Knowing God
Study Guide

An Exercise in Spiritual Growth and Discipleship Using the Book by J.I. Packer

Section Three: If God Be For Us...

by
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For Study Groups or Personal Use
Preface

While many books and authors have passed through Christian awareness over the centuries, periodically a book comes along that strikes a cord deep in the Christian community. *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer is one such book. While reading through Packer’s book can be memorable, studying the book chapter by chapter changes lives. I have seen those changes happen again and again over the years as I have lead cover-to-cover studies, using a one week per chapter format. While this takes about thirty one weeks to complete (twenty-two chapters with two chapters taking two and one three weeks each to complete), introductory material, section reviews, and follow-up), it allows ample time for contemplation of each truth Packer introduces, time to delve into the scripture references and consider the depths of each claim that Packer makes. As faithful students of all that Christ has commanded, we do mean to be Bereans after all, to question everything that is said to see if it is true, and this study should be no exception.

While the study of good books can help to focus the growth of a Christian, I have always thought that discipleship could only be successful if it was centered in the cross of Jesus Christ and its true meaning of sacrifice, to the “not my will, but thy will be done” that lies at the root of Christ’s sacrificial decision. My goal is that everyone who uses these materials, who studies *Knowing God* with their assistance, will find the cross of Jesus Christ taking its rightful place at the center of their lives. If that happens, then I will have been a “good and faithful servant.”

A prayer for this study

Dear Lord God, you have challenged us in your Word to study to show ourselves approved and told us to leave aside the milk of the Gospel and mature into its meat. Open our hearts, O Lord, and prepare us to learn of you, to drink deep of your revelation of yourself. And, as we come to know you better, O Lord, may we also come to better know ourselves. Grant us, by your grace, success in our efforts.

We thank you, O Lord, for your mercy and patience with us as we struggle to understand both you and ourselves better. May everything we do be to your honor and glory. Amen.

William (Bill) G. Meisheid
## Contents

**SECTION THREE: IF GOD BE FOR US...** ................................................................. 1  
  Scriptures ............................................................................................................. 1  
  Quotes ................................................................................................................ 1  

**CHAPTER 18: THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL – PART 1** ........................................... 3  
  Quotes for the week ............................................................................................ 3  
  Concern: That we understand the difference between expiation and propitiation, and  
  not minimize God’s wrath over sin ....................................................................... 3  
  Interacting with the text ...................................................................................... 4  
  What to Do Next ................................................................................................. 6  
  Goal: To forever meld God’s justice with his mercy without diminishing the significance  
  of either............................................................................................................. 6  

**CHAPTER 18: THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL – PART 2** ........................................... 7  
  Quotes for the week ............................................................................................ 7  
  Concern: That even when we understand the importance of propitiation and God’s wrath  
  over sin, we still will not understand the absolute centrality of Jesus’ death to everything  
  he was and did ................................................................................................... 7  
  Interacting with the text ...................................................................................... 8  
  What to Do Next ................................................................................................. 10  
  Goal: To never lose sight of the centrality of Jesus’ death as an explanation of who he  
  was and what he did ......................................................................................... 10  

**CHAPTER 19: SONS OF GOD - PART 1** ................................................................. 11  
  Quotes for the week ........................................................................................... 11  
  Concern: That we will define our Christianity by other than biblical standards  
  .......................................................................................................................... 11  
  Interacting with the text ...................................................................................... 12  
  What to Do Next ................................................................................................. 14  
  Goal: To understand what it really means to be a Christian ............................ 14  

**CHAPTER 19: SONS OF GOD - PART 2** ................................................................. 15  
  Quotes for the week ........................................................................................... 15  
  Concern: That we will not grasp the importance of the need for gospel holiness and joy  
  in our lives ....................................................................................................... 15  
  Interacting with the text ...................................................................................... 16  
  What to Do Next ................................................................................................. 18  
  Goal: To understand the significance of our assurance in God ....................... 18  

**CHAPTER 20: THOU OUR GUIDE** ........................................................................ 19  
  Quotes for the week ........................................................................................... 19  
  Concern: That we would know what to do so that we could do it .................. 19  
  Interacting with the text ...................................................................................... 20  
  What to Do Next ................................................................................................. 22  
  Goal: To listen to God as he leads us along the path of righteousness and then act on  
  that guidance .................................................................................................... 22
CHAPTER 21: THESE INWARD TRIALS

Quotes for the week ................................................................. 23
Concern: That we would want to stay children in the faith, protected and pampered .......... 23
Interacting with the text......................................................................................................................... 24
What to Do Next ................................................................................................................................. 26
Goal: To put away childish things and become men before the Lord ........................................ 26

CHAPTER 22: THE ADEQUACY OF GOD - PART 1

Quotes for the week ................................................................. 27
Concern: That we would forget the omnipotence, sovereignty, and power of God to accomplish his will ................................................................................................................................... 27
Interacting with the text......................................................................................................................... 28
What to Do Next ..................................................................................................................................... 30
Goal: To put our complete trust in the sufficiency of the Lord our God ........................................ 30

