



Unravelling the Four Epistemic Methods of Experiencing God: Insights and Implications

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Abstract

This epistemological study probes into the yearning of every believer of various creeds globally and mankind for centuries have been searching for esoteric means to reach the echelon of knowledge of deities and supernatural beings. This paper scripturally and theologically examines Christian theology and how believers in Christ Jesus can fully understand the Godhead. This study further explains the four epistemic routes: experiential, doctrinal, biblical and spiritual—hence experiencing God's presence, counsel and dealings that unite believers with their living God. This study plan employs analytical discourse that is enshrined in biblical epistemology for progressive spiritual formation and communion with the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, various definitions of terms and extensive insights are given, and the implications of knowing God and the benefits of experiencing God are all captured in this paper.

Keywords: Christianity, epistemology, spirituality, doctrine, biblical knowledge, proper theology.

Introduction

Since the fall of man, the human race has been asking questions and seeking salvific answers about the only true God—theologians, seminarians, and scholars have spent centuries studying God for a proper understanding of His nature and ways. The importance of knowing God can satisfy the hunger of mankind religiously (Ryrie, 1999, p. 27).¹ According to Wayne Grudem (1994, *The Existence of God*), “All persons everywhere have a deep, inner sense that God exists, that they are his creatures, and that he is their Creator”

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*. Moody Publishers, 1999.

(1994, para. 2).² It is essential to examine that fact that “God Himself is the source of Knowledge of Him” (Ryrie, 1999, p. 27).³ The scriptures have made it clear that “Theology is not only the study of religious beliefs and practices, it is also the study of God and how He relates with His creation and rules in their kingdom with finality” (Dan 5:17). Theology can be a complex field that encompasses many different inter-faith practices and believe system, however, one way to better understand the diversity of theological beliefs found in the Christendom is to examine the four theological knowledge systems. Vos posits that “Theology is the science of God, adding that other definitions are misleading, or when closely examined, are found to lead to the same result” (2003, p. 3⁴). On the other hand, a Deistic American political theorist and pamphleteer contended that:

The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and it admits of no conclusion. Not anything can be studied as a science, without our having the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing. (Paine, 1794).⁵

The sole purpose of this paper is to delve deep into the four theological knowledge systems, which are: Experiential/Practical Knowledge System, Doctrinal Knowledge System; Biblical Knowledge System; and Spiritual Knowledge System, thereby offering insights and implications for practicing theologians, gospel ministers and individuals interested in understanding how mankind can maintain a constant relationship with God and become an emissary serving God and humanity (2 Cor 5:20).

Definitions of Terms

The four operational terms are clarified and their insights are explained for a better and easier understanding of this work. The words are knowledge system, experiential, doctrinal, biblical, and spiritual knowledge.

Knowledge Systems

Knowledge from the theological perspective refers to the understanding of God’s nature, teachings of Jesus Christ, and capacity acquired through the help of the Holy Spirit to capture and communicate the mind of God concerning a received or given instruction, dealings, or experience in Christ Jesus (Hos 4:6). In addition, knowledge provides the compass to navigate the pillar of truth and falsehood represented in beliefs, traditions, principles and ideas found in the world (Dan 11:32). A nation can be saved, if they capture the knowledge communicated through the mouth and Spirit of God. It is very possible that “A people of God can perish because they lack knowledge” (Hos 4:6). On the other hand, “For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “Seek me and live” (Amos 5:4 ESV). This indicates that knowledge gives life when God gives it through anointed ones, His Spirit and His word. Furthermore, knowledge systems are the spiritual bodies of eternal compendium of instructions that promote the agenda of God or the wiles of Satan through its agents working together in a given territory, or all over the world at a given dispensation to acquire, sustain, mediate, and disseminate the counsels of God or the wiles of Satan. The knowledge system is a framework that is designed to help individuals or the Church to stay in alignment with the dealings of God in an allocated season, like the sons of Issachar, “Men who had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command” (1 Chron 12: 32). The theological knowledge system is the express communication of God’s counsel through His words (spoken, written, or impress upon the heart), the Bible, through His servants (gospel ministers), and other individuals He has found worthy to be used by Him through the help of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:7–11).

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: The Knowability of God*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

³ Ibid., 27.

⁴ Geerhardus J. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*. Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2003.

⁵ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*. Barrois, 1794.

Experiential Knowledge of God

According to the New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, experience is "knowledge derived from one's action, practice, perception, enjoyment, or suffering."⁶ Ojo added that "Experience is something personal to the individual and must come from one's perception of reality" (2021, p. 75).⁷ In addition, "Experiential too has been defined as "about or acquired by experience; empirical."⁸ This is suggestive of the fact that knowing God is enshrined in personal dealings, a covenanted journey where God shows Himself to a man practically (Ps 9:10).⁹ Additionally, having personal dealings with God can leave an unforgettable scar (encounter or experience), like in the case of "Jacob" (Israel) in Genesis 32:22–32, and "Apostle Paul" in Galatians 6:17.

