

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

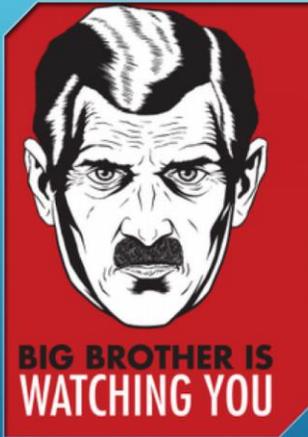
All-Knowing

All-Powerful

GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

'Omniscient'

As we're looking at God being all knowing or all powerful let's consider our society's view of omniscience (being all-knowing). If you've read Georger Orwell's book 1984, or even if you haven't, you'll have heard of his most famous idea, an organisation that knows far too much...



BIG BROTHER

"The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power, pure power."

Whenever we refer to a 'Big Brother' society this is meant as a bad thing. It is thought of as bad to be forever watched. Think about why this might be.

Answers:

- It makes us vulnerable
- People might see what we do wrong
- We don't trust other people with that information
- People might try to gain power and misuse it,.

The idea that someone is always watching us is a scary thing, isn't it. But we can see that that is exactly what the Bible teaches about God. That He knows everything about us. Let's look at a few texts that prove that point and how He uses that knowledge.

- ▶ Job 37:16
- ▶ Psalm 147:4-5
- ▶ Psalm 139:1-5, and verses 15&16
- ▶ Hebrews 4:13
- ▶ 1 John 3:20

GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

Job: Asserts that He has perfect knowledge

Psalm 147: God knows His creation. He understands all things.

Psalm 139: God knows us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Before we know ourselves.

