

Editorial: Our Greatest Need and Privilege: Knowing our Triune God.

Stephen J. Wellum

What is simultaneously our greatest need and privilege as human beings? The Bible's answer to this question is singular and it may be stated in three simple words: To know God.

The Bible's answer is no doubt the opposite of how our world would answer this question, which ought not to surprise us given our sin and rebellion against our Creator and Lord. However, sadly, one wonders whether the church would immediately answer the question this way—especially if we evaluate our actions, behaviors, and what we

most value, more than our mere words. Lamentably, in the church, at least when it comes to our daily lives, we often betray the truth that we are more enamored with this world and what we think it has to offer than with the true and living God, our Creator, Lord, Judge, and Redeemer.

David Wells, in his very helpful, yet alarming book, *God in the Wasteland*, now over a decade

old, documents this sad reality. Developing the research of such people as Peter Berger, Os Guinness, and Charles Taylor, he describes the effects of secularization on religion. He argues the thesis that “modernity” (which includes within it what is often dubbed modernism and postmodernism) has blinded us to the reality of God. It has sought to focus our thinking and lives simply on the “here and now” which, surprisingly, has not led to the abolition of religion from society, but the marginalization of religion and God to the periphery of our lives. The result is that in a secular society, religion may still survive, even flourish, but its influence in the *public* world is basically nonexistent; instead religion, and more importantly God, is relocated to the *private* domain of our lives where he is safely kept from becoming central. In this way, Wells rightly notes, God becomes *weightless* to us—not in the sense of ethereal—but in the sense of unimportant and insignificant. As Wells observes, even though a majority of people continue to assure the pollsters of their

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belief in God's existence, he rests upon us so inconsequentially that he is barely noticeable.

Even more alarmingly, that which is true of society is also true of the church. That is why, Wells contends, our fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is not inadequate technique, insufficient organization, or antiquated music. Rather, our fundamental problem is that God rests too inconsequentially upon us, and this is precisely why God's word seems so distant from us; his amazing grace is thought of in such ordinary ways, and our rejoicing in the gospel and the glory of our Triune God is not what it ought to be.

What is the solution to such a problem? It is first to reject the mindset of our day, then it is to repent of our actions, and then to return anew to Scripture to think big thoughts about our great and glorious God. In short, it is to renew our commitment to know God once again—not as we want him to be, or not as we often construct him to be after our own image—but as he truly is, as he has revealed and disclosed himself in Scripture and thus made himself known to us. For not only is the knowledge of God the very reason God created us in the first place, in order to enter into covenant relationship with him, but it is also our supreme and inestimable privilege, joy, and highest satisfaction. In fact, there is no higher end—no greater *summum bonum*—nothing more glorious and important, and nothing more urgent than to know the Triune God of Scripture in all of his sovereignty, power, and grace. In fact, it is only when we do so, as J. I. Packer reminded us nearly forty years ago in his classic work, *Knowing God* that God's people will become effective servants and ambassadors for our King. People will pray and earnestly seek and petition God, evangelize and take the gospel to the ends of the earth, worship and live for God's glory, and lay down their lives in gospel service only if they have caught a glimpse of the God of the Bible in all of his holiness, justice, glory, and grace. Apart from knowing God and being a God-centered people, we will have little energy for God; we will have few great thoughts about him; we will never display

confident boldness for him, nor will we ever learn to have great contentment in him no matter our circumstances. Surrounded by a secular, pragmatic, human-centered culture, we must stand against the tide and learn afresh what it means to *know* God, for there is nothing more important.

With that in mind, over the next year, *SBJT* is committed to increasing our knowledge of God by focusing on various aspects of the doctrine of God—biblical, historical, and contemporary—that are crucial and important to theology and thus our daily lives. We will divide up this year's issues in a Trinitarian way. This issue, both in its articles and in the Forum section, will focus on themes related to God as the Triune God with particular focus on "God the Father." Next issue will focus on topics related to "God the Son" and thus delve into areas related to the person and work of Christ, yet, obviously, with Trinitarian overlap. After our Bible Study edition in the Fall, our last issue of the year will focus on "God the Holy Spirit," and address crucial issues central to pneumatology. Our goal and prayer is that in concentrating our attention on our great and glorious Triune God, we will better fulfill our calling to know the only true God, who is life eternal and by doing so to become more effective servants in gospel service for his glory and for our good, as well as for the life and health of the church.