Doctrinal Knowledge of God

A doctrinal knowledge from the theological perspective is a systematic belief in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the accounts in the Bible, and the grace to follow the teaching and steps of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Millard J. Erickson affirmed that "Correct doctrinal beliefs are essential to the relationship between the believer and God" (2015, p. 5).⁹ Thus, for example, the writer to the Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Heb 11:6). Any doctrine that does not theologically promote the teachings of Jesus Christ, explains the acts (ways) of God and equips believers for active kingdom services cannot interphase, commune and disseminate the knowledge of God. In the same way, the Psalmist says that "He (God) made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel" (Ps 103:7). Just as important, God wants His children to know Him, and everyone who has come to accept Jesus and follow Him.

Biblical Knowledge of God

Biblical knowledge is a theological belief and interaction with the trinity (God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit) and understanding their ways, acts and precepts through reading the Bible that covers a wide range of topics, including systematic theology, ethics, morality, and spirituality (Josh 1:8). Additionally, the Bible commands eternal authority because it is the word of God and that it contains all the knowledge and wisdom necessary for a person to live a godly and spirit-filled life (Heb 4:12–13). To practically master biblical knowledge, one must have a personal understanding that Jesus Christ is the only way, the truth and life, and by extension, His (God's) word can give eternal life, and security from evil, and change the world (John 14:6).

Spiritual Knowledge of God

Spiritual knowledge is a revealed syllabus and dealing that occurs in the seen or the unseen realm that is facilitated by the Spirit of God or Satan to bring direction, guidance, destruction or counsels of God or the wiles of Satan to an individual or group of like minds. Christians believe that this spiritual knowledge is administered by the Spirit of God concerning what God is said to do according to His words in any terrain at a given point and bringing to one's remembrance His promises, love and rebuke (Acts 1:4). One of the wise writings of King Solomon states that "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (Prov 25:2).

Insights and the Roles of Each Method in Shaping Our Theology

Roles of Experiential Knowledge of God

Experiential knowledge, often known as personal, existential or direct knowledge, is important in many peoples' views of God. Personal experiences and encounters with the divine nature of God can increase one's awareness of God's character and traits, while theological ideas and scripture study give a basis (Dan 11:32b).

6. *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*. Typhoon Media Corporation, 2010. P.447.

⁷ Vincent Ojo, *The Relevance of Experiential Knowledge of Jesus in Seminary Formation In the Light of John 14:1-14*. Ekpoma Reviews, 2021.

8. Ibid.

9. Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 3rd ed., Baker Publishing Group. 2015.

The quest of knowing God can be very tasking, painful and exciting simultaneously. It is a practical experience that is based upon grace, mercy and the divine pursuit of God to will and to do His great works. In the Gospel of John, Philip in the bit to understand how the Father works, asked Jesus to show him the Father, and Jesus responded along the line, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). Clearly, “Jesus makes the knowledge of him and his Father a joint one so that anyone who knows of one also knows the other” (Ojo, 2021, p. 77). To gain the applied system of knowing God, it is imperative that God in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit must be accepted and revered, keeping a solid godly and spiritual relationship with them as though they are inseparable, they receive the communion and hands of fellowship individually (John 14:25–26).

For instance, the trinity (Godheads) are very aware of what they are doing and spiritually position and subject a believer to some series of training and tests, just to see how the believer will cooperate with them (Godheads), or how the believer will interact with the situation and better yet, use the power of choice to decide on what to do, or what not to do in that situation (Job 23:10–14). Experiential knowledge can never be disseminated, acquired, processed, experienced and achieved outside God. A believer can either forsake the curriculum designed by God or embrace the syllabuses outlined for him to deal with and become victorious at the end (Ps. 66:10–12). Experiential knowledge of God plays a very crucial role in everyone who has come to fellowship with the light God has given, often known as personal or direct knowledge, is important in many people's views of God. Personal experiences and encounters with the divine can increase one's awareness of God's character and traits, while theological ideas and scriptural analysis give a basis.

1. Experiential Knowledge as a Path to Divine Encounter

Personal encounters with God are important for growing faith and comprehending God's character. Furthermore, Jacob was a man whom God had destined to be great if he walked in the ways of his fathers in the promises of his fathers, Isaac and Abraham according to God's dealings in their lives. He tried all he could to accomplish the promises of God, first in the flesh by offering Esau a pot of stew his twin, to get his birthright even when God has declared Esau to serve Jacob (Gen 25:21–23, 29–34). Even more importantly, he laboured for 14 good years to get his beloved wife, Rachael even after the deception of his uncle, Laban to exchange Leah for Rachel, Jacob kept his grit to serve another seven years for his beloved damsel, Rachel (Gen 29:20–30). Furthermore, Jacob was still hungry and thirsty for what God had destined him to be, looking for any opportunity to encounter the supernatural and he got the encounter after he sent his wives, children, maids and all his properties through the Ford of Jabbok at Peniel and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day (Gen 32:22–32). More so, when the man discovered that he could not overpower Jacob, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with him. Jacob named that place Peniel because he felt he had seen God face to face and his life was preserved. Many scholars supported the claims that, the man Jacob wrestled with was an angel and God in Genesis, but the book of Hosea 12:3-5 captures the man as an angel (Gen 32:28; cf. Hos 12:3). This practical experience Jacob has changed his name forever, from Jacob to “Israel” which is an eternal name where the twelve tribes of Israel came from and have become gates in the eternal Kingdom of God.

