

Doctrine of Open Theism

1. There is a new idea that is growing in popularity within the Church. It is called "*open theism*" (or "*openism*" for short) and is all about the doctrine of God's knowledge.
2. It gets its name from the idea that the future is "*open*" and therefore no one—not even God—can know what the future holds.
3. So openism severely limits God's knowledge by teaching that God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge—that is, He has very limited and uncertain knowledge of the future.
4. In fact, openists would say:
 - God does not even know what you will eat for lunch tomorrow.
 - If you are single, God does not know whom you will marry, if you will have children, or how you will die.
 - God does not know if the husband that He lovingly directed you to marry will fall away and end up cruelly beating and abusing you next year.
 - Everything in life is all "*up in the air*" because the future is not yet settled in God's mind—it is an open future.
5. But, curiously, openists believe that the Bible is the word of God, they believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died for our sins—and they believe most every other traditional Christian doctrine.
6. Openism is the doctrine that says that God's highest goal in creating us is to enter into a loving relationship with us.
7. Furthermore, openists believe that true love implies "*risk*."
8. Suppose you fall in love with someone and you approach the person to begin dating. At that moment when you try to initiate a love relationship, you are taking a big risk. There is the risk of being rejected by the person you love. Maybe he or she will not date you—or worse, maybe he or she will but will break up with you later.
9. Openists say that if you knew the future so well that you were certain whether or not someone would say "yes" to your invitation, then it is not true love anymore.
10. They believe that true love needs risk in order for it to be real.
11. If love involves risk, and risk involves uncertainty about the future, then we cannot have a loving relationship with God if He knows what we will choose.

12. According to openism, genuine love and free will logically imply that God does not know what His free creatures will do.
13. In contrast to Open Theism is the Bible that teaches that what makes God God is that He knows the future.
14. Consider Isaiah 41:21-24 where God challenges idols to prove that they are true “Gods”. Note carefully what the Lord says about foreknowledge: *“Present your case,’ the Lord says. ‘Bring forward your strong arguments,’ The King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them and know their outcome. Or announce to us what is coming; Declare the things that are going to come afterward, That we may know that you are gods; Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together. Behold, you [idols] are of no account, And your work amounts to nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination” (Isa 41:21-24).*
15. What this passage teaches is that one thing that sets the true God apart from false gods is His knowledge of the future.
16. People who worship a god who does not know the future do not really worship the true God at all. Open theism is a *“gospel issue.”*
17. Jesus rested His gospel claims on His ability to predict the future. *“I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe” (John 14:29, cf. also John 13:19).*
18. Compare and contrast the “God” of openism with the God of the Bible.
 - The God of the scriptures is all knowing and all-powerful; the God of openism has limited knowledge and limits his power to make room for human beings to use their power.
 - The God of the scriptures is never surprised and never caught off guard by what happens in the world. But the God of openism is constantly surprised and is constantly learning more and more as the unexpected future unfolds.
 - Openism depicts God as remarkably more human and feminine than the God of the scriptures. For example, the God of openism is submissive, whereas the God of the *Scriptures* wisely asserts his will.
 - The God of openism feels a need to be loved, whereas the God of the scriptures is the self-sufficient giver of love.
 - The God of the Bible is powerful (a quality usually associated with manliness) whereas the God of openism often finds Himself helpless and unable to accomplish what He wants.

- The God of openism prefers a more equal division of control, whereas the God of the *Scriptures* is the absolute authority.
19. Openism also challenges other Christian doctrines besides God's foreknowledge, such as God's infallibility and His essential goodness.
 20. For example, if openism is true, then when God commissioned Paul to write the book of *Romans*, God did not know if Paul would make a mistake and write something that should not have been in the Bible. This means that, if openism is true, the Bible could have had errors.
 21. Historically Christians have believed that the Bible is infallible—that is, it is impossible for the Bible to contain even one falsehood. Openists, it would seem, have to deny that the Bible is infallible.
 22. Two leading openist scholars— David Basinger and Randall Basinger-- have done just that. According to scholar Dr. D. A. Carson, they no longer believe the Bible is infallible.
 23. Furthermore, if openism is true, God did not know whether the human nature of Christ would choose to sin. That makes the incarnation a pretty big risk—of bringing sin into the godhead! In other words, it was possible for God to sin in Christ and we are just fortunate that He did not.
 24. There is no kind way to say it but openists are proclaiming a different god than the true God.