CHAPTER 22: THE ADEQUACY OF GOD - PART 2

Quotes for the week ................................................................. 31
Concern: We do not really believe that God is for us based on how we respond to the situation ................................................................................................................................................... 31
Interacting with the text......................................................................................................................... 32
What to Do Next ..................................................................................................................................... 34
Goal: To become a whole and complete Christian for whom the Greatest Commandment is a living guide to every moment of our lives .................................................... 34

CHAPTER 22: THE ADEQUACY OF GOD - PART 3

Quotes for the week ................................................................. 35
Concern: That we will succumb to the accusations of the accuser, despite having received forgiveness from and in Christ Jesus our Lord ...................................................................................... 35
Interacting with the text......................................................................................................................... 36
What to Do Next ..................................................................................................................................... 38
Goal: To apprehend what it means to have God at our back, with our eternal well-being His faithful concern ................................................................................................................ 38

REVIEW OF SECTION THREE: IF GOD BE FOR US...!

Quotes for the week ................................................................. 39
Concern: That we will have the grit to complete the task................................................................. 39
In Review of Chapters 18-22 ................................................................................................................... 40
What to Do Next ..................................................................................................................................... 42
Our Final Goal: To know God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit to keep our course straight and true to the end.................................................... 42

KNOWING GOD: IN CLOSING

Closing Quotes..................................................................................................................................... 43
Closing Concern: That we will not grasp (and therefore not act upon) the changes God has made in us as we struggled through this study. ................................................................. 43
In closing .................................................................................................................................................. 44
Section Three: If God Be For Us...

Scriptures

Romans 8:31  “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Hebrews 9:24  “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Hebrews 4:15-16  “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

1 Corinthians 10:13  “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

1 Corinthians, 1:27  “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”

Matthew 19:26b  “…but for God all things are possible.”

Quotes

“He whom God has touched will always be a being apart: he is, whatever he may do, a stranger among men; he is marked by a sign.” Ernest Renan (1823–1892), French writer, critic, scholar. *repr. In Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 3. L’Avenir de la Science (1890).*


God pity them both! and pity us all, who vainly the dreams of youth recall. For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: “It might have been!” John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), U.S. poet.

“If I am not, may God put me there; and if I am, may God so keep me.” Joan of Arc (c.1412–1431), French patriot, martyr. Quoted in *The Trial of Jeanne d’Arc, ed. W.P. Barrett (1931)* On being asked whether she knew she was in God’s grace.

“God is subtle, but he is not malicious.” Albert Einstein (1879–1955), German-born U.S. theoretical physicist. Quoted in *Einstein, ch. 14, R.W. Clark (1973).*

“There is hope. There is hope everywhere. Today God gives milk and I have the pail.” Anne Sexton (1928–1974), U.S. poet. “Snow.”

“The gods help them that help themselves.” Aesop (6th century B.C.), Greek fabulist. *Fables, Hercules and the Wagoner.*

“God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!” Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Madman, in The Gay Science, first edition, “Third Book,” aphorism 125 (1882).*
Chapter 18: The Heart of the Gospel – Part 1

Today’s theme: Where God’s sacrifice meets our soul.

Scriptural background: 1 John 4:10 “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice [propitiation] for our sins.”

Quotes for the week

“…yielding momentarily to sin when sorely tempted, acknowledged his error when calm reflection had shown it to him, and came forward with noble frankness and offered up his grandmother as an atoning sacrifice—in those old days when the luckless sinner could keep on cleansing his conscience and achieving periodical happiness as long as his relations held out.” Mark Twain. Samuel Clemens, author, newspaperman. Roughing It.

“The effects of the incapacity shown by the popular leaders in all the great members of the commonwealth are to be covered with the ‘all-atoning name’ of liberty.” Edmund Burke. English statesman, author, orator, politician, philosopher, and supporter of the American Revolution. Reflections on the French Revolution.

“I do not charge the merchant or the manufacturer. The sins of our trade belong to no class, to no individual. One plucks, one distributes, one eats. Everybody partakes, everybody confesses, with cap and knee volunteers his confession, yet none feels himself accountable. He did not create the abuse; he cannot alter it.” Ralph Waldo Emerson. American essayist, philosopher, and poet. Essays and English Traits: III. Man the Reformer.

Concern: That we understand the difference between expiation and propitiation, and not minimize God’s wrath over sin

There have always been those who have argued against God being angry against human sin and therefore claim no need of appeasement, as if the mere thought was demigrating to God. The very idea that God should need to be appeased was/is anathema to them, as therefore the passion and cross is anathema also. However, what is forgotten in this approach is an appreciation of God’s utter holiness and the clear attempt to put aside the obvious statements of his wrath against sin.

“Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,” declares the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 22:31

1. Why do you think the “progressive” church, and to some degree the “emergent” church, focuses almost entirely on God’s love, allowing it to crowd out any other possible representation of God’s nature?
“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amount to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience…”  

Colossians 3:5-6

2. How is sin like idolatry and how is this insight a key to understanding God's wrath against sin?

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**Interacting with the text**

**Goal:** To grasp the biblical meaning of propitiation and to see how Christianity differs from the pagan usage or the lesser context of expiation.

1. Explain propitiation in your own words. Explain what the word means to you?

2. How is propitiation fundamentally different in Christianity as compared to the similar concept in Paganism? Use Ephesians 2:8 to illustrate this difference.
Section Three: If God Be For Us…

3. What is at the heart of the argument made by those who want to change propitiation to expiation? Why is refuting this argument significant, especially when you look back at the sections of our study (anger/wrath/jealousy) preceding this chapter?

4. How does Packer explain the nature of God's wrath poured out on Jesus at Calvary?

5. Why is “representative substitution” an important concept in Christianity?
6. How is God’s forbearance tied to propitiation?

7. In what ways other than propitiation is the death of Christ depicted in the NT? Explain how you normally think of the death of Christ and its application to your life?

What to Do Next
Reread this chapter again, taking into consideration what we discussed today, as you prepare to deal with the second half of the chapter. Remember, we are examining the heart of the Gospel, the engine that drives everything else in God’s plan of redemption, the spreading of the sanctifying grace of salvation throughout the whole of human history.

Goal: To forever meld God’s justice with his mercy without diminishing the significance of either
Remember, most of what we learn about God requires us to balance the seemingly disparate attributes of his nature, in this case his perfect justice with his perfect mercy. We should also remember that most heresy can be traced to trying to simplify the faith and remove these tensions from our understanding of the nature of God and his relationship to us and his creation. Therefore let us always be willing to live within that dynamic tension and leave the resolution of this problem to the God in whom we trust. It is not just obedience God seeks, but faith and trust, which are tested in the fire of not knowing. We, like Job, have this lesson to learn.
Chapter 18: The Heart of the Gospel – Part 2

Today’s theme: Jesus’ death becomes the centerpiece of history.

Scriptural background: Romans 2:23-25 “…for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God…”

Quotes for the week

The famous painting of The Death of Socrates by Jacques-Louis David, if examined as a crucifixion picture, brings out a way in which Socrates’ death was quite unlike that of Christ. While his disciples are in agonies of grief, Socrates himself remains calm and poised; his philosophy has saved him from pain and passion. Christ, on the contrary, dies after hours of torment and doubt. Socrates imperturbably takes the cup of hemlock: Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane cries out, “Take this cup from me.” Oliver Taplin, British classical scholar. “Ideas: The Uneasy Marriage of Minds,” Greek Fire: The Influence of Ancient Greece on the Modern World, Atheneum (1990).

“…let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.” Nehemiah 1:6-7

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,  
And did my Sovereign die?  
Would he devote that sacred Head  
For such a worm as I


Concern: That even when we understand the importance of propitiation and God’s wrath over sin, we still will not understand the absolute centrality of Jesus’ death to everything he was and did

“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.” Proverbs 14:27

1. Do you fear death? If so why? If not why not? Maybe the best time to answer this is in the middle of the night after you have been awakened and are lying there in the dark.
“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;” 1 Corinthians 15:56

2. Do you think our culture insulates itself from death? If yes, then how? If not, then how does it make itself intimate with it?

**Interacting with the text**

**Goal:** To understand the centrality of Jesus’ death and how it relates to man’s rejection of God, as well as God’s extension to us of his peace, love, and glory.

1. What kind of impressions do you get of Jesus by reading the New Testament? Are your impressions different than Packer’s observations? If so, how?

Section Three: If God Be For Us...

3. What does propitiation say to those who reject the sacrifice of Jesus?

4. What do you think happens to those who reject God? Is Hell fair? Would a loving God do such a thing?

5. What does it meant to be at peace with God? How are peace with God and propitiation intimately tied together?
6. How are God's love and glory served by the death of Jesus Christ?

What to Do Next
Read Chapter Nineteen: Sons of God. This chapter will take two sessions to complete. We will be investigating the very nature of what it means to be Christian. Prepare yourself for some important insights as you interact with Packer’s arguments.

Goal: To never lose sight of the centrality of Jesus’ death as an explanation of who he was and what he did
Remember, what Jesus experienced was so horribly difficult that as a man he shrunk back from its difficulty while praying in the garden. Yet, he embraced his role in redemption despite its painful requirements. We too should accept the painful requirements of our redemption and sanctification and overcome any desire to shrink back from God’s discipline in our lives. You can’t take your cross and follow Jesus if you are unwilling to bend down and pick it up.
Chapter 19: Sons of God - Part 1

Today’s theme: A Christian is... “the mystery of adoption”.