2. Experiential Knowledge Promotes Testimonies and Witnessing

The result of experiencing God can exude testimonies and empower the act of witnessing to others about the work of God in the life of a believer because He has done something spectacular. (2 Tim 1:12). One of the ways to know God is to have a first-hand experience where He comes into your space to do something supernatural and extraordinary. Apostle Paul and Barnabas at Lystra through speaking to the crowd of listeners perceive that one of the men crippled from birth could be healed because of his faith, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet” and that was how he was healed. (Acts 14:8–10). In that same account in the Acts, the healing was publicly vivid to the public that they mistook Apostle Paul for Hermes and Barnabas for Zeus, being their Greek gods and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices for the sign of healing done and seen by the hands of Apostle Paul. (John 8:17, 3:11; cf. Acts 14:9–12). Sometimes, the understanding of God comes through personal dealings that cannot be ignored, rather gathering encomiums from people around for further witnesses. The healing of the crippled beggar at the beautiful gate lamed from his cradle attracted so much attention when Peter and John went into the temple to pray. (Acts 3:1–5). The lame man, known as

“Levi” was believing for alms from Peter and John, rather Peter demonstrated the healing power of God when he drew the attention of Levi and raised him on his feet and he began to “walk, leap and praise God” following Peter and John into the temple (Acts 3:6–8). This very miracle gathered a massive crowd at the temple. Deffinbaugh (2006) believed that the result of the miracle was not to attract any crowd, but the people could recognise that Levi had been healed and could not deny the testament of the miracle that just happened to the man that was once lamed from birth.¹⁰ See Acts 2:22–24, cf. Acts 3:12–16.

3. Experiential Knowledge Gives Divine Revelation and Intuition

People across many religions and faiths have been searching for the best ways to relate with God and to understand the deepest part of God, but fail to know the simplest and righteous way to connect to God (Prov 14:12). Some seek to connect with God through chanting or repeating phrases or mantras, while others seek God through mortification of the flesh (Sutherland, 1997).¹¹ In the same vein, “Many seek God through reason, which is a common thread in cults” while “Others seek God through feelings, and if we achieve an emotional high, then we have indeed connected with the Almighty” (Sutherland, 1997, p. 6). I believe that some religious people go about seeking God with so much zeal and without the knowledge of God and His nature (Hos 4:6). God spoke to Jeremiah as a God-Father, “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known” (Jer 33:3). When God calls a man, He reveals Himself to that man. God is the compendium of light, which brings understanding of Him to the simplest man. In the Apocalypse, Jesus made a similar statement, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20). If we truly want to know the divinity of the Godheads, “Yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:3–5). When we seek God genuinely from the depth of our soul, He will call us for a deeper relationship and fellowship with His divinity and this Father-son relationship can become an arena where God showers His benevolence on man. In fact, “Pray for God's grace—that He will reveal Himself” (Sutherland, 1997, p. 7). See also, Exo 33:12–13ff. 17, 19; Ps 25:4ff. 27:11, 86:11, 103:7; Jer. 24:7; cf. Matt 11:28–30.

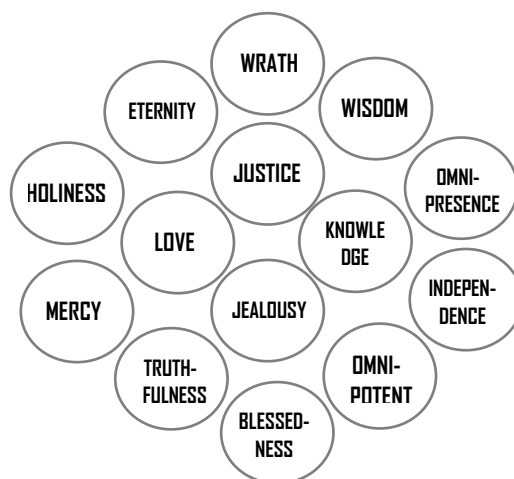
The Roles of Doctrinal Knowledge of God

The will and readiness to know God can be contagious and feasible however, the ability to know God can be a lifetime occupation that we can never master until the coming of Jesus Christ (Ps 139:6, 147:5 cf. v. 17). To truly know God, we must first reveal ourselves to Him. God's revelation through nature is evident because He chose to be revealed in this way, even though He knows you more than you think you know yourself. This personal knowledge of God comes with salvation, as Jesus states that no one knows the Son except the Father (Matt 11:27). This knowledge is not obtained through human effort or wisdom. Sinful people often mistake natural revelations about God, leading to a darkened mind and a loss of truth. Therefore, Scripture is necessary to correctly interpret natural revelation (Grudem, 2015, p. 149).¹² False religions exist as evidence of how sinful people can misunderstand and pervert God's revelations if not guided by Scripture. Therefore, we rely on God's active communication through Scripture for authentic knowledge of God because “The knowledge of God is bi-directional which the essential dimension of a relationship is” (Sutherland, 1997, p. 3).

