

Handouts for

Knowing God:

Experience & Love Him

Trust in God's Excellence!

Rev. Paul J. Bucknell

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Experience & Love Him



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Knowing God: Experience & Love Him

Rev. Paul J. Bucknell

Each Christian is embarked on a spiritual journey largely consisting of developing and deepening a relationship with God the Creator. As we scrutinize the scriptures to discover God's person, He further shapes our lives and our involvement in His plans. Without doubt the Lord desires that you draw closer and more intimately know Him!



(1) Knowing God

Gain and develop a personal relationship with God (1 John 1:3-4)

I have trouble enough getting to know people. How can I get to know God? I can't even see or hear Him. And even if I could meet Him, how would I know I would like Him?



(2) The Goodness of God

Assured that all His requests and plans are good (Ps 31:196)

A lot of people including believers have problems with evil as if it all came from God. God, instead, pronounces that He is good even during difficult times. A deep confidence in God's goodness drives unhealthy doubts and fears from our hearts.



(3) The Power of God (Omnipotent)

Personally knowing a mighty God makes a difference (1 Chr 29:11)

Did you ever feel powerless? Join the club! Actually, we were never meant to be able to solve all our problems. As God's children, it is wonderful to know He really cares for us and that our major task is learning to rely on His strength.



(4) The Holiness of God

Grasping God's untouchable way (Ps 68:17; 1 John 1:5)

Did you ever stare into the bright sun? We just can't do that nor can we fully grasp God's holiness. God is light while we, being tarnished with impurities, can't easily approach Him unless we carefully follow His terrific plan to bridge this gap.



(5) The Wisdom of God

Willing to comply to His plans because they are best (Psalm 104:24)

Our biggest problem is not knowing how to make the best decisions but to know and understand Him who perfectly designed things! We need to perfect our hearing from God if we are going to successfully live out our lives and ministries.



(6) The Faithfulness of God

Confident He will help me where and when I need it (Lam 3:22-23; Nu 23:19; Hab 1:12-13)

Our problems with consistency largely lie in our inability to control life's details, but a larger part, perhaps, is our plaguing uncertainty, ignorance, and wavering on personal issues. It is a good thing God is not like that lest we would perish.



(7) The Mercy of God

God tenderly and effectively cares for us (Hab 3:2)

Why is it so hard to forgive others? Our unforgiving spirits seem to indicate that we never made a mistake! But God is perfect. Why, then, is He so kind and forgiving? We are missing something big here.



(8) The Sovereignty of God

Trusting God's will to be supremely completed (Ez 1:1)

Is it so bad that God is in control? People, including many believers, have such a hard time accepting God's sovereign control. Perhaps, we like to think our choices and decisions are better. We must learn from Jesus How He mastered the challenges before Him by relying on and even delighting in the Father's sovereign will.



(9) The Lord Your Healer

Discover the Lord's Healing Touch on Your Life (Exodus 15:26)

Although today's world regularly spites God's mercy, His Healing name, Jehovah Rophe, is beautiful, bringing hope to strengthen believers to see how powerful God's love is and that in no situation—even in great sickness and pain—do we ever need to be apologetic for God's actions, but satisfied and delighted. Times of sickness are opportune times to more deeply draw near to God to know Him more deeply as your Healer.



(10) The Wrath of God

God's wrath assures us of His thorough justice (2 Chronicles 34:21)

Christians vary widely on their views of God's anger, even with some insisting God's wrath is, or should be, nonexistent, while others wonder why God hasn't done more regarding injustice. This study on God's wrath gives us a clearer picture as to how God works in our world, churches and lives.



(11) The Exalted God

Humbly living to bring Him glory (Ephesians 2:4-7)

We are not very good at acknowledging God's glory due to overvaluing our own importance. Life's path gets exciting when we finally begin to understand and respond to our Lord's glorious person.



Your Future Journey

Seeking to develop your relationship with the Almighty God while still on earth!

- What problems hold you back from increasing your hunger to know the Lord?
- What steps can you take to assure persistent spiritual growth while facing so many distractions around you?



(1a) Knowing God

Gain and develop a personal relationship with God (1 John 1:3-4)

“I have trouble enough getting to know people. How can I get to know God? I can’t even see or hear Him. And even if I could meet Him, how would I know I would like Him?”

What is God like? Use 2 minutes to write down as many adjectives to describe God.

• Can we really know God?

God is so great. Can He really be known? Elihu rightly reminded Job, “Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; the number of His years is unsearchable” (Job 36:26).¹

• Who or what is God?

Throughout the history of man, many various concepts of God have been suggested and deeply believed. Perhaps it is helpful to begin with a contrast to better grasp these differences on a larger scale.



• 1 John 1:3-4

The Bible holds the special words from our Creator that we need to hear so that we could come to know Him. In exploration of this topic of knowing God, let us focus on three questions from 1 John 1:3-4. Each tackles a significant aspect to knowing God. (1) Can I know God? (2) How do I get to know God? (3) Does knowing God bring a change in my life?

“And indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1 John 1:3-4).

1) Can I know God?

*“And indeed **our fellowship** is with the Father” (1 John 1:3).*

• Knowing God

- Implications of fellowship (*koinonia*) (1:3; Acts 2:42)
- “He (Jesus) was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him” (John 1:10).
- “And so they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also” (John 8:19).
- “This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

• Knowing A Personal God

- God is personal and to be known on a personal level—in clear contrast to an impersonal force which cannot be known.
- God, the infinite Creator, reveals Himself in the scripture as One who wants to engage in a personal relationship.
- People can know things about God without personally knowing Him.
- God mystically blends aspects of transcendence with immanence without stripping Him of His person and will.
- Persons are distinguished by their desire and purpose.

¹ All scripture is quoted from NASB unless otherwise stated.

2) Do I know God?

*“And indeed **our fellowship is with the Father**, and **with His Son Jesus Christ**.*

Design – Started off great - in the garden (Gen 2-3)

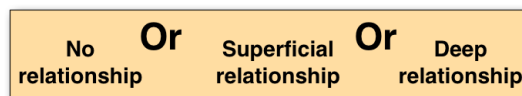
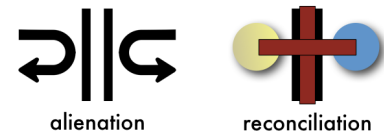
Historic – The relationship was broken (Gen 3; Eph 2:1-3)

Reality – Man couldn’t fix it (Rom 1; Isa 59:2)

Update – God Himself solved the problem

- Inward corruption (Isa 59:15-16; 63:10)
- His call to seek Him (Isa 55:1, 60:1-3, 62:11, 65:1-2)
- His intervention to help (Isa 53:10, 63:5)

“And I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me; And My wrath upheld Me” (Isaiah 63:5).



3) Does knowing God bring a change in my life?

*“These things we write, so **that our joy may be made complete**” (1 John 1:3-4).*

• Knowing God brings change

“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit” (Mat 7:16-17).

• Don’t be superficial and confused by religion

Summary Questions

- Do you know God? How do you know for sure?
- What kinds of beliefs do people around you hold?
- Would you say that the purpose of life has to do with knowing God? Why or why not?
- Why is sincerely following a religion not the same as knowing and loving God?
- Why does the genuine knowledge of God and works always lead to worship and obedience?
- What areas of my life should see greater change because I know God?
- What steps do you practically take in your life to better know God?

“When the Bible speaks of God as being on high’ and ‘in heaven’; the thought here is not that God is far distant from us in space, but that He is far above us in greatness, and therefore to be adored.”²

² *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, p. 73.

(1b) The Revelatory God

We need not seek for Him, but only come (Ex 33-34:6-7)

“Are all the religions the same?” “Do all religions lead to the same goal?” God interrupts this line of thinking by giving us a clear picture of who He is and His special unique character. We should all be glad God is who He says He is and live in His grace while it can be found.

Question: List three things that develop a relationship and three things that are fun about good relationships.

- _____
- _____
- _____

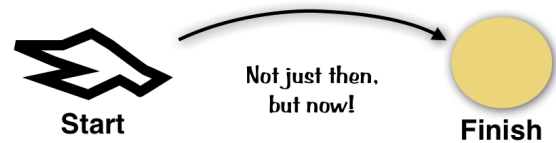
1) The Way to Know God

Joining God’s blog

God reveals Himself through all sorts of means including the created material world (Rom 1:19-20), our consciences (Rom 2:14-15) and God’s Word (Psa 19). Get the hint? God wants us to personally know and be influenced by Him, not just a little, but a lot. Creation, our conscience, and the Bible become our social media to know and interact with God.