Scriptural background: John 1:12-13 “But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Quotes for the week

“Now, there is a sense in which all men are the sons of God, for it is to God that all men owe their life. And there is, further, as the New Testament has taught us, another and deeper sense in which men who are not may “become” the sons of God, through faith in Christ.” George Jackson (1864-1945). Methodist Pastor and Seminary Professor. The Teaching of Jesus, H &S 1903.

“The first is, that the Son of God became man. The second is, why he became man. That men might become the sons of God through him. Therefore St. Paul says, “You are the sons of God. Not - you may be, if you are very good: but you are, in order that you may become very good”. Charles Kingsley. English clergyman, university professor, historian, and novelist. The Good News of God, Macmillan and Co. 1887.

Concern: That we will define our Christianity by other than biblical standards

Jesus said in Mark 12:29-30 that “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”

1. The mystery of the Trinity casts a whole new light on our interaction with and relationship to God as compared to the Jews of the Old Testament. How is our relationship the same and how is it different?

Paul said to the Athenians in Acts 17:27-28 “God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

2. How is this view of God any different from the traditional Jewish view? (e.g. Think of the Holy Spirit)
Interacting with the text

**Goal:** To understand the centrality of the Fatherhood of God to our being Christian and then respond to how that requires us to act biblically.

1. What is unique about the Christian orthodox view of God as Father? How does this affect your relationship to Him?

2. How does the Old Testament name for God (Yahweh) fit into and interact with the concept of God as our Father?

3. How does the concept of “perfect ideal” confront the notion of “I can’t deal with God as Father because my father was so dysfunctional/destructive/abusive/etc.?” What is the conceptual failure inherent in this argument for a person’s claim to be unable to trust God as Father?
Section Three: If God Be For Us...

4. Why is adoption so significant to the Christian? (See John 15:15, Galatians 4:7)

5. Why is the sonship of the believer normative for the Christian? Examine the Sermon on the Mount in the light of this question?

6. What three words (a phrase) does Packer use to focus and summarize the New Testament message? Does his idea appear radical to you? Why or Why not?
7. How does YOUR adoption show you the greatness of God's grace? Who sustains this adoption? How?

8. Why does YOUR adoption demonstrate the hope at the center of the Christian faith? What is that hope?

**What to Do Next**

Reread Chapter Nineteen: *Sons of God*. This chapter will take one more session to complete as we continue our investigation into the very nature of what it means to be Christian. Think about the discussion we had during today’s lesson and let those insights inform your thinking as you reread the text and address the next set of questions.

**Goal: To understand what it really means to be a Christian**

Begin to explore this week what it means to have God as Father, as well as Savior (Jesus the Son), and Comforter (Holy Spirit). The Lord’s prayer focuses us on God as our Father. Think about why, when the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he pointed them to the Father; why of all the possible prayers he could have commanded, he commanded this one.
Chapter 19: Sons of God - Part 2

Today’s theme: A Christian is... continuing with the mystery of adoption.

Scriptural background: 1 John 3:1a “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”

Romans 8:29-31a. “For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”

Quotes for the week


“The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of adoption” which God puts into our hearts, by which we know that we are His children. The Spirit bears witness to this great truth (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:14, 16). This sealing has to do with the heart and the conscience—satisfying both as to the settlement of the sin and sonship question.” See next.

“Just as the incarnation was fore ordained, and yet took place in time; and just as the Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the word, and yet actually only on Calvary. Why then mention this eternal aspect of adoption? To exclude works and to show that our salvation had its origin solely in the grace of God (Romans 9:11; 11:5, 6). Just as if we should adopt a child it would be a wholly gracious act on our part.” Rev. William Evans. The first graduate of Moody Bible Institute. The Great Doctrines of the Bible, Copyright 1912, 1939, Moody Press Chicago, IL.

Concern: That we will not grasp the importance of the need for gospel holiness and joy in our lives

Two important components of our Christian lives are the demand for gospel holiness and the joy of assurance.

1. What is holiness and why is it so important?

2. How is our blessed assurance tied to Philippians 4:7? “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
Interacting with the text

Goal: To understand how the Holy Spirit, holiness, and our assurance in Christ are central to whom we are as Christians, without falling into the traps of straining after experiences, slipping into antinomianism, or forgetting what the perfect Fatherhood of God means to our blessed assurance.

1. How does YOUR adoption shed light on the ministry and purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit both in creation and in your life?

2. How is YOUR adoption related to gospel holiness? With this in mind how does Hebrews 12 deal specifically with YOUR adoption?

3. How is holiness related to God’s law? How does adoption change our approach to that law and its demands for holiness?
Section Three: If God Be For Us...

4. What does assurance mean to you? How are adoption and assurance intimately related?

5. What two sources, according to Packer, witness to our adoption as children of God? Why are both of these sources important?

6. What question does Packer ask (in three forms) of each of us that can't be sidestepped and speaks volumes on the lack of appreciation of the principal of adoption in the Church now and throughout its history? How do you answer that question?
7. Look at the 18 questions Packer asks at the end of this chapter. At the end of the day, ask each of these questions of yourself. What do you think would happen if you asked yourself all 18 of these questions every day for a month? Would that change your life? Why or why not?

