

## In this Series of Lessons we will Study

- Man's Spiritual Ignorance
- Mans' Ignorance of God
- Man's Ignorance of Christ
- Man's Willful Ignorance

**IG'NORANCE**, *noun* [Latin *ignorantia*; *ignoro*, not to know; *ignarus*, ignorant; in and *gnarus*, knowing.]

Want, absence or destitution of knowledge; the negative state of the mind which has not been instructed in arts, literature or science, or has not been informed of facts. *ignorance* may be general, or it may be limited to particular subjects. *ignorance* of the law does not excuse a man for violating it.

[What does the Bible say about ignorance? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Ignorance is the lack of knowledge or understanding. Ignorant people are either unaware or uninformed. Sometimes we are ignorant because we did not know there was a need to learn something. Other times, we are ignorant because we have chosen not to learn something we need to know. In [Hosea 4:6](#), the Lord says, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you." Willfully rejecting knowledge that God wants us to have is sinful ignorance. While unintentional ignorance about earthly topics is understandable, intentional ignorance about spiritual matters can lead to eternal destruction ([Romans 1:18–23](#)).

The Bible makes a distinction between ignorance and innocence. We don't have to be ignorant of the fact of sin; in fact, we can be highly informed about sin yet remain innocent of it. But we should all be ignorant about the *practice* of evil. [Ephesians 5:11–12](#) says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." In [Matthew 10:16](#), Jesus warned us, "I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

To effectively fight the spiritual battle, we must know something of how our enemy functions. Believers are encouraged to forgive each other, "so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" ([2 Corinthians 2:11, ESV](#)). Ignorance about what the devil is up to—and ignorance of the damage done by [unforgiveness](#)—is dangerous to our spiritual health. One of Satan's basic tactics is to keep people ignorant: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ" ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). Ignorant people are easy prey for those with wicked schemes ([Psalm 1:1–2](#); [Proverbs 7:6–7, 21–23](#)).

God says that [idolatry](#) springs from spiritual ignorance: "Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save" ([Isaiah 45:20](#)). Ignorance of the true God is unjustifiable, because the knowledge of God's existence and power is available all around us ([Romans 1:18–23](#)). People who substitute false gods instead of pursuing the real God are sinfully ignorant.

[Hebrews 5:2](#) says that Jesus is "able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray since he himself is subject to weakness." God has great patience, even with the ignorant. Even when we are willfully ignorant, He gives us a multitude of opportunities to learn ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). Paul said that God showed him mercy because, before Jesus saved him, he had "acted in ignorance and unbelief" ([1 Timothy 1:13](#); [Acts 3:17](#)).

God commands us to repent of our ignorance and seek Him with all our hearts ([Acts 17:30](#); [Jeremiah 29:13](#)). The opposite of spiritual ignorance is wisdom, and we are told to seek wisdom above all things ([Proverbs 3:13–18](#)). Fortunately, wisdom is readily accessible; the book of Proverbs personifies wisdom as a [noble lady](#) who is calling out to all publicly: "To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it" ([Proverbs 8:4–5](#)). Every time the Bible commands us to "listen" or to "hear," God is giving us a chance to trade ignorance for His wisdom.

"ignorance" occurs 18 times in 17 verses in the KJV.

[Ephesians 4:17-19](#) The character of the old man.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

a. **Therefore:** This makes the connection, not only with the glorious spiritual privileges laid out in [Ephesians 1](#) through 3, but also with the high call of a unified, mature body as described in [Ephesians 4:1-6](#). Because of this high calling, we should **walk** (live) in a different way than the world around us does.

i. There is a constant tendency for Christians to display to the world that we really aren't so different after all. This is usually a misguided effort to gain the world's "respect" or approval. This must be resisted at all costs, because the goal in itself is both undesirable and unachievable.

ii. This principle of compromise can be illustrated by the exchange between a liberal scholar theologian and a Christian professor. The liberal agreed, "I'll call you a scholar if you'll call me a Christian." The trade isn't worth it.

b. **No longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk:** The Gentile **walk** is characterized by **the futility of their mind**. In the end, their thinking is futile because their **understanding is darkened** — because they are **alienated from the life of God**.

i. This is not to say that man, in his rebellion against God, is not capable of mighty intellectual achievements. Instead it is to say that all such achievements fall short of true wisdom, because *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom* ([Proverbs 9:10](#)).

ii. **Futility:** “The thought is not that unregenerate minds are empty. It is that they are filled with things that lead to nothing.” (Vaughan)

iii. As Christians, we have a proper way and place to **walk**. It is as if Jesus turned us around and put us in the right direction, and now we have to **walk** and progress in that direction.

c. **Because of the blindness of their heart:** Fundamentally, the **ignorance** and lack of understanding of man is a **heart** problem. It is shown not only in a foolish denial of God, but also in his moral failures (**licentiousness, uncleanness, greediness**).

i. The **Gentiles** Paul speaks of were either atheists or they believed in gods who were themselves immoral. Therefore in their denial of the true God, they denied any standard of morality that they must answer to.