Close friendships and spiritual progress

Our relationship with God is like a friendship. Friendships grow when both sides are eagerly excited about meeting each other. While on earth, there is a mystery to our relationship with God and many factors to developing—not very unlike our relationships with those around us. In the future, “We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him” (1 Jo 3:2-3 -NASB).



Distortion of good works

Man wrongly perceives good works, thinking they can satisfy God. They can’t. God looks at good works through the lens of relationship. Once gaining that acceptance through faith in Christ, we then do things because we like Him. The girlfriend knows her boyfriend likes a certain snack and so prepares it for him even without him asking.

Spiritual development

Once spiritual rebirth occurs, then we can grow in our relationship with God. Like a child in a family, an individual and that individual’s way of relating to God develops. John mentions the infant, teen, and adult, each stage picturing the way we acquire different skills and knowledge of God’s Word. It is predominantly developing our love and trust for God.



• Question

Do your devotional times best reflect: a personal time with God, an intellectual pursuit, religious habit, or something else?

Explanations for life come as we understand God and His purposes.

Without knowing God, we cannot understand His works.

2) Our Desire to Know God (Exodus 33)

"Then Moses said to the LORD, 'See, Thou dost say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But Thou Thyself hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Moreover, Thou hast said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find favor in Thy sight. Consider too, that this nation is Thy people'" (Exo 33:12-13).

- What did God want of Moses?
- What did Moses want?
- What was he frustrated about?
- What did Moses think the solution was?

Calling upon the Name of the Lord (Exodus 34:5)

One key incident further reveals God's true nature to Moses. Please note that God is revealing this to him so that it can be revealed to us so that we might want to know Him more deeply and respectfully respond to Him.

"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he (Moses) called upon the name of the LORD" (Ex 34:5).

Problems with theology

The quest to know God

3) God's Self-Revelation (Ex 34:6-7)

God's Self-introduction

God's holy person is best seen through His own introduction. The world's religions are a poor guessing game of who God is and how it practically influences those living on earth.

"6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations'" (Ex 34:6-7).

Questions on Exodus 34:6-7

- Who is speaking in Exodus 34:6-7? How does he name or entitle Himself?
- What adjectives does the Lord use to describe God in verses 6 and 7?
- Group these descriptions in two or three categories. What do you learn from this list?
- Which attribute means the most to you? Why?
- Many have a hard time understanding the last description. Do you? How do you resolve it?

• Introduced by character traits not works

Character is more important because it shapes the person's abilities and resources. Man cannot be trusted and therefore must limit himself (But even the power to limit others is a power!).

- Personal character more revealing
- e.g. 'God the creator' speaks about His power not His mercy. Today's world wants power, not character.
- Video capability | Cloning power | Detection ability | Genetic capability | Power capability

• Why did God reveal Himself at all?

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7).

- In what ways would you further want to know Him and His ways? Why? How important is this to you?

"Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness" (Rom 11:22).

"Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord."³

³ *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, p. 29.



(2) The Goodness of God

Assured that all His requests and plans are good (Ps 31:19)

God is always good. This is His nature. When we question our Lord's goodness due to personal difficulties or blatant evil around us, then we are humming the evil one's tune. Instead, trust in God's goodness, and your heart will not be troubled.

• Our Relationship with God

- We are not only learning things about God but more deeply knowing and treasuring Him.
- Two significant questions answered by personally knowing God:
 - "Who am I?" - I am His and so I want to know more what He is like so that I can better please Him.
 - "Why am I here?" - God made me for a particular purpose which I get to know by knowing and trusting Him.
- Our task here is to take these attributes of God and make sure they help us relate to our Lord. 'And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness,' declares the LORD" (Jer 31:14).

1) God is Good

• A Genesis study

- What main lessons do we learn from the first two chapters of Genesis about God?
- How does this differ from how you think God would introduce Himself? Why?

• A Psalms study

- "O taste and see that the LORD is good (טוֹב יְהוָה); How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).
- "For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).
- "Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely" (Psalm 135:3).
- "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!" (Psalm 73:1).

• Two world views of self

Self-esteem: I believe in myself. => I can do or be whatever I want.

God-trust: I believe in God's goodness => He has wonderfully designed & equipped me to carry out His good purposes.

Examine: On what basis does the world tout self-esteem? On what basis can we believe in God's goodness?

A Summary

God chiefly introduces Himself as being good. Something is wrong when we doubt that the Lord's motivation toward His creatures are inferior or even evil. Our confidence in life does not come from an imagined reservoir of potential (i.e. self-esteem) but in God's goodness through which we can assume we are wonderfully designed, equipped, and placed.

We might have numerous unsolved questions about what happens in this world or in our personal lives, but we must not doubt God's inherent inclination to kindly help (i.e. be good towards) His creatures. He is good!

Question: List four things in this world that you would, if possible, improve. Star the most important one.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2) Difficulties Believing in God's Goodness

• Terribly Twisting Truth

- Believing in God's truth is not easy because all the unhappy, difficult and even unjust things happening in our lives and around the world. Think about the things we want to improve. It is easy to jump from this criticism to doubt God's motives. "If God was truly good, then He would" Have you ever asked this kind of question?

- The problem of evil can be differently answered or left unanswered, but in no case should we accuse God of an inferior good which is not good. Be like Job, "Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God" (Job 1:22).
- Satan turns good into evil by having us doubt God's goodness. "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Is 5:20).



• Satan's tactics

Notice the sinister progression of Satan's persuasiveness, which first cast doubts about God's goodness and then subtly replaces good with evil.

- "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" (Gen 3:1) => Good is not good enough because of limitations.
- "Your eyes will be opened" (Gen 3:5) => Good is eating that fruit (which God said not to).
- "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food..." (Gen 3:6) 'Good' is something else than what God defines as good and provides.
- Nehemiah summarizes the corruption of a person/society by abusing God's goodness. "And they captured fortified cities and a fertile land. They took possession of houses full of every good thing...so they ate, were filled, and grew fat, and reveled in Thy great goodness. But they became disobedient and rebelled against Thee, And cast Thy law behind their backs..." (Neh 9:25-26).

Summary - At the heart of false worship is the belief that God offers inferior products in an unfair world, and that something else, the idol, offers something better. Religions, philosophies and distortions of Christianity become means by which God's goodness is locked out from their minds, stripping any real knowledge of God's goodness from them. (e.g., If God is not good, then why should I trust Him.)

- Do you question God's goodness expressed towards you? Confess your doubt about how you doubt His good treatment of your person or role in society, then affirm His goodness in the very area you questioned.

A society's decline is directly measured by how complete this switch of good and evil has taken place. Dare we measure our society?

3) The Power of Knowing God's Goodness

"How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast stored up for those who fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee, before the sons of men!" (Ps 31:19)

- Think about the attribute of God's goodness. What other characteristics do you think of? From God emanates various expressions of His glorious goodness. We see them in the various ways He deals with His people.
- God is good. We seen His goodness overflowing in His creation-His works. God is calling us to respond to Him. "If you like what you see around you, then you will like Me whom you cannot see!"
- Because the goodness of His nature, we can be sure His plans and dealings are derived out of that goodness.
- Psalm 31:19 calls us to hide in His goodness. It protects us from the scoffing of the world, scars of bitterness, and marks of hopelessness. Can you see the faith this verse inspires in us?

• Other Scriptures

"Jesus is our good shepherd. 'I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me' (John 10:14).

God's goodness is translated to our lives largely through Jesus Christ. He tenderly leads us along in life. He never leaves us alone and vulnerable (Mat 28:20). Jesus is our good shepherd. When He leaves, He lives in us through the Holy Spirit (Php 1:9).

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called..." (Rom 8:28).

God's goodness affects our daily lives and even our problems. We can be confident of the very way God works out all the details of our lives-'work together for good.' Without faith, we live outside His sphere of goodness, though it still be there. The inability to attach God's personal care to us through His goodness strips much joy from our lives and increases insecurity.

• Overview

- **God is good.** "God is good. This is the way God is. I need to start believing it!"
- **Difficulties believing.** "I have wrongly understood God, myself and the world. Forgive me Lord!"
- **Knowing God's Goodness.** "I am but a beggar, trying to grab a crumb of your goodness to feed my own soul. I repent of this narrow and selfish approach. Now let the power of the abundance of your goodness flow into my life for your glory and the sake of others" (Eph 3:20-21).

*"Generosity expresses the simple wish that others should have what they need to make them happy. Generosity is, so to speak, the focal point of God's moral perfection; it is the quality which determines how all God's other excellences are to be displayed."*⁴

⁴ *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, p. 146-147.



