

Who is God?

THE QUESTION WE MUST ASK.
THE ANSWER CHANGES EVERYTHING.

Isaac Jorgensen

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Title book: WHO IS GOD?

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Self published

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Cover design and photography: Sofia Tirronen

For Kajsa, my wife and friend
And
Miles, Elliott and Adele

CONTENTS

Who?.....	11
How?	16
God is Holy.....	21
God is One and Three	27
God is Self-Existent and Self-Sufficient	33
God is Eternal.....	37
God is Unchanging.....	42
God is All-Knowing	47
God is All-Wise.....	52
God is Everywhere-Present.....	57
God is All-Powerful and Sovereign	62
God is Loving and Good	68
God is Just and Merciful	74
God is Gracious.....	80
God is Infinite.....	84
Conclusion.....	87

INTRODUCTION

I don't know what year it was or how I got the book, but I remember opening a copy of A.W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy* and reading the first sentence:

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

It sounded like a bit of an overstatement to me; maybe some exaggeration to just get the reader interested. But as I continued further into the book, the truth of that statement became very clear. I began to see that the way I was thinking, making decisions and living my life was directly controlled by what I really believed about who God was and what He was like.

Being a songwriter, I found myself swept into writing songs about the attributes of God that Tozer's book had focused me in on. (At the time I was touring and preaching the gospel with a band called Foolish Things). Two of the early songs ("Who Can Compare" and "This Love") ended up on one of our albums. It was wonderful to see people blessed by these truths of God through music.

I read and re-read that book several times and scribbled down notes at the end of the chapters that might be turned into more song lyrics eventually. I had the idea of someday making a record full of songs on the attributes of God to accompany that book. So over the following years I carried on with writing those songs, and they really seemed a blessing whenever shared in worship gatherings. But I also began to realize there was a problem with my idea of this project. That is, for many people, Tozer was hard to read. I had recommended the book to some others but sometimes heard comments like, "It seemed like it would be really helpful, but I have trouble understanding the way he writes." And it's true. He was from a different generation and probably stylistically influenced by even older generations. Over time, I guess I had gotten used to his style of English because of some other authors I often read who wrote similarly.

It was such a sad thought to me that because of a language or culture gap, many couldn't benefit from such strong teaching on this subject. I believe in our times we are desperate for a bold proclamation of the true God, but where will people hear it? Many of the old books are hard to understand and systematic theology volumes are even more intimidating. Even in many churches the pastors won't bring out the real God of Scripture, for fear it will expose a multitude of problems that everyone's ignoring. But we can't stay in the spiritual dark or we'll continue our slide away from the treasure and safety of knowing the true God.

So that's how I ended up here, writing this book. It seemed a clear need, and I had already invested so much songwriting into the concept that my heart had grown more and more passionate over it. I still have a strong memory of the night I decided to commit myself to creating this book and record. I often go out for walks later in the evening where it's easy to get some quiet and pray. That night there was a large Colorado thunderstorm happening to the east. I remember looking at those gigantic dark clouds and flashes of light and feeling the thunder shaking the city. What kind of person dares to attempt to teach people about the God who commands these storms and stars and galaxies? I thought to myself.

I believe God wanted to remind me how serious a responsibility it is -to tell people who He is. The Bible says that teachers will be judged more harshly than others, so how much more someone teaching about God Himself! But I also felt the comfort of knowing that it's not my job to tell anyone what I think of God, it's my job to find what He's said about Himself and make it known.

Around that time God also called my wife and me to move our family to Sweden to minister. Before we left, we had a night when I invited over a bunch of friends from our church and we gathered in my basement and recorded the group singing several of the songs (for the album). It was such a special night and you will hear their voices popping out at various places in the record. This is actually a miracle. The hard drive that had the recordings got destroyed and after failed attempts to recover any information, a friend paid to send it to professionals at data recovery. They sent photos back showing that they had opened it in a dust-free room but unfortunately, there was zero percent recoverable information on the drive. I was a bit bummed that we couldn't use those recordings, but

when it came back in the mail, my friend suggested we pray over it. So, at a Friday night prayer meeting, we laid hands on it and asked God to bring the information back. We took it immediately to my computer and the files were back on it! We were all so amazed and I feel so blessed that the recordings made it onto the project.

The book part of this project is not a modern translation of Tozer's (although at times I've wished for convenience that I chose to do that instead). Since my hope was to have something a modern reader could connect with, it seemed best to start from scratch. I think every generation needs its own preaching on the subject of God -not because He changes, but because our language, culture and world do. The same truths have always been there, but we need to hear them communicated in a way we understand and meditate on how they interact with our modern context.

As is usually the case with teaching, I've been far more blessed studying this topic than most will be reading what's been written here. It is born out of a multitude of hours studying the Scriptures, long walks with the Lord, slowly reading other works on the subject and pondering these truths as I go through my days. I have found that to continually meditate on God is truly nourishment for everyday life. Theology isn't meant to be kept in stuffy old seminary libraries; it is to change our thinking and shape our life at work, home and play.

The year I wrote this book was a challenging one for me. I was an immigrant in a new culture without many friends. We had gotten rid of most of our belongings when we moved and then lost nearly everything else because of a mold problem. My wife was the only one who could find work, so I spent the year as a stay-at-home dad of a three- year-old and a one-year-old. I wouldn't call it a year of crisis, but definitely a year of stretching. I only share this to say that I found the truths about God to be so powerful in encouraging me, correcting me, and re-focusing me in very practical situations. Moments of confusion trying to figure out a new place, moments of exhaustion with children screaming, moments of uncertainty about what ministry should be like here, moments of sadness missing loved ones, moments of feeling my identity in question. These are the same kind of moments we all have day-to-day and God is the medicine they all need. Knowing who He is and connecting to Him changes everything.

It's true. What you really think about God is the most important thing about you. I certainly can't teach you everything about Him, but I pray this book and these songs will somehow stir you to hunger, discovery and amazement of who He truly is. May His Spirit, the Gospel of His Son, and the truth of His Word captivate you and change you — the world is desperate for it.

His,
Isaac Jorgensen

CHAPTER 1

Why?

There is a question we often forget to ask: “What is worth my time and energy?” Most of us are having trouble keeping up with all the activities and obligations of our schedule as it is. We’re constantly spending time, and the crazy thing is we don’t even know how much of it we have to use. A thinking person knows they cannot afford to waste it, so they must figure out what to prioritize.

A while back I was hired to work an all-night shift in a grocery store. It was hard work, but one of the perks was, anything you wanted to eat in the store you were allowed to take (this is like a little kid’s dream come true!). Of course, I started thinking of all the things I could choose and all my favorite tasting foods and candies and such. But it was only one night so I couldn’t eat everything I wanted. On top of that, I was doing hard labor and really needed food that would give me energy and keep me feeling energized. So, as difficult as it was, I grabbed some healthier food to fill me up and only had a bit of candy.

We’re very much in the same situation, aren’t we? We have a world of information in front of us for the taking. There’s so much to explore and learn and be entertained by. But again, we don’t have time for all of it, and we have to give some thought to what information we really need the most.

Why take the time to read a book like this? Because among a thousand topics you could give your time to exploring there is one that rises above them all. There is one subject that lies behind every other subject and touches every part of our lives. This is the thing we must find time for. This is the thing we most need to get knowledge about –God.

God. If someone asked you “What is God?” or “What is He like?”, what would you say? What comes to mind when you think of God? What do you know about Him? Your answer to this great question of God will impact your life greater than anything else.

When we study science we're trying to discover what's true about the natural world and the universe we live in. When we study history we're trying to figure out what happened in the past. When we study biology we aim to understand how life and living things work. But when we study theology, our aim is to find out what's true about God. But this is not just another topic among many; it is the topic of topics. Everything else hangs from a thread, and He's the one at the top holding it. Without God there is no universe to study, no history to happen, no life in existence and none of us to observe it. Who *is* at the top of that thread and what is He like?

All of us think something about God. One person says He's loving, another says He's angry and cruel. The religions of the world present all kinds of possibilities about God (or sometimes gods). Even visiting a selection of different churches under the name "Christian" will reveal a variety of beliefs about the divine. But what is actually true about God? The historical researcher believes there is an actual reality of past events that he's attempting to track down. The scientist discovers the way things really are in the natural world. In the same way there is a reality about God. He really is a certain way, and that's what we want to know. We can all have our own opinions about Him, but remember — opinions can be wrong. Someone can believe whatever they want about Alexander the Great, but what they think may not be true. The good thing is; if you're wrong about Alexander the Great, it's not likely to affect much in your life. If you're wrong about God, however, you're wrong about the thing that potentially affects everything else. You *must* know who God is. Here are some reasons, which are all connected to each other:

Your Soul. We all live by what we think, so wrong thinking is a dangerous thing. You make the decisions you do because you view things a certain way. How many times have we gone through a horrible situation and thought "If I only had known ___ back then!" Understanding the facts helps you to make the best choices. If you think reality is different than it is, then each decision you make will bring about different results than you think. Like a traveler with a bad map, we will walk step-by-step in the wrong direction only to eventually find we weren't going, at all, where we

thought. This is crucial, here's why: What you think about God will influence the way you respond to God, and the way you respond to God will steer what happens to your soul. Jesus Christ pointed out the logical conclusion: If you get everything in the world but lose your soul, you've really gained nothing. It's not enough to have your opinion about God, you have to know your opinion about Him is right. You can't afford to be wrong about this--it could cost you everything.

Relationship. True Christianity makes the bold and wonderful claim that mere men can have an actual relationship with the living God. A relationship is between real people interacting with each other. Each relationship in your life is different because the people you're interacting with are different. What is the person? A friend, spouse, child, mother, teacher, boss? Of course, there are things you would say to a friend that you would never say to your boss. So your relationship is affected by what the person is. But also, what is the person like? What do they prefer and dislike? What are they passionate about? It seems that the closeness of a relationship is directly tied to what is held in common. You are not likely to be close with someone who does what you dislike and dislikes what you do. People who fall in love find themselves trying to come up with ways to make the one they love happy. But if you don't know what someone's like, you run the risk of actually offending them rather than making them happy. How can we have a close relationship with God if we don't even know what He's like?

Faith. We're told over and over in the Bible that God tells us to live by faith—that is, trust. God wants our trust (also essential for relationship). Many of us find ourselves saying “I wish I had more faith” and trying to work up some feeling of trust. But if you know what someone's like (and it's not bad), trusting them is actually natural. Imagine my wife calling me on the phone and telling me to go take a large sum of money out of the bank and then quickly hanging up. I wouldn't know the reason and I'd be confused, but I'd probably get the money. Because I know what my wife's like, I *trust* she wouldn't have told me that for no reason. If some stranger called with the same request, there's not a chance I'd do it...I don't know a thing about them! All this to say; God wants our trust.

Knowing what He is and what He's like will encourage us to trust Him.

The book of Genesis informs us about the entrance of sin into the world—the spiritual disease that has plagued the whole of human existence. We know Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, but why? We won't look at it in detail now, but a thoughtful reading will show that the serpent encouraged them to think and believe *untrue* and *wrong* thoughts about God. Yes, that's how all the problems of mankind started...wrong thoughts about God, followed by distrust, and then a devastating decision. The same type of cycle happens over and over in our lives, even though we often don't realize it. One way or another we get lured into believing lies about Him, and then because of our distrust we choose wrongly. We might verbally agree with right theological thoughts, but the choices we make are the best indicator of what we really believe about God...and what we *really* trust in.