Note: A page, with the questions laid out in a 30 day grid (for you to keep track), is included at the end of this Section.

What to Do Next

Read Chapter Twenty: *Thou our Guide* and consider the importance of God having a plan for your life that fits within his larger plan for humanity and all of history. Think about why this knowledge is significant.

**Goal: To understand the significance of our assurance in God**

In the end, it is our grasp of our blessed assurance that brings stability and unrelenting hope to our Christian walk. Consider the eighteen questions every day for a month as an exercise. If you decided to do it, then do it at the same time every day so it will become a habit. Record your observations throughout the exercise and especially note any differences as the exercise progresses.
Chapter 20: Thou Our Guide

Today’s theme: God always has a plan for us.

Scriptural background: Psalm 25:9 “He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”

Quotes for the week

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29:18.

“I so love the Spanish proverb “God says, ‘Choose what you will and pay for it,’” which stresses that life holds no easy answers, that conscious choices are often costly ones. We must live with and pay for their consequences.” Marsha Sinetar. American author. To Build the Life You Want, Create the Work You Love: The Spiritual Dimension of Entrepreneuring. St. Martin's Press. 1996.

Concern: That we would know what to do so that we could do it.

“I asked the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” He answered, “Do you not know what these are?” “No, my lord,” I replied. So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:4-6

1. Looking at this scripture, how do we usually make our decisions?

2. What does this scripture say is the right way to make decisions?
Interacting with the text

**Goal:** To understand God’s plan for our life and to accept it, which is an obvious point of contention within our modern, self-actualized social conditioning. It is a real and legitimate question; who *owns* our life, us or God? If God owns our life, to mirror Paul’s question in *Romans 9:19-20*: “You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?”

1. Why do we have such a hard time figuring out what to do with our lives?

2. Why do you think this problem of indecision so chronic in our modern lives (almost like an ongoing illness)?

3. What two things do we depend on if we are going to believe that God will eventually guide us?
Section Three: If God Be For Us…

4. God explicitly says in the Scriptures that he will guide us? Give at least two examples.

5. Why do our attempts at receiving guidance from God usually fail? Do you have any personal examples of this?

6. Packer argues for the reasonable and rational application of God’s word as a legitimate form of guidance. Do you agree? Why or why not? What do you think about his six common pitfalls? Explain how you agree or disagree with each of them?

7. Do you expect God’s guidance to produce a trouble-free life for you? Packer says this is wrong. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
8. Why is Joel 22:22-26 so important to this discussion about guidance? Explain.

What to Do Next

Read Chapter Twenty-one: These Inward Trials and consider how you can believe the right doctrine yet go so wrong in your application that you destroy the very work you are trying to do.

Goal: To listen to God as he leads us along the path of righteousness and then act on that guidance

It is one thing to know what God has called you to do and quite another thing to actually do it. Many of us say if we only knew what God wanted we would do it. Would we; or is that a convenient excuse to avoid dealing with what we already know we need to be doing and aren’t? I have some seminal advice: do what you know to do and when you run out of those challenges then you can tell me that you wish God would tell what you are supposed to do.
Chapter 21: These Inward Trials

Today’s theme: How easily we go off the narrow path and misapply the truth we have learned.

Scriptural background: Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

1 Corinthians 3:9-13 “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.”

Quotes for the week

“Partisanship is our great curse. We too readily assume that everything has two sides and that it is our duty to be on one or the other.” James Harvey Robinson, American Historian.

“I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.” James Madison, 4th President of the US.

“You sell a company twice. First of all, you sell them the product, then you sell them the service.” Richard Brock, founder, chairman and CEO of Brock Control Systems.

Concern: That we would want to stay children in the faith, protected and pampered

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” Hebrews 5:12

1. Why is it so hard to grow up?

2. What is the best antidote against becoming Peter Pan (unable to leave childhood)?
Interacting with the text

Goal: To become mature in the faith, leaving behind the milk of our childhood and embracing the responsibility of Christian adulthood. “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” 1 Corinthians 13:11

1. What overall problem does this chapter deal with? Have you experienced this problem yourself? If so give an example.

2. Packer says, "False hopes are a greater evil than false fears." Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

3. Have you ever thought, "It isn't working any more!" and went looking for someone to help you make it “work” again? Explain. How is this problem related to church/congregation hopping?
4. Packer states that “Backsliding Christians are always miserable.” How is backsliding different from the problem this chapter is attempting to address.

5. What, according to Packer, does God, our heavenly Father, want from us?

6. Why is an adequate understanding of grace so important to our living the Christian life, especially with the issues raised in this chapter?

7. How is our learning to lean on God so dependent on grace?
8. What can we learn from God’s chosen people, those like Abraham and David? Why is it important that the Bible did not gloss over their failures, but exposed their weaknesses?

