other things if our hearts and minds are consumed with something going on out there another part of the world something that we really can't affect change in then we don't have the time or the capacity to learn about what we should be doing in life to think about goals to think about the other people around us do we know our neighbors do we know the other people in our workplaces or our schools have we thought about whether we should spend time trying to get to know them that might be useful knowledge so that we could bless them we could speak to them about

Christ this is and we also need down time to think creatively and to reflect if we're on a phone consuming consuming consuming taking an infotainment all the time we don't have that time to stop and think well what should I be what knowledge should I be seeking what should I really be seeking we're just go go go and don't think what should I know we just know what we know and just flit on to the next thing trying to fill every moment of boredom but when we let ourselves be consumed by useless knowledge the world the flesh and the devil gain the upper hand as we feast on bread and circuses what then should be our approach to knowledge we should read God's word we should seek his priorities what are what priorities does God have in this world what is God trying to accomplish in this world and we should seek to know those priorities and seek to bring our priorities into line with his and then we'll have a better gauge to know what knowledge we should pursue we only have limited time we have limited ability to learn and grow and to know things so let's rest in what rest in the fact that God knows us and God cares for us who knows that we can't know everything he couldn't possibly require us to do more than we possibly could in order to gain safety security in this world so we need to learn what we can according to

God's wisdom and for the rest we need to simply abide and rest in the knowledge that God knows us and God knows how to take care of us even if we don't know everything about health or safety or everything we possibly can in our field we need to accept our knowledge is limited and the fact that our knowledge is limited forces us to call out to God and to trust in God and this is where knowing that God is omniscient all knowing is really practical because we can't know everything and we need to trust in the one who does know everything to be able to take care of us God has put certain processes in place in this world in creation the Westminster Shorter Catechism and I'm going to end on this the Westminster Shorter Catechism says that God rules the world through acts of creation and providence he's put certain orders and prophecies in place in the natural world so that we'll be provided for but he also rules through his acts of providence what are those those are those that's his supernatural guiding and ordering the world the catechism question 11 asks what are God's works of providence and the answer is this

God's works of providence are is most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions God didn't create the world and wind it up like a like a like a clock and for the younger people clocks he used to be to wind them up and wind up a clock and set it to go and say okay you're off on your own take care of yourselves no God's hand is actively intervening in our affairs in our lives and he is preserving helping us and caring for us and he knows what he's doing you be