

Ephesians 1:17

Give Thanks for Wisdom & Revelation

Main Idea: Pray for and be thankful for the wisdom God that gives us in Jesus.

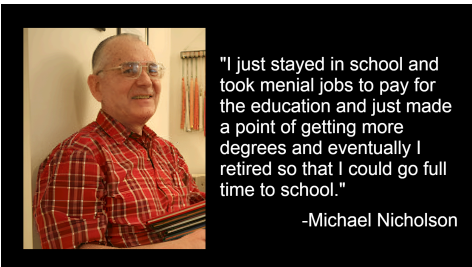
[Picture of Michael Nicholson]



Michael Nicholson, born in 1941, is a perpetual student from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and he's been in school for 65 years. He's received one bachelor's degree, two associate's degrees, three specialist degrees, 23 master's degrees, and one doctoral degree. Nicholson completed most of his degrees in Michigan, but also received some of his degrees in Texas, Indiana and Canada. His first degrees were in religious education from William Tyndale College, and systematic theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, but most of the rest of his degrees are related to Education.

For a while, Nicholson worked in several teaching positions related to his degrees.

[Nicholson quote]



But when asked in 2012 about his pursuit of all these degrees, Nicholson said, "I just stayed in school and took menial jobs to pay for the education and just made a point of getting more degrees and eventually I retired so that I could go full time to school."

His most recent job was as a parking attendant at the school he was attending, which he took in order to attain a discount on tuition. Michael Nicholson apparently knows a lot, but feels like he still has so much left to learn.

Have you ever just been completely overwhelmed with all the things you know that you don't know? In our daily decisions, we can sometimes wonder about the choices we make, or the choices we don't make, and doubt whether we're making the right choices.

Many times over the course of my years as a pastor, I've wondered why I'm the one preaching and teaching, when I feel like I have so much I still need to learn.

The rise of the internet has magnified this feeling, but the truth is, it's always been something we've struggled with. Nearing the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon wrote:

there is no end to the making of many books, and much study wears the body. (Ecclesiastes 12:12b)

There's no end to all the books we could read, and all of the lessons we could learn, and if we really try to study them all, we're going to wear ourselves out!

And when it comes to faith and spirituality, especially, we might wonder, "Do I really even know enough to know what's true?" When we have so many religions in the world – Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Paganism, Polytheism, even Atheism – Christianity might just seem like another option out of many, so we might wonder, "how can we really know if we've picked the right one?"¹

But in the Bible, and in history, we find that God gives us proof not only that Jesus is our Savior and Lord,² but that we can count on Him to guide us and assure us of His presence with us as we follow Him day by day.

Ephesians 1:17

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. (Ephesians 1:17)

Father, You are truly worthy of all praise. You have all knowledge and all wisdom. So help us to always turn to You and Your word, that we might be filled with the knowledge and wisdom from above. In Jesus's name, Amen.

About a year ago, the Sheriff's Search and Rescue in Lane County, Oregon shared this story on their Facebook page.

[Picture of Facebook post]



Recently Lane County Sheriff's Search and Rescue responded to an all-too-familiar mission, but with a unique twist.

A motorist had attempted to traverse a remote road in the U.S. Forest Service - Willamette National Forest that is not maintained for winter travel. His vehicle became stuck in the snow and he did not have cell service to call for help (cell reception is very limited in many forested areas of Lane County). Making his situation worse, his family was out of the country and nobody knew where he had gone or to call for help if he didn't make it home.

Regardless of the circumstances leading to his situation, once stranded this person made several smart decisions. First, he stayed with his vehicle. Rarely does anyone in Oregon die from exposure waiting in their vehicle to be found and rescued, but we have unfortunately seen many poor outcomes from those who chose to walk away. Second, he used some ingenuity to find a way to call for help. The man had a

¹ John 14:6

² 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Titus 2:11

drone with him and attached his cell phone to the drone. He then typed a text message to a trusted person describing his situation and exact location, hit send, and launched the drone several hundred feet into the air. The increased elevation allowed his phone to connect to a tower and send the message, which resulted in our teams being deployed and assisting him out of his situation.