10. Robert L. Deffinbaugh. especially paragraph 24, for more information on witnessing the healing (Acts 3:1–26), 2006.

11. Jim Sutherland, “How We Know God,” (paper presented at Reconciliation Ministry Network International, Chattanooga, TN, 13 January 1997), 5.

12. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: The Knowability of God* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015), 149.



GOD'S BEING IS NOT A COLLECTION OF ATTRIBUTES ADDED TOGETHER

Figure 1.1 (Grudem, 178)

It suffices to state that these characteristics are indicative of God Himself and consequently characteristic of all of God rather than that they are merely characteristic of specific aspects of God. (Grudem, 2015, p. 178). These factors suggest that we shouldn't view God as some sort of combination of different characteristics joined together, as in Figure 1.

God's character can be divided into two categories: incommunicable and communicable. God's communicable traits are those humans can transmit, while His incommunicable traits are unique to Him. Humans cannot fully share God's communicable qualities, such as love, justice, creativity, grace, kindness, goodness, truthfulness, rational thought, and relationality (1 John 4:8). God's attributes, such as love, justice, and creativity, are imperfectly possessed by humans. As a man grows in Christ, he becomes more perfected in God's communicable traits. He becomes new through God's grace and trust in Jesus. He must combat his sinful nature and learn to put on the new self. Embracing Christ allows him to display virtues like love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5:22–23).

On the other hand, God's incommunicable traits are unique to Him, distinguishing Him from creation. These traits include all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing, sovereign, transcendent, unchangeable, and self-existent. Although we can characterize these, we rarely comprehend them. These incomprehensible traits are why we revere, worship, trust, and thank the Creator. Wayne Grudem in classifying God's attributes¹³ declared that:

Not one of the incommunicable attributes of God is complete without some likeness in the character of human beings. For example, God is unchangeable, while we change. But we do not change completely, for there are some aspects of our characters that remain largely unchanged: our identities, many of our personality traits, and some of our long-term purposes remain substantially unchanged over many years [and will remain largely unchanged once we are set free from sin and begin to live in God's presence forever]. (2015, p. 157).

The major roles of doctrinal knowledge of God will help us know, understand, and examine the incommunicable and communicable attributes and characters of God both in His Being and in the affairs of human participation.

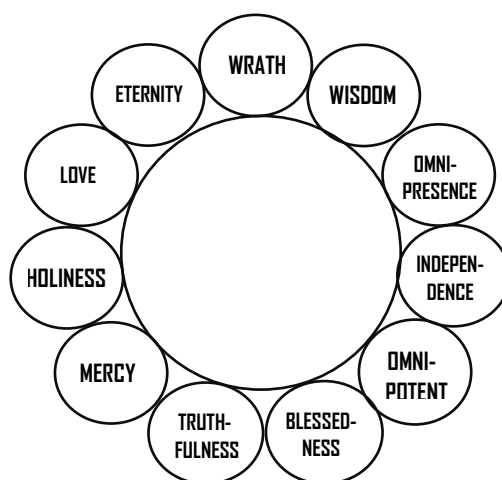
1. Doctrinal Knowledge of God Helps Us Experience the Incommunicable Attributes of God

The Knowability of God's incommunicable attributes and characters which are seen as His independence, His unchangeableness, His ever-presence, oneness, and lives eternally can place a man on the pedestal of walking side by side with God. God's independence, aseity, and self-sufficiency are emphasized in the Bible,

13. Grudem, *The Character of God: Incommunicable Attributes* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015), 157.

as He does not require creation for existence or reason, and provides everything to all mankind. (Ps 102:25–27; cf. Is 46:9–11; Acts 17:24–25). God's essence, perfections, purposes, and promises are unchanging, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to diverse situations. (Berkhof, 1939, 1941, 58).¹⁴ The eminent Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck observes that God's unchanging nature is critical for maintaining the Creator/creature distinction and for our adoration of God. More so, God's infinite nature, characterized by limitlessness and observation of events in time, implies that time does not limit God's existence. (Rev. 1:8; cf. 4:8). God Himself is timeless in His being, sees events, and acts in time (Ps 90:2; cf. Acts 17:30–31; Gal 4:4–5). God's omnipresence, or infinite presence in space, means, “God does not have size or dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.”¹⁵ He is present in every point of space with his entire being, despite his different nature in different places. (Gen 1:1; cf. Deut 10:14; Ps 139:7–10). God's unity, also known as the “unity of simplicity,”¹⁶ refers to the unification of God, which is not divided into parts but is emphasized at different times. However, due to the changing meanings of “simple” in modern times, it is more beneficial to focus on God's unity. Frederick G. Patterson added that the three Persons of the Trinity cannot be divided or confused with one another. While each Person (at this time) carries out separate tasks, they all cooperate and contribute to the Godhead's unity. (2010, para. 4).