Repair. This distrust of God is the cause of our separation from Him, and separating from Him is the cause of all the problems of men. We are built and designed to be with God, if our connection with Him is broken, we are broken. Like a machine trying to work on the wrong fuel, we are crippled and struggle to function as we were meant to. Our damaged relationships, our confusion, our fears, anxieties, depression and the like, are all signs that things aren't as they should be. The solution, then, is to reconnect to God. A fish dying on the shore can only be helped by putting him back in the water where he is free to be what he's designed for. A man dying in sin can only be helped by getting back into God. This is one of the reasons Jesus came. He said his followers would know the truth and it would set them free. There is a part of this that happens when we first surrender ourselves back to God. But the Scriptures tell us that we need to be transformed and this is done through fixing the way we think (Rom. 12:2). We must get back to the truth that Jesus said would set us free. I believe the heart of this truth is God himself. Seeing Him clearly is the best way to see ourselves clearly, and it's a freeing thing. A heart focused and centered on God is a heart how it ought to be. To put it simply, the best counseling for your problems comes from understanding and responding to who God is.

Church. When we read what the Bible has to say and look at the amazing things God has done at different points in history, we must conclude that much of what we call “the church” is nothing like what it should be. There is often a lack of power, a lack of love. Some people who claim to be believers don’t seem to fit the description the New Testament gives us. There are accusations from the world that we are hypocrites—and many of them true. Often, people claiming the name “Christian” seem to be no different from anyone else in the world, but they have a religious club they go to on the weekends. This seems to point us to the problem that our church groups are filled with many people who still aren’t worshipping God (trusting and obeying Him), or who are worshipping a version of god that isn’t the real one...that’s called idolatry. Remember, we all live and make our decisions based on what we *really* believe. The church must have a high view of God and a right view of God. Worship is the way we respond to who we think God is.

What God are we responding to? Like a piece of clay on the potter’s wheel, a group of people is shaped by their idea of God. It causes them to see the world, themselves and others in different ways. We must have it right or we will be shaped wrong. There are some who may have never known the truth and some who may have forgotten it, but the church must get back to knowing who God really is and let it mold them.

Can you see it is no exaggeration to make this your number one priority? If anything is worth striving to understand, it is Him. Can anything be more important? If you are wrong about God, everything else is in jeopardy.

What is God?

Who is God?

What is God like?

He is the question of questions and we must know the answer. May we see Him as He is and understand what to do about it.

CHAPTER 2

How?

Answering the question of *what* to spend our energy on must be followed by a second question; *How* should we go about it? It's great to say we want to understand God, but where can a person actually get information about Him? Sadly, many people's beliefs about God are just something they heard or assumed. People will often tell you what they believe, but they may have never thought about how they came to believe it. If our concept of God is just what we think or feel or imagine about Him, we're basically inventing something and calling it God. Since we just talked about how important it is to think right about the Lord, we want to know the truth –not just what someone assumed about Him. The potential consequences of being wrong are too expensive. We want to learn accurate information from good sources. So we must consider where we can find true data about God?

Before we continue, there are two common extremes we may be wise to avoid with the pursuit of understanding God. First, it is absurd to think we can *fully* grasp God. Whatever we can discover about Him, it will never be all of Him. He is so much higher than us. An ant cannot possibly fully understand a human because he is something much lower. We have to humble ourselves and acknowledge that we are something far less and it's not in our capacity to wrap our minds around what He is. To really understand the fullness of Him, we'd have to be on the same level as Him, but then He wouldn't really be God. On the other hand, this doesn't mean we can't know *some* things about Him. Of course, an ant can't know everything about a human, but he can know some things and they are true things. He might know how big a person is and what they sound like and smell like. So the little creature can know true things about a human, but he cannot even come close to completely comprehending all that a human is.

Our goal, then, is to discover what we *can* know is true about God. Now back to the question of data. Where do we get accurate knowledge about who God is? I'm convinced our most reliable in-

formation can be found in three places: The Scriptures, the natural world, and Jesus.

The Scriptures. When we refer to the Scriptures in this book we're talking about the sixty-six books compiled into the Bible. Some argue that this is just the opinions of men since the Bible was written down by men, but we have good reasons to believe otherwise. A book that has over and over predicted future events becomes impossible to explain by natural means. Anyone can write a religious book, but no one knows the future...except God. So when the Bible claims over and over to be from God, and shows itself to know more than humans should know, it has a good defense for itself. Beyond this, a Christian notices Jesus Christ himself quotes the Old Testament Scriptures over and over and says they were from God. Even the New Testament books, we find, are either written or affirmed as Scripture by the men Jesus sent out to build His church. Taking logic and Jesus seriously we have to recognize God is the one behind the Scriptures. What the Bible says about God is, in a way, God speaking about himself. How amazing and fortunate we are that He has chosen to inspire such a book. Without it we would have no other way to discover so much about Him.

The Natural World. What could we know about God if we had no Scriptures? Well, you can learn some things about an artist by looking at their work. You can see what they're capable of, you can see some of what they love and hate and want to express in what they make. In the same way we are born into an amazing creation that God has produced. We are part of His work as well. People look at the paintings, sculptures, writings, songs and buildings of men and say things like "What a genius," or "What a beautiful mind this person had!" The Bible says that the heavens and the sky declare to us God's glory and handiwork (Ps.19:1). The book of Romans also tells us that some things about God are clear simply from looking at what's been made (Rom.1:20). As we observe this incredibly complex and beautiful world and universe it says a lot about what kind of God must be behind it all. Of course, it's also important to add that the Bible also tells us that man's fall out of relationship with God seems to have also affected the natural world negatively. So we see, while looking at creation says a lot, parts of the picture will be confused without the combined help of

the Scriptures. Still, this is a wonderful window into God. The scientists and the rest of us have the joy of discovering what God has built and how it works. Truly, this amazing invention we call the universe and everything in it shines as the product of an unspeakably brilliant and beautiful mind.

Jesus. It is an enormous thing to seriously say we believe someone is the Son of God, but Jesus is backed by a trail of incredible information that can't be explained any other way. It's not my goal at the moment to unpack that topic, but only to point out that if God has indeed come to earth as a man and been seen, this is striking gold for the person mining for information about God. Jesus' best friend while He was on earth describes Him as God living among them (John1:1, 14, 18). What better way to learn about God than to have Him living with you? Jesus Himself said that the person who had seen Him had seen God (John14:9). The book of Colossians calls Him "the image of the invisible God." He is our best source of information about what God is like because He is true God. When we read about Jesus we're reading about God in a language we can understand—human. We listen to humans and watch humans all day long so seeing a life that is somehow God in human flesh is powerful. The book of Hebrews opens by telling us that in the past God spoke through prophets, but in the last days He's spoken to us *through* His Son. We can understand God so much better when we read about the life of Jesus, the words of Jesus, and the cross of Jesus.

It already says something about God that He has chosen to make Himself known to us. He has gone out of His way to reveal and share Himself with humanity. This must imply that He wants to be known and should already encourage us about the kind of God we're seeking.

The Attributes of God. When we talk about an attribute of God, we're just talking about one of the truths we've discovered about Him. How many attributes does He have? There doesn't seem to be any agreement on this, partially because so many of them are closely related to one another. Also, we learn different kinds of truth about God. Some of it tells us *what* God is, some of it tells us *who* He is and other parts tell us what He does. As you might expect, this makes it challenging to categorize and number

His attributes. On top of that, there's also a chance there are many truths about Himself He hasn't informed us about. All this to say; the list of attributes in this book is not exhaustive, and I don't feel capable of categorizing them in detail. Our focus is to learn true things about God and reflect on how it affects our everyday thinking and living.

The Personal Factor. We have focused on why it's worth our time to learn about God and how we can go about it, but it's important to remind ourselves of a couple things before we move forward. One major obstacle we all have is that we tend to have a bias—every one of us. I mean that we have a tendency to ignore or explain away things that make us uncomfortable. This really affects the way we look at information. We'd like to believe that we are people who let the facts lead us to the truth, but our preferences and experiences and social settings tempt us to ignore or distort certain facts. There are bound to be things you discover about God that make you uncomfortable because of what they mean for your life. It's like a flashlight shining into a dark room and you begin to see how dirty it is. You can pretend these truths aren't there, but if you don't have reason to believe it's not true (other than your preference), you're just turning off the flashlight. It won't do you any good in the long run. Remember, Jesus said the truth will set you free...trust Him and keep the light on. The one who reveals is the same one who's willing to help fix you. Let each of us ask God to help us with this.

*Open up our eyes, Open up our hearts to see,
Show us who You are
Show us what we're supposed to be.*

Remember also that there is an enormous difference between knowing someone and knowing *about* someone. A book can only tell you *about* God, but that's not the same as actually encountering Him personally. The person who is out to know God will find information about Him invaluable because it helps them as they chase a real relationship with Him. But that's something only you can do. There are people who spend their lives studying theology and the Scriptures and with all they know *about* Him, they still

don't have any personal interaction with Him. This is a tragedy. If you never actually get to know God you're missing out on what you're built for, what you long for, and you don't have eternal life without it (John17:3). Please don't just speed through this book. Stop often and talk to God about what you're thinking about; ask Him what it means for your life; act on the truths you learn about Him.

The Bible is full of verses indicating that God is waiting to come closer to those who will seek Him. When we realize more and more who He actually is, this offer becomes an unbelievably incredible invitation. To be close to God and involved with Him is the highest thing a person can attain. May we all grow in our knowledge of Him and grow to know Him.

CHAPTER 3

God is Holy

If you were transported to the throne room of God right now, what would it be like? What would you think of the God you were witnessing? What word would be most fitting to describe the sight? From what we know, it would probably be the word “Holy.”

We know at least a couple of men have had a glimpse of what we’re talking about. Isaiah in the Old Testament and John in the New Testament both saw a vision of God’s throne room, and they both say the same thing. They talk about these incredible creatures worshipping Him, and what are they saying? “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa. 6:3 ; Rev. 4:8). John says they don’t even rest, but day and night they continue on about His holiness. This is apparently the overwhelming impression you get from encountering God. He is Holy.

The Bible is saturated with the topic of holiness. It’s mentioned hundreds and hundreds of times from cover to cover, and implied even when it’s not mentioned. In one sense, “holy” is almost a synonym for God himself. To be holy is to be like God. If someone encounters the true God, they’ve encountered the holy. It’s not just one of His attributes, but also something that refers to His “godness” in general.

To try and understand this concept of holy, we’ll think about it from two angles: What God *is* and what God *is like*. For example, you are a human; that is what you *are*. You have a body with a head, two legs and two arms, you have a brain, you need oxygen and so forth. These things describe your essence; what you are. But also, what are *you like*? Are you good or bad, nice or mean, honest or dishonest? We will focus later on the answers to these two questions, but for now we’ll take a “zoomed out” perspective. God’s holiness refers both to what He is and what He’s like.