9. What can we learn from John Newton’s Hymn *I asked the Lord*? (Remember, it was written in the late 1700’s)

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**What to Do Next**

Read Chapter Twenty-two: *The Adequacy Of God*, which centers on Paul’s letter to the Romans. We will deal with this chapter in three parts. The popular 1980’s book, *When Bad Things Happen To Good People*, postulated a limited God who could not intervene in or control everything that happened to his children. Packer will have none of that and neither should you.

**Goal: To put away childish things and become men before the Lord**

It is one thing to say we will move from milk to meat, to progress from childhood to adulthood in our Christian faith, but it is altogether another thing to actually accomplish that fact. To me, the chief deterrent to our maturity is a lack of accountability. Not one moment of accountability or a single decision, such as in salvation, but a daily, hourly, even moment by moment accountability in which all decisions, even every idle word is brought into account. That takes a real man with a real spine who understands to his very core that all gain comes with real pain. So, share around the analgesic and let’s have at it.
Chapter 22: The Adequacy of God - Part 1

Today’s theme: It is in Him that we have hope.

Scriptural background: 2 Corinthians 3:5 “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.”

Quotes for the week

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution is designed only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for any other.” John Adams (1735 - 1826). Second President of the US.

Of all the needs (there are none imaginary) a lonely child has, the one that must be satisfied, if there is going to be hope and a hope of wholeness, is the unshaking need for an unshakable God. Maya Angelou (b. 1928), U.S. author, poet. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, ch. 4* 1969.

“Likewise, I find myself relying upon my own strength and will before lifting up life’s issues to God. This type of attitude not only forsakes the adequacy of God but also exposes my ‘halfway Christian’ unbelief.” Justin Sung Ho Kim. Justin Kim’s Devotional. *The journey from my head to my heart.* (http://justinsunghokim.wordpress.com/2007/09/25/esther-41-17/)

Concern: That we would forget the omnipotence, sovereignty, and power of God to accomplish his will

The 1981 bestseller *When Bad Things Happen To Good People* by Rabbi Harold Kushner, basically postulates a limited God who cannot intervene in or control everything that happened to his children. Packer will have none of that and neither should you.

1. If Kushner were right, what would that mean for how we had to live? How would we know when God was not able to intervene?

2. Isn't our faith and trust directly related to God's trustworthiness in every situation? How does Kushner's view strike at the heart of that faith and trust?
Interacting with the text

**Goal:** There is an old Christian aphorism that reflects our goal for this chapter: “Let go and let God.” While that sounds nice, it is easier said than done. You could argue that one way to look at the Christian life is that *it is a life of becoming* and our earthly goal is to strive to become what God has designed us to be. However, accomplishing that is another matter, especially when we fall prey to depending on our own efforts.

1. Throughout the history of the Church, the Book of Romans has been seen as the key that unlocks the whole of Scripture for the Christian believer. What is it about Romans that engenders this view?

2. What is unique about Chapter 8 of Romans?

3. What is the difference between the modern view of comfort and the older view, which was more attuned to assurance? How is this difference important in living the Christian life?
Section Three: If God Be For Us...

4. What does Packer say is the reason for Paul writing Romans 8? Why is it important that the content of Chapter 8 follows Paul’s revelations in Chapter 7?

5. What four gifts has God given all who by faith are in Christ Jesus? How does the fourth gift relate to this chapter?

6. Who is the “we” of Romans 8:31 and why is understanding the meaning of that important?
7. What does Packer argue is a Christian’s birthright? What does he mean by “posses our possessions”? How is this summed up in “I am convinced that...” and following?

8. What, according to Packer, is the secret of the “more than conquerors” experience?

What to Do Next
Read Chapter 22 again and apply what you have learned today as you work your way through the text. Think about the comfort and assurance of God in your life and what that means to your daily living.

Goal: To put our complete trust in the sufficiency of the Lord our God
Some will argue it is foolhardy to put your complete trust in anything, much less God. Isn’t that what separates the true believer from the want-a-be posers? Our goal this week is to step out in faith and put our WHOLE trust in God, in His providence, in His will for our life, and to be able to say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” That is Christian trust in the adequacy of God.
Chapter 22: The Adequacy of God - Part 2

Today’s theme: When God is for us, nothing can succeed against us.

Scriptural background: Psalm 55:18 “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Psalm 46:1-3 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”

Quotes for the week
“’I admire the serene assurance of those who have religious faith. It is wonderful to observe the calm confidence of a Christian with four aces. Mark Twain. Samuel Clemmons, author, newspaperman (1835-1910).

“It is not so much our friend's help that helps us as the confidence of their help.” Epicurus (341 BC - 270 BC). Greek philosopher, poet.

“Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living; the other helps you make a life.” Sandra Carey. Author.

Concern: We do not really believe that God is for us based on how we respond to the situation

While we often say we trust in God, our actions and our emotions often say different.

