

COMING TO KNOW GOD: Reason, Revelation, and Faith

These three steps correspond to the three phases of coming to know God. First, we can know about God through our own reason. This knowledge isn't very clear, but it's enough to know that God is unique, and the most important thing there is. Secondly, God comes to introduce Himself directly through revelation. He tells us who He is, and invites us into a relationship with Himself. And thirdly, by faith, we accept God's revelation, and our personal relationship with Him begins. So let's look at those three steps in greater detail.

What Reason tells us about God

When we talk about "reason" in this context, we're talking about our natural human intelligence, our ability to make observations and draw inferences from our common experiences. Reason can come to know that God exists in two ways:

1. By looking at the external world: If the universe had a beginning, what caused that beginning? If things in the universe don't have to exist, why do they exist? How did the universe get to be so orderly and predictable if there was nobody to organize it?

2. By looking at the human person: Why does everyone want to be perfectly and permanently happy if there is no perfect and permanent happiness? Why does everyone want to be in a loving relationship with a perfect person if there is no perfect person? A "good" thing is something that achieves the purpose it was given by its maker (e.g., a pen manufacturer makes a pen to write clearly, and it's a good pen if it does that). But then how can we talk about people being "good" or failing to be good unless we were given some purpose by a Maker?

These are all ways that we can know that God exists, and that He is supremely powerful, wise, necessary, etc. So we can know by reason that there is a God, and that He is incredibly important. But our understanding of Him, just based on reason, is pretty vague. We can't see Him, we can't talk to Him, and we don't know where He is. More importantly, we can know what God is, but we can't know who God is. Which is why, if we're going to enter into a relationship with Him, He's

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going to need to take the initiative step, which He does, in Revelation.

What Revelation tells us about God

So God comes to us, and introduces Himself. When God reveals Himself directly to the human race, it is called Divine Revelation. It begins in the Old Testament, where God reveals Himself slowly to the patriarchs and prophets. Then, He reveals Himself fully by coming to meet us in the flesh, in Jesus Christ. But how do we know about Jesus? Through Scripture and Tradition. Now revelation tells us who God is. In fact, it tells us that God is three (3) persons. It also tells us that God is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is an infinitely happy, loving community of persons. This is the central mystery of our faith. It tells us who God is and the kind of relationship we are invited to enter. In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity answers the two ultimate questions:

1. Where does everything come from?
2. What is the purpose of life?

Now the only question is: will we accept God's invitation to join Him?

Faith: Entering into Relationship with God

Faith means believing that what God has revealed is true and acting according to our faith. If we don't believe what God has told us, then we can't be in relationship with Him. And if we don't act like we believe, then our belief doesn't do us any good. If we reject somebody's testimony, it means we don't trust them personally – and we can't be in a loving relationship with someone we don't trust. That's why accepting God's testimony is so crucial for our relationship with Him. Also, don't think that "faith" or "belief in God" mean uncertain opinion. God can't lie or be mistaken, so we can be absolutely certain that what He reveals to us through the Bible and Church teaching is completely true. Of course, there's a lot of stuff in the Bible and two thousand years of official Church teaching – but there are plenty of places to find summaries, like the Creeds and the Catechisms to learn about the basic truths of our faith and realize that God has done so much to make Himself known to us. Let's remember that this information is meant to lead us deeper into a relationship with God and for us to respond by allowing Him to change our lives!