I thought that was a pretty cool story! I'm glad that the stranded driver happened to have a drone in his vehicle, and that he had the idea of attaching his phone to it, and that it was able to connect and send the message so that he could be rescued.

But fortunately, when we need help from God, we don't need to rely on a cell signal. God always knows exactly what we need, even before we pray for it.³ And when trials come, and they will always come,⁴ it's important for us to look up and lift up our cry for help, not because God doesn't already know our situation, but because He longs for us to reach out to Him in faith.⁵

Our Scripture verse today is a prayer for wisdom and revelation, but it's also something we can give thanks to God for because He's given us these things through Jesus and through His Holy Spirit.

James writes that if anyone lacks wisdom, he should ask God.⁶ God gives wisdom to those who turn to Him for wisdom.

Three hundred years ago was a period of time in history that we refer to as the age of enlightenment. During this period, we saw a huge shift in all sorts of areas.

[Picture of Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven, music begins]



In the area of music, we were blessed by the music of Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven.

[Picture of inventions]



There were major inventions that came out of this period, such as mercury thermometers, fire extinguishers, and even the piano.

³ Matthew 6:8

⁴ 1 Peter 4:12

⁵ Proverbs 15:8, 15:29

⁶ James 1:5

[Picture of philosophers and scientists]



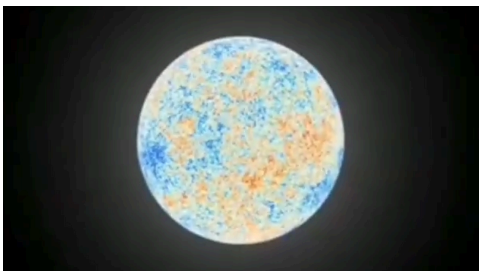
Also during that time, there was a massive shift toward philosophic reason and the scientific method, good things, but in the process, just like today with the rise of the internet, the philosophers and scientists tended to get an ego about how much they thought they knew, forgetting about how just how little we know in the larger scope of things.

[Picture of the brain]



For example, three hundred years later, we still know very little about how the brain stores memories. We still know nothing, scientifically, about where consciousness comes from.

[Video of the universe]



And even though we can point a telescope out into space, and try to estimate the size of the universe, we still have no idea, because all we can see is what we call the observable universe, and beyond that, we don't don't know what's out there.

But there is One who knows. 1 John 3:20 says that God knows all things.⁷ Verse 17 describes Him as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father.” As much as we might be in awe of the human mind, and how we can use it to discover awesome things in our earth and universe, God is far more glorious.

But God is not glorious in an unknowable sense.⁸ Ironically, we might get that impression if we only read bits and pieces of the Bible. 1 Timothy 6:16 says that God dwells in unapproachable light. Exodus 33:20 says that

⁷ 1 John 3:20

⁸ 1 John 4:6-7

no one can see God and live. And the Bible says in many places that God is holy, which means that He's different and separate from us because of His absolute moral perfection.⁹ Yes, and amen!

But God is also our Father.¹⁰ He loves us.¹¹ He allows us to know Him and be known by Him, and He does that through our Lord Jesus Christ.¹² Jesus said, "If you've seen Me, You've seen the Father." And He said, "I and the Father are One."¹³ And He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."¹⁴

So Jesus shows us God the Father, is one with God the Father, since Jesus is God the Son, and Jesus shows us the way to the Father, that we might be with Him forever in eternity.

And this is all made clear to us through His word, the Bible. You see, so often we spend so much time searching to know everything we can about the earth and the universe through science, and that can definitely be good, but the greatest mysteries of the universe and beyond are made known to us through one book, the Bible.¹⁵

Now, technically the Bible never seeks to prove God's existence, it's just assumed. But the Bible does point to the proof that's clear to all of us. Romans 1:19-20 says:

What can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

To know God is real and powerful and creative, all we need to do is open our eyes and look at the world around us. Every building has a builder. We know that. Every painting has a painter. We know that. Even if we've never met the builder or the painter, when we see a building or a painting, we know that those things only exist because of the people who made them. In the same way, creation can only exist because of the Creator.