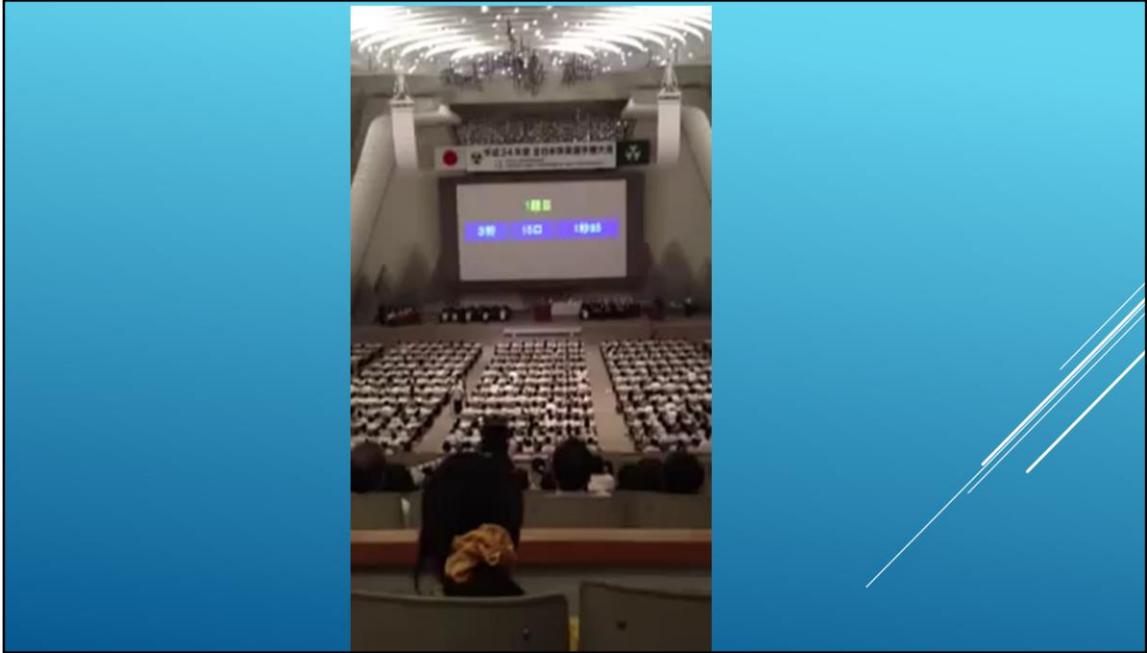
1 John: God knows EVERYTHING

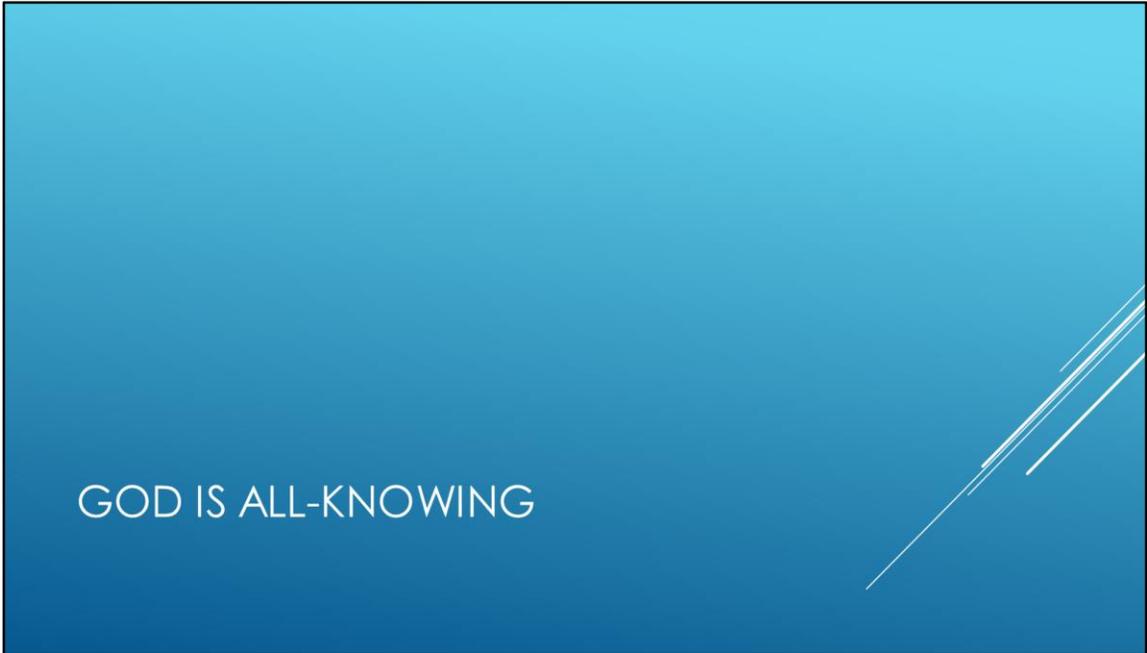
So, God does know all things. He knows every detail of His creation. From the microscopic to the astronomical. From the Earth's rocks to the human heart.

Let's reflect on that for a moment. If I ask you to remember something trivial, and then recall it later in the day then you have to take a moment to recollect it, don't you? You have to commit energy to memorising it and then recalling it, and you could get it wrong. God doesn't remember everything. He knows. Everything is always at the forefront of God's mind. It's much more like me saying to you "I'm about to need the number 7. What number do I need?" But even that isn't close. God knows us entirely. We are always at the forefront of His mind. We are always known, always on His mind. Always cared for.

To make a similar point. If I were to ask you to add up 145 and 365 then you might be

able to do that pretty quickly (or not). The next slide shows a room of people at a competition adding up 15 numbers in 1.8 seconds!



A blue gradient rectangle with white text and a white streak. The text "GOD IS ALL-KNOWING" is centered in the lower-left quadrant. A white streak, composed of several parallel lines, extends from the bottom right towards the center of the rectangle.

GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

That pace of calculation is amazing. But more amazing still, is that God never needs to work anything out. God doesn't need to calculate or use logic. He already knows every answer. So for God the future of the world is not like a game of cosmic chess. He doesn't sit there thinking "If I go there, then that will happen, then I'll do that..." God doesn't deduce or calculate. He knows.