1. What does the modern scourge of anxiety say about our protestations of belief? Is anxiety a problem for you? Why?

2. Do you have anyone you truly trust? What might cause them to betray you?
Interacting with the text

**Goal:** To give God his unique due, never forgetting that “God is not man, that he should lie…[or] change his mind.” Numbers 23:19

1. Who is the God with whom we have to do, the one who is “for” us?

2. What does it mean for God to be “for” us?

3. What three qualities does the psalmist say mark the true believer? How do you measure up to each of these attributes?
Section Three: If God Be For Us...

4. What does it mean that God will withhold no good thing from us?

5. How is faith different psychologically and theologically? Why is this important?

6. How does the adequacy of God expressed in Romans 8 relate to the first commandment of the OT Decalogue?
7. How does God deal with divided allegiance and how does that apply to this chapter? Think about Hebrews 12 and the Father who did not spare His own Son. Think about the demands that loyalty places on us.

What to Do Next

Read Chapter 22 through again and as you approach the last section think about the God with whom you have to do. Think about what He offers you and what, as a result, you should expect of yourself.

Goal: To become a whole and complete Christian for whom the Greatest Commandment is a living guide to every moment of our lives

God seeks real commitment, a true heart sold out for Him. This week, let the Holy Spirit speak to you about the places in your life where you hold back from God. Think about why you are holding back and what you can do about it based on this chapter.
Chapter 22: The Adequacy of God - Part 3

Today’s theme: When God is for us, who will accuse us?

Scriptural background: Revelation 12:10 “Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.”

Quotes for the week

“My spirit looks to God alone, My rock and refuge is His throne, In all my fears, in all my straits, My soul on His salvation waits. Isaac Watts (1674–1748), British hymn-writer. “My spirit looks to God alone,” l. 1-4, Psalms of David (1719).


“From thence to heaven’s bribeless hall, Where no corrupted voices brawl; No conscience molten into gold, No forged accuser bought or sold, No cause deferred, no vain-spent journey. For there Christ is the king’s Attorney, Who pleads for all without degrees…” Sir Walter Raleigh (1552(?)–1618), His Pilgrimage, English Poetry I: From Chaucer to Gray. The Harvard Classics. 1909–14.

Concern: That we will succumb to the accusations of the accuser, despite having received forgiveness from and in Christ Jesus our Lord

We confess our sins and say we believe we are forgiven, but our old man still feels the rebuke of conscience and won’t let go (Romans 7).

1. Do you have confessed and forgiven sins that still plague your conscience? Why?

1. Do you think God will take back the forgiveness he has already given you? What makes you so sure? (Hint: See 1 John 1:9)
Interacting with the text

Goal: To accept forgiveness, lay hold of our birthright, and pull it all together into knowing God in Christ.

1. What, according to Packer, can never disinherit us? Why is this realization important?

2. Are you afraid (ever?) that God has or will reject you? Explain.

3. What does Paul, according to Packer, argue about our justified status before God?
4. Who is it that justifies us? Why is that understanding so important?

5. What is wrong with the children's flower petal plucking rhyme: "He loves me; he loves me not?"


7. What, according to Packer, is the heart of biblical religion?
8. Packer argues that the essence of Christianity is found in what link?

9. What are distractions and what is the true priority for every one of us?

What to Do Next

Think back on this section: *If God Be For Us*… and how Packer ended this study. What part of that phrase do you focus on? Too many people get mired in the “If” and lose their hope and trust, when they should be focusing on the last “God Be For Us,” an exclamation of primary significance.

**Goal: To apprehend what it means to have God at our back, with our eternal well-being His faithful concern**

There is nothing more empowering than knowing God has your back. Think about it; revel in it; live up to it. Never forget: You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek." *Psalm 27:8.*
**Review of Section Three: If God be for us...!**

**Today’s theme:** God alone is always reliably enough for any need.

**Scriptural background:** Psalm 91:2 “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

**Quotes for the week**

“God, if this were enough, that I see things bare to the buff. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), Scottish author. Songs of Travel: If This Were Faith (l. 1–2).

“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.” Martin Luther. (1483–1546). Central figure of the Reformation. Hymn: A Mighty Fortress is Our God.

**Concern: That we will have the grit to complete the task**

We have now completed the journey we started together. Toward the end of this study, Dr. Packer makes the following difficult assertion:

“Now, if you are a Christian, you know that you, too, are being claimed in the same way [as Israel was in the greatest commandment Matthew 22:37-38]…The claim rests both on the right of creation and redemption, and it cannot be evaded. You know what kind of life it is that Christ calls you, as his disciple, to live…You are called to go through this life as a pilgrim, a mere temporary resident, traveling light, and willing, as Christ directs, to do what the rich young ruler refused to do: give up material wealth and the security it provides and live in a way that involves you in poverty and loss of possessions. Having your treasure in heaven, you are not to budget for treasure on earth, nor for a high standard of living—you may well be required to forgo both. You are called to follow Christ, carrying your cross.”

