

"WHO IS GOD?"

Selected Scriptures

J.I. Packer, in his book *Knowing God*, wrote:

What were we made for? To know God.

What aim should we set for ourselves in life? To know God.

What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God

Listen to the explanation of the Lord Jesus...

John 17:3... "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

In this one verse, God is defined in a powerful way. God is, first, *the one and only God*; and second, *God is absolutely genuine or authentic*.¹ Eternal life involves nothing more and nothing less than knowledge of the true God. Eternal life is not so much everlasting life as personal knowledge of the Everlasting One.² This special knowledge of God is an integral part of the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:34... "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight and contentment than anything else? It's the knowledge of God.

Jeremiah 9:23–24... Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; **24** but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and

¹ Borchert, G. L. (2003). *Vol. 25B: John 12-21* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (190). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (556). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

What gives God the most pleasure? It's when we truly know God, not just know about Him.

Hosea 6:6... For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

God reveals Himself to believers through the written Word and the living Word. It is important that we understand that the word **know** (ginosko) in John 17:3 emphasizes an experiential relationship rather than just speculative information. The emphasis here is on knowing God personally. Rivet this sentence in your mind and heart...

KNOWING GOD IS THE GREATEST PURSUIT OF LIFE!

The importance of right thoughts about God cannot be overestimated. No nation or individual can rise above their idea of God. Right thoughts about God lead to right actions and wrong thoughts about God lead to wrong actions.

How can we know God? We must take a long, hard look at His attributes. Tonight we will look at four of the attributes of God.

1. GOD IS HOLY.

The root idea of holiness is that of "separation." Yahweh revealed holiness to be his chief attribute (Exod. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Isa. 6:3; cf. Rev. 4:8).

Exodus 15:11... "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?"

Isaiah 6:1–5... In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the

voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Revelation 4:8... And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

God's holiness is central to who He is as is clearly evidenced by the repeated angelic declaration—"Holy, Holy, Holy." When Isaiah encountered the *separate and distinct* God, he experienced what A.W. Tozer called "*moral shock*." His heart trembled. His knees buckled. His voice quivered. All he could say was:

"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Unfortunately, we have learned to live with *unholiness*. Because we see sin everywhere, we see it nowhere! However, that unfortunate tendency in our lives does not diminish the unapproachable, incomprehensible holiness of God. God is holy!

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee; Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, Holy, Holy, all the saints adore thee, Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea; Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee, Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, Holy, Holy, though the darkness hide thee, Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see, Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy Name, in earth and sky and sea; Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

What does this mean for us? Peter wrote...

1 Peter 1:13–16... Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

God is holy and He expects holiness out of every single person who becomes a part of His kingdom. Obviously, we can never be perfectly holy as God is, yet that does not give us an excuse to flippantly live any way we choose and to participate in the deeds of darkness. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to conform each believer into the image of Christ Himself.

2. GOD IS SOVEREIGN.

When we discuss the idea of God's sovereignty, we delve into the realm of His absolute rule and control over all of creation. Dr. Tony Evans wrote:

"Everything that happens comes about because He either directly causes it or consciously allows it."

This flies in the face of what most people want in "*a god*." Their preference is a 911 God who shows up when they need him, gets them out of the mess they have been entangled in, and then leaves them alone. Face it. Most people don't like the idea of an authoritative God who can and will do as He pleases.

Listen to the psalmist again...

Psalm 115:3... But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Psalm 135:6... Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

Think about this...

God could not be sovereign if He were not omniscient. By that I mean that God has perfect knowledge. There is nothing that He does not know! If there were one tiny fragment of knowledge that someone other than God possessed, He would cease to be sovereign.

God could not be sovereign if He were not omnipotent. By that I am referring to perfect power. If there were one tiny shred of power that someone other than God possessed, He would cease to be sovereign.

God could not be sovereign if He were not omnipresent. If He were not present everywhere, how could He be totally sovereign?

God has sovereignly determined that the human race will give Him glory for all of eternity. That includes those precious souls who inhabit heaven and those tormented souls who inhabit hell.

Philippians 2:5–11... Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of JESUS EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

How does the sovereignty of God affect our lives?

It gives us great confidence. One day all is going great in your life. Then, in the next breath, life caves in on you and seeks to suffocate you. You are diagnosed with cancer. Your marriage is threatened by infidelity. A loved one dies. Confidence in the sovereign God can see you through the most difficult times of your life.

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold into Egyptian slavery where he suffered for years. Eventually, he became the prime minister. He never yielded to depression or bitterness. Instead, he maintained his infectious faith in the

sovereign God. His reply to his brothers after the death of their father serves as a first-rate illustration of the confidence that a solid belief in the sovereignty of God brings.