It’s a simple, but challenging question: ‘What is God?’ What is this holy, divine being? If we’re telling someone about something they don’t know about, we can try to use other things they *do* know about to make comparisons. For example: A child might ask what a propeller is, and we can explain by comparing it with something

like a windmill since they're somewhat similar. But what is similar to God? He says this about Himself in Isaiah:

To whom can you compare Me? Whom do I resemble? Says the Holy One.
Isaiah 40:25 *NET*

God refers to Himself as "the Holy One" and asks what we could compare Him with? The obvious answer is nothing and no one. Think about it: Absolutely every thing and every person we can think of is in the category of something God made. But what category is He in? It's the God-category, and He's the only one in it. That's part of the meaning of Holy. The fact that He is God means that He is something different, set-apart and one-of-a-kind.

As we continue to study His attributes, this uniqueness of *what* God is will become more and more obvious. Who else is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-wise, infinite, eternal and all the rest? There is no one like our God (1 Sam. 2:2). Nobody is equal to Him, nobody is His peer and nobody comes close to the greatness of what He is. God is the Holy One.

We must always remember this holiness of the Lord. Having a relationship with God is not the same as a relationship with another human. We are not equals with Him. He is something enormously higher and greater than we are and is to be honored, respected and taken seriously. When Jesus taught His followers to pray, the first line was that our Father in heaven would be hallowed, that is, treated as holy (Matt. 6:9). Apparently, Jesus knew that daily when we prayed, we would need reminded that God is something amazingly great and should be treated like it.

Now about what God is like. This also is very important to the idea of His holiness. Every man has a body and a brain; that's part of *what* they are. But a good man and an evil man will do very different things with their bodies and brains. It matters a whole lot what someone is like. And so we know that God has things like endless power, knowledge and wisdom, but what is the moral quality of God?

Everything about God is perfect. The Bible says His ways are perfect and He always does what is right (Deut. 32:4). Jesus also said that the Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). This doesn't mean God

does a perfect job obeying a law someone gave Him; there isn't anyone who could give Him a law to follow. He doesn't just do what's good; He *is* what's good. He's the whole reason we know there is such a thing as right and wrong. Something is right because it's in line with His character and something is wrong because it's not like His character.

So God's holiness also refers to the fact that He is morally perfect. For this reason, His holiness is often seen in His opposition to what's morally wrong. Since He is the source of all goodness, anything against Him is also against all that is good and perfect. He says His eyes are too pure to even look on evil and that He cannot tolerate wrong (Hab.1:13). Of course, this is a problem for us.

When the prophet Isaiah saw that vision of God's throne room, he immediately felt he was in danger because of his sin (Isa. 6). He felt convicted by the wrong things he had said ("I am a man of unclean lips"). Nothing was even mentioned about his sin, just being in the presence of God made it clear he was incompatible with Him. A similar thing happened to the apostle Peter. Jesus supernaturally helped him and his fishing partners immediately get their biggest catch ever. Suddenly, they were aware of the presence of God because of the miracle. Do you remember how Peter responded?

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,
"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"
Luke 5:8 *NET*

The reality of the presence of the Holy God did the same thing it did to Isaiah. Again, nothing is said about sin, but he automatically feels the conflict of it and feels like running away. If our consciences have any sensitivity left, we feel traces of this conflict in our guilt and fear and avoidance of God. This is why the holiness of God is something many are afraid to talk about or think about. This is why we've always been tempted to make up our own versions of God—one who is not holy. Something in us knows there's a problem. And this doesn't just apply to people the world thinks of as unholy—remember; Isaiah was a prophet and Peter was chosen as one of Jesus' twelve disciples. These weren't bad guys by most

people's standards, but they still felt how every bit of their unholiness put them in danger with the Holy God.

Remember, it hasn't always been this way. The book of Genesis tells us that everything God made (including us) was good (Gen.1:31). God's presence wasn't a troubling thing, but a wonderful thing. It would even appear that Adam and Eve enjoyed regular walks and talks with God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8-10). We were made morally perfect and made to know and enjoy God. But immediately after they chose to distrust and disobey God, the issue began. Instantly they felt shame, even from each other. When they heard the sound of God coming, it was no longer a joy. Adam felt afraid and naked, and attempted to hide from the presence of God. Of course it didn't work, God sees all and knows all.

God's holiness and our un-holiness is truly our great dilemma, but we get a glimmer of hope. After God deals with Adam and Eve it says that He makes tunics of skin to clothe them with (Gen. 3:21). They have caused their own shame, but He takes the initiative to give them a covering. Of course, being clothed with the skin of an animal meant an animal had to die. Some innocent creature lost its life to become a covering for their un-holiness.

This is hope for us because God has done the same for you and me. We stand in our un-holiness with guilty consciences, and shame, and fear. We run from the Holy God because we can feel our nakedness exposed in the bright light of His holiness. But He has made us a covering: Jesus Christ. He took the condemnation for our imperfect, unholy status and gave us His perfect status. He was the innocent one who lost His life so we could be clothed with His holiness. He is our only covering, our only safety in the presence of the Holy God. Praise the Lord! Jesus has made a way for us to be once again compatible with the Holy God if we will return to Him.

The people who want to be with God are told to be holy because He is (1 Peter 1:15). We cannot be holy in the sense of *what* God is, He will always be creator and we will always be creature. But God wants His people to be *the way He is* in character. He wants His people to be morally perfect in goodness, love, justice, mercy and grace. We are to be imitators of God like children imitating their parents (Eph. 5:1). Striving to be like God can't give us a good standing with God; we messed that up and Jesus fixed it on the

cross. We strive to be holy because it's what we're meant to be, and we want to be like the God we love.

More holiness also means more intimacy. The more you share in common with someone the more intimate you become. Since God is perfect, all of the change needs to be in us. Holiness for us means coming to love what He loves, hate what He hates, do what He does, act like He acts. The apostle Paul was reminding one of the churches that they were the ones God wanted to be with, to walk with and be a father to. Then He said:

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Corinthians 7:1 *NIV*

We have been given an amazing opportunity to be the people God is with! And He says He likes to reveal Himself to those who will obey Him (John 14:21).

Imagine the days when kings had absolute power in their country. The king held the most significant position and everything and everyone near Him had a greater significance. The building He lived in was His dwelling place so it had to be treated special, kept beautiful and clean. His cup was a special cup because it belonged to Him. His servants had a place of honor because they worked with the king, and because they were close with Him they needed to dress and act differently than others. You don't treat a king's stuff like normal stuff; it's more significant because of who it belongs to. In the same way, we are not to treat our minds and bodies like other's do; we're God's stuff. We belong to the most significant being in all the universe. Peter said:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...

2 Peter 2:9a *NIV*

We have the honor of being close to God; of being His special people. We have a greater significance simply because we're the possession of the most significant one. His Spirit is said to be the *Holy Spirit*, and every place He lives is to be treated holy. We are the place where God dwells; He says we are His temple (1 Cor.

3:16). This is mind-blowing. If your favorite musician in the world said they were coming to stay at your house you wouldn't think it a burden to adjust things to their liking. How much more privileged are we to be the place where the ruler of the universe wants to live? It is no burden to adjust our hearts to Him, and thankfully, He helps do the changing (Phil. 2:13).

Next time you hear the word "holy" or sing it in a worship song remember:

What is God? The incomparable, great creator who stands in His own category.

What is God like? He is perfect, pure goodness and cannot tolerate evil.

What should you do knowing God is Holy? Respect Him. Honor Him. Take Him seriously. Trust in His holy Son for forgiveness. Ask His Holy Spirit to conquer you. Learn what He's like and imitate Him. Live a life worthy of the calling you've received...to belong to the great Holy God!

CHAPTER 4

God is One and Three

Imagine if we were creatures born in the ocean that had never been above the surface of the water. It would be very difficult to understand everything about the world on land, even if it was told to us. We could only use our own environment and experience as our reference point, but things are very different under water than they are on land. We must remember this is our situation with God –to say the least. Some things about Him are far past our comprehension. God can't be fully accounted for by the reference points we use in our environment and minds. This will become quite evident in the subject here. May God help us grasp what we can and humility to accept the boundaries of our understanding.

Some truths about God can be stated clearly with just a couple verses of Scripture – this is not one of them. If we want to see what the Bible says about this, it will take a bit of patience.

GOD IS ONE

In the early days of Israel's history, the cultures around them worshipped multiple gods. But as God miraculously rescued the Hebrews out of the slavery of Egypt, He told them that not only was He to be their God, He was actually the only God there was.

I am the first and I am the last, there is no God but me
Isaiah 44:6b *NET*

Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!
Deuteronomy 6:4 *NET*

The New Testament affirms the same truth:

...we know that an idol in this world is nothing, and that there is no God but one.
1 Corinthians 8:4b *NET*

[There is] one God and Father of all, who is over all and
through all and in all.
Ephesians 4:6 *NET*

And so we are not polytheists; we don't believe there are lots of gods or even a couple gods, but only one true God. This isn't to say there aren't beings that live in the spiritual realm, such as angels and demons. But these are nothing like God; they are created and limited.

Through history and modern times, people have worshiped things they refer to as gods, but they are not really gods. They are either created objects thought of as divine, or demons that are honored as gods (2 Kings 19:18; 1 Cor. 10:20). If we are to take this information seriously, we do not have the luxury of pretending all religions are true or ultimately about the same thing. There is only one true God, and we are either worshipping Him or something He created.

God is called "The Most High (Ps. 78:56)." There can only be one person in this position, only one ultimate. If there was another god as high as God, then obviously, He wouldn't be the Most High. Think about it: If God has absolute power and control over everything, it is impossible for another to be like Him. That being would also have to be under His power and control and so not have absolute power itself. There can only be one God.

The command to love Him with everything we are is attached to His one-ness (Mark 12:29-30). Since He is the singular one at the top, nothing is to be obeyed, loved or trusted in more than Him. There are no others, God is one.

GOD IS THREE

Here is where a person studying the Scriptures begins to unfold an unfathomable mystery. Jesus, incredibly, claims things that only God can claim, and does things that only God can do. He controls and commands nature, predicts the future and knows peoples' thoughts. He claims to be able to forgive sins, to be the giver of life, to be the judge of men. He says He should be honored the same way God is and accepts worship (Matt. 8:26; Matt.16:21; Matt. 9:4; Matt. 9:2, 6; John 5:21, 26; John 5:22-23; John 9:38). Did you catch that? Read that list one more time slowly. The person who thinks of

Jesus just as a nice guy who founded a religion has not chewed on the information of what He did and said.

The Old Testament talked about a Messiah King (Jesus) who would show up in Israel's future. These predictions also had hints of His divinity (Isa. 9:6 ; Ps.110:1). The men who were with Jesus and the New Testament authors also call Him God (John 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; John1:1). This is only a sampling of the information pointing to Jesus' God-ness. It's important to keep in mind that the first Christians were Jews; they believed in the one true God and stuck with that belief, but they were still convinced of Jesus' deity. What can this mean?

The mystery continues to unfold: Not only is it clear that Jesus is God, but we hear about the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. We are told He does things that only God can do, and has the attributes that only God has. He is said to be involved in creating the world and saving people. It says He's eternal, and that He knows everything. Lying to Him is lying to God, and if the Holy Spirit is present somewhere, it is God being present (Gen.1:2; Ps.104:3; John 3:5; Heb. 9:14; 1 Cor. 2:11; Ps. 139:7; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16). The evidence leaves us no other option; the Holy Spirit is God.