Isn't God's knowledge so much greater than ours? Shouldn't this drive us to worship Him?



INCOMPARABLE TO...

Does anyone recognise either of these people?

- One is Sherlock Holmes, master of deduction
- One is Kim Peek. Who is perhaps the world's most famous savant. What's a savant? Someone who has remarkable gifting in some sort of mental ability. Usually with an associated handicap. Kim Peek inspired the movie Rain Man. He can read both pages in a book simultaneously and retain 98% of their contents. His memory recall and his mathematical skills are amazing. He suffers from severe autism.

Armed with that knowledge. I'm thinking of weakness that both these people share. Can you hazard a guess as to what it is?

Both of these men have brilliant intellects. They can gain knowledge quicker than anyone else they'll ever meet. But fundamentally they struggle to understand people. They cannot empathise or relate to people properly. And that's often how we perceive God. We know that He knows all things, but he doesn't feel like we do. He's robotic, inhuman in some way.

But actually God is not less than human at all, but far more. And He knows us truly.

He knows how we feel. And He knows in a way that cares.

- ▶ Compassion (Mark 8:2)
- ▶ Anger (Mark 3:5)
- ▶ Grief (Luke 19:4)
- ▶ Sorrow (John 11:36)
- ▶ Joy (Luke 10:21)
- ▶ Love (John 15:12)

GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

Jesus felt keenly, and knew people intimately. He felt:

- Compassion when he saw the hungry crowds who followed Him
- Anger against the religious leaders of His day
- Grief as He wept over Jerusalem
- Sorrow as He wept for His friend Lazarus
- Joy as He sees the Spirit working in people's lives
- Love – even as He called His disciples His friends, and said He would die for them.

God's knowledge is not just trivia. It's a husband knowing His wife, and loving Her dearly. It's an intimacy and care. It's a promise made and always answered. It's knowledge of every flaw and fault, and a willingness to forgive all the same. It's someone who has seen our troubles and shares them. And tells us with absolute certainty that there is a glory awaiting. That is the knowledge of God as it engages with humanity.



So why not take a moment to consider the contrast between the God of the Bible, and the fears of the World. It's easy to think that an all-knowing God would be like an Orwellian Big Brother. But have a think in your table about what is in this fearful view, and how that compares or contrasts with the Lord of the Bible.

Big Brother

- Swift to punish
- Cruel
- Untrustworthy
- Avoidable
- Power-hungry
- Flawed

The Lord

- Patient
- Loving
- Completely just
- Inescapable

Humble
Perfect

Passage	Apparent 'problem'	Possible response
Genesis 6:6		
Jonah (see ch4 v2)		
Genesis 18:21		

GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

Genesis 6:6 – God has genuine emotional interaction with His world. If a songwriter completes a song, then sits and listens to it and they are moved to tears. They feel genuine sadness, does that suggest the song is broken? No, their engagement with it is a beautiful thing. God is totally engaged with His world, and feels anger, sadness, pain, regret as He engages. But ultimately God’s plans are good, and that’s a beautiful thing to consider.

Jonah & Genesis 18 passages – This is talking illustratively about how God interacts with people. So God obviously doesn’t ‘Go down and see’ anything. He doesn’t have a body to walk there with. He doesn’t have eyes to see like we do. He already knows exactly what is there. But it is conveying that God does know, and that He doesn’t know like someone who has heard about it, but like somebody who has seen it.

We must be careful with passages like this not to read too much into it. This is a story, and it’s a story about how God interacts with His people. Is this passage here mostly to teach us about whether God knows everything or not? It’s not is it? Whereas some of the Psalms and other texts we’ve looked at are there specifically to state plainly that God knows everything. That’s what they’re trying to tell you! That’s the whole point they are there!