ii. **Past feeling** has the idea of one's skin becoming callous and no longer sensitive to pain. It is the logical result of **the blindness of their heart**. **Blindness** can also be understood here as *hardening*, and this ancient Greek word “is used medically to denote the callus formed when a bone has been fractured and reset. Such a callus is even harder than the bone itself.” (Wood)

iii. **Licentiousness** is sin that flaunts itself, throwing off all restraint and having no sense of shame or fear; **uncleanness** is a broad word, mostly with reference to sexual impropriety.

iv. Barclay elaborates on the Greek word *aselgeia*, translated **licentiousness**: “The great characteristic of *aselgeia* is this — the bad man usually tries to hide his sin; but the man who has *aselgeia* in his soul does not care how much he shocks public opinion so long as he can gratify his desires.” (Barclay)

## 1. Brevity of Life Limits Knowledge

Job 8.9 For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow

[Study Guide for Job 8 by David Guzik \(blueletterbible.org\)](#)

**([Job 8:8-10](#)) Job should respect ancient wisdom.**

a. **Inquire, please, of the former age:** Bildad asked Job to consult the wisdom of the ages and to consider what they had to **teach** and **tell** Job.

i. "If Job would only take the time to consider ancient tradition, he would find that God only does right. Sinners get just punishment, and good men are blessed with health and prosperity." (Smick)

ii. Bildad quoted the ancients, but even in ancient Biblical history they could see that there is not an easily seen correlation between righteousness and blessing. Even at the beginning of time, Abel was righteous but was rewarded with murder from his brother Cain.

iii. "The biggest benediction one man can find in another is not in his words, but that he implies: 'I do not know the answer to your problem, all I can say is that God alone must know; let us go to Him'... The biggest thing you can do for those who are suffering is not to talk platitudes, not to ask questions, but to get into contact with God, and the 'greater works' will be done by prayer." (Chambers)

**b. For we were born yesterday, and know nothing:** Bildad gave Job a graceful excuse for what he considered to be his previous foolishness. It was simply because Job did not consider and consult ancient wisdom.

i. **Our days on earth are a shadow:** "The following beautiful motto I have seen on a sundial: Unbrae sumus! 'We are shadows!'... Such as time *is*, such are *you*; as fleeting, as transitory, as unsubstantial. These *shadows* lost, *time* is lost; *time* lost, *soul* lost! Reader take heed!" (Clarke)

ii. "To be sure, we can today learn from the past, but the past must be a rudder to guide us into the future and not an anchor to hold us back. The fact that something was said years ago is no guarantee that it is right. The past contains as much folly as wisdom." (Wiersbe, cited in Lawson)

## 2. The Future is Hidden

Ecclesiastes 8.7 For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

**(Ecclesiastes 8:5-9) Reasons for wise living.**

a. **He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful:** Good will come to those who obey and honor the king.

b. **Because for every matter there is a time and judgment:** Wisdom knows what Solomon first poetically explained in [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8](#) — that there is a time and purpose for everything under heaven.

c. **Though the misery of man increases greatly. For he does not know what will happen:** The Preacher understood that **for every matter there is a time and judgment**; but he also knew that we don't know what those times are. A wise man's heart may discern **both time and judgment**, but certainly not perfectly; and not all are wise.

i. "The highest wisdom is submission to things as they are... Yet in doing all this there will abide in the heart the recognition of abounding injustice." (Morgan)

d. **No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death:** If the lack of wisdom discouraged Solomon in [Ecclesiastes 8:6-7](#), he found the powerlessness of man in the face of death to be yet more despairing. *Under the sun*, he saw that **death** allows no winners, and **there is no release from that war**.

e. **All this I have seen... there is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt:** The Preacher knew that part of man's misery on this earth was to be ruled by others oppressively.

i. "This may be spoken of rulers generally, who, instead of *feeding, fleece the flock*; tyrants and oppressors, who come to an untimely end by their mismanagement of the offices of the state. All these things relate to *Asiatic* despots, and have ever been more applicable to *them* than to any other sovereigns in the world. They were despotic; they still are so." (Clarke)

## 3. Coming Evils Unforeseen

Ecclesiastes 9.12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

a. **I returned and saw under the sun that — the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:** Solomon wondered, "If this life is all there is, then why doesn't this life make more sense?" In a world that made more sense **under the sun**, then the **swift** would always win the **race** and the **strong** would always win the **battle**. Yet it doesn't always work that way.

b. **But time and chance happen to them all:** The Preacher again struggles against a sense of fatalism. In his somewhat contradictory way, the one who previously proclaimed God's management of all ([Ecclesiastes 7:13](#) and [9:1](#)) now wondered if it didn't all happen according to **time and chance**.

i. "*Time and chance* are paired, no doubt because they both have a way of taking matters suddenly out of our hands." (Kidner)

c. **The sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them:** From his **under the sun** perspective, it seemed that man was more subject to the whims of **time and chance** than of a loving, all-powerful God.