Figure 2 suggests that God's attributes are not separate from His true self, but rather an addition to His nature.



GOD'S ATTRIBUTES ARE NOT ADDITIONS TO HIS REAL BEING

Figure 1.2 (Grudem, 1994-2015, 179)

2. Doctrinal Knowledge of God Helps us to Experience the Communicable Attributes of God

The late Pentecostal theologian, Kevin J. Conner established the nature of God in four ways—as a Spirit (John 4:24); Light (1 John 1:5); Love (1 John 4:17); and Consuming Fire (Heb 12:29).¹⁷ Knowing the nature of God fosters how God relates with His creation (humans and spirit beings). Wayne Grudem buttressed the spirituality and invisibility of God as “an existing being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or

14. The four keywords (essence, perfections, purposes, promises) used as a summary of how God is unchanging are taken from Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, 1941), p. 58

15. Grudem, 173

16. Grudem decided to call the oneness of the Godheads as the ‘unity of simplicity’ instead of using the ‘unity of singularity’ defined by some systematic theologians (178).

17. Conner, *The Foundations of Christian Doctrine: The Nature of God* (Kent: Sovereign World International and Oregon: City Bible Publishing, 1980), p. 48.

dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence” (2015, 188). However, we must also discuss the outward manifestations of God. God's invisibility means that we will never be able to see his entire essence, all of his spiritual being, but God nonetheless reveals himself to us through visible, created objects (Grudem, 2015, 188). The mental attributes of God, which are wisdom (Rom 16:27); knowledge (Omniscience: Job 37:16) and truthfulness (faithfulness: John 17:3; cf. 1 John 5:20) are present in Him while His moral attributes are love (John 17:24); goodness (Luke 18:19); holiness (Ex 26:33; cf. Ps 71:22, 78:41, 89:18; Is 1:4, 5:19, 24; et al); righteousness (or justice: Deut 32:4); peace (or order: Rom 15:33, 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20; 12; cf. Eph 2:14; 2 Thess 3:16); mercy (patience, grace: Ex 34:6; cf. Rom 3:23–24; Eph 4:2), wrath (Ex 32:9–10; Deut. 9:7–8; cf. 29:23; 2 Kings 22:13); and jealousy (2 Cor 11:2). These mental and moral attributes of God are qualities that God channels towards His creatures and desires man to possess, and so they are referred to as communicable attributes (Conner, 1980, p. 52). Jonathan Rice, has it summed up here that “Our Creator truly knows and loves us, empathizing with our sorrows, sharing in our joys” (2014, para. 28).¹⁸ We learn to imitate God's character as we look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Phil 3:20; cf. Heb 12:2).

The Roles of Biblical Knowledge of God

In Christianity, the only document needed to stay in this faith is the Bible—a divine library with several inspired books, the book of all books, priceless and incomparable¹⁹ (Conner, p. 23). Dele A. Ilesanmi argued that “Christian education is a corpus of biblical truth, oxygen, and a vehicle of Christianity, without which Christianity is endangered, petrified, and atrophied”²⁰ (2023, p. 1). The biblical knowledge of God is conveyed through His every Word catalogued in the divine library known as the Bible. This Holy Book is the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13); the Word of the Lord (Jer 1:2, 11); the Word of Christ (Col 3:16); the Word of Truth (Eph 1:13); the Word of Life (Phil 2:16); the Word of Faith (Rom 10:8) the (Holy) Oracles of God (Rom 3:2; cf. Ps 28:2). According to Kevin J. Conner, he contended that “Christianity arises out of faith in an infinite personal God who has not been silent, but has spoken”²¹ (1980, p. 24). Certainly, God's speech is one of His important actions, among His mighty acts and these acts convey His Word and His truth authoritatively (Rev 11:1–2; cf. Luke 8:11; Jam 1:8; 1 Pet 1:23). Furthermore, God's nature allows Him to communicate to us through His Word and the events we go through across different platforms, places and situations. John M. Frame affirms that “It is not our place to pick and choose among them what we prefer to hear, believe, or to obey”²² (2013, p. 535). The unity of the Bible captures all the events, accounts, and diversity where kings, statesmen, peasants, prophets, fishermen, herdsman, priests, tradesmen, and prisoners who wrote the Bible in three languages as God allowed this compendium of resources to emanate from His Holy Spirit for our daily living (Conner, 1980, p. 34).²³ The fundamental goal of humbling getting into the arms of God is to understand what the scriptures say about Him and what His Words mean in the life of His creatures (James 1:23).