So often mistakes in understanding scripture come when people forget about passages that are really trying to tell you something very specific about God, and people instead take the opposite point from a passage which isn't even trying to comment on it!

▶ Applications:

- ▶ Repentance
- ▶ 'Holy fear'
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Worship

GOD IS ALL-KNOWING

- God knows your every sin, so there is no point withholding your sorrow. In fact, to do so can be very dangerous. So pray, repent. Repent freely because God has always known your every sin. And He still sent His Son to die for people just like you.
- God's knowledge should move us to a Holy fear of Him. A strong Father-Son relationship will often have an element of 'fear'. It's not that the child is petrified of their Dad, but that they fear offending him, and are concerned to show respect. We should live in light of God knowing our actions and live in respect for Him.
- God makes promises with absolute knowledge of exactly how He will fulfil them. So there is no reason not to trust Him. We should have faith.
- When we look at a God who is this much greater than us, what can we do but worship? Praise God for His great knowledge.

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

'Sovereign'

'Omnipotent'

- ▶ What does it mean to be 'sovereign'
 - ▶ Able to exercise great power
 - ▶ Has the right to exercise power

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

Consider a definition for the word sovereignty. It might help to consider when you would describe a person as sovereign,

▶ What is God sovereign over?

- ▶ Psalm 135:6
- ▶ Proverbs 21:1
- ▶ Ephesians 4:11
- ▶ Romans 9:13-15

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

God is sovereign over:

Psalm 135: The world

Proverbs 21:1 Human hearts and the world's rulers

Ephesians 4: Human giftings and roles

Romans 9:13-15 – His own mercy and love

Ultimately God is sovereign over all things, isn't He? He is the one who has made the world, and He is the one with absolute rights over it. And He exercises absolute power. There is never any question that He can achieve His goals.

Romans 9 is the key text in this. In verse 21 a question is raised. If I was a potter in times gone by I could make wonderful works with my skills, or I could make chamber pots (toilets) with them, or both. And nobody would be entitled to tell me otherwise, would they? Few would presume to. Well, the whole world is God's creation. He has made it and it is His to do what He will with.

We should be so careful when we approach God, and when we read the Bible. We shouldn't think, "You can't do that God!" Of course He can, He has every right. It doesn't mean we have to like it. But we must respect God's sovereignty.

- ▶ God is All-Powerful, and can therefore do anything
- ▶ God is absolute Sovereign, and therefore does everything

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

Hebrews 1:3 says “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, *sustaining all things* by His powerful word.” It is God who keeps the world together, who maintains His creation.

Proverbs 16:33 says “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” You cannot do so much as throw a dice without the God controlling the result. He is ruler of all things.

In these verses we see not only that God’s rule is absolute, but it is being exercised *all the time*.

Application	Bible verses
Comfort	Romans 8:28, Jeremiah 29:11, Deuteronomy 33:27
Reverence	Job 41:11
Prayer	Matthew 6:8, Luke 11:9-12
Confidence	2 Kings 6:16, Romans 8:31-39
Faith	2 Peter 3:8-9, Isaiah 46:8-11

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

Above are a few of the applications we can take from God's sovereignty. Why not consider these verses for your encouragement and to respond to this awesome power of God?

Difficulties	Bible verses
If God in His sovereignty has everything planned, then why pray? He'll never change His mind!	Job 42:8 Exodus 32:11-14
Why bother telling people about Jesus if God has already planned who will be saved?	Acts 18:9 Romans 10:14-15
Where does sin come from? How can we be held responsible for any of our actions?	Romans 9:19-21 2 Peter 1:20-21
If God rules all things why is there suffering?	Luke 13:1-5

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

[Questions 1 and 2 responded to on next slide]

Question 3:

Ultimately we cannot fully answer where sin comes from in a way that will be easy for us to understand. Paul addresses this in Romans 9 where he raises the question of how we can be blamed for sin if everything happens according to God's will? What's Paul's amazingly intellectual answer? It's to say "Who are we to question God?". Ultimately we know God is in control of all things. We also know that we are responsible for our own actions. Do we understand how they fit together? Probably not, but praise God that He does: He is much greater than us. That is another part of how He is our worthy and glorious Lord. Another thing to note from Romans 9, as previously considered, is that ultimately we should not be offended by God being in control and still holding us accountable. Paul is very clear that He has every right to do that. God can do whatever He wishes with us. That could be a scary thing, but praise God that we can be assured He acts with perfect justice. In Heaven we will have not complaints.