(3) The Power of God (Omnipotent)

Personally knowing the mighty God makes a difference (1 Chr 29:11)

Did you ever feel powerless? Join the club! We were never meant to be able to solve all our problems. As God's children, it is wonderful to know He is all-powerful but also that He cares for us. As we rely on His strength, He helps us so that His power is further manifested through our impossible circumstances!

• Human Power

- How is human strength gauged?
- Our strength is limited to our changing physical strength.
- Our strength is often limited to our physical presence.
- Man's power can be seen in the way his words influence others.
- Influenced by 'markers' in the world (words on a web page); how much one contributed or in other ways helped others.
- Wealth and influence are limited. "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth. 18 But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day' (De 8:17-18).

Summary: Humans are very weak when we look at the size of the universe. We can create bombs but then others who have more strength or wisdom steal the bombs and use them against us, frustrating our very will and threatening our existence. "Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God" (Ps 62:11).

"To think of creature and Creator as alike in essential being is to rob God of most of His attributes and reduce Him to the status of a creature. It is, for instance, to rob Him of His infinitude: there cannot be two unlimited substances in the universe. It is to take away His sovereignty; There cannot be two absolutely free beings in the universe, for sooner or later two completely free wills must collide" (Tozer, p. 12).

1) God's Amazing Power

The Lord who possesses all power can never be thwarted or threatened. He often is pleased to use all sorts of seemingly weak means to display His power, allowing all of us to see how the least of His power is greater than man's strength.

- God's creative power empowers His authority over His creation. "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You" (Neh 9:6).
- God's power is glorious! "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Th 1:9). What does it mean the lost will not experience God's power?
- God's power enables Him to do all His will. "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all" (1 Chron 29:11). God's power is linked to His sovereignty!
- God's extreme power is linked to His glory! "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Rev 4:11).
- His power is seen in the tedious control of earthly affairs including the temperature, disasters, and history itself.
- God's power works hand-in-hand with His faithfulness. Compare the adjectives describing God below:
 - "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness, Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You, Which has come upon us, our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers and on all Your people, From the days of the kings of Assyria to this day" (Nehemiah 9:32).
 - God is to be praised because of His power! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev 5:12). "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Rev 7:12).

Summary: "Because the ...weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 1:25).

2) God's Power at Work in His People

- God's power is constantly being exerted but not always responded to. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20).
- God's power strengthens believers for His work in them. "Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously" (Col 1:11).
- God's power works through His people. "He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor 12:9).
- Power is released for us to see and be amazed! "Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, To see Thy power and Thy glory" (Ps 63:2). "Behold, God is exalted in His power; Who is a teacher like Him?" (Job 36:22)
- Our prayer goal is the desire to be filled with His strength: "To be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:16b-17).
- Understanding God's power does not solve all the theological queries. If God is all powerful, then why...?
 - "And when Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses" (Ex 14:31).
 - If He can give me sandals that never wear out, then why do I still have to go to the shoe store?
"And Thou didst give Thy good Spirit to instruct them, Thy manna Thou didst not withhold from their mouth, And Thou didst give them water for their thirst. 21 "Indeed, forty years Thou didst provide for them in the wilderness and they were not in want; Their clothes did not wear out, nor did their feet swell. 22 "Thou didst also give them kingdoms and peoples, And Thou didst allot them to them as a boundary. And they took possession of the land of Sihon the king of Heshbon, And the land of Og the king of Bashan" (Neh 9:20-22).

Summary

- God's power has no limits or controls except that His holy will and purpose determine. How amazing that God directs His power to work in and through our lives to complete His glorious purposes!
- Every believer is able to do all that God desires, nothing holding back our potential to grow in Christ.
- A mature Christian knows that God does not always immediately do what we want and allows us to journey through difficult places at times, feeling the heat of the enemy's threat. This is because God is carefully working behind the scenes to show His mighty power. The famous songs in Exodus 4 and 5 would not have been sung and danced if the Israelites were a good contest for the mighty Egyptian army in the world. They were weak and looked foolish for turning against the bank of the Red sea allowing no escape. The Christian, then, is not insistent that God must immediately answer prayer as he wants but knows God will provide strength to timely display His glory. "And the LORD said to Gideon, 'The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me''" (Jud 7:2).

Study questions

- What Bible verse helps you capture the immensity of God's power the most? Why?
- List at least 3 ways God's power is so much greater than man's power?
- Is it wrong for God to use His power to control affairs on the earth?
- What does it mean that God's power works within His people? How does it practically work out?

*"The word 'majesty', when applied to God, is always a declaration of His greatness and an invitation to worship."*⁵

⁵ *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, p. 73.



(4) The Holiness of God

Grasping God's untouchable way (Ps 68:17)

Did you ever stare into the bright sun? We just can't do that nor can we fully grasp God's holiness. God is light while we, being tarnished with impurities, can't easily approach Him unless we carefully follow His terrific plan to bridge this gap.

1) God's Holiness

- God's holiness is that remarkable, other worldly, brilliant display of God's unsullied person and purpose, not in the least dulled by any hint of inferiority, self-seeking display or pretense. "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness" (Ps 68:17).
- God's transcendence should not be interpreted to mean that God's holiness or other attributes are limited to the distant sky or invisible world, leaving us saddled on the dark world. Remarkably, Jesus came to this world to pronounce God's saving involvement on earth, and yet being without sin. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).

2) Holiness Defines God

- "Holy" means set apart, distinguished and therefore sacred, hallowed, and dedicated. The word is used 581 times in the Bible, giving us a clear clue that God's holiness is the central problem to sinful man.
- "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Positively, holiness defines all that is pure and sacred; negatively, holiness by nature counters all that is dark and evil.
- Although the word "holy" is not used in Genesis (except sanctified Gen 2:3), God's holiness was clearly visible in judgment in every scene where the disobedience of man or angel appears. God's holiness immediately thrusts a great barrier between His holiness and sinful man, whether it be in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), the exile of Cain (Gen 4:16), the great flood (Gen 6:7) or the division of men (Gen 11:7-8). God's holiness assures sinful man that if he approaches God, then he will be judged.
- The topic of covenant is introduced in Exodus and onward through the Pentateuch and scriptures ('holy covenant' Dan 11:28,30; Lu 1:72).
- Everything associated with God is holy:
 - Holy ground (Ex 3:5)
 - A holy assemble (Ex 12:16)
 - A holy nation (Ex 19:6)
 - And so forth: Holy men (Ex 22:31); Holy place (26:34); Holy garments (28:2); Holy gifts (28:38); Holy anointing oil (30:31)
 - "Holy, holy, holy" (Is 6:3) brings our attention to God's thrice holiness but Rev 4:8 declares the eternal state of His holiness, "and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD".

Summary: The old covenant hid man's sin from God who dwelt in the tent above the cherubim. "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (De 7:6). The new covenant through Jesus, however, brought God's holy person right in their midst, making them a "holy nation" at a whole different level. "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

3) Practical Implications of God's Holiness

- It is impossible for flaws to tatter God's holy name or character, nor can He overlook sin in any person's life.
- God made man holy in His image and so open fellowship was natural, good, and desirable—in both directions. "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'" (Gen 1:26). The whole concept of mankind improving himself through the ages, whether accidentally or purposely, is simply ridiculous proven by the selfishness of people in every daily paper.
- God devised the Gospel not to make man a bit better, as then he could still not fellowship with God, but completely holy through Jesus Christ's death on the cross where God's wrath was fully poured out on His Son, thus enabling man to be pardoned. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Ro 5:9). Being saved means reconciled to God as man had originally been made.

- Toleration of sin in our lives is an admission of a flawed understanding of God (1 Cor 5:7). The phrase, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God” (Jud 13:22) makes full sense because of man’s sinfulness and God’s holiness.
- Judgment and wrath flows from God’s holiness, and it is this perfect demand for holiness that makes man’s sinfulness so horrible and worthy of judgment. “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (Rev 20:11-12).
- When nurturing Christians, individually or in a church, we must understand God’s demand for holiness (1 Cor 10:21-22). “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (1 Cor 11:30).
- The greater the revelation of God, of His grace and holiness, the higher the expectation of holiness. We saw Ananias & Sapphira dedicating large sums to the church and yet the Holy Spirit judged them with death because they said they donated all but held back some. “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3).
- The Spirit of God is known as the “Holy Spirit” (92 times in Bible) as it manifests God’s holy person and purpose. God’s dwelling and change of His people come from His Holy Spirit living in them making them a holy temple of God.

Summary

God’s holiness makes His majesty glorious, but not willing to merely display His holiness to those who lost it, having been made in His image, through Christ’s death created the gospel by which man might cleanse themselves from all their sin and come fully in God’s presence and even be seated on the right hand of Christ (Eph 2:6).

