

April-May 2022



GLOBAL TRAINING NETWORK



Matching Gift Challenge

Our ministry recently received a gift of \$7500 from one of our great partners. This gift comes with a challenge to match this amount by the end of May. Last year you more than TRIPLED it. Can you do it again? So far, the prospects are good! With a little more than a month to go, you have more than met the challenge with \$11,567 in special giving. This leaves us with just under \$4500 to go to actually triple the original gift. You are awesome and we thank you. We are having a busy year of travel and training and it is great to know that you are with us!

Our Itinerary



- May 5-30: Rwanda ministry**
- June 5: Calvary Baptist, Wickenburg, AZ**
- June 16-July 2: Philippines ministry**
- July 10: First Baptist, Duncan, AZ**
- Sept 3-11: Kurdistan Ministry (tentative date)**
- Sept 18: Calvary Crossroads, Wenatchee, WA**
- Sept 25: East Wenatchee First Baptist, WA**



In His Grip

The Thrill of Theology

I have been studying to lead a course in Integrative Theology. This is a comprehensive way of studying, evaluating, and applying important Biblical teachings. Does it sound boring? If you think so, you are not alone. Many people assume that any theology is bound to be drier than a 2 day-old fast-food burger. That is unfortunate. The truth is quite the opposite. Sound theology, well taught, helps one develop a whole new appreciation for the central truths of our faith. Further it helps one to root their actions and decisions in a world view based on an understanding of God that actually makes sense. Let's take, as an example, two small slices of the doctrine of God: the transcendent omniscience of God along with His immanence. These two concepts combine to tell us some amazing things about our creator. (OK, stifle that yawn and read on. This is good!)



able according to Barth and Bultmann. To them, God is the everlasting "other." He can reveal *Himself* through emotional, non-thinking, ecstatic experiences, *but through no rational ideas about Himself*. They specifically rejected the idea that nature reveals anything about God (general revelation). Our powers of inference and deduction, they claimed, are simply too limited by their finiteness to learn anything about the Infinite. Consistent with this, they also reduced the Biblical accounts of God acting in history to mere stories based on human perception and NOT inspired communication from God (special revelation).

This leaves us with several questions. First, if God's mind is so completely "other" that He can reveal no knowledge of Himself to human beings, how can Barth and Bultmann know so much about it? Second, how is it possible for God to reveal Himself, but no facts about Himself? This seems self-contradictory. Also, if God is limited(!) by His inability to communicate truths about

Definitions first: God's "transcendent omniscience" means that God knows everything in the universe and beyond including all actual as well as all possible events in the past, the present, and the future. God's "immanence" means (among other things) that in spite of this unimaginably vast perspective, He can and does intelligently communicate with us and interact with the smallest details in our lives.

This is so amazing that some think it is not even possible. Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann, two influential 20th century theologians, taught that God's mind is so far beyond our own (so transcendent), it is inherently impossible for God to reveal ideas about Himself to us or be involved with us in real time. (If He is transcendent, He can't also be immanent.) They assert that God has instantaneous infinite knowledge and does not need to "reason" anything out. He simply knows. Humans, on the other hand, are limited to finite "propositional" thinking, reasoning in a sequence of ideas. This makes communication between our finite minds and the infinite mind of God impossi-

Himself in propositional form, how did He manage to create human beings who can think in no other way? Why would He do this? What does this limitation mean about God's other attributes? Are they limited as well? Doesn't it suggest overwhelming cruelty for God to create people with a hunger to know God and yet with no ability whatsoever to find Him? Finally, should we accept this speculation about the nature of God without evidence or should we accept what the Bible teaches about God's intimate concern for humans, something for which there is undeniable and overwhelming evidence?

Thankfully, God HAS made Himself known, and we CAN both KNOW ABOUT HIM AND KNOW HIM! In nature and also in the conscience of human beings, God reveals general conclusions about His qualities, including His moral qualities, so that there is a kind of universal basic morality of which humans are all aware (Rom 1:20; 2:14). Mothers love their babies. Kindness and honesty in some form are embraced by cultures across the



The Thrill of Theology (Cont'd)

globe. Everywhere, there is a conception of a higher being seemingly built into the human soul.