So here we sit with the pieces we've found in Scripture. There is one God and Father of all, but Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God. That's three different persons being referred to as deity! What do we make of this? Someone will say "It's simple, there are three gods." But we've already seen, that's not what the Bible says. Jesus himself affirmed the Old Testament statement that God is one (Mark 12:30).

"Then," someone suggests, "It must be that the one God has three modes: Father, Spirit and Son." Maybe He just has a Father mode He's in sometimes and switches at times into Son or Spirit mode? This sounds like a great option, but it just doesn't account for the facts: Jesus says He came from the Father and that after He leaves He will send the Holy Spirit, so they are distinct from each other (John 5:37; John 16:7). When Jesus is baptized the Spirit descends onto Him like a dove and the Father speaks from heaven (Matthew 3:16-17). Again, all three are present but there is a distinction between them. When Jesus sends out His followers on their mission to make disciples He says:

...baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of
the Holy Spirit.
Matthew 28:19b *NET*

Where does this put us? You can't say there are three Gods. You can't say God has three modes. You can't say Jesus isn't God and you can't say the Holy Spirit isn't God.

The term "trinity" isn't found in the Bible, but it's used to describe what all the facts add up to. There is only one God, but there are three persons in God. Somehow, God is three *and* one –at the same time.

This is where we realize we're like the ocean creatures trying to grasp things outside of our environment. We have no reference point for something that is one and three in the way that God is. We think of water: It can be liquid, ice, or vapor and still be water. But then it seems we're talking about different modes again. We can think of things with three parts, but the Father, Spirit and Son don't seem to be parts of God, each one appears to be, somehow, fully God.

It would appear He has revealed something about Himself that is a mystery to us. That bothers some people. There are those who refuse to believe because they don't understand. But something isn't untrue just because we don't get it. We shouldn't be surprised that we can't get our head around everything about Him. He is the maker of all we know and is beyond it all! Our understanding has a ceiling that it can't rise above and we are reminded He is God and we are just men.

We say "three persons", because the Bible speaks about the Father, Son and Spirit in personal terms. We have been speaking all along of God as a "He," because this is how He presents Himself. The Father is a "who," the Son is a "who," and (although it's often forgotten) the Holy Spirit is a "who." God is a being, although an infinitely higher being. Many people acknowledge there is "something out there," a force or power behind the universe. The Bible tells us it is not just energy, but a person – the triune God.

While each member of the trinity is fully God in essence, it appears there is a functional order in the persons. As one theologian put it:

The one God (“He”) is also, and equally, “they,” and “they” are always together and always cooperating, with the Father initiating, the Son complying, and the Spirit executing the will of both, which is his will also.

Packer, *Concise Theology* p.42

We have important lessons to learn in this. Jesus is fully God, but we always read about His willing submission to the Father (John 5:30; 6:38; 8:28–29). As the Bible tells Christians to submit to governments, masters and bosses, and structures in the family, it’s not because we’re worth less than those we submit to, but because God has ordained order. We see Jesus himself “though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave” (Phil. 2:6–7a). If we think it below ourselves to submit to the Father’s will, we’re saying we’re worthy of more than Christ.

We are generally taught in Scripture to direct our prayers to the Father, *in the name of* Jesus and *through* the Holy Spirit (helpful direction to the person wrestling with how to address a God who’s three persons). Still, all three members of the trinity are to be thought of and honored as God. Often we are tempted to think Jesus or the Holy Spirit, are not in the full sense God, but this is not true. We are to take them as seriously as the Father. As we continue to pursue God we know we must look to all the members of the Godhead.

This is one of the things that make Jesus so wonderful to think about. God himself has actually come to the same planet you and I stand on today. God’s word doesn’t tell us the details of how Jesus was fully man and God simultaneously, but Jesus said if we’ve seen Him we’ve seen the Father (John 14:9). This means that what Jesus said, God said. Seeing the way Jesus responds to different kinds of people is the way God responds to those kinds of people. Just like God as seen in the Old Testament, Jesus is patient and merciful but there is a time when He will judge the world and so we’d better know where we stand with Him (Acts 17:31).

Knowing the Holy Spirit is the true God should amaze us when we think of its implications. “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” said Paul (1 Cor. 3:16). The same Almighty, Holy God of the Bible comes by the Holy

Spirit to live inside of those of us who truly believe. The disciples of Jesus have God's actual presence working in them and through them...if we would only remember this! We are also reminded the Holy Spirit is just like Jesus. Some are afraid of the Holy Spirit because they wonder what will happen if they encounter Him powerfully. But the true Spirit of God is like Jesus. If you're told the Holy Spirit is working in people but they seem very different from the way Jesus is, you have good reason to question if it's really the Holy Spirit.

We don't want to forget the *three are one*. There is no conflict in the triune God. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are just as holy as the Father and will bring about justice. And the Father is just as loving as the Son. Jesus didn't come to the earth and die on the cross to calm His over-angry Father. We're told it's because God so loved the world that *He* sent Jesus (John 3:16). What a wonderful God.

So much will remain a mystery to us, but we will stand where the Bible puts us: Trusting in the one true God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*You are more than our minds can hold
You are more than our songs have told
You are what you are and we don't know how
You are what you are and we worship you now*

*Our Maker, Three in One
You are the Father, Spirit, Son
Our Maker's mystery
Undivided One in Three*

CHAPTER 5

God is Self-Existent and Self-Sufficient

The universe and everyone in it owes God gratitude. We exist; we *are*, only because He has caused us. If God never desired to make us, we would never have been. Everything in all creation owes God an endless “thank-you.”

God, on the other hand, owes this thank-you to no one. This is what we mean when we say He is self-existent. Everything has an originator—except God. He doesn’t have a maker or a cause because He was never made or caused.

We read about Jesus:

All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

John 1:3 *NET*

The language is so all-inclusive. If anything has an origin, it’s indebted to Jesus for its existence. Creation is a chain of causes and effects, but God is the first cause of all and the effect of none. The psalmist says:

Even before the mountains came into existence, or you brought the world into being, you were the eternal God.

Psalms 90:2 *NET*

Before creating our world He already existed. The Bible opens with the phrase, “In the beginning *God...*” and then follows everything else.

As difficult as it is for our minds to think about an uncaused being, it’s almost more difficult to imagine there isn’t something unmade. It only takes a thinking person who’s willing to ask “where did I come from?” Of course we can refer to our family tree and how one generation after another led to us, but where did it all start?

The Christian believes God started it all; He built the heavens and the earth and made the first man and woman. The secular world may laugh at us and say “then where did God come from?”

But the honest thinker can't laugh long. Even if someone could provide proof for the theory of evolution, you still must have a world and elements to start evolving—where do those come from? So follows an answer like, the big bang! But the problem continues: What caused the “bang” and where did the stuff come from that was “banged”? Even if someone makes a guess at something, you still have to ask where that thing came from, and on and on it goes.

Something has to start the cycle, something has to exist independent of everything. That thing is the true God, who at times actually presents Himself with the simple, but telling name, “I AM” (Ex. 3:14). He is the Great I Am; He just exists. He simply is. He has no origins and no maker.

God's self-existence naturally leads us to His self-sufficiency. Since He's unmade and created everything else without help or supply from anywhere, of course He is independently sufficient. God doesn't need anything. He isn't dependent on someone or something else. If everything we know were gone tomorrow, He would still be there and be fine. Remember, *before* He brought the world into being He *was*. He exists all by Himself and is sufficient all by Himself.

Looking at these truths rapidly begins to place mankind in our proper perspective. We happened because of someone else. The same way a musician owns the rights to a song they create, God owns the rights to our life. He is our creator and so He owns us. We only have life because He has given it to us; we owe Him everything. Yet many of the anthems of the world are, “I am independent,” “my life is mine,” and “I don't need God.” These things are proclaimed with the same breath He's supplying them, minute by minute.

If every man and woman on the planet decided they didn't need God and wouldn't believe in Him, it wouldn't threaten Him one bit. But if God determined He was done dealing with us and let go, we would be over. With the snap of His finger all of time, matter and space could collapse. Let us humble ourselves and remember that God is necessary to us; we are not necessary to Him.

The church has often forgotten this as well. We are tempted to speak as though God were begging people to come to Him because He needs something from us. No, the begging is all ours. He needs nothing from us and we need everything from Him. In our Chris-

tian service as well, let us keep in mind we're not rescuing God from a bad situation or supplying a lack that He can't fill. It is because He invites us to be a part of what He's doing that we have the privilege of serving Him.

We, as sinful men, have been living centered around ourselves (the created), instead of God (the Creator). Many who have an interest in the spiritual are only asking what God can do for them. But God has given them their existence and everything in their life. Have they ever asked, "What does God want from me? He's done all for me and I've done nothing to honor and love Him." We have arrogantly ignored and sometimes even opposed the one who is literally our lifeline. Our rebellion against Him is like a sawing away at the single rope we hang by.

A God who doesn't need anything is uncomfortable in a way. Since God isn't dependent on us, we have no control over Him. We have nothing to negotiate with. We cannot place our demands on Him or make Him conform to our ideas and standards.

But there is also a glorious comfort about God being this way. It means that He is able to love like no one else. Having someone who doesn't need anything from you but loves you is greater than you can imagine. It's because He's sufficient in Himself that He's able to do good toward us, even when He's getting nothing out of it. And this is exactly what we see:

For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that *while we were still sinners*, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:7-8 NET

Do you see it? Dying for a good person is something rare enough to find, but who could die for someone that's wronged them? Only someone who loves you, but already has what they need. Only Jesus. Praise God! Though He doesn't need us, He desires us to be with Him and made a way.

By God's grace the same can become true of a Christian (in some measure). The person who has found their meaning, acceptance and love in God is able to love similarly since their needs are met in God. Because they drink from the endless river of God's

love, they aren't desperately thirsty for their needs to be met by other people.

Yes, He is the needer of nothing and giver of all. Yes, we are dependent on Him for everything. But wonderfully, the self-existent God is also good, and He's happy to supply for us. The world lives in fear and stress chasing their practical needs because they believe their survival is dependent on themselves. Jesus' truth sets us free. He pointed out that being given life and a body is a bigger deal than being given food and clothing. If God has already given you the bigger things, what makes you think He's not going to supply the smaller things you need? So, Jesus says, don't worry about it all, just seek to serve God and He'll add what you need (Matt 6:25-33). Dependency is not a bad thing when it's dependency on God. He invites us into the joy of knowing we're being looked after and not needing to be anxious.

He has given us existence, supplied for our lives, and even given us a way to be forgiven of our rebellion against Him. How fortunate we are to be at the mercy of a merciful God. May humanity stop the insanity of sawing at the rope that holds them and return to Him while they still can. May we all live in the constant "thank-you" to our maker and supplier.

CHAPTER 6

God is Eternal

Our experience with everything we know is that something has a starting point and an ending point. There is a moment when a life is born, and a moment when a person dies. There is a time when something is made and a time when it breaks down or wears out. And so we can assign ages to things. We mark where something begins and measure its existence until it comes to an end. Clearly, we cannot do this with God because He has no beginning or end.