1. The Biblical Knowledge of God Increases Our Faith

Knowing God personally and reading the promises in His Word is satisfying to the body, spirit, and soul—which serves as the bacon that gives life, peace, and prosperity (Josh 1:8). On the other hand, the nature of the scriptures has the propensity to empower the faith of the readers and the hearers (Paul, Rom 10:17).²⁴ The Word exudes faith because of the inspirational elements in the scriptures and Paul, in 2Timothy²⁵ maintained this position that “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof,

18. Rice, “The Communicable Attributes of God,” *InterVarsity Blog*, 5 Nov 2014, <https://www.intervarsity.org/>

19. Conner, *The Bible*. para. 5.

20. Dele A. Ilesanmi “Pneumagogy: A Proposed Theory for Effective Teaching and Learning in Christian Kingdom Education.” *African Journal of Kingdom Education* 1.2 (2023): pp. 18–29, doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8220036.

21. Conner, *The Oracles of God*, p. 24.

22. John M. Frame. *Systematic Theology*. (New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2013), p. 535.

23 Conner, *The Unity of the Bible*, p. 34.

24. Paul, was formerly known as Saul but his name later changed to Paul after he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ on his way to Damascus and he became one of the very zealous Apostles in the New Testament that wrote the Pauline Epistles.

25. Timothy, a Christian was a missionary partner of Apostle Paul and Silas, the first Bishop of Ephesus.

for correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (3:16).

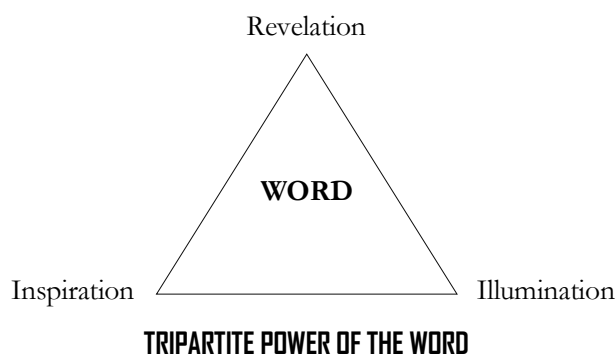


Figure 2

The Biblical knowledge about God, which possibly directs us to the person of Christ as the very Word, does not just produce faith in men, but also inspires, illuminates, and reveals the counsel of God to mankind (John 1:1–5). A professor of Bible Doctrine and Systematic Theology, in his ‘Christian Theology’ book clarified that revelation is the discovery of truth while illumination is giving the understanding of the truth, and inspiration helps to communicate the truth (Bancroft, 1987, p. 24).²⁶ Therefore, knowing God to be true makes His Word living and trustworthy, because of the infallibility and inerrancy of His Words, we derive great faith that encourages us to build our lives on them (John 17:17; cf. Heb 6:18–20; 1 Pet 1:23). The Gospel of John captures this saying of Jesus to one of His disciples, Thomas... “I am the way, and the truth, and the life—no one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6). Now that Jesus is the very Word and is the truth—then it suffices to say that faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God and without faith it is impossible to please God. The “Tripartite Power of the Word” in Figure 2, is a practical example of what the Word of God does in a man before faith is produced and how a man can receive the Word every day. (Rom 10:17; cf. Heb 11:6).

2. The Biblical Knowledge of God helps Us to Know the Symbolic Nature of God’s Word

Studying the Bible to know the ultimate power and nature of God, the passion and salvific work of Christ towards humanity, and the infinite presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and home of the people of God are all encapsulated in the power of His Word given to mankind. The spoken and written Words of God contained in the Bible symbolize many things to God and man—and are the true nature of God. The Word of God is like water, it is life-giving, refreshing, and serves as a cleansing agent (Eph 5:26). The Word is like bread, meat, and milk, a strength-giving food for the young and the mature (Matt 4:4; Heb 5:14; 1 Pet 2:2). The Word is like fire because it burns, cleanses and purges every dot of evil and it’s our standard while it is like hammer, smashes and demolishes evil (Jer 23:29). His Word is like an anchor and nail, it holds every believer in a safe place and hangs us under the shadow of His wings (Eccle 12:11; Heb 6:18–19). The same Word of God is like a sword—to separate the things of the flesh and the spirit (Heb 4:12). It is like a mirror because it reveals to us what and who we are and can be in God (Jam 1:23), while it is also a rod for measuring the standard of faith and practice (Rev 11:1–2). The Word of God is like gold, very valuable and priceless, like honey, sweet taste and also a lamp that lightens and illuminates our darkness and path to the throne of the Father (Ps 19:7–10, 119:105; Rev 10:10). According to John M. Frame, he asserted that “the power of the Word brings wonderful blessings to those who hear it” however, “with a disposition to obey.” (2013, p. 528).²⁷ Hence, the Biblical knowledge of God is first found in His Words and these Words become tools and vehicles that transport a Christian from the paws of evil to a glorious walk with the Lord to live a life pleasing to God (John 6:63).