2 Peter has an interesting perspective on this. Peter notes that prophecies didn't

ultimately originate in the prophet, but in God. Do you think this meant the prophet entered a trance, or some state where they robotically repeated the words of God? No, when they wrote the scriptures they wrote what was on their hearts. And yet God, in His sovereignty would have shaped their circumstances, their personality, their thoughts so that every word written was exactly what He wished it to be. (Wow!) We might consider how God would work in all things in this way. He's not compelling us to do anything by shutting off our own reason or choices, but He sculpts everything so that our choices, personality, will, etc are all according to His will. God does everything.

The concept is mind boggling, but ultimately we should settle for the knowledge that we are able to make choices and be held to account for them. AND God is in control of all things. Praise God.

Question 4:

There are many answers to this, and different perspectives will be helpful at different times. I picked this passage to show that suffering isn't in any way because God is 'losing' control. It's not something he simply 'allows' to happen. In fact, we should be glad about that, because it would be terrible if our suffering was meaningless! No, God has purposes for everything. In the Luke 13 example Jesus makes the point that suffering should lead to repentance. Suffering shows that our world is broken? Why is our world broken? Because our relationship with God is broken. In His mercy God has shown that there is real need in the world, and that we must turn to Him!

Can you imagine how cruel it would be for God to create a perfect world that we lived in for our 80 years (or however long), without any pain, never having a sense that anything was wrong, and then we were condemned to hell? God provides suffering which creates outrage in us, which rebels against this being the way things should be. Which makes us long for a place like Heaven. It should move us to Him.



Questions 1 and 2: Why pray?

Back to the Future is apparently taught to film students as a movie script that provides a great example of a setup early in the script paying off later in the script. Because what they do is they have all these jokes where they give you a setup early on, and then a payoff later in the film.

For example, you can well imagine the filmmakers thinking about where they might set part of this film. So they decide to have a bit of a joke with it. So perhaps they start with the idea. They say, 'well we could have this place and a joke about how it gets its name. So let's say it becomes the Lone Pine Mall. So then, because we want that to be the payoff from a joke. It could start off at the beginning of the film as the Twin Pines Mall, then when Marty travels back in time he could crash into one of the Pine Trees. Then, when you see the name Lone Pine, you know how it got there and can have a bit of a smile or laugh.'

You see, they want to provide a punchline to make you laugh. The setup is needed to get to the desired outcome. Just as if I said "Why did the chicken cross the road?" then you'd recognise it as the setup for a groan inducing punchline.

God has different objectives with His creation. He doesn't have a punchline. But He works all things to His glory. And you can almost imagine in the mind of God: If all glory is going to be given to God, if all credit for an event. Then what will He do? What setup will He give it? Well, He will have people praying. Because if people pray then the glory goes to God. So why have prayer when God is all powerful? So that God gets the glory.

So why should you pray if He already knows all things? Well, there's lots of answers, but one of them could be. Why would God have you praying at this time? Surely it's in part because He has an answer for you. He's having you pray so that He gets the glory for the answer.

Of course, another answer is to pray because God answers. Prayer works.

We could use similar logic with the question of why evangelise if God has already chosen who will be saved? Well, if God intends for someone to be a Christian, what would his setup to that event be? It would be evangelism! He would send someone to tell them the gospel (see Romans 10 passage). So be encouraged! When you share the gospel with someone you could consider why God might have you doing that? It could be because He has plans for the salvation of that person.