But people today say, "No, the universe and everything in it exists as a result of billions of years of random chance and has no need for a Creator God." But that's nonsense. Creation is far more complex than a building. It's far more complex than a painting. But if we saw a building or a painting in the middle of a forest, we wouldn't assume it just came about by random chance. No, we would assume that someone had been there, and had made it, and had left it there. And if you say anything else, you've left rational thought, you've left the scientific method, and you've left clear and simple knowledge.

The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.¹⁶ In other words, in order to truly know anything, we have to start with the truth that God is real, and that He is worthy of all awe and reverence.

Verse 17 continues.

⁹ 1 Samuel 2:2, Psalm 99:9, 1 Peter 1:16, etc.

¹⁰ Matthew 23:9, John 1:12, Acts 17:28, Ephesians 4:6, etc.

¹¹ John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-8

¹² 1 Corinthians 13:12

¹³ John 10:30

¹⁴ John 14:1-9

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ Proverbs 1:7

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. (Ephesians 1:17)

So Paul prays in this passage that the Ephesians not only would have wisdom from God, but would have revelation from God. And he tells us exactly how we receive revelation from God as well: it's through having a knowledge of Jesus.

Part of the problem is that even while we admit that we don't know it all, we act as if we do. Sometimes we need to unlearn what we think we know in order to be filled with true knowledge.

[Picture of Bruce Lee]



There's a story about a conversation between a master martial artist and Bruce Lee, who is arguably the greatest martial artist of all time. The master martial artist asked Bruce Lee to teach him everything he knew about martial arts. Bruce held up two cups, both filled with liquid. "The first cup," said Bruce, "represents all of your knowledge about martial arts. The second cup represents all of my knowledge about martial arts. If you want to fill your cup with my knowledge, you must first empty your cup of your knowledge."

It's much the same with much of what we think we know. There's so much misinformation about Jesus and the Bible that sometimes in order to even begin to grow in the true knowledge of God, you need to first empty yourself, humble yourself, recognizing that you are not the authority of what's true. God is.¹⁷

You don't have to know everything about everything in order to make the most important decision you can make in all of your life: to place your faith in Jesus. You just need to know a few very clear, simple truths from history: that Jesus really did live and die for your sins, and that He rose from the grave and lives today so that you can have true, eternal life in Him.¹⁸

You see, Jesus was not just another person who lived a long time ago. He was not merely a good teacher. He was not merely a miracle worker, as cool as that sounds. No, Jesus was and is the revelation of God, and when we know Jesus, we know God.¹⁹

Jesus's miracles prove this.²⁰ Jesus's death and resurrection proves this.²¹ So because Jesus is who He said He is, we can trust Him and everything His word says.

Paul wrote to Timothy, talking about false teachers who were deceiving people in the church, describing them as:

¹⁷ James 4:10

¹⁸ Romans 10:9

¹⁹ Matthew 17:1-8

²⁰ Acts 2:22

²¹ Romans 1:4

always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:7)

Listen, learning is good, and growing in knowledge and wisdom is good, but there comes a point that we all need to make a decision about what we're going to do in regards to the knowledge that we have about Jesus. So Paul also wrote to Timothy in the same letter:

you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

If you want wisdom, first ask God for wisdom,²² and then read His word,²³ which points us to Jesus,²⁴ who is Himself the wisdom and revelation of God.

The early disciples were asked, "What must I do to be saved?" And they responded, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."²⁵ Many people today, if they believe in heaven at all, think that they just need to be a good person, or say that they're just not sure, but God gives us His word so that we can know for sure. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

²² James 1:5

²³ 2 Timothy 3:15

²⁴ John 5:39

²⁵ Acts 16:30-31