Conclusion: Personal Steps to Know God

- People were made with the natural desire to know and serve God so that awareness of their deficiency (i.e. guilt) is always lurking deep inside.
- The Gospel, devised and sacrificially made through Jesus, serves as the bridge to come before our holy God.
- Since God sent His Son to die for us and reconcile us to Him, we can fully trust His method to forgive and sanctify us to come before Him, our holy God.
- We are accepted as God’s holy ones (saints) not because of religious acts, attempts to improve our morality, but because we are covered in Christ’s righteousness (i.e. justification by faith). “Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 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” (Rom 3:20-25).
- Only through the gospel can God’s people be sanctified (literally mean to be holy). “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

• Study questions

- Share one glimpse that personally enabled you to better understand God’s holiness.
- Why is judgment of sinners so necessary?
- Why are religions so inept at helping reform or save mankind?
- How does God resolve the problem of our sins through the Gospel?
- What sin do you tend to hide in your lives, thinking it does not matter that much? Does it?

“He only is independently, infinitely, and immutably holy. In Scripture He is frequently styled ‘The Holy One’: He is so because the sum of all moral excellency is found in Him. He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin.”⁶

⁶ The Attributes of God by A.W. Pink.

KNOWING GOD

Experience and Love Him

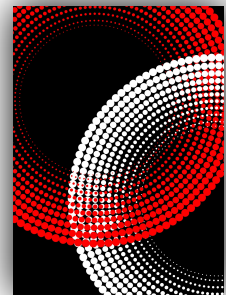
(5) The Wisdom of God

Willing to comply to His plans because they are best (Psalm 104:24)

Making the best decisions can only come from knowing and understanding Him who perfectly designed things! As we get to know the Lord, we begin to gain His wisdom. Because of this, we need to perfect our hearing from God to successfully live out our lives and ministries.

1) Definition of Wisdom

- Wisdom is the ability to grasp all relevant factors to make the best decisions. God's wisdom forever has grasped all knowable factors, even those spread throughout eternity, thus making God All-wise.
- Many people, religions, and philosophies boast of their wisdom, but once they deny God and His wisdom, they become but fools. "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps 14:1). Humanism is perhaps the greatest sinful movement because it sees itself as the source for supreme wisdom.
- Man's understanding and wisdom is not the place to start understanding God and wisdom, but it remains the only place for us to begin! Our poor dwarfed wisdom, merely a slight shadow of God's wisdom, should not rightly be considered wisdom at all. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God" (1 Co 3:19). Jesus has at least been to heaven ([John 3:12-13](#)).
- The wisdom of God begs conformity for it reveals the best perspective for any decisions. Counter advice will always prove to be utter failure because the opposite of wisdom is foolishness, countering God and His will.



2) God's Wisdom

Let's look at several aspects of God's wisdom.

- "To the only wise God" (Rom 16:27) cleverly describes the extent of God's wisdom. There were many gods paraded in the streets and altars across Rome, but God was **only** wise. God, unlike idols, was not shaped by man's hands or minds, but always possessed His perfect astuteness. In order to drop all sense of comparison with other gods or minds, Paul rightly added the descriptive word "only." He was (and is) the only wise God, indicating that there are no other gods considered wise. And if there are no other gods that are considered wise, then certainly there are no creatures or beings of any kind that can be considered wise. Man's greatest apex of learning occurs when he discovers the source of all wisdom (and morals) derive from the "only wise God".
- "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom 11:33) The wisdom of God is beyond man's ability to grasp. We strive to improve our knowledge and refining of our perspectives, but God's wisdom is fully mature, allowing for no improvement or missing of one mere calculation.
- "O LORD, how many are Thy works! In wisdom Thou hast made them all" (Psalm 104:24). God's works come from His words which like fireworks display God's wisdom. "Many" is the best way to describe the incomparable nature of His wisdom. This is why the DNA is worth studying for decades by our best scientists trying to crack its perfect code. "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens" (Pr 3:19).
- The purpose of displaying God's wisdom is to bring Him praise. "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Rev 7:12). Other than the fact that God delights in His wisdom, He shares His glory through His works, Words, and redemption plan so that His perfect wisdom is made further manifest in our minds and lives. Foolish decisions, always made apart from Him, bring praise to God as they eventually show their utter nonsense, while those who lean upon God increase in knowledge and wisdom and so all bring further demonstration of God's wisdom, whether rejected and spurned or loved and enjoyed. Each brings a greater display of God's glorious person.
- Jesus is Wisdom. "But to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Co 1:24). "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who **became to us wisdom from God**, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Co 1:30; also Pro 8:22-32).

Summary

God is only wise and His wisdom is beyond our comprehension, but for that reason, it is totally reliable, enabling the foolish man to become wise. Fortunately, God patiently distributes His wisdom to those who respect Him.

3) God's Wisdom in Us

A key changing point of growth in my life occurred when I heard a preacher explain how God's wisdom was revealed in His Word. All of a sudden, I understood that God's truth always reflects what is best and wonderful. The truth of God's Word leads us to His wisdom! God's truth wonderfully leads us to the best life possible. All worldly thoughts try to look wise and attractive but are not because they counter God's wisdom.

"For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity" (Pro 2:6-7).

- God's works manifest His glory, such as in animals (Job 39:19-25) or the solar systems (Job 38:31-35), but we cannot even begin comprehending their greatness. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding" (Pro 38:4).
- Humans delight in their capabilities, insights, success, feats of the body and through them give praise to God's works in His design of humans. "There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Four which I do not understand: 19 The way of an eagle in the sky, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the middle of the sea, And the way of a man with a maid" (Pro 30:18-19).
- God at times passes some measure of understanding and wisdom onto people. The distributed wisdom is always considered an essential part to the completion of God's sovereign plan.
 - "So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are'" (Ge 41:39).
 - "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship" (Ex 31:3).
 - "Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore" (1Ki 4:29).
 - "For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind" (Ec 2:26).
- The Gospel, in essence, is wisdom to know God. The problem of redeeming man became so impossible that it took the wisdom of God in Christ here on earth to solve it. "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:12). "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:3-4).
- The church is God's display case. "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10).
- The church becomes a key voice broadcasting God's wisdom. "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:6-8).
- Gaining wisdom is directly related to knowing and experience God. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Pr 9:10). The fear of the Lord is a healthy apprehension of God's presence and His expectations which help us guard our activities.
- "For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit" (1 Cor 12:8). "Word of wisdom"(8) is, as in the Old Testament, the way the Spirit of God passes special insight and wisdom to certain believers so that they personally can make and communicate wise decisions and their importance.

Summary

We were made in God's image and were able to tap into God's wisdom. The Lord in His wisdom carefully uncovered His scheme to overcome the devil (Mark 3:24-27) and won back His elect through Christ, once again enabling us through the Holy Spirit to commune with Him to know and do His will. This is the difficult work done behind the scenes that we might gain the wisdom of God and live uprightly in cooperation with His will. This is why worldliness is so heinous. After His proof of love and enabling us to commune with Him, we still awkwardly ignore Him and doubt the goodness of His will, thinking He is keeping something from us. For us to know God is to experience His wisdom for daily life and ministry so that we constantly see His awesome input into our lives.

Study Questions

- Why do people think they are so wise? Are they really? How do we know?
- Can any activity without the wisdom of God be wise? Explain.
- Do you have the fear of God? How do you know?

*"The effect of His gift of wisdom is to make us more humble, more joyful, more godly, more quick-sighted as to His will, more resolute in the doing of it and less troubled."*⁷

⁷ *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer, p. 97.



(6) The Faithfulness of God

Confident He will help me where and when I need it (Lam 3:22-23)

Our problems with consistency largely lie in our inability to control life's details, but a larger part is due to our plaguing uncertainty, ignorance, and wavering on personal issues. It is a good thing God is not like that less we would perish due to an inconsistency in the way He carries out His covenant. What the Lord says, He does. God is faithful! Always.

⇒ Individual assignment: List the promises you can find in Psalm 37:1-7.

• Our Relationship with God

- Understanding God's attributes are crucial to possessing a strong Christian life. God's faithfulness helps us maintain a growing trust in God. If we believe God is faithful, then we will trust Him. Growth occurs even when problems occur.

1) Understanding God's Faithfulness

• God claims to be 'fully' faithful

- "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice..." (Deut 32:4).
- "And My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, and in My name his horn will be exalted" (Ps 89:24).

• Biblical analysis

- The Hebrew word for 'faithfulness' is 'Amen', depicting certainty, also meaning truth. Its root verb means to confirm, support or uphold (TWOT#116). This support can refer to the steady hands of a parent who carries his child.
- As a God of revelation, we are totally dependent on the words and pictures that He reveals to us. They are totally reliable and therefore depict truth. Other words for faithful are truth, firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, and steadiness.

