

EXCERPT



Knowing God
50th Anniversary Edition

October 3, 2023 | \$22, 304 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0776-1

Stemming from J.I. Packer's profound theological knowledge, *Knowing God* brings together two key facets of the Christian faith—knowing about God and knowing God through a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Now with a foreword by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, this thought-provoking work continues to renew and enrich our understanding of God.

Prepare to Be Blown Away by *Knowing God*

Packer once defined theology as “the use of the mind and the tongue to celebrate God and get clear in one’s thinking and talking about him.” The point is that doctrine directs disciples toward doxology in everything they do. (“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God,” [1 Corinthians 10:31].) The glory of God was the motivation of everything Packer did. Knowing God matters because if we do not know God, we cannot glorify him. And glorifying God is why there is something rather than nothing, and why we are all here.

Packer may have been the last of the “greatest generation” of evangelical theologians. He continued to teach into his nineties, and even when classroom teaching was no longer possible, he still found ways to communicate what he was learning. His last book provided wise instruction for those who are nearing the end of their respective races and want to learn how to finish well: *Finishing Our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for Engaging with Our Aging* (2014).

To read Jim’s publications is to visit milestones marking his and other pilgrims’ progress through the various stages of Christian life. This is the primary benefit of knowing Packer: not to become more like him, but to be inspired to become more like Christ. Every pilgrim needs words to sustain us in the journey. The benefit of knowing Packer is having a wise, godly, and winsome companion along the way.

In *The Knowledge of the Holy* A. W. Tozer wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Close on its heels, however, is what comes into our minds when we think about the gospel. Packer packed his thought into a three-word phrase: “adoption through propitiation.” This is why knowing God is, for Packer, much more than an intellectual exercise. To know God is to relate to the Creator of all things as one’s loving Father. I don’t think Packer ever recovered from this literally earth-shattering knowledge—namely, that the old world is passing away (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 2:17; Revelation 21:1), because in Christ and through the Spirit the Lord is making all things new. The chapter on adoption is, not surprisingly, one of the highlights of the book you are about to read. As you come to know God better through reading this book, then, remember that God knows you by name as his beloved son or daughter. So: start reading *Knowing God*, open your windows and prepare to be blown away.

-From the foreword by Kevin J. Vanhoozer

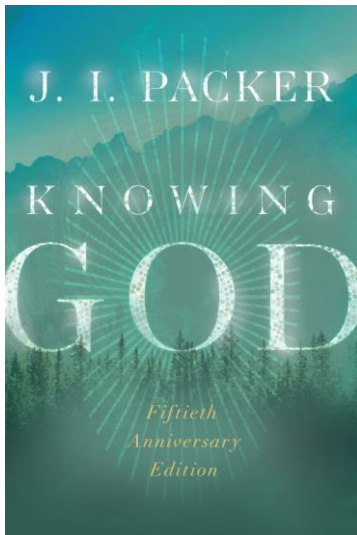


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For half a century, J. I. Packer's classic has helped Christians around the world discover the wonder, the glory, and the joy of knowing God. *Knowing God* was named by *Christianity Today* as one of the top fifty books that have shaped evangelicals. With a companion Bible study, devotional journal, and study guide, readers can explore these biblical themes for themselves in our new fiftieth anniversary edition.

The Legacy of *Knowing God*, a Christian Classic

"A hundred years from now only a handful of books written today will still be widely read and accepted as Christian classics. Dr. James I. Packer's *Knowing God* may well prove to be one of them. A gifted theologian and writer, Dr. Packer has the rare ability to deal with profound and basic spiritual truths in a practical and highly readable way. This book will help every reader grasp in a fuller way one of the Bible's greatest truths: that we can know God personally, because God wants us to know him."

—BILLY GRAHAM

"Those who know God have great contentment in God. It is no wonder so many are so discontented! They don't know God. Oh if only they would use *Knowing God* as a devotional study. It would create such a thirst for more of God that they would keep on coming to him in his Word and drinking of him. This book is the classic God used to launch me into a study of the sovereignty of God. I'll never be the same!"

—KAY ARTHUR

"For years I have been asked to list the 'top twenty' Christian books I have read. *Knowing God* has been on that list since the mid-1970s. This volume is Packer at his very best."

—CHUCK SWINDOLL

"If I can't put the Bible on this list, I'll choose a Packer book instead. Every national and world leader must seek to know the nations and world in which they serve. And in order to know this world and its people, we must first know the God who shaped and molded us all. Packer simply and powerfully re-introduces us to God: his attributes, actions, and most important, his grace."

—JOSHUA DUBOIS, "My Top Five," *Christianity Today*, September 2014

"Here is a theologian who puts the hay where the sheep can reach it—plainly shows us ordinary folks what it means to know God."

—ELISABETH ELLIOT

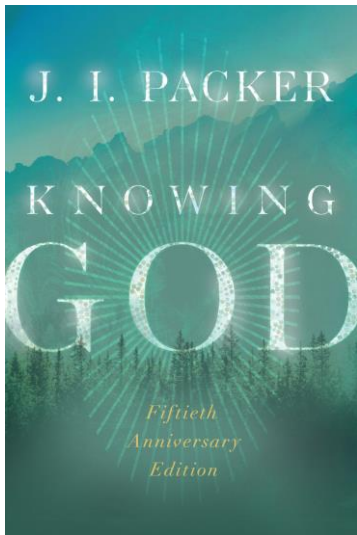


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"*Knowing God* is a masterpiece by a master theologian. It serves as a wake-up call for those who are asleep to the majesty of God."