26. Emery H. Bancroft “*Christian Theology*.” Zondervan. 1987

27. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, p. 528.

The Roles of Spiritual Knowledge of God

Many Christians are doing everything possible to tap into the spirit realm to see God or for better usage—to touch God spiritually. However, most of them do not know how to do this and some have resulted into seeking this encounter by reading many occultic books. Dr. Patrick, a Christian Physician and Bible Teacher affirms that this venture opens them up to demonic influence which every child of God should desist and resist. (Oben, 2013, p. 1).²⁸ I also found what Michael Bradley affirmed that “The number one way that you will grow in spiritual knowledge on this earth is by reading and studying the Bible for yourself” and “there is simply no other way” (2023, para. 3).²⁹ To know God is to understand that He is a Spirit and those who must experience Him must be able to connect through the help of the Holy Spirit (John 4:24). Apostle Paul makes this clear to the church in Corinth that those who can know a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Cor 2:11). This passage demonstrates that our natural mind excels in gathering, understanding, and applying material knowledge, but struggles with gathering, understanding, and applying spiritual knowledge (Ritenbaugh, 1995, para. 4).³⁰ It takes a willing heart in search of the true God to encounter the Father and giver of light through His Son, Jesus Christ—and only those who are wicked, foolish and perpetrators of evil say in their thoughts, “There is no God” (Ps 14:1; 53:1; 10:3–4). The Holy Spirit leads us to truth, cleanses us of sin, enhances our sensitivity, and brings us to a sympathetic state, allowing us to understand spiritual things (Adeney, para. 4).³¹ God’s ways are not our ways, neither His thoughts our thoughts, He fathers everything, preserves everything and can control everything He has created (Is 55:8–9; cf. Rom 11:33–36). Pastor E.A. Adeboye, the general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God argues that “To know the mysteries of God, you must know Jesus Christ and be known by Him” (Hos 6:3; Jn 10:14; Phil 3:10), and further stresses that “No one would reveal their deepest secret to a total stranger or mere acquaintance” (2022, para. 5).³² Apostle Paul emphasised that “We impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” (1 Cor 2:13). The acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed and concluded that “There is a God! He does live! Even if it is difficult to explain in words alone how I know that, I know through the power of the Holy Spirit” (2007, para. 1).³³

1. Spiritual Knowledge of God Shows Us How to Live According to His Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the most crucial aspect of a Christian's life, as it enables Christ to work fruitfully through believers, making them productive and sensitive to the dealings of God (LaHaye, 1992, p. 179). To the church in Colossae, Paul's goal was not to achieve perfection, but to proclaim Jesus, warn, and teach wisdom to all, aiming to make everyone mature in Christ (Blackaby, 2011, p. 77). The inner man is naturally flawed, necessitating the presence of a pure Spirit that regenerates and configures it for express communication with God (Imuwahen, 2023, p. 4). If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him (James 1:5). The Greek word used here for *wisdom* means “a clarity in spiritual things.” Likewise, Marilyn Hickey contended that “To secure your future, you need to get a better understanding of the things of God. You need to know how to secure your future according to God’s plan for your life”³⁴ (2010, 140). If Christian workers must be filled with the Holy Spirit, why should every believer

28. Patrick Oben, *Keys to Open your Spiritual Eyes* (United States: Dessen Publishing, 2023), p. 1.

29. Michael Bradley, “Seek After the Knowledge of God,” *Bible Knowledge Blog*, 24 August 2023, <https://www.bible-knowledge.com/seek/>

30. John W. Ritenbaugh, *The Covenants, Grace and Law*, *Bible Tools Blog*, 1995, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/5701/Spiritual-Knowledge.htm>

31. W. F. Adeney, “Spiritual Knowledge,” *The Pulpit Commentary*, 2010, https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/adeney/spiritual_knowledge.htm

32. E. A. Adeboye, “Spiritual Knowledge,” *Sunday School Lesson*, 2022, <https://openheavenslution.org/sunday-school-lesson-41-spiritual-knowledge/>

33. Boyd K. Packer, “The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge,” *Church of Jesus Christ Blog* 2007, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2007/01/the-quest-for-spiritual-knowledge?lang=eng>

³⁴ Marilyn Hickey. *Spiritual Warfare*. Englewood: Marilyn Hickey Ministries, 2010.

who reads and teaches the word not enjoy this gift? Only spiritual persons who apply spiritual methods may achieve spiritual alignment and results³⁵ (Sanders, 2007, p. 48).