• Description of God's faithfulness

God's faithfulness depends on both His power and goodness. God's faithfulness is that effectual control over all things to ensure what He says and plans comes true. Prophecies and promises both depend on God's faithfulness.

- His faithfulness depends on God's ultimate control of things to make sure nothing invalidates His Word. "For the word of the LORD is upright; And all His work is done in faithfulness" (Ps 33:4).
- His faithfulness depends on God's goodness God is good and trust in His plan is not only right but meaningful, helpful and fulfilling. "And My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, And in My name his horn will be exalted." (Ps 89:24).
- God's faithfulness is dependent on His unchanging person and plans (immutability) (1Sam 15:29; Psalm 90:2). "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num 23:19). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Since God is all-powerful to carry out His good and beneficent plans toward us, shall we not trust everything He has said in each area of our lives?
- God is faithful in judgment. "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor" (Hab 1:13). He cannot overlook evil, even the 'smallest evil' as we can.

2) God's Faithful Ways

- God's plans are wrapped up in His tremendous merciful redemptive plan. "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).
- God's comprehensive redemptive plan (Ephesians 3:7-11) is accentuated by God's promises and thus enfolds the many variables of life. It is the untouchable plan. God, however, is not faithful in just one area but in all areas of our lives.
- It is a good thing God does not reflect our inconsistencies less we would perish due to an inconsistency in the way He carries out His covenant. We need a perpetual High Priest faithfully interceding for us. "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25).

Psalm 37:1-7	List the Promises
37:1 (A Psalm of David.) Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers.	
2 For they will wither quickly like the grass, And fade like the green herb.	
3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.	
4 Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.	
5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.	
6 And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your judgment as the noonday.	

• God's faithfulness is great and is exhibited in all His actions and ways.

- Faithful to carry out His plan in our lives (Phil 1:6,12-14).
- Faithful as a father to His children. "Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children" (1 Thess 2:11).
- Faithful to discipline as needed. "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness" (Heb 12:9-10).
- Faithful to help as needed. "He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark" (Ps 91:4).
- Faithful to enable us to withstand temptation. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor 10:13).



God's faithfulness assures us that what He says will come about. Comfort can be found in God's saving promises as well as His coming judgment.

3) Developing a Discerning Mind Regarding God's Faithfulness

The evil one does all He can to thwart our trust in the certainty of God's faithfulness to His Word. If he tinkered with Adam and Eve, surely he will attempt to destroy our trust in God too. If we compromise, we will think God is like us, changeable or subject to outside forces bending His will. If we stand firm in our trust, we will see God's faithfulness in its glory and join the Psalmist in praising God. "For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations" (Ps 100:5). Here are some events that make us question God's faithfulness.

- What about Israel, God's chosen, being taken captive to foreign nations?
- What about David's anointing and such delay?
- What about God's blessing upon the righteous such as Jesus and yet He suffered?

• Our Expected Response

- We are expected to respond to His faithfulness. Because He has revealed Himself, then we ought to trust Him and respond to what He has revealed as trustworthy. Conformity to His Word is called obedience. Though the world's picture of the world is distorted, we can live by our trust in what He has said in His Word.
- Our lives are to be shaped by this trust in Him. "Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness" (Ps 37:3). Our lives increasingly display faithfulness because we are shaped by what is true and real. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Gal 5:22).

• My testimony

God has faithfully watched over BFF's mission training trips to Africa and Asia. They are always fully supported, but not like you would think or I would want! The adjacent chart depicts how little money we have in the few weeks prior before we go. We, with those I work overseas, must trust Him. Notice that most of the funds for this trip came in the last week. Otherwise, I would not be able to go. God provides just enough to do what I need to do. How do I encourage my faith? I remember what He has done in the past.

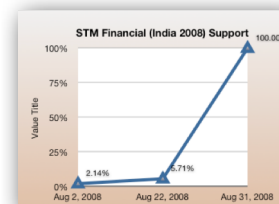
• God's Reminders to His Faithfulness

Trust and faith in God's faithfulness is so important that God provides many reminders to boost up our confidence in His faithfulness.

- **Crossing the Jordan:** The crossing of the Jordan River was nothing compared to the Red Sea, but it affirmed Joshua's authority and reminded that new generation that God's presence was equally with them to conquer the Promised Land.
- **Setting up memorial stones:** The water only stopped after the priests feet entered the water. Trust often requires us to show our earnestness by taking the first step according to His guidance (John 6:30-44). The monument reminded them not to forget!

• Study Questions

- What area of your life do you have most difficulty trusting to Him? Why?
- Can you peacefully sleep at night trusting your Father in heaven to care for you (Mat 6:33-34)?
- Are you consistent, that is, does your words and confession match your behavior?
 - ➔ List a story, from Bible or otherwise, that God uses to help us trust in His Word. Be sure to identify what it is that encourages your faith. (If not, read the Bible and Christian bibliographies more!)



*"Everything about God is great, vast and incomparable.
He never forgets, never fails, never falters never forfeits His Word."*⁸

⁸ *The Attributes of God* by A.W. Pink, p.59.



(7) The Mercy and Grace of God

God tenderly and effectively cares for us (Hab 3:2)

Why is it so hard to forgive others? Our unforgiving spirits seem to indicate that we have never made a mistake! But God is perfect. Why, then, is He so kind and forgiving? We are missing something big here.

1) The Need for God's Mercy

- Mercy does not come at the expense of justice or righteousness. "O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy" (Hab 3:2). God's mercy never overlooks sin but through the cross satisfies His wrath.
- God's compassion is seen in His magnanimous treatment of us by withholding the judgment that we deserve. "Nevertheless, in Thy great compassion Thou didst not make an end of them or forsake them, For Thou art a gracious and compassionate God" (Neh 9:31).
- God's mercy seat. The Old Testament ark of covenant demonstrated God's extreme patience. In the ark were the two tablets, the Ten Commandments, which revealed God's standards and our sins. God dwelled above that ark and though seeing the Israelites with their shortcomings, used the sprinkled blood on the ark to hide their sins with the blood of animals (Heb 10:4) until His Son's blood was shed on the cross (1 Pet 1:2). When we see God's extreme mercy, we ask, "Why?" and come up with the answer that God has a greater purpose to reconcile mankind back with Him, establishing fellowship and co-working with them.
- Praise due to His mercy. "To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, 8 which He lavished upon us" (Eph 1:6-8).

Summary: From the Garden when man sinned, the need for mercy began. God's wrath, seeking justice from His righteous throne, started oppressing everyone. Death, the curse of life, entered the scene and remains with us to this day. God's wrath, like a falling roof above our heads, constantly threatens to come down upon us. The walls to hold back His wrath are His mercy. So although death threatens, God's mercy extends life so that He can in history come to earth and die for us, providing redemption, and then proclaim this message about Christ to the world.

2) The Difference Between Mercy and Grace

Much confusion arises due to these two words of mercy and grace largely because they both display God's rich goodness expressed to His people not deserving it. They do have different meanings which highlight the special aspects of God's goodness.

- The commonality of mercy and grace: The two words overlap at times, but they both emphasize God's general goodness and man's undeserving nature. The words, mercy and grace, are often used adjacent to each other.
 - "And he prayed to the LORD and said, 'Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that **Thou art a gracious and compassionate God**, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity'" (Jonah 4:2).
 - Mercy and grace are used together in the New Testament too. "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).
 - The combination mercy, grace, and peace is used three times as an opening salutation (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 John 3).
- The distinctive characteristics of mercy and grace:
 - Mercy** is God's extraordinary kindness that withholds His judgment upon man for his wrong.
 - Grace** is God's bestowal of favor even though man does not deserve it.
 - In the above situation with Jonah, the Lord holds off judgment upon a nation by exercising mercy and sending the prophet a second time to speak God's Word so that the Ninevites might hear and repent.
- **Lovingkindness** (*hesed*): This powerful word combines both God's patience (i.e. mercy), God's wisdom (i.e. saving plan by which He could exercise mercy), and His willingness to work with inferior and sinful and rebellious creatures (grace).
 - "But Thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in **lovingkindness** and truth" (Ps 86:15). (*hesed*: lovingkindness (NASB); mercy (KJV); steadfast love (ESV); love (NIV)).
 - "The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in **lovingkindness**" (Ps 145:8).

Summary

These two words further display God's interest in helping His people to contemplate the depths of God's love.