There is no answer to the question, "How old is God?" He's never been younger and He'll never be older. He's never had a first day and He'll never have a last day. Since He is infinite, there is no way to apply a unit of measurement to Him. No matter how big a number you can think up, it won't even represent one percent of His existence. There are no percentages or fractions to an eternal being. "From everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2) He is God: from forever, to forever.

There was never a time when God wasn't and there will never be a time when He isn't. While creation is temporal, God is forever permanent. The psalmist says to Him:

In earlier times you established the earth; the skies are your handiwork. They will perish, but you will endure. They will wear out like a garment; like clothes you will remove them and they will disappear. But you remain; your years do not come to an end.

Psalms 102:25-27 *NET*

Everything perishes, dies, wilts, ages, decays, rusts, decomposes, evaporates, spoils and fades, but God will never fade or end. Since He's self-dependent, nothing can be changed or taken from Him that would threaten His existence.

There is much speculation about what this means in God's relation to time. It appears time itself as we know it was started by Him and He was existing before there was such a thing (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Heb. 1:2). So we're told:

...a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a
thousand years are like a single day.
2 Peter 3:8b *NET*

The way we think of time and are confined to it doesn't apply equally to God. He's not bound by it like we are. Perhaps this is part of why He can also tell us what's going to happen in the future. If He sits outside of time He can view the whole of our existence at once.

...Truly I am God, I have no peer; I am God, and there is none like me, who announces the end from the beginning and reveals beforehand what has not yet occurred.
Isaiah 46:9b-10 *NET*

To fully comprehend the eternal God is impossible for us. We'd have a better chance of trying to jump to the moon with our two feet. We're completely incapable of grasping His everlastingness. There is indeed nothing like Him.

We are amazed by God's eternity, but it reminds us of a terrible truth: our own mortality. We are creatures with a beginning and are guaranteed an ending to our earthly life. The fear of death runs rampant through the human race. Our deepest parts cry out wishing for eternity, but death stares us all down. There is no one exempt. The rich, the poor, the famous, the unknown, the powerful and the weak are all guaranteed this end. The people of the world are left to ask, can there be any hope? Is this all there is? Does our life have any real purpose if we are really only going to become worm food?

When we think of Adam and Eve eating from the forbidden tree we often forget there was another important tree. The Genesis 3 account says that after Adam and Eve chose to take the forbidden fruit, God prohibited their access to the garden of Eden. Why? God said because of mankind's new condition, he must not be allowed to eat from the tree of life and live forever. If we had never sinned, we were supposed to live forever. Our hearts still know it and long for it.

God's choice to take immortality from sinful man may bother us, but many have pointed out how necessary this was. Sin is a

progressive thing. Evil leads to more evil and more evil. To let people live forever who are getting more corrupt is a nightmare. Can we imagine the horror of men like Hitler having no end to their life? We cannot fathom the terror of a world where sin isn't just present but without end.

But still, here we are: Sitting in the funerals of our families and friends with the sickening reminder that we are terminal. The world says, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." If death is our final destination this is the best we can do...enjoy all we can before we're gone. People act like they can accept that, but the faces of everyone at the funerals are more honest; we're not okay with it. But we're helpless. Jesus' words become a beacon of light to those who've realized how dark it is:

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me
will live even if He dies, and the one who lives and believes in me
will never die.

John 11:25-26 *NET* (selected)

Jesus claims that He himself is the stuff of life and makes a staggering offer: He can give you a life that death won't take away and you'll never lose it. He can give you eternal life (John 3:16). But can it actually be true? What kind of man can make such a claim? Consider this: Jesus is the one who numerous times predicted He would come back to life after He was killed and actually did it! The resurrection of Jesus is a solid historical fact. If there is one person you could hope to trust for information on life after death, it's Jesus. He's the only one who has proven He knows His way out of death.

Jesus' death and resurrection make a way for us to come back to the eternal God—the source of eternal life. Those who return to the trust of God through Jesus are forgiven, and put in the process of being conformed back toward a sinless state. When we reach the last chapter of our Bibles (Revelation 22) we find in the new heavens and new earth that the tree of life is there on Main Street. Christ made a way for us to come back and once more have the opportunity to live forever. Since we are made clean and will be completely transformed into His image, He can let us once again share in His everlasting life.

And so the Scriptures say:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life.

1 John 5:11-12 *NET*

Eternal life isn't a substance or an object; it's a person. The eternal God doesn't get life from somewhere else; He *is* life. If you have Jesus you have life and if you don't have Jesus you don't have life.

Meditation on this truth has been the inspiration of the great men and women of Christian History. To begin thinking about God's grace and our wonderful, eternal future should radically impact the way we live our lives. For the follower of Christ, death need not be feared; it will be our transfer into the presence of Christ for eternity. It is our upgrade.

We will always be beings with a beginning, but praise God, we don't have to be beings with an ending. Remember, if we're going to live forever, our earthly lives aren't even a fraction of what's to come. If we were to suffer the most miserable earthly existence serving Christ for one hundred years, it will be done and we will forever be blessed with our Lord.

So while the people of the world take all they can get out of this life, the disciple is learning to give all He can in this life. Jesus tells us, then, it only makes sense to store up treasure in heaven where it's permanent (Matt 6:20). Why would we try to get a bunch of stuff that won't last? With eternity in view, we should work for what lasts and what's going to matter to God.

He promises we will be rewarded for seeking Him, for taking care of the poor, broken and sick, for forgiving those who wrong us, for loving those who don't love us, and even for being wronged because of our loyalty to Him. And what about our calling to make disciples? If all the energy and suffering of our life led just one person to Christ and His life everlasting, it will have been worth it.

As the people of God, it's easy to lose sight of our eternal God and our eternal destiny. We get swept into the secular mindset of the world and are seduced to love the dying pleasures of the world.

Then someone reads to us the accounts of men and women who suffered and died serving Christ—many while even blessing those who killed them. They lost everything and yet took their dying breaths full of hope and peace inside. They were preparing to enter their reward. The world took all it could from them, but it couldn't take their Jesus — their everlasting life.

Why would we give our highest love to anyone other than Him? If the person that makes your life worth living is guaranteed to die, then it's only a matter of time until your life is not worth living. Every possession can be worn out and every person can die, but God, you can have forever.

Let us not think that we're doing God a favor when we surrender our whole lives to Him. He gave His life for us and our eternal reward will make our sacrifices in this life seem so little.

Every kingdom and government will come to an end — including the one you live in now. The people of power and influence and fame will soon be gone. They were living on borrowed life just like the rest of us. But God's kingdom is forever because He is the King who doesn't die. To be a part of God's people-group is to be in the kingdom that lasts forever and our King will share His life with us forever.

Let us praise the eternal God for His greatness and His kindness toward us. Thank Jesus we don't need to fear death anymore!

...He has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
2 Timothy 1:10b *NET*

CHAPTER 7

God is Unchanging

I the LORD do not change...
Malachi 3:6a *NIV*

You are the same and your years will never run out.
Hebrews 1:12b *NET*

...the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.
James 1:17 *NET*

Here is a simple but profound truth that shows up repeatedly throughout Scripture: God doesn't change. He has not become different than He used to be, and He won't be any different in the future than He is today. He is not just eternal, but eternally the same.

Throughout the history of the church, theologians have pondered the impossibility of change for God. When something changes, it moves from one state of being to another. It is either breaking down or growing and maturing. It is either getting better or worse. None of these seem to be possibilities for our maker.

Since God is perfect nothing could be added to Him that would improve Him. And since He is the source of all things, nothing can be taken from Him. He has no beginning or end, so He's never aging, maturing or growing. He is self-sufficient and all-powerful, so nothing can be taken from Him. He has nothing to gain and nothing to lose in Himself. He is unchanging.

Some wonder how it is that God doesn't change, but other verses talk about Him "forgetting" or "regretting" and so forth. These are definitely words having to do with change. But we must remember that God is an infinite being communicating through the Bible to finite creatures. He knows we have no reference point for fully understanding Him, and He often speaks to us through human imagery and terms we can understand. He talks about His hands, eyes and arms, but He is spirit, so He has no body. He asks people questions even though He knows everything. He talks about

forgetting and regretting to help us understand what's happening relationally, but still He tells us plainly that He doesn't change.

So why do we see Him sometimes loving and gentle and sometimes angry and bringing judgment? Doesn't this show He changes from time to time or from person to person? No. We are the ones that do the changing. Because God is pure goodness, to turn against Him is to poison all that is good and it demands that He deals with us to be just. He hasn't changed; we've set ourselves against Him.

The same strong wind can wonderfully fill a sail on a boat and at the same time be breaking down signs on the beach. What's the difference? A sail receives the wind and moves with it. A sign is standing in an unmovable position in resistance to the wind. And so it is with men and God. He is a terror or joy to us depending on whether we're resisting Him or moving with Him.

When we see or experience a change, we can trace it to a cause. Our bodies change because of what we eat, or how much we're in the sun or how we're aging. The weather is altered by the earth's rotation, atmospheric effects, volcanic activity and who knows what else. The creator God, however, is the unaffected one. Nothing pressures Him, controls Him, threatens Him or forces Him to do anything. And so He stands, just like He always has, being the same in and of Himself.

What is impossible for God? Of course, in a way we could say nothing, but Hebrews 6:18 tells us it is impossible for God to lie. So here we have an example of His unchanging moral nature. He is a righteous and holy God, so He will never act unrighteous or unholy. Also,

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a human being, that He should change His mind. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it happen?

Numbers 23:19 *NET*

Men change their minds or don't do what they say because they are either undependable or because they have limited knowledge and wisdom. They may decide one thing, and then go back on it because they found out something that makes them wish they had chosen differently or spoken differently. They will commit to

do something but then be unable to do it because of some unknown factor. This isn't so for God. Since He knows absolutely everything, He never needs to change His mind. Since He's all-powerful He always has the means to follow through with what He says.

This is a great comfort to most of us who've tasted the unpleasant, changing nature of human relationships. So many people we used to enjoy so much have become very different people over time. So many promises are broken. So many lies are told. Even when we find friends with consistent character they are eventually moved away by circumstances or taken by death. Life is never the same for very long. God is the only one you can have who will never be someone or something different down the road.

You don't have to worry about what kind of God He'll be in the future. He'll be just like He is now. You never have to wonder what kind of mood God is in when you come to Him, He has not changed. You may feel different about God from time to time, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8). He still opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). His promises are still true and you can count on Him.

Human history, technology, and cultures change and God works uniquely and differently in each time. But morality (right and wrong) never changes because it's based on Him—the unchanging God. What He has said about the right and wrong way to live remains the same even if a culture accepts and embraces other opinions.

The church must also remember this: The God we serve is the same one we find in our Bibles. The Jesus we serve today is the same one who said we should get rid of sin no matter what the cost (Matt. 5:30). The same Jesus who said if people didn't repent they would be destroyed (Luke 13:3). He is the same Jesus who went where the sinners were and loved them and called them to repentance (Matt. 9:13). The same Jesus who healed multitudes of people (Matt. 12:15-17). He is the same Jesus who sent messages to His churches to comfort the faithful and warn the loveless and disobedient (Rev. 2-3). Listening to the preaching and conversations in many churches these days makes it sound like Jesus has become something much different than He used to be. But He has not changed and we are wise to make sure we remember the real Jesus.