2. Spiritual Knowledge of God Helps Us to Live a Holy Life

The scriptures have established the express qualities of God and holiness is one of His attributes, in fact, the prophet Isaiah refers to God's name as "Holy" (Is 57:15). According to Ephesians 4, Paul admonishes the Ephesian church not to live in the flesh and according to the pattern of the unbelievers, instead they should follow Jesus and the apostle's teaching about living a life of holiness in true righteousness before God (17–24). The verse explains that righteousness and holiness are distinct concepts—that righteousness comes from being born again and making Jesus Christ Lord, while holiness involves separation from God and appropriate behaviour. Holiness is a wilful decision to live by God's commands, focusing on pleasing God and bearing fruit. Both are essential for glorifying God. Watchman Nee argued that "The nearer we are to God the higher our standard of holiness will become and the deeper we will recognize what uncleanness, corruption, and unrighteousness are"³⁶ (1973, p. 77). A believer can withstand every temptation that comes his way because we have power in Christ (1 Cor 10:13; cf. 2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5:24; 2 Tim 2:22). To live a holy life, we must avoid temptation. I never declare, "I don't feel liberty within me." God says the Holy Spirit is within me, and because the mighty Holy Spirit that raised Jesus Christ's body from the dead is indwelling me, that same mighty Spirit is producing liberty. I have Spirit-given liberty; I am also a liberator, setting others free (Gossett Don Gossett and E. W. Kenyon, 1981 p. 33).³⁷

The Implications of Knowing God

Russell Gehrlein posited a simple concept called the "Immanuel Labour." He further added that there is a clear pattern in scripture of God working in and through his people, empowering them with his presence and bestowing various abilities upon them to meet the legitimate needs of people (Gehrlein, 2018, para. 1).³⁸ For believers in Christ Jesus to come into this experience, it very expedient that they allow this saying of Menno Simons, a Dutch priest, an early leader of the peaceful wing of Dutch Anabaptism sink powerfully in them:

Therefore, anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see and understand what the right way, the truth, and the life are, the way which is so straight and narrow and is found of few; the truth which is known to none except those who are taught of the spirit of the Lord illuminated and drawn by the Father; the life which is to know God the Father as the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.³⁹ (Simons, 1953, p. 2).

According to the Bible, God took the initiative to show Himself to men so that they could know Him. This is due to God's grace and love for humanity. Humans cannot know God if God does not take the initiative to reveal Himself in the Scriptures (Barnabas, 2023, p. 17).⁴⁰ When God shows himself to us, we have to know how to silence the accuser, because our life is hidden in Christ Jesus (Acts 17:28; cf. Col 3:3; Rev 12:11). When we surrender our lives to the Lord—to His purpose and His will—that action carries great realms of authority and influence in the courts of Heaven. So, we should make it a normal part of our prayer to say something such as, "Lord, not my will but Your will be done. I lay my life down before You." (Henderson, 2017, p. 25).⁴¹

³⁵ Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007.

³⁶ Watchman New, *Spiritual Knowledge*. New York: Christian Fellowship Publisher Inc, 1973.

³⁷ Gossett, Don, and Kenyon, E. W. *The Power of Your Words*. New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1981.

³⁸ Russell Gehrlein. "Six Ways God's Presence Impacts our Work," *Institute of Faith, Work and Economics Blog 2018*, <https://tifwe.org/six-ways-gods-presence-impacts-our-work/>

³⁹ Menno Simons. *Foundation of Christian Doctrine*. Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers Inc., 1539.

⁴⁰ Clement Barnabas. *Basic Christian Doctrines*. IICS Study Book Series. Trichy: Indian Institute of Intercultural Studies, 2003.

⁴¹ Robert Henderson. *Accessing the Courts of Heaven*. Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers Inc., 2017.

The Benefits of Experiencing God as a Believer

1. God's dealings in the lives of believers miraculously promote their faith in every aspect of their Christian faith.
2. It brings believers to a place of reverence, admiration and obedience to God's (His) will.
3. The communicable capacities of believers are expanded to learn about the characters, personalities and dealings of the Godhead.
4. It teaches believers how to use the word of God in every situation to solve any practical problems to the glory of God.
5. It gives us historical, present and future happenings of how God is going to walk with His creation and creatures.
6. God pour Himself into believers through His Holy Spirit so that they can think and act like Him.
7. He reminds believers of His promises, faithfulness and plans and also brings them to pass.
8. It brings believers closer to God.
9. It gives believers absolute confidence in their God.
10. It gives believers complete trust in God's word.

Conclusion

This review article has scripturally and theologically unravelled the four major methods of knowing God and it defines each method extensively from what knowledge is and its systems and expounds on each epistemic method: Experiential Knowledge, Doctrinal Knowledge, Biblical Knowledge and Spiritual Knowledge. This paper further gives robust insights into the roles that each knowledge system plays in adequately shaping our Christian theology and spiritual alignment to the purpose of God concerning our destinies. In the same vein, several possible outcomes were highlighted to guide our path when seeking God experientially, doctrinally, in His word and in our secret place—to ascend to the height of Zion where believers in Christ Jesus will begin to commune with the Godhead. God has revealed Himself to mankind and He wants us to have a solid relationship with Him following these four epistemic methods covered in this work and this action will propel the move of God in the life of every believer seeking God in Spirit and truth.

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