God reveals Himself further through special revelation in the Scriptures and in the life of Christ. This is especially transparent to believers. The new birth renews a person in knowledge after the image of the creator (Col 3:10). We gain God's insight into God's will (1:9) as well as other important spiritual matters (1:15-20). Based on His Word, Christians are able to avoid deceptive teaching (Col 2:4), and strengthen their faith. These things are communicated *in concepts and words* (2:7). God communicates with us in ways we CAN understand. We are meant to understand—all of us! The Bible is verbally inspired and Spirit illumined. The Biblical descriptions of God (God is holy. God is faithful. God is love, etc.), while limited to finite terminology, are never-the-less true. They enable any and every believer not only to know things about God, but to actually know Him who is life eternal! What a privilege you have!

Not only has God spoken clearly to us, He is also intimately involved in every detail of our lives, down to knowing the number of hairs on our heads (and what happened to the absentees). He hears our prayers, inhabits our worship, and enjoys fellowship with us through His Spirit. He aids us in temptation, He reassures and prompts us. He is actively engaged in changing us over time to reflect His image!

Why does it matter that God has transcendent knowledge and yet has revealed Himself to us and is intimately involved in the smallest details of our lives? Here are a just a few reasons:

1. It means that you have the *wisest possible guide*. In a world filled with confusing messages and conflicting ideas, where do we turn to know the truth? How can we be assured we are making decisions in keeping with values that are finally and objectively *right*? We turn to God's Word. We *know* that God has brought all possible wisdom to bear in providing for us special revelation to guide us. Trust Him and what He has said in His Word. You will never go wrong!
2. It means that you have the *highest possible knowledge*. It is a wonderful thing to study the uni-

verse and unravel its mysteries. It is a still greater thing to know the God who transcends the universe, who created it, wrote its physical and moral laws, and who values you enough that He died for you!

3. It means that you have the *most transformative possible relationship*. C.S. Lewis claimed that he gave up atheism because it was too boring. True and practiced Christianity is anything BUT boring. It transforms us, making us more and more vitally "alive!" As we grow we adopt more and more of God's attitudes. We increasingly detest all forms of sin, not only because of their nature, but because of the damage they do to people and the pain they cause to God. On the other hand, we are increasingly long-suffering toward people, recognizing and identifying with the human weaknesses that lead to sin while feeling more and more pain over the all the wreckage sin creates. We are also increasingly compassionate for those suffering affliction in the

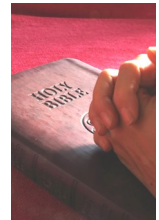
We live life more vividly...as our minds and hearts vibrate to the music of His presence.

forms of poverty, physical ailments, aging, and trials of all kinds. In short, we begin to love what God loves and hate what He hates. Our world is full of relative values and personal definitions of truth. Many religious teachers and writers add to this confusion by teaching (in various ways) that God doesn't actually teach what He teaches. It is a sad thing to live without any assurance about the nature of God or understanding of His morality, or certainty about His care for us and involvement in our lives. It leaves a void in a human soul, a hunger unsatisfied, a numbness where God intended that there be passion. Growing in Christ renews that passion. We are transformed! We learn to live life more vividly; laughing, loving, weeping, serving, and enjoying God more fully as our minds and hearts vibrate to the music of His presence.

There is much more to say on this subject. ...And we haven't even started talking about God's transcendent righteousness, His transcendent justice, or His transcendent love! Theology boring? On the contrary, it is the full meal that leaves you satisfied and strengthened as only the exploration of truth can do. ∞



Our Praises & Prayer Requests



- Praise God for a great "first-half" of the "Edmondson Matching Fund" campaign.
- Praise God our training schedule is returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- Praise God for a good number of GTN trainers stepping up to minister in Kurdistan.
- Please pray for the overall training ministry as GTN returns to Nepal.
- Please pray for our upcoming ministry in Rwanda in May and expanding in October.
- Please pray for our upcoming ministry return to the Philippines in June.

Ministry Partnership

Your financial partnership is essential as we carry out our God given ministry. Please follow the instructions below or on the enclosed response card (US mail version).

"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account... And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:17, 19)

You may give online at:

gtn.org/edmondson

Under "Ministry Designation" select "Bob and Eileen Edmondson (435)" or "Edmondson Matching Gift (43502)" (type in "Matching" and that selection will appear) or "Books for Kurdistan (43503)."



Support also accepted at:

Global Training Network
PO Box 6507
Peoria, AZ 85385

Please include a note indicating that your gift is preferred for the Edmondsons #435 or "Edmondson Matching Gift #43502" or "Books for Kurdistan #43503".

Come visit us at



www.inhisgripionline.org

Please call GTN at 623-217-3867 if you need any assistance.