—R.C. SPROUL

"Few writings deserve to be called 'Christian classics,' but this is surely one of them. With the heart of a pastor, the understanding of a theologian and the passion of a prophet, J. I. Packer brings the reader face to face with the living God."

—CHUCK COLSON

"The books and essays Dr. Packer has written could fill shelves, but he is still known best for his fine work in *Knowing God*. Others may have followed with books about desiring, loving, serving, or seeking God, but Dr. Packer's volume says it simply, says it best."

—JONI EARECKSON TADA

"I first read the book in 1977 in what was then the ninth American printing. I was discipled by that book before I knew what discipleship was! Bad books try to tell us what to think, while good books help us to think. But truly good books shape the way we think. That's what this book did for me. There isn't a song I've written that hasn't been impacted by the point of view in this book. *Knowing God* not only points to the door, it provides the key, helps us open it, and prepares us for the One we shall discover waiting for us on the other side. In his book Packer rescues us from the 'private religious hunches' of our theologically fickle age, from the 'gigantic conspiracy of misdirection' that would rob us of the deep simple joy of knowing God."

—MICHAEL CARD

"*Knowing God* is must-reading for any Christian who is serious about their faith. While it is theology, it is practical, and while it is profound, it is easy reading. I highly recommend it."

—JOHN PERKINS



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"There's a difference between knowing God and knowing about God. When you truly know God, you have energy to serve him, boldness to share him, and contentment in him."

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J.I. Packer, A Remarkable Life of Knowing God

Once named to *Time* magazine's list of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America, James Innell Packer (1926–2020) wrote what many consider the definitive classic evangelical book of the twentieth century, *Knowing God*, which has sold more than one million copies in North America alone.

Jeff Crosby, president of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, said, "J. I. Packer was a man who knew and loved God and helped others to do likewise. *Knowing God*, which IVP first published in 1973, is but one example from his life of writing and teaching."

As the author of forty-seven books, as well as untold numbers of journal articles, book reviews, dictionary entries, and forewords, Packer's prolific work has impacted countless pastors, thought leaders, theologians, and authors.

Jim Hoover, who served as an editor at IVP for thirty-five years, said, "Jim Packer was a remarkable presence. I had the privilege of meeting with him on various occasions over the years, and he always impressed me as a man of grace and humor, erudition and humility, a man who loved God and who, though he crafted what he said carefully even in casual conversation, never took himself overly seriously. He was extremely generous, some might say overly generous, almost never declining to provide endorsements in his support of young writers."

Packer was born in a village outside Gloucester, England, on July 22, 1926. When he was seven, while being chased by a bully as he left school, Packer suffered a severe head injury in a collision with a van. Unable to participate in sports after the accident, Packer instead turned his attention to his love for reading. And when he turned eleven, Packer was gifted an old Oliver typewriter from his parents. Little did they know that their son would go on to craft every word of every one of his books on a typewriter.

Bob Fryling, former publisher for IVP, said, "I was privileged to know Jim Packer as a distinguished IVP author. He had a joyful countenance and a godly pastoral heart. But he used to joke about being hardheaded because he had a metal plate in his forehead from an accident in his youth. However, it was not by accident that Jim became known for his clear theological thinking and writing. He was always able to get to what he would say to be 'the nub of the issue' no matter how complex it was."

Packer's time studying at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, became another formative experience for his future as a prolific author and theologian. During his years at school he attended lectures by C. S. Lewis, whose thought became an influential part of Packer's life and work. While at Oxford he also committed his life to Christ at an evangelistic service sponsored by the campus InterVarsity chapter.



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Following the completion of his doctorate in philosophy, Packer went on to teach at Oak Hill Theological College in London before attending Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, where he underwent theological training for ordination into the Church of England. And in 1954 Packer married Kit Mullet and they had three children: Ruth, Naomi, and Martin.

During his time in England, Packer took on a number of theological college-based roles, including working as principal of Latimer House, Oxford, serving as principal of Tyndale Hall, Bristol, and then as associate principal of Trinity College, Bristol. In 1979, one of Packer's friends from Oxford convinced him to teach at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Packer preached and lectured widely in Great Britain and North America and served as general editor of the English Standard Version of the Bible published in 2001, and as theological editor of the Study Bible version. In 2014, Packer was named Author of the Year by the Association of Logos Bookstores. He was a frequent contributor to and an executive editor of *Christianity Today*, and wrote numerous articles published in journals such as *Churchman*, *SouthWestern Journal*, *Reformation & Revival Journal*, and *Touchstone*. In addition to *Knowing God*, his books include *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (1961), *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (1984), *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (1994), *Weakness Is the Way* (2013), and many others.

As an author with IVP for nearly a half century, Packer left a lasting impression on those he interacted with on various projects. Fryling said, "Jim was graciously articulate in giving wonderful endorsements to a multitude of authors and books. One day at lunch with some colleagues I asked him, 'Jim, how would you describe the uniqueness of IVP?' After a brief pause he said, 'Some publishers tell you what to believe and other publishers tell you what you already believe, but IVP helps you to believe.' We were so grateful for not only his kind and generous affirmation, but we were a bit stunned that he had captured in a brief moment what indeed was integral to IVP's vision and mission. He was a publisher's dream!"

Cindy Bunch, IVP Vice President, Editorial, said, "In July 1988 I started working at InterVarsity Press while finishing seminary. That summer I took Dr. J. I. Packer's week course on puritanism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Little did I know that some years later I would acquire two books with him: *Never Beyond Hope* and *Praying*. I was also able to collaborate with him on a number of *Knowing God*-related books and Bible studies. And now his experience of knowing God is fully realized."

Packer himself sums up his life, faith, and eternity best: "There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them, and that this relationship guarantees God's favor to them in life, through death and on for ever."



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