It's amazing to think of the Jesus we see going to the cross. He let Himself be lied about, stabbed in the back by a friend, given an unjust trial, insulted, tortured, humiliated and hammered to a piece of wood. He went through all that for us. To pay the fines of your rebellion so He wouldn't have to lose you. Suffering to meet your need. That's the same Jesus we're serving today; He hasn't changed. The love He showed that day for us is the same love He has for us now. That's the one who says to people "come, trust me."

It's wonderful to know the only one who's perfectly wise, just and loving will never change. It's also a relief that we, being so messed up, *can* change. We don't have to stay in the condition we're in. Change is at the heart of what it means to repent. We need to be about something different. The person without God is trusting, loving and obeying things other than God. They must change their thinking and come back to Him. He will forgive them and work the change in them.

Doesn't it make sense to have Him be what you trust, love and obey? If what you build your life on is subject to change you are a disaster waiting to happen. You are only okay so long as what you are about is okay. If you're hanging onto money, every time money is shaken you will be shaken with it. If your reason for living is the love of some special person, you'll be lost if you lose them or they fail you. Whatever we may want the most, we are tying our hearts to it and will live in an emotional seasickness of ups and downs where there's nothing solid to rest on. This is what people mean when they talk about the attribute of God's faithfulness, they're focused on the truth that since God won't change, you can fully count on what He's told you.

The Bible often speaks of God and Jesus as a rock. Since He is unchanging, He's the only safe thing to build your life on. Jesus says listening to Him and obeying Him is like building a house on a rock, and doing otherwise is like building on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). No matter what you build on, life is going to change. You can count on it. The person on the rock has to endure the storm, but it doesn't threaten everything about them. Nothing threatens God, and so nothing threatens what you love if it's Him. This is the wonderful freedom of those who have the unchanging God as their treasure. No matter the difficult circumstances they face, they can sing:

*Nothing can take what we have in You
Nothing can break what we build on You
You have never changed, you will never change
You have never changed, my God*

CHAPTER 8

God is All-Knowing

We've seen repeatedly that there are certain things we experience that don't apply to God. Need is something we're familiar with because we're dependent creatures. But He has never needed anything. Change is an inescapable reality of our existence, but it's completely absent from His. Everything we know has a beginning and an ending, but He does not. Here's another thing to add to the list of things that don't apply to God: Learning.

From the day we are born, we are learning and growing in knowledge and understanding. We need information; we need to understand; we need to be taught. We all have a certain amount we know and can know, but what doesn't God know? He is the cause of everything, the builder of everything and the sustainer of everything (Rom. 11:33-36). The prophet Isaiah asks rhetorical questions about God, like:

From whom does He receive directions? Who teaches Him the correct way to do things, or imparts knowledge to Him, or instructs Him in skillful design?
Isaiah 40:14 *NET*

He made it all, before there was anything or anyone else! So no one has ever showed God how to do anything. He doesn't need directions, teachers or instructors because there's nothing He needs to be informed of. There is nothing for God to figure out. The clockmaker is not going to be surprised one day, discovering in one of his clocks some part He wasn't aware of. Similarly, our maker knows it all from top to bottom, everything about everything. This includes the past, present and future; the material and the spiritual.

How do you begin to reflect on this? It applies to everything. God knows every angel and demon and all of their activity. He knows every galaxy, planet, star and moon and everything about each one of them. He knows what's in every centimeter of every light-year in our cosmos. He knows each individual creature on the earth, from the elephants to the parasites. He knows about every

act, thought and feeling of the entire human race from Adam to the last human.

He sees the whole of human history intricately. He doesn't just know *what* happened at all times, but also *why* it happened. He knows all of the causes and effects and conditions of every situation. As He has shown repeatedly, He also knows exactly what will happen in the future. This is how He can tell Isaiah 150 years in advance what the conqueror Cyrus would do, and even calls him by the name his parents would give him someday. This is how God could reveal to Daniel the next four great empires that would rise and fall. This is how He could predict the exact time that Jesus would show up hundreds of years in advance. He knows it all.

The all-knowingness of God has enormous relevance to our lives. With every other relationship in your life, you have some measure of control over how much you expose yourself. We dare to reveal certain parts of ourselves to some people, but we always have parts that are kept back and hidden, parts that we keep covered. But with God, we are completely vulnerable.

And no creature is hidden from God, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Hebrews 4:13 NET

Those are such strong words: naked, exposed, no creature is hidden! Everyone else knows the you that you present yourself as, but the Lord knows who you really are. He sees those dark parts of us that no one else sees. He knows about the wandering eyes of lust. He knows what's been looked at on the Internet and done in private. He knows about that secret habit, those lying words, that harmful thing you did. We are stripped of all our coverings before Him; He has seen it all. There is no face or act you can put on to make Him miss it. No false excuse you can give will trick Him. It's chilling to think this is the one who we will be judged by.

It doesn't stop there either. God doesn't just know what you've done that's wrong and right, but *why* you did it. Jesus revealed part of the problem with the "religious elite" of His day; they were often doing *right things*, but for the *wrong reasons*. You can pray, fast and give to the poor because you love God and love people, or because

you like the respect and honor it gets you (Matt. 6). God knows what's motivating all of your actions. He knows who really wants Him, and who is trying to use Him to get something else they really want.

Yes, we are worse than we dare to investigate, but praise God, He is more merciful than we can grasp. If any person knew everything that God knew about you, chances are you couldn't find a spouse, friends or companions that wanted to get close to you. But God is remarkable. He knew all of this *before* He sent His Son to come die for you. He knew the fullness of how messed up you were and still went through with it! He was aware of every single sin and problem with you and still said through the cross, "I'll take you."

How wonderful He is! What a relief to know He's never going to be shocked with your faults and leave you. How fantastic to realize He knows what He's gotten into with you, and has offered you forgiveness and relationship anyway. You will never find anyone who can love you like that. Of course we cannot be content to continue living lives of sin, but we can be relieved to remember He knew it and died for us while we were sinners.

It's wise to build any relationship with honesty, but with God it's absolute necessity, because no matter what you say, He knows what you *really* mean. When a friend figures out you've lied to them, the friendship doesn't work until apology has happened and honesty has returned. God never "figures out" we're not being truthful, He already knows everything in us. So if you want to have a relationship with Him you have to be open and real. This is hard for us, but wonderfully freeing if we will learn to live in it.

Right now He sees exactly where you're sitting, what time it is, when you got out of bed this morning and what you're wearing. He knows perfectly what you're feeling and what's going on in your mind at this moment—even if it's doubtful, wrong or "unspiritual." You might as well be straight forward with Him. Maybe you should stop for a few moments right now. Be completely honest and talk to Him about what's on your mind—He won't be shocked with any of it.

The all-knowingness of God also means we don't need to use fancy words or forms when we talk to God; just be honest with Him. Isn't it good to know He gets what you want to say even if you can't think how to say it? He knows your doubts and fears and

distractions, so just be truthful about them. He's already seen the sin and died for it, so apologize and ask His help to leave it behind. Sometimes when we pray we feel like no one's heard us except the wall, but don't worry. He knows everything. He sees every moment, every prayer, so trust Him.

He knows you better than you know yourself. He was putting you together in your mom's womb, He knew every day of your life before it started (Ps. 139:13, 16). God is aware of your misery and keeps track of every tear you've cried (Ps. 55:8). The wrongs that have been done to you also are not hidden from Him: The friend that stabbed you in the back, the parent's scarring words, the person who molested you, the trust that was violated by the one you loved, the mocking laughs of those cruel people. Whatever it is, He knows it all and knows how to fix you.

Many are confused thinking God is angry with them because they don't understand His will and how to do it. But if God knows everything, He also understands what you don't know. He's not holding you responsible for what you don't understand, so trust Him and obey what you do understand. And for those afraid to serve God because they know their motives are wrong: Remember God knows that you've realized it and is watching if your heart says, "I want to be steered into right motives." The direction of your heart can be changed with one choice – and God sees it.

When you are tempted, remember that Jesus himself even knows that. He was tempted in all ways like we are, though He never gave into sin. The Scriptures tell us He can sympathize with us, and we don't need to be afraid to come ask for help when we need it (Hebrews 4:14-16).

He sees all the good things too. All of those times when you're striving to love people and they don't seem to care or notice; He notices. Every big or small thing done out of desire to honor God or do good to others is in His eye. We do not need the approval or recognition of man. God knows and will reward each one according to their works (Romans 2:6).

One of the most important things for us to consider about God's knowing, is that He knows who really belongs to Him (2 Tim. 2:19). This is comfort for the true disciple, who can rest in the thought that God knows we're trusting in Him, counting on Him and depending on His help. It's a more disturbing thought for those

just playing church, but can also be a gracious wake up call to them. You may have said a prayer, been baptized, attend a church, try not to be too immoral, hang out with other Christians, but not really be a Christian. The Lord knows who has come to trust Him and put Him in charge of their life and who is playing the game. You might have everyone else thinking you belong to God, but it will mean nothing to the all-knowing God if it's not real. If that's you, don't deceive yourself and don't miss out on the real God. Repent and believe.

Next time you see a small bird sitting on a branch or flying over your head, remember what Jesus said: God never forgets about even one of them, and He hasn't forgotten about you. Next time you brush your hair, remember that God knows exactly how many are on your head, and how many were there yesterday (Luke 12:6-7). Remember that He's always known how broken and messed up you are, and He still wanted you. Be honest with Him and let the all-knowing God forgive you, repair you and lead you.

CHAPTER 9

God is All-Wise

Discussing the all-knowingness of God naturally leads us into the wisdom of God. Someone who knows absolutely everything must also be incredibly wise (especially if He's also good). What is wisdom? Well, if we say someone was *not* wise in what they said or did, we mean that they didn't know or do what would have been best. A wise person knows what he's doing and does it with skill. To put it simply: God knows what the best things to do are and the best way to go about doing them. God has the perfect goals in mind, and He's using perfect methods. His works are perfect (Deut. 32:4).

Our Lord is great and has awesome power; there is no limit to his wisdom.
Psalm 147:5 *NET*

People can get wisdom and grow in understanding, but there is no limit to God's wisdom. He has no wisdom to gain. As we get older we say things like, "If I was only as wise then as I am now...." But God always knows exactly what ought to be done and He's always doing it perfectly. He is all-wise.

We have already spoken of the knowledge and wisdom of God we see in creation. Scientists are constantly discovering the incredible complexity in all that God has designed. How unbelievably smart the Creator behind them must be! We say with the psalmist:

How many living things you have made, O Lord! You have exhibited great skill in making all of them; the earth is full of the living things you have made.
Psalm 104:24 *NET*

Those opening chapters of Genesis describe so quickly what must have been an astonishing thing to watch. God, by His wisdom, was simply saying "let there be..." and there it was! He brought into existence water, land, trees, plants, stars, sea creatures, birds, animals and mankind. All of these were invented and built

from the wise mind of God — out of nothing. When we create something, we really just take stuff that's already here and arrange it in different ways. On top of that, we get our ideas and inspiration from everything else around us. But where does God get His ideas? With nothing else to copy He thought up things like light and water and fire. Can you imagine what He must be like? And we're told that all of what He had done was good (Genesis 1:31).