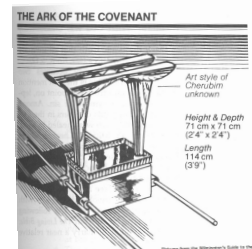
- For Him to forgive us, He had to come up with a plan. He couldn't just overlook our sins.

- He had His only Son Jesus Christ die for our sins.
- We are humbled at such a great scene of compassion and commitment to us.
- And so, our salvation is birthed in love. We are as a little baby without knowing what is going on.
- That love, birthed into us, becomes our DNA and affects our own actions and treatment of others.

3) God's Mercy and His People

There are many exhortations and illustrations portraying the important part of forgiveness in God's kingdom. We are saved by His mercy and—so to speak—swim in it our whole lives. We are “in Christ” and therefore bound to Him. This should greatly affect our own lives. There is not much to boast about if God forgives us but we do not forgive our brother.

- The Lord's Prayer (Mat 6) three times mentions the need.
 - “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12).
 - “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Mt 6:14).
 - “But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Mt 6:15).
- Revenge is the Lord's duty, not our own
 - “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). We can trust the Lord for proper vengeance. This is the day to cry for mercy and salvation (John 3:17).
- Bitterness one's heart of revenge and means that if we had power, we would take revenge.
 - “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph 4:31).
 - “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Heb 12:15).
- Complete forgiveness is necessary for good relationship with our Heavenly Father and effective ministry.
 - “Peter...said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ... ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. ...You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (Mat 18:21-35).
- Jude's heart:
 - “May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you” (Jude 2).
 - “Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life” (Jude 21).
 - “And have mercy on some, who are doubting” (Jude 22).
 - “Save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh” (Jude 23).



Study Questions

- How do you summarize the similarities between mercy and grace? How are they different?
- Describe the mercy seat? Why is it called such and what does it demonstrate?
- Why is it so important that we forgive one another?
- Are you upset with anyone right now? Why is it completely unreasonable for any Christian to be bitter?

“A deep consideration of the holiness of God cannot but be followed with a deep consideration of our impure and miserable condition by reason of sin: we cannot glance upon it without reflections upon our own vileness.”⁹

⁹ *The Existence and Attributes of God*, Vol 2 by Stephen Charnock, p.191.



(8) The Sovereignty of God

Trusting God's will to be supremely completed (1 Tim 6:15-16)

Is it so bad that God is in control? People, including many believers, have such a hard time accepting God's sovereign control. Perhaps, we like to think our choices and decisions are better. We must learn from Jesus How He mastered the challenges before Him by relying on and even delighting in the Father's sovereign will.

1) The Sovereignty of God

- Insists that God's purpose and will is perfectly and completely accomplished in time and eternity and that no power or other being can thwart His purposes.
 - As we develop our trust in God's overall control of our life affairs, these truths associated with God's sovereignty buttress our hope, strength, endurance, and motivation to faithfully carry out our small part of His will to please Him (Eph 2:10).
- ➔ What aspects of God's sovereignty do we find in the account where Elisha prophesied abundant food the next day despite the severe famine that they faced during the siege (2 Kings 7:12, -3-5, 18-20)?

2) The Biblical Teaching of Sovereignty

"Which **He** will bring about at the proper time-**He** who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen" (1 Tim 6:15-16).

- **He** probably refers to God the Father.
- Only Sovereign (root: dynamos) emphasizes His complete power.
- King of kings describes God's authoritative position –Root: to act as king, to reign (Greek and Hebrew).
- Lord of lords (Greek: *kurios*) emphasizes the duty of full obedience.
- Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light declares His power and holiness beyond time into eternity.
- Be honor and eternal dominion demands the respect God deserves as the supreme controller over His kingdom.

3) Mankind's Two Problems with God's Sovereignty

• Problem #1 Man innately hates the Sovereignty of God

Man deeply resists God's sovereignty and prefers his love affair with his own choices and lusts.

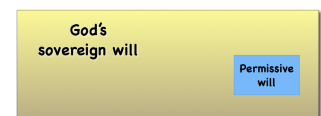
• Problem #2 Man can't comprehend the Sovereignty of God

God's glorious and comprehensive rule remains so far beyond our puny minds that we cannot easily grasp it, resulting in gross misrepresentations of Him, only further distancing the truth from our hearts and minds.

• God's Sovereign & Permissive Will

A common explanation attempting to answer many theological questions.

- God accomplishes all His sovereign (decretive) will (Jud 9:23).
- He allows some things for a time to function in a less than ideal way (permissive will) (Ac 2:23).
- In the end, all that happens is used to fully carry out God's purposes.



• Prophecy & Sovereignty of God

- God at times reveals ahead of time what will happen.
- God therefore knows what will happen.
- God in fact controls what will happen.

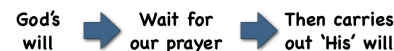


"Thus says the LORD, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria... It happened just as the man of God had said'" (2 Kings 7:1,18-20).

- Power over wills and affection. "The LORD said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go'" (Ex 4:21).

• Prayer & the Sovereignty of God

- God controls all things: “Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’” (Isa 46:10).
- God wants us to pray: “..You have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full” (John 16:24).
- He waits for us to pray for His will then He will act. “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2).

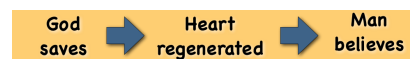


• Evil & Sovereignty of God

- God is light. “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5)
- God is all powerful, “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all” (Ps 103:19).
- He allows evil to exist under His rule, “Kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet 3:7).
- God temporarily allows evil to exist to display His grace and love. “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate my power in you, and that My Name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth” (Rom 9:17).

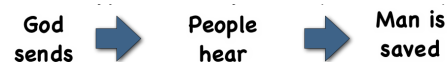
• Salvation & the Sovereignty of God

- God saves sinners who care not for God and righteousness: “None seeks for God” (Rom 3:11).
- God chooses those to be saved: “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4)
- Man is spiritually dead: “mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God” (Rom 8:7).
- God regenerates or causes a new life: “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8)
- Man is called to repent: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 4:17).
- Man can actively place his faith in Christ: “many more believed because of His word” (John 4:41).



• Missions & the Sovereignty of God

- God wants the gospel preached to all, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mat 28:19).
- God predestines those to be saved, “Having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph 1:11).
- Man is called to repent and believe, “Whoever will call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13).
- God’s people are to actively promote His saving Word, “How then will they call...? How will they believe? How will they hear...? How will they preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:14-15)



• God’s Rule through His People

- “Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One” (Daniel 7:27).
- “To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).
- “And raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6-7).

4) The Holes of Life – Experience the power of the sovereignty of God in your lives!

- “Thus says the LORD, ‘Make this valley full of trenches. For thus says the LORD, ‘You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts’” (2 Kings 3:16-17).
- “Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds’ feet, And makes me walk on my high places” (Hab 3:17-19).

• An Assignment

- Read the Psalms and Proverbs and note what is said about the sovereignty of God.
- Discuss one temporary or long term unchangeable issue that you struggle with. Can you accept God’s hand in it? Why is it so difficult? Seek Him until you can praise Him for it like Habakkuk.

“To fancy an infinite power without a supreme dominion, is to fancy a mighty senseless statue, fit to be beheld, but not fit to be obeyed; as not being able or having no right to give out orders, or not caring for the exercise of it.... And if we suppose him with a perfection of justice and righteousness...we must suppose him to have an entire dominion, without which he could never be able to manifest his justice.”¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Existence and Attributes of God*, Vol 2 by Stephen Charnock, p. 366.

KNOWING GOD

Experience and Love Him

(9) The Healing God

Discover Him and Find His Healing Touch (Ex 15:26)

Although today's world regularly spites God's mercy, His Healing name, Jehovah Rophe, is beautiful, bringing hope to strengthen believers to see how powerful God's love is and that in no situation—even in great sickness and pain—do we ever need to be apologetic for God's actions, but satisfied and delighted. Times of sickness are opportune times to more deeply draw near to God to know Him more deeply as your Healer.

The names of God differ from the attributes of God for each as each name emphasizes a group of His attributes. In God's name the "Healer", for example, we discover many wonderful aspects of His person, making this description true of Him. Each name of God provides a glorious picture of His Person and ways.

Jehovah Rophe, I am the Lord Your Healer (Ex 15:26)

And He said, 'If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.' (Exodus 15:26)



1) The Path To Healing (Ex 15:26a)

The context

- The Praising (15:21)
- The Complaining (15:22-25)
- The Promising (15:26)

“And He said, ‘If you will...”

- “Give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and”
- “Do what is right in His sight, and”
- “Give ear to His commandments, and”
- “Keep all His statutes”
- “...put none of the diseases on you”
Curiously, would you do these things if you knew you would keep from cancer, heart disease, etc.?