Genesis 50:15–21... When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!" **16** So they sent *a message* to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying, **17** 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18** Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." **19** But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? **20** "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. **21** "So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Romans 8:28... And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Belief in the sovereignty of God not only produces confidence as we face the circumstances of life...

It enriches our worship. In those deep, dark moments when you are assailed by trouble, you can lift your head to heaven and sing about the greatness of God and the glory of God. The one, true God created you to worship Him in the good times and the hard times. Faith-filled worship when life is tough is only possible when you have a firm grasp on the sovereignty of God. That makes for some special times of worship!

3. GOD IS JUST.

Deuteronomy 32:4... "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He."

Our English terms "*righteousness*" and "*justice*" are basically from the same word groups in both the Hebrew and Greek.

God's justice/righteousness means that He always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right.

As a result of God's justice/righteousness, He necessarily must punish sin. Why did God send His Son to become a human being some 2000 years ago? I want to make this perfectly clear. Not one single human being could go to heaven on their own record. Why? Because of the sin that we have committed. Paul wrote:

Romans 3:21–26... But now apart from the Law *the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

Romans 6:23... For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's justice was satisfied when Christ shed His blood for our sins on the cross of Calvary. Praise God. His system of justice allows for a substitute. Tony Evans wrote:

God will not tolerate people rejecting Christ. He will not tolerate it because an eternal God let His eternal Son pay an eternal price for our eternal sin that eternal people might live with Him eternally. But if we reject the God who paid the price through His Son for our sin, then we will face the eternal consequences. (Our God Is Awesome, p. 248)

What should our response be to the justice of God? It should clarify an important issue in our minds and hearts. **God can never be unfair!** How many times have you heard people make that accusation? I want you to know that no matter how painful your circumstances might become you can rest assured that God is totally just and fair. Learn to trust Him as you walk through the valleys of life.

Keep this in mind. **Jesus Christ is your only hope of ever going to heaven.** He paid your penalty for all the sin you commit over the course of your life. He alone can justify you before God and grant you the forgiveness you desperately need! Remember, *He is holy. He is sovereign. He is just.*

4. GOD IS LOVE.

Everyone wants to be loved. So often human love fails us and leaves us with shattered hearts. I want you to know there is a love that will never fail or disappoint. It is the love of God!

1 John 4:7–11... Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

God's holiness demands that all sin be punished, but God's love provided a plan of redemption and salvation for sinful people. What is God's love? Grudem defined it like this...

God's love means that God eternally gives of Himself to others....This attribute of God shows that it is part of his nature to give of Himself in order to bring about blessing or good for others. (Systematic Theology, p. 199)

The self-giving love of God reached its zenith when He sent His Son to die for our sins **(1 John 4:10)**.

Romans 5:8... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

What joy should grip our hearts when we come to grips with the fact that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit has willingly given of themselves to bring us genuine love and the corresponding joy and happiness that comes with it. It is God's nature to love like this.

What should be our response to the love of God? Our response to God's love should be that of genuine repentance of our sin and faith in Jesus Christ. **God's love saves us!**

The sovereign God has decreed that Christ is the only hope of salvation. I pray that you would respond to God's love by placing your faith in Christ tonight if you haven't already done so.

Taking it a step further, I want you to understand that **God's love never fails!** Paul wrote to the Roman believers...

Romans 8:37–39... But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's love secures us even in the most painful circumstances imaginable.

What amazing love! Here's a liberating truth. God's love for you is not based on your performance as a believer. He loves you on your worst day and on your best day. Glory to God!

Now, our Lord expects you to love Him in return. In fact, we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, our soul, and our mind and we are to love other people. We shouldn't find it too hard to love a God who saves us and secures us. God's love never fails!

Why would we ever complain about our circumstances and demonstrate resentment toward a God who loves us so? How could we ever grow lukewarm in our personal relationship with Him? What could ever motivate us to give our time, talent, or treasures to anyone or anything other than the God who demonstrates such incredible love?

.....

If we are going to worship God and develop an authentic relationship with Him, we need to do all we can to understand and appreciate who He is. How do we do that?

We must focus on His attributes as revealed in the Word of God and as modeled by the Son of God. Don't fall into the trap of cherry-picking the attributes you like and rejecting the attributes you dislike. You must embrace this truth...

God with all His attributes is the biblical God!

Listen to Paul's words concerning the importance of knowing God...

Romans 11:33–36... Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

KNOWING GOD IS THE GREATEST PURSUIT OF LIFE!

July 19, 2023
CFBC... "The Doctrine of God"