This is important to remember because the objection comes: "If God does everything perfectly, why is this world such a messed up place?" So we return to the fall of man, and interestingly, wisdom is there as well. We're told that Eve was looking at that forbidden tree, and part of the temptation was that it was desirable for making one *wise* (Gen. 3:6). It's not that wisdom is a bad thing to want, but the serpent was suggesting that God's wisdom wasn't best. In deciding it would be better to disobey God rather than obey Him, they were really saying that God's wisdom wasn't as good as their own.

The decision to trade God's wisdom for our own began the unraveling of all that was made good. We'd still be in paradise if we hadn't separated ourselves from the wisdom of God. The broken world and our broken lives declare that we are not wise and we do not know what we're doing. God should have been trusted.

We want to get mad at Adam and Eve for starting this mess, but the problem is, every one of us is a contributor. Every time I make a decision that God's word disagrees with, I proclaim that I know better than God what is best. Isn't that ridiculous? How arrogant we are to act like we can figure things out and rule our lives better than our maker!

Not just that, but then we sit around critiquing what God is doing as if we know what we're talking about. The book of Job records the life of a man suffering severe hardship, and wrestling with all the hard questions and asking God why. At the end of the book God responds by asking Job a couple chapters-worth of questions (Job 38-41). Each one reminds him how insignificant he is compared to the God he's questioning. God says:

Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?
Job 40:2a *NET*

No one is in the position to correct God. We don't function even close to the level He functions. Little children get angry at their parents for not letting them eat too much candy, but the parent is wiser than the child. A young child cannot understand the reasoning of the parent because he's not an adult. How much more can we not understand the infinite wisdom of God as mere humans!

There is no better plan than the plan God has. There is no better idea than the idea God has. There is no way better than God's way. He has a perfect purpose. It's so hard for us to believe that when we can't see a shred of benefit that could come from our circumstances. We may not know why or how, but God will use them, for His glory and for our good. The people who love Him will find, looking back, that He has worked all things (even the horrible things) together to accomplish good (Rom. 8:28).

God says His thoughts and His ways are way higher than man's thoughts and ways (Isa. 55:9). We really have to humble ourselves and admit that we probably won't be able to grasp His reasons a lot of the time. We're not usually going to be able to look at things and say "I see what God's up to, how wise!" He's always working out His plans, but we don't notice because we'd never guess how He's doing things.

Imagine living 2000 years ago and walking into the city of Jerusalem. Off to the side of the road you see three criminals getting executed by Roman soldiers. As gruesome as it is, it's not unusual for the Romans to dispose of convicts via crucifixion. You try not to look at the uncomfortable sight and focus yourself on what you're about to do in town and go your way. That, perhaps, describes what many people experienced the day of Jesus' death. Little did they know they had witnessed the event that all of humanity's hope was resting on. They would never have guessed that one of those men was the Son of God, and that His death was being accepted by the Father as payment for the world's sin. God's wisdom has Him doing things we'd never think of, in places we'd never guess.

The night before his death, Jesus was praying to His Father and wrestling with the plan He came to accomplish. But His statement "not My will but Yours be done" stands in stark contrast to the attitude of Adam and Eve, and us; "not Your will, but mine be

done.” Jesus submitted Himself to the Father’s wise plan and we are saved because of it.

We, as the people of God, are called to return to this truth: God is wise. We must learn to trust Him and stop looking for our help and direction everywhere else. The Bible is not just a nice book with some wisdom; it is perfect wisdom from the perfect God. Yes, it will often take work to study and discover what the Bible is teaching, but once we have, we must let it trump every other wisdom.

Let the psychologists, the psychiatrists, the life-coaches, the counselors, the scientists, the philosophers, the politicians, the priests and popes and pastors say all they want, but if God says something different, they are wrong and He is right. They’re only people you know. If what God has said disagrees with your culture, or heroes, or friends or family or schools, or your feelings, then hold to what He told you. He knows what He’s talking about.

There are many things we do that modern culture calls a disease, a disorder, “being human” or “being true to ourselves.” But if God says the same things are sin, then let’s call it what it is and agree we should apologize to God and stop it. If a person is comfortable continually doing things God calls sin, they show that they have not been born of God and are not inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven (1 John 2:3, 9; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:10–21). They are still committed to the wisdom of Adam’s kingdom, not the wisdom of King Jesus.

This is part of the reason faith and repentance are closely related in the Bible. You make decisions in your life because you trust they are worth doing and good for you. But if you’re going to have faith in God that means you trust Him. So when He says certain things shouldn’t be in our lives, we repent (turn from them) because we trust His wisdom. When He says certain things need to be added to our lives, we add them because we believe He’s right. We’re learning to come back to the trust of God.

Since only God’s ways are perfectly wise, our wisdom is measured by how much we listen to Him and obey Him. When Jesus finished speaking His famous Sermon on the Mount, He said that the person who hears His teaching and does it is the wise person (Matt. 7:24). The most intelligent person on earth right now is the one who is trusting and obeying God the most: If you want to grow in wisdom, that is the way.

The Bible shows over and over that God is even using suffering and the evil intentions of the enemy to accomplish His plans. We are often asking, "What is God doing? Why does it have to be like this?" Maybe your life feels like that right now. You cannot imagine that there is a good answer to these questions. It's okay that you don't know. God doesn't always tell us why, but He has proved His love for us and told us He is strong and wise.

Are we struggling with anger, bitterness, or un-forgiveness? It may be because we're missing the truth of God's wisdom, love and power in action. Next time you're getting angry, ask yourself what it is that's been lost or threatened. If God's wisdom knows you should have it, nothing will stop His power from finding a way to make sure you do. If God knows a better way to accomplish what needs to be done in you and those around you, then you haven't really lost much at all. We get bitter and struggle to forgive others because we think that the wrong they have done has ruined our lives. Nonsense. They may have really acted wrong and hurt us, but nothing will stop God from doing everything and anything He wants to do in the lives of those who trust Him. One day we will find ourselves saying with Joseph "you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose" (Gen. 50:20).

So trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't try to lean on your own understanding—it's not strong enough to lean on (Prov. 3:5). May His Spirit give us grace to remember who He is, and may we learn to pray in surrender:

*If we cannot hear the answer
If we cannot see the way
We choose to trust You
And Your choice of wisdom, Father
There will be no better way*

There is no better way than the way He's chosen. Time will show it.

CHAPTER 10

God is Everywhere-Present

One of the most fundamental questions we can ask about anything is “where is it?” Everything is somewhere, right? This morning I was in my bed and now I’m sitting in a room at a desk. Right now you are somewhere, and because you are there, you are not anywhere else. You are only present in one place at a time.

When we ask the question “where is God?” – the answer is different. He is everywhere at the same time. There is nowhere God is not present. What an incredible thought! He is next to you, up the street, on the other side of the world, and in every dark corner of the galaxies in His universe. It’s not just that He can go to all these places; He is always at all of those places without leaving anywhere else. If you’re grasping any of this stop and praise God.

We live in time and space so we are confined and limited by time and space, but God created them so He is not limited by them. He is not material; He is Spirit (John 4:24). And not just any spirit, but the infinite Spirit. He has no limits.

When Solomon built a temple for the worship of God He had to acknowledge this truth.

But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the
highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I
have built!
Kings 8:27 NIV

All of the universe cannot contain God. He built it! He created it and is present everywhere sustaining it (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). This doesn’t mean the material world *is* God (that’s the view of pantheism). It means He caused it all and is keeping it all going. Everything you see is something God made – not God himself. But God is there, here and everywhere.

In Jesus’ day there was a dispute between the Jews in Jerusalem and the Samaritans about where God ought to be worshipped. The Jews claimed it was at the temple in Jerusalem and the Samaritans claimed it was on a nearby mountain. When a woman brought the debate up, Jesus told her:

...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:23b-24 *NET*

God is not confined to a place. Those who want to worship God must learn that He's not just looking for people to show up to a location at a special time and honor Him. He is everywhere and knows all, so His worshippers must learn to truly honor Him in every place and every way. Have we really thought about this? There are things we do in our lives that we wouldn't dare do in a service in a church building. We can go home from a place but we cannot go home from God. We can leave anyone else's presence but we never leave God's presence.

Where can I go to escape your spirit? Where can I flee to escape your presence?

Psalms 139:7 *NET*

Everything you do is done in the presence of God. He is there at your work, there in your classroom, there in your bedroom, there in your living room and kitchen. He is where you're vacationing, where you shop, where you hang out with your friends and where you are with your family. This is why He wants people that really worship Him and don't just come to religious gatherings and then act like He's not there the rest of the time.

God cannot be escaped. There is no door to keep Him out. People can refuse to think about Him, but He's still there. The scientific community can dismiss talk of Him, but He's still there. The schools can refuse to acknowledge Him, but He's there just as much as He ever was.

Maybe as we think about this we're amazed and agree, but we also wonder, "why don't I feel like God is always here?" Well, first of all, some things can be true even if you don't feel like they are. Did you know we're moving at 67,000 miles an hour right now? Even if we don't feel it, it's a fact that earth moves at that speed. Don't make the mistake of believing God is absent, simply because you don't feel Him or notice Him.

Also, remember there are some things that need to be revealed for you to know they're present. It's like those movies where some

clever thief fills a room with smoke so they can see the lasers connected to the alarm-system. The lasers don't become real because of the smoke—they are revealed. There is a manifestation of their reality. The sun is just as real when we're on the dark side of the earth, but it's not revealed to us till we rotate again to face it. So there are times when we feel He's gone, but other times He manifests the reality that He's there, and we say like Jacob:

Surely the Lord is in this place, but I did not realize it!
Genesis 28:16b *NET*

There is another factor relating to our experience of God's presence, and that's our relationship to Him. I've always found it interesting in songs and literature how often people use phrases like, "I'm all alone in a crowded room." What do they mean? There is a difference between being close to people and being in close relationship with people. The presence of God is close to all, but relationship with God has been spoiled because of sin. The sinful man is standing in the room with his judge and it's an awkward, fearful thought for him. His heart is miles away from God's. Thankfully, the gospel is aimed at repairing this.

But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have
been brought near by the blood of Christ.
Ephesians 2:13 *NET*

Brought near? We don't come any closer to a physical place where God is; we are brought into closer relationship with Him. The blood of Jesus pays the fines for our sin, and then our judge actually adopts us into His family as one of His kids. His presence becomes a comfort and a joy, rather than a reason to fear punishment.

A Christian isn't given instructions and sent out on their own. When God tells us how to live, He's going to be standing next to us the whole way giving us all the strength and grace we need to do it. Sometimes you might notice it and sometimes you might not, but it's true (John 14:16; Matt. 28:20). There is nowhere you will go that He will not be with you. The parent cannot go everywhere with the child and the lover cannot go everywhere with their love, but God

can and does go everywhere with His people. The one who thinks you're worth dying for is right by your side to help you — always.

[Jesus] died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we
may live together with him.
1 Thessalonians 5:10 *NIV*

As incredible as it is to think of, God wants you to be with Him. This is part of the reason Jesus died. To come closer to God you don't just go to a place, you bring yourself in-line with Him. For an unbeliever, that means turning from a lifestyle of self-centeredness, self-righteousness and being in charge, to trusting God and obeying Him. For a believer, we must come in closer, continuing to seek God, believing and obeying what He has said and leaving sin behind. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you (James 4:8a).