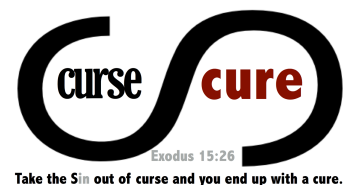
Observations

- “If you”: God desires to have us live healthy lives (i.e., Moses, Joshua).
- “I will put”: The Lord oversees disease through curse and cure—God is Judge and yet merciful.
- Conditional: Healing is related to our relationship to His truth (obedience).
- Connection: Health is less important than our relationship with Him (respect and relationship).

The world says its way is good, but the Lord knows better.

➔ **anger and unforgiving** - heart disease, broken relationships, pride

“Men who rate themselves as generally angry on questionnaires given early in life are, by the age of 55, three times more likely to have heart disease and six times more likely to have a heart attack (myocardial infarction), compared to other men.” The Johns Hopkins University study appears in today's (2002) Archives of Internal Medicine.



➔ **worry and anxiety** - multitude of emotional and health problems

Harvard Medical School, "Anxiety has now been implicated in several chronic physical illnesses, including heart disease, chronic respiratory disorders, and gastrointestinal conditions."



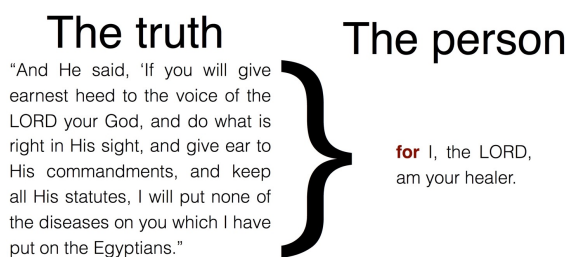
➔ **sexual immorality leads to diseases (STD) and brokenness**

2) The Person Offering Healing (Ex 15:26b)

Jehovah Rophe **אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֶךָ**

- Healer: to mend (by stitching); repair; figuratively to cure, heal
- Emphasis on the "I" – The Lord's Privilege
- Think of Jesus' "I am" statements.

"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10).



- Where does the healing come from? From obedience or from the Healer?
- The commandments lead to God. We are not to be entrapped by commandments or tradition, but find their end goal in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

The World's Lies	The Lord's Truths
Divorces morals from healing	Links morals with healing
Depends upon drugs to keep some health	Looks to Healer for healing
Thinks the best life is health and pleasure	Abundant life is found in Christ (Jn 10:10)
Deludes itself by thinking it can escape the curse	Peace (true healing) comes through faith in Christ

"I, the LORD, am your Healer." (15:26)

- Healing has advanced greatly since the old practices mixed with witchcraft and superstitious methodologies (e.g. Pergamum).
- Beyond all the great hospitals and doctors stands Jehovah Rophe, the Lord your Healer.
- Without God's design and life, there would not be any healing.
- The further from God's truth we wander, the more harm that comes to our bodies.



The Lord Your Healer

3) Questions on the Lord the Healer

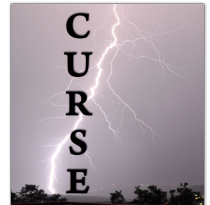


Many of the unanswered questions regarding healing exacerbate the doubt that the secularists have regarding God's love and mercy. This study on Exodus 15:26 boldly reveals and explains God's statement, "I Myself am Your Healer," which is important when we consider the rise in disease around us. "Why does He allow His children to suffer?" is just one question that we pose. By studying each question and answer, you will gain a thorough biblical perspective on healing, and more importantly, you will find yourself drawn nearer the Healer.

1. How can you be so sure that God is concerned about our lives if He allows so many health problems?
2. Why doesn't God just heal everybody, or at least all the Christians?
3. Why does it appear that God is the one who brings diseases upon the people?
4. What cure does God give that will keep us from diseases (Ex 15:26)?
5. What does the truth of God's Word have to do with finding healing?
6. What does it mean that there's a larger purpose for healing than just the healing?
7. How are hospitals and physicians dependent on God's healing power?
8. Why do health plans bring more harm than good to people?
9. Is all sickness related to my personal sin?
10. How can health become a block to a person knowing and discovering God?
11. How is healing an illustration of the Gospel?
12. So how should I treat the pain, diseases, and broken relationships that I face?
13. How should I or others face the possibility of death through sickness?

Summary and application: Meeting the Healer

- We might be reluctant to meet Him (I'm healthy, young, but...)
- Healing goes deeper than physical health, penetrating our relationships, inner peace, environment, etc. (World: yoga, drugs, organic)
- Is the Lord calling you to meet Him as the Lord your Healer?
- Linda's example (CHF)
- So what if each time we see weakness, sickness in our lives, brokenness in relationships, that we seek the Healer and not simply healing. When better, we express our gratefulness rather than just forget.





(10) The Wrath of God

God's wrath assures us of His thorough justice (2 Chronicles 34:21)

Christians vary widely on their views of God's anger, even with some insisting God's wrath is, or should be, nonexistent, while others wonder why God hasn't done more regarding injustice. This study on God's wrath gives us a clearer picture as to how God works in our world, churches and lives.

Let's start our inquiry from listing below what we can learn about God from the following verses.

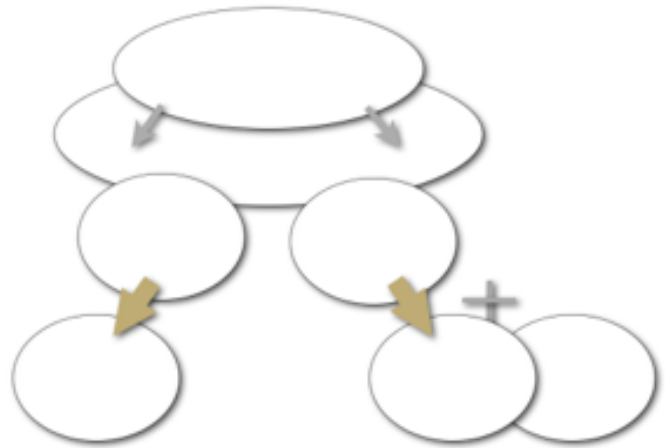
"Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.... They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land" (2 Sam 21:1,14 NASB).

1) Definition and description of wrath

- **Definition:** Wrath is that stored up or released anger against those who dare to defy God's judgments. "So the **anger of the LORD burned** against them..." (Nu 12:9). "The wrath of God is the onslaught of the holy God asserting and establishing His absolute claim to dominion" (TDNT Vol 5, 407).

"All its (Israel's) land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath" (De 29:23). "And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the sons of Ammon" (Judges 10:7).

- **Biblical analysis:** The word 'wrath' is used 184 times while 'anger' is used 266 times (sometimes used of man).
- **Getting the connection:** "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for **great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD**, to do according to all that is written in this book" (2 Chronicles 34:21). Anger arises due to our resistance to carry out God's judgments, whether known through natural revelation or found in His Word.
- The attribute of God's wrath perfectly blends with His other characteristics like mercy. God's wrath starts when His righteousness judgments have been infringed upon. His wrath is that personal drive to pursue all offenders until full vengeance is paid out. God's mercy never discharges God's righteous anger but only diverts it. His wrath must always be satisfied. His wrath, at times, is put off (stored up) for a later and greater unleashing, or it can be otherwise perfectly satisfied through some atonement, but satisfied it must be. Jesus was the full propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2).
- God's wrath is not a characteristic of God as normally thought, but it does indeed describe how He pursues His holy Name. This wrath of His, its intensity, severity, unbiased, just and ongoing nature reveals the righteousness of God, just as His love in its persevering, other-focused nature reveals God's lovingkindness.



2) God's anger against unbelievers

- God's justice makes sure all offenses against God's judgments are fully paid. We all suffer from God's wrath, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Ephesians 2:3).
- God's anger is constantly prompting Him to judge the sinner. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). We might dismiss our sin as being unimportant, trite or even a personal preference, but no matter what we think, God the Maker holds every sinner fully liable for his or her rebellious deeds and thoughts. This is

the reason God's wrath 'abides' on us. It is constant and waiting for the execution time.

- God's greater plan. "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:22, 23).
- Regulation of God's anger. "The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations" (Nu 14:18).
- The Bible is not at all hesitant to speak of God's anger as if it is a defect. It is a necessary part of God to carry out His judgments. Unlike man, God's judgments are always true and deserving. It is for this reason, God says that vengeance is His. We are not to take revenge, in heart or otherwise.
- God's anger arises due to affront to His authority. He expects man to conduct himself in a way that pleases Him.
- God's anger, then, is a special response mechanism that makes sure no injustice or inappropriate conduct gets away. From our perspective, people get away with sin a lot. But it simply is not true. God is carefully exercising His complete plan to fully carry out His justice. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).