## 4. Life is Mysterious

Ecclesiastes 11.5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

[Study Guide for Ecclesiastes 11 by David Guzik \(blueletterbible.org\)](#)

Moving towards real wisdom, through fits and starts.

## 1. ([Ecclesiastes 11:5](#)) The limitations of knowledge.

**As you do not know what *is* the way of the wind,  
Or how the bones *grow* in the womb of her who is with child,  
So you do not know the works of God who makes everything.**

a. **As you do not know what is the way of the wind:** Solomon again reminds us of the limitations of human knowledge. We don't know **the way of the wind** or how **the bones grow in the womb** of a mother.

i. "Thus at this point in his closing appeal the Preacher simply insists on a fact: certain aspects of God's working on earth defy explanation. The mystery which shrouds our very origin underlies the whole of reality." (Eaton)

ii. As Jesus would later say, *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit* ([John 3:8](#)).

b. **So you do not know the works of God who makes everything:** In the same way we don't know the hidden things, we also do not know **the works of God** in any comprehensive way. The Preacher brings us to a place of humility and submission to God and His works that again pushes us out of the previously entrenched *under the sun* premise.

## 5. Nature and Grace Full of Mysteries

John 3.8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

[Study Guide for John 3 by David Guzik \(blueletterbible.org\)](#)

### **([John 3:5-8](#)) Jesus explains the new birth.**

a. **Most assuredly... you must be born again:** Jesus was emphatic in saying that man does not need *reformation*, but a radical conversion by the Spirit of God. We must be **born of water and the Spirit**.

i. "In [verse 3](#) Jesus has spoken of 'seeing' the kingdom of God, whereas here He speaks of 'entering' it. There is probably no great difference of meaning." (Morris)

ii. **Most assuredly:** "The words add solemnity to and underline the truth of what follows. The modern expressions, 'In truth I tell you', 'Believe me when I say', 'I do assure you', convey the meaning." (Tasker)

iii. **Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God:** If a nation passed a law that said no one could live there except those who were born in that nation, and someone wanted to live there who was not born there.

- It wouldn't matter if he took a name that was common in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if he spoke the language.
- It wouldn't matter if he observed some of the customs.
- It wouldn't matter if he dressed like those in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if he practiced some of the religious traditions of that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if his parents were born in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if his children were born there.
- It wouldn't matter if he had many friends in that nation.
- All that would matter was if he was actually **born** there.

iv. "A man may cast away many vices, forsake many lusts in which he indulged, and conquer evil habits, but no man in the world can make himself to be born of God; though he should struggle never so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born again, still he would not enter heaven, because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated -- 'unless a man be born of the *Spirit*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **You must be born of water:** We know from [John 3:10](#) that whatever being **born of water** was, it should have been familiar to Nicodemus from the Old Testament.

i. Some have thought **born of water** means to be baptized. Water here may represent baptism, but there is no real Old Testament foundation for this.

ii. Some have thought that **born of water** refers to our physical birth, since we come forth from a sack of water. This approach is more attractive, but doesn't it simply state the obvious? However, it does make a good parallel with the idea of *that which is born of the flesh* in [John 3:6](#).

iii. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be born again by the Word of God. In other passages of Scripture, water represents the Word, as we are *washed by the water of the word* ([Ephesians 5:26](#)).

iv. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the *living water* of [John 7:38-39](#).

v. Some have thought that **born of water** means to receive the water of cleansing prophesied in [Ezekiel 36:25-28](#) as part of the New Covenant. This is the approach has the most weight (though it is a tough call), because of its firm connections to Old Testament prophecy — which Jesus says Nicodemus should have know to understand these things.

c. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh:** Without the new birth of the Spirit, the flesh taints all works of righteousness. Yet, everything that a Spirit-led man does can be pleasing to God.

i. “In this **flesh** is included *every part* of that which is born after the ordinary method of generation: even the spirit of man, which, receptive as it is of the Spirit of God, is yet in the natural birth *dead*, sunk in trespasses and sins.” (Alford)

d. **Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again”:** Again, Nicodemus *did* marvel at this statement, because he — like most all Jews of his time — believed they *already had* the inner transformation promised in the New Covenant. Jesus wants him to take hold of the fact that *he does not have it*, and **must be born again**.

i. We should not forget *whom* Jesus said this to. Nicodemus was a religious leader, a Pharisee, an educated man, and an earnest man. By all outward appearance, he was *already* transformed unto God — yet he was not.

ii. “These solemn words for ever exclude the possibility of salvation by human merit. Man’s nature is so gripped by sin that an activity of the very Spirit of God is a necessity of he is to be associated with God’s kingdom.” (Morris)

e. **The wind blows where it wishes:** Jesus’ idea to Nicodemus was “You don’t understand everything about the wind, but you see its effects. That is just how it is with the birth of the Spirit.” Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that he didn’t have to understand everything about the new birth before he experienced it.

i. Since we can’t control the Spirit, “It should lead us to be very tender and jealous in our conduct towards the Holy Ghost, so that we do not grieve him and cause him to depart from us.” (Spurgeon)