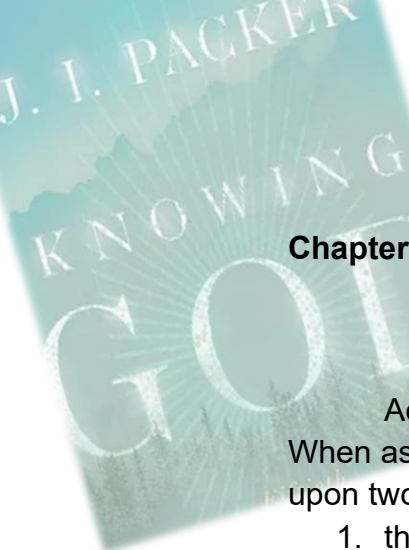




## Chapter 2: The People Who Know Their God

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According to Dr. Packer, many of today's Christians claim to know God. When asked, they are expected to joyfully give their testimony, often expounding upon two major personal conclusions or events:

1. they can rattle off their well-memorized conversion story;  
(“This, after all, is what evangelicals are expected to say.”)
2. they claim to know God based upon events in their individual lives.

But have they **known** God? Packer says “I doubt it.” (pg. 24f)



Why would the author of “Knowing God” be such a sourpuss in this regard? Because almost everyone believes that a lifetime of heartaches—both big and small—do matter. We focus intently upon these bad memories, dredging and re-dredging some up for decades. They become our “crosses” to bear.



Other people look at us with pity and say, “Poor soul, how he/she has suffered.” Soon we adopt this woe-is-me attitude as our own personalized mantra.

**“Stop it!”**



says Packer.

Those who truly know God “never brood on might-have-beens” and missed opportunities. Instead, they focus only on what they have gained. (pg. 25)

Paul said it well: **[READ PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9]**

Paul considers his former desires, wishes, and achievements as rubbish.<sup>1</sup> This is from the man who had a world of opportunity awaiting him as a Roman citizen and who was quickly rising in his role as a Pharisee. If anyone had reason to weep and mourn about a lifestyle and a career lost it would have been Paul (or Saul).

Instead, he turned to Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>The Greek word for “rubbish” can also be translated as “garbage” (NIV), “trash” (ESV), or “dung” (KJV). Some translations simply say “a total loss.”

### **Does he regret this lost opportunity?**

**"When Paul says he counts the things he lost [as] *rubbish*, or *dung*, he means not merely that he does not think of them as having any value, but also that he does not live with them constantly in his mind: What normal person spends his time nostalgically dreaming of manure? Yet this, in effect, is what many of us do. It shows how little we have in the way of true knowledge of God."** (pg. 25)

#### Knowing God vs. Knowing **About** God

Packer draws on a line which affects us all: "A little knowledge **of** God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge **about** God."

#### **{Give an example of what each these mean.}**

Those who know God--and attempt to act as Christ would act-- are able to put the disappointments and unpleasant times ("losses and crosses") of their lives permanently behind them. These people learn from the experiences but they don't dwell on the gloom of the past. "If we really knew God, this is what we would be saying...." Otherwise, we are living a life of only knowing **about** God. (pg. 27)

One of our best examples of knowing God (not just knowing about God) comes from the Book of Daniel. Daniel was only a teenager when the Babylonians conquered his hometown of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. He and his fellow Jews were exiled 600 miles to the east to the palace of their new king, Nebuchadnezzar II, and treated like royalty. (This is the same king who built the famous Hanging Gardens).

"People who know their God are before anything else people who pray." Daniel and his three Jewish friends were faithful to God in their prayers, diet, and worship, even when threatened with punishment by death. "The fruit of true knowledge of God is energy to pray for God's cause." (pg. 28f)

#### **[READ DANIEL 11:32]**

Daniel is an inspiration for those who want to know God. The people of today who know THE God ---not those gods of ancient Babylon, nor those flesh-centered idols and gods of our modern world---will be strong and resilient.

## In summary, people display evidence of knowing God by...



### ...having “great energy for God.”

“But the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.” (ESV); they react to the anti-God trends that surround them.

“While their God is being defied or disregarded, they can not rest,”

[Note Packer’s reference to Bishop Ryle.]



“People who know their God are before anything else people who pray.” Be bold. Take action! If you’re too old or feeble, simply continue to pray for those can affect a course for righteousness. (pg. 28)



### ...having “great thoughts of God.”

In all of the Bible the most vivid and heart-felt picture of God is presented in the Book of Daniel, per Dr. Packer. Daniel was inspired by God’s “holy majesty, his moral perfection and his gracious faithfulness.” (pg. 29f)

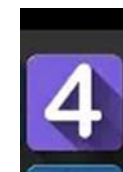
***{Does our image of God fit this picture?}***



### ...showing “great boldness for God.”

Daniel and his three comrades knew the risks of honoring and worshiping Yahweh instead of Marduk and Ishtar...or Nebuchadnezzar himself. (pg. 30)

***{How can we “show boldness for God” in our world today?}***



### ...being at peace in their minds with God.

No threats could persuade Daniel (or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) to worship the king’s golden idol or the gods of Nebuchadnezzar’s court. Live or die, it didn’t matter because God was with them-- and it should be the same conviction for us today.

**[READ the poem “Lord, It Belongs Not to My Care,” pg. 31 of *Knowing God*.]**

## *So, what first steps do we take to gain a knowledge **OF** God?*

### **First,** fess up.

Be honest with yourself and allow the Lord to jump into your very soul. Realize how much you lack in this knowledge. (...and remember: it's knowledge OF God, not about God.)

"Many of us, I suspect, have no idea how impoverished we are at this level." (pg. 32)

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**Second,** seek the Savior. When Jesus was among us on earth his followers sought him. They had heard of Jesus as being a good teacher...

... then they came to *know* him as their Lord and savior,...  
... and thus, to know God.

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### **Additional Sources**

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