3) God's patience

Why does God delay execution of His wrath? Clearly God wants us to seek and discover His mercy. "But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, ... The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (1 Peter 3:7-9).

Three common misunderstandings of God's patience.

- 1) Some believe that God, in His great love, will overlook our sin.
- 2) Others believe that God has a problem executing judgment, perhaps, the Lord is weak, uninvolved or impotent.
- 3) Natural disasters are simple rumblings of 'mother earth.'

"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4).



4) God's anger against believers

- There is a personal anger against those to whom God has revealed Himself. God got angry with Moses due to complaining the lack of good speech (Exodus 4:12-14). God got very angry with the Israelites to the degree that He did not allow them (the fathers) into the Land of Promise (Numbers 32:13). "But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem..." (2 Ch 32:25, 26).
- God does judge God's people – focuses on the present. "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?" (1 Peter 4:17-18).
- God regularly judges His people – we are expected to judge ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:29-32, 5:12, 13).

Summary & Assignment

Summary: Although believers deserve the full brunt of God's wrath upon their lives as unbelievers, Christ died to fully satisfy God's wrath so that we could become the children of God (1 Jn 2:1-2). God can still get angry with us, but like a parent, it's purpose is to improve our character, further display God's glory and so that He can more fully reward us.

- How does hell (***)* fit into this whole scheme of God's anger?
- Group assignment: What are some sins in our lives, churches and society that we need to repent from? Please humble your heart and pray together confessing and seeking God's forgiveness.

*"Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come."*¹¹ – Jonathan Edwards

¹¹ *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer, p.137.



KNOWING GOD

Experience and Love Him

(11) The Exalted God

Humbly living to bring Him glory (Ephesians 2:4-7)

We are not very good at acknowledging God's glory due to overvaluing our own importance. Life's path gets exciting when we finally begin to understand and respond to our Lord's glorious person.

1) The Largely Neglected Truth

Most believers lack living with a good understanding of God's exalted person. This is much like living on crutches.

- Duty to praise and exalt God, "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool..." (Ps 99:5).
- Our life purpose: [Glorify God](#), and to [enjoy him](#) forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism).
- Degenerated worship is common.
- Disobedience displays opposition to God's glory.
- "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). Belief ushers us into God's presence. Unbelief escorts us away.

Breakout: Exploring God's Glory in the Book of Job

Write something discovered about God's glory on the empty block to the right.

"Behold, God is exalted in His power; Who is a teacher like Him?" (Job 36:22).	
"Remember that you should exalt His work, of which men have sung" (Job 36:24).	
"Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; The number of His years is unsearchable" (Job 36:26).	
"The Almighty--we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power; And He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness" (Job 37:23).	

2) The Meaning of Exalt

There are several Biblical Hebrew words meaning to exalt. Daniel 4:37 reflects this, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

King Nebuchadnezzar, after his senses returned to him and he was properly humbled, could rightly acknowledge God's exalted person. He used three similar words to speak of God's glory.

- **Praise** emphasizes laud, that is, words that emphasize one's greatness.
- **Exalt** in the Hebrew has a sense of being lifted up to a high position. Thrones are often lifted up on platforms.
- **Honor** has a sense of adorn and glorify. The Hebrew root word means lift or raise up one's view toward another.

All these meanings overlap and describe God's glorious person with our inferior words. When man or angels see God in His glory, they are found on their knees bowing before Him. Nebuchadnezzar was obviously emphasizing God's glory and so used several words to describe the Lord. God is glorious and demands all peoples, creatures and creation to reflect that glory back to His great and exalted person.

Contrasting holy and exalted

The two words holy and exalted have different meanings and yet retain a similarity.

- Holiness demands a distance from God gained through God's dissimilarity to us. God is holy, that is, He is set apart from us by His person and ways. We do not see that distance in the Garden before man's sin.

- Exalted distinguishes itself from holiness by its height. The Lord is lofty, that is, his position and status are unapproachable. Isaiah's famous vision records this, "In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted,¹² with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1).



While holiness speaks about the needed distance from us due to God's character, His exalted position demands distance due to His honor and prestige. Both words remind us of how unapproachable God is. He is far-off. The exalted One is high and removed from us.

God's masterful plan (Ephesians 2:4-7)

"4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

The full glory of God's awesome plan is seen in Ephesians 2:4-7 where He reveals the measures He has taken through Jesus Christ to share His holiness and glory with His people. God reconciles (unties) us with Him (Ephesians 2:5) and raises us up in Christ (Ephesians 2:6) all because of His rich love toward us (Eph 2:4). Why? Ephesians 2:8 says it is to display His surpassing (think glorious) graciousness. God further exalts Himself by displaying His kindness in our lives.

3) The Ways God is Exalted

God is glorious and demands all peoples, creatures and creation to reflect that glory back to His great and exalted person. All that we have comes from Him but for His ultimate purposes.

- God's exaltation is untouchable. "The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens" (Ps 113:4).
- Hardness of Pharaoh's heart: "Still you (Pharaoh) exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go" (Ex 9:17). God drowns them in the sea. – The Old Egypt died

"Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea" (Ex 15:1).

- We exalt Him by deliberately recognizing and praising His glorious person.
- We exalt Him by how our lives affirm His good ways by choosing to live for them.
- We exalt Him by delighting in His glorious person ("enjoy Him forever").

If your spiritual life is boring...

Living in light of God's glory is never boring or repetitive. The problem is largely due to not being able to sufficiently comprehend God's glory but is compounded by our resistance to living in conformity with His exalted person. We are blinded to it and rather focus on our desires rather than His. If the sun is hidden by the clouds, it is not due to its absence but our blindness. Take an adventure. Begin to get serious about living for God's glory. The cloud's will readily depart as you purpose to focus on His person and pleasure.

An assignment

- Think about how much of your life is centered on bringing God glory. Repent as needed.
- Reflect the ways you have 'seen' or experienced God's exalted person. Write down the details associated with each experience.
- Search your heart to see if you desire to know more of God's glorious person. Reflect on your answer and pray as appropriate.
- List any ways that you steal glory from God to yourself. This happens when we accept or seek the applause of man without giving God His due glory through the way He has enabled us to accomplish what we have done.
- Share one personal 'glimpse' of God's glorious person or ways and one area that holds you back from further exalting Him.

"Now I will arise," says the LORD,
"Now I will be exalted, now I will
be lifted up" (Isa 33:10).



*"Delighting in his glory being known and enjoyed, God delights in himself and makes himself his end."*¹³

¹² Interestingly, both these words are from the same root Hebrew word, rum, but in different verb forms.

¹³ *God's Passion for His Glory*, by John Piper, p.153.

Your Future Journey

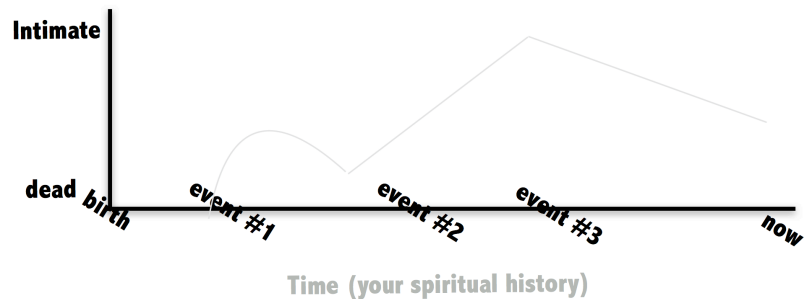
Seeking to develop your relationship with the Almighty God while on earth!

Constantly seek to develop your relationship with God while still on earth! Your growing awareness of who He is and His purposes will lead you into a constantly growing relationship.

- What problems might hold you back from seeking to know the Lord more?

Chart #1: Your past

Show a time/growth chart of when you had your major times of spiritual growth. Add the years to the events.



- What steps can you take to assure persistent growth with so many distractions around you?

Chart #2: Your future

Show a time/growth chart of what you hope your growing relationship will look like. Write in the chart the spiritual disciplines that will help you get there.



A. W. Tozer says that the modern church has lost the sense of the majesty of God.

“The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men. This she has done not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge; and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic. ... A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking.”

“God makes not a creature so powerful as he might, but he delights to make the creature that wait upon him as holy as it can be; beginning it in this world, and ripening it in the other. It is from him we must expect it, and from him that we must beg it, and draw arguments from the holiness of this nature, to move him to work holiness in our spirits; we cannot have a stronger plea.”¹⁴

¹⁴ *The Existence and Attributes of God*, Vol 2 by Stephen Charnock, p. 208.