1. Do you agree with Packer’s assessment? Explain.

2. Does that sound like call of Christ you hear preached in churches today?
In Review of Chapters 18-22

We have now completed our journey. On the last page of the book, Dr. Packer gives us this challenge:

Finally: we have been brought to the point where we both can and must get our life’s priorities straight. From current Christian publications, you might think that the most vital issue for any real or would-be Christian in the world today is church union, or social witness, or dialogue with other Christians and other faiths, or refuting this or that ism, or developing a Christian philosophy and culture, or what have you. But our line of study makes the present-day concentration on these things look like a gigantic conspiracy of misdirection. Of course, it is not that; the issues themselves are real and must be dealt with in their place. But it is tragic that, in paying attention to them, so many in our day seem to have been distracted from what was, is, and always will be the true priority for every human being—that is, learning to know God in Christ.

“Thou hast said, ‘Seek ye my face.’ My heart says to thee, ‘Thy face, Lord, do I seek’” (Ps 27:8). If this book moves any of its readers to identify more closely with the psalmist at this point, it will not have been written in vain.

Add this statement to the previous insight and you may conclude that to truly know God in Christ, you must take up your cross and without doing that, you cannot succeed in your task.

1. Do you agree with my conclusion? Explain.

2. How is propitiation important to Packer’s premise stated above?

3. If God is your Father, your eternal and truest Father, how does that bear on Packer’s premise?
Section Three: If God Be For Us…

4. How is the failure of the Rich Young Ruler touching on our desire for God’s guidance? Think about his question, Jesus’ demand, and Packer’s premise.

5. What inward trials do you think the Rich Young Ruler was going through for him to approach Jesus the way he did? What do you think you need in order to meet your inward trials?

6. What danger do you face responding to the call of Christ? What will it take for you to overcome that danger?
7 How is trust an important factor in our meeting Christ’s call? What isn’t dependant on trust?

8 Have you made the heart of biblical religion a part of your own heart? Explain.

What to Do Next

To borrow a phrase from a well-known Nike commercial, “Just do it!”

“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power…” 2 Thessalonians 1:11

Our Final Goal: To know God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit to keep our course straight and true to the end

May the grace of God empower you, may the joy of God fill you, and may the peace of God give you rest for your soul. Amen. So be it.
Knowing God: In Closing...

Closing theme: I have become a new creation, may my life (my heart and my actions) reflect my new life in Christ Jesus my Lord.

Scriptural background:

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Deuteronomy 30:14 “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

2 Chronicles 6:30 “You know what is in everyone’s heart. So from your home in heaven answer their prayers, according to what they do and what is in their hearts.”

Closing Quotes

“Aeternitas vitae resonat tamquam imago”—“What we do in life echoes in eternity.” Russell Crow’s character Maximus.

“It is what you do that defines you.” Christian Bale as Batman speaking to Rachel Dawes in Batman Begins.

“What you do speaks so loud, that I cannot hear what you say.” Ralph Waldo Emerson.

“All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy, for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter into another.” Anatole France

Closing Concern: That we will not grasp (and therefore not act upon) the changes God has made in us as we struggled through this study.

1. Why do you think is so hard to put into practice (act upon) the changes God has called us to embrace in our lives?

2. Do you sometimes know what you have to do, but something seems to stop you from doing it? Why do you think this happens? (hint: see Romans 7)
3. What do you think is the most important thing you have to do to cause what you learned in this study become part of who you are (ingrained in your heart and expressed in what you do)?

4. What, for you, were the three most important things you learned during this study? Prioritize and explain their importance to you.

5. Do you think it would be useful to study this book again? Why or why not?

6. Where do you go from here?

**In closing**

At long last we have come to Packer’s initial challenge, that we should get off the balcony and get on the road with Christ, carrying our cross (whatever that may be) and persevering to the end. We cannot say we don’t know God by now; our challenge is to live it out.
| 30 day listing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1. Did I try to understand the meaning of my adoption today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 2. Do I value it above all else? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 3. Did I remind myself of my privilege in being a child of God today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 4. Did I seek full assurance of my adoption today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 5. Did I dwell today on the love that God has given to me? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 6. Did I treat God with all the respect due my Father in Heaven? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 7. Did I see Jesus today as both brother and Savior/Lord? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 8. Did I think today of his closeness and his caring? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 9. Did I hate what God hates today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 10. Was I sensitive to evil today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 11. Did I seek to avoid it (evil) today, lest I grieve my Father? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 12. Did I look forward today to the great family reunion? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 13. Did I feel the thrill of this hope today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 14. Did I love (agape) my Christian brethren today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 15. Am I proud of my Father & the family I belong to today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 16. Did I present the family likeness in my life today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 17. Where did I lack it (family likeness) today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 18. Did I confess my sin & ask forgiveness of my heavenly Father today? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
Grace and peace and the blessings of God be yours now and forever.