We may believe He's always with us, but it's not often that we remember it. The proverb says:

Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and he will make your
paths straight.
Proverbs 3:6 *NET*

That's the hard part, right? We forget to acknowledge that He's there and it affects the way we think and live. Scripture says that this influences us to let Him get us on the right path, going the right direction. We must cultivate a remembrance of the presence of God. How can we do this? Here are a couple practical suggestions:

First, make time every day to be with God alone, to talk to God and read your Bible. These times lead our mind and our heart to remember Him. Second, make sure you're often with people who are trying to love God with all their heart. Spending time with people who live in God's reality is massively helpful in learning to do it yourself.

Many have found something like this very helpful: Take a watch or cell phone with an alarm clock (that you'll have with you all day) and set an alarm. Every time it goes off, take it as a reminder of God's presence with you and hit the snooze button so it will happen again shortly. When it alerts you, give thanks to God and

talk to Him about what's on your mind. Ask, "how can I please You right now," or "how can I love those around me right now." It may be intense to do this for several hours or a day, but you may be struck by how radically your mindset is changed. I used to think "I shouldn't have to do things like that to remember God's presence." But I've also surrounded myself with phones, computers, televisions which all constantly remind me of everything else but God. So, take it or leave it, but perhaps it will bless you when you know you're having trouble remembering the reality of His presence.

Knowing God is always with us makes every place we go a sacred place, and every work a sacred work. We are going places with God and doing things for God. The everywhere presence of the Lord means all that He is lives with us. It's not just any God who's near to us; but the Holy God, the Creator God, the All-Powerful God, the Loving God, the Just God, the All-Knowing God. You get the point. What a life changing thing this is to learn to live in. May He give us the grace to joyfully, trustingly walk in the reality that He's there and everywhere.

CHAPTER 11

God is All-Powerful and Sovereign

There are some things everyone can know about God even if they don't have a Bible. The power of God is one of those things (Rom. 1:20). The thoughtful mind cannot look at creation and miss the truth that whoever its creator is, He must be enormously powerful to cause all of this.

The book of Revelation speaks of a huge crowd in heaven worshipping God, saying:

Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the All-Powerful, reigns!
Revelation 19:6b *NET*

If someone or something has power, it means that person or thing has the ability and strength to accomplish something. We might talk about a powerful person, machine, storm, computer, an idea and whatever else. We mean they have a strength or ability. To not have the power to do something is to be incapable of it. God is capable of everything and anything that He wills to do.

God is called "All-powerful" or "All-mighty" because His power and might are not limited. A hurricane has a lot of power, but not unlimited power. There is a certain amount of energy it has and no more. The strongest men and machines still have a point where something is too hard or too heavy. But about God, Jeremiah says:

Oh, Lord God, you did indeed make heaven and earth by your mighty power and great strength. Nothing is too hard for you!
Jeremiah 32:17 *NET*

Nothing is in the category of "too hard" for God. As the maker of everything He is the only true source of power. We all live on borrowed strength and power from God. Since God is self-sufficient, He doesn't get power from anywhere else. He doesn't need to rest, or recharge or find more power. On the seventh day of creation, God didn't rest because He was tired. In fact, all of crea-

tion is being constantly held up by His power (Heb. 11:3). If God were to let go, the universe would fall apart.

He must be something so strong, so amazing. Think about this: they say on average, the earth is about 150 million kilometers (93 million miles) from the sun. Can you imagine how much energy the sun must have to be giving us sunburns from that far away? It is estimated by some that there are 200-400 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy alone, and our sun is only a speck compared to some of them. Then to think; we don't even know how many galaxies there are in the universe! They're guessing in the billions and hundreds of billions. What kind of power must God possess to be the source of all of that? It is completely impossible for us to comprehend. Now would be a good time to set the book down and just worship Him.

To be capable of anything doesn't mean God will do anything. While nothing is too hard for God, there are some things God will not do because He won't contradict His nature or His plans. He is not some mindless force of energy, but the living God who is wise, all-knowing, just, holy, unchanging, and everything else we're meditating on in this book. It would truly be a terror to think of the endless power of God if we didn't know the goodness of the person who had it.

For all of us, there is a gap between what we'd like to do and what we're able to do. For God, there is no such gap. Anything He wills to do, He can do and does do. He is a limitless resource, strength and power. He does whatever pleases Him (Ps. 135:6). There is no enemy or obstacle capable of stopping Him or overpowering Him. God's never shaking in fear or wondering if He can accomplish what He desires.

This is related to what people mean when they talk about the sovereignty of God. Being a person of limitless power, He is in control of everything and what He wants to do will be done. For a long time, people have wondered and debated about how it is that God can be in control of everything, without our choices meaning nothing. Doesn't that mean He also controls all we decide? No man probably understands that perfectly, but we know that He can do all He wants, and He apparently wanted to give man a free will — even with the wrong ways we've used it. The owner of a company can delegate control of a department to one of His employees and

they have a real level of control, but it is only borrowed control. If the owner decided to remove the person's position and control the department himself He has the power to do it. So it seems with man that God has delegated some things into our choice, but He has the ability to determine the outcome. A study in the life of Joseph (Gen. 37-50) will show that men often choose genuinely bad things, but God uses it to accomplish His good plans. We will be held responsible for our choices because they are real, but nothing will stop God from doing what He's planned.

This is one of the reasons we can trust in what God promises us. He is strong enough to follow through with what He's told us He's going to do. Sometimes promises are broken because there is something that hinders us from carrying them out. But nothing's going to stop God from doing and giving what He wants. No one and nothing can challenge God (Jer. 49:19).

As God is strong enough to carry out His promises, He is also strong enough to carry out His threats. Jesus told us:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and
body in hell.

Matthew 10:28 *NET*

That's not an empty threat He's not strong enough to back up. There is nothing strong enough to protect you or defend you against God if you have not obeyed the gospel of Jesus (1 Thess.1:8). People accusingly ask why God hasn't eliminated evil if He's strong enough, but they have forgotten they themselves are evil. God will indeed deal with evil, but He's being patient. He's giving time for more of us evil people to turn to Him and escape the destruction (2 Peter 3:9). You do not want to be the enemy of God; praise the Lord you don't have to be! Let us be sure we have surrendered to God to forgive us and lead our lives.

Those who return to God find His power an encouragement rather than a frightful thing. Jesus claimed He had the ability to bring Himself back from the dead (Matt. 2:19) and then He did it! So when He promises to give us life after death we know He has the power to back up what He says. His unchanging nature guaran-

tees us He will stick to what He says and His strength assures us He's capable.

God promised us something incredible in one of Peter's letters:

... His divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary
for life and godliness...
2 Peter 1:3 *NET* (selected)

Think about what that's saying: God's divine power has given us everything we need for what? Life and godliness. God knows what you need in your life and to be godly in it, and He is the one supplying the power. So next time you're thinking "I can't handle this," or "I can't get through this," or "I can't be changed" – that's a lie. God will give you everything for life and godliness as you trust Him. You probably will have no idea how, and it may not feel like it, but He will carry you through. No matter how dark and real your circumstances get, God's universe-making strength will give you what you need. It is not an obstacle to Him.

The truth that the Almighty God loves us is so wonderful. A parent who loves their child greatly has the desire to always be by their side and to help them with everything, but there are so many things they are incapable of helping with. But to be loved by God? There is no need He cannot meet, no enemy He cannot save you from, no person or thing He cannot help you with. You can see why Paul would say:

If God is for us, who can be against us?
Romans 8:31b *NET*

After saying that, Paul went on to list all of the things we might battle with and how none of them are strong enough to separate us from His love. When the strongest lover loves you, nothing can take you away from His love. Look at the list:

Trouble
Distress
Persecution
Famine
Nakedness

Danger

Death

Angels

Heavenly rulers

Things that are now

Things to come

Powers

Height

Depth

Or...Anything else in all of creation! (selected from Romans 8:35-39)

If you belong to Jesus, nothing is going to separate you from His love. We may have to face challenges from all of these things. He hasn't promised we will avoid them, but that we will have all we need to carry us through until He makes all things new.

There are, no doubt, many things that we wish God would do that He hasn't chosen to do. If all we knew about God was that He was strong, we might be discouraged. But when we remember He's wise, working out those perfect plans in a perfect way, we can trust Him. And when we remember He's all-knowing, we can rest assured that He knows what's going on and what it's going to take to carry us through. No one can get in the way of what God wants to do with your life if He wants it done.

Unanswered prayer is never caused by a lack of ability on God's part. He may be waiting for us to trust and obey, He may know it's not the right time or His wisdom may have a plan that we don't understand. You may not know His answer, but you can trust He'll work a miracle in the situation or work the miracle of sustaining you in it. A read through the Bible will show you He does both. If you are His child, be confident that God looks forward to showing Himself strong in the lives of people who are loyal to Him (2 Chron. 16:9).

Whatever the challenge, remember He is strong enough. If you are struggling to pay your bills, trust and obey. He can provide. If you are the overwhelmed parent who feels they don't have strength for another day, trust Him for help. He can give you strength. If you are feeling incapable of breaking addiction or sinful habits, trust and obey. You are not strong enough, but He is. If you have

no idea how to know the will of God, keep seeking Him and acting on the truth you do know. He is able to communicate to you whatever you need to hear, when you need to hear it. If you are crushed under a season of crisis or loss, He knows what you need and tells us He gives power to the weak (Isa. 40:29).

God's power will fulfill everything He has spoken. He will save those who repent and trust His Son Jesus. He will punish those who reject Him. He will make all things new. He will heal us and wipe our tears away someday. He will work everything together for our good. He will bring an end to Satan.

God asks us: Is My power limited (Num. 11:23)? We know the answer is "no," but we need to live it out. Our task is to focus on Him, believe what He says and do what He says. He is going to work out His plans – regardless of what we think may be obstacles. Don't be afraid of the evil plans of men, God laughs at their arrogance in thinking they can stop His will (Ps. 2).

The God who loves us is the God with all power. If you are with Him you are on the winning side. May we be bold and trust Him.

CHAPTER 12

God is Loving and Good

It is an intimidating thought to attempt a brief chapter on the love of God. It is such an enormous and beautiful thing. No one has fully grasped it or explained it, let alone in a short chapter. You cannot explore all that is in the ocean in a day, or a hundred lifetimes, but you can still get in and start swimming. So we can take our minds into this truth about God and taste a bit of its greatness and implications. This is perhaps one of His best known attributes, though it is often misunderstood and even criticized by some.

The word “love” is used so frequently and in so many ways. It seems to be the favorite topic in music, literature, poetry, painting and even our daily discussions of what we like (“I *love* that car!”). It can mean something so serious or be something so casual, that it becomes difficult to define. We’re going to have to try to understand what the Bible means when it talks about love.

We’re considering love and goodness at the same time in this chapter for a reason. If you look up the words translated “love” in our Bibles, you find in the original languages, they mean “goodness, affection, good-will, loving-kindness, well-meaning” and so forth. There may be some distinctions between the two terms, but they’re so closely related we’ll discuss them together here. We know when the Scriptures talk about the love of God they’re also talking about His goodness. He is pure good, and He desires good for all.

You are good and you do good.

Psalm 119:68a *NET*

The Lord is good to all, and has compassion on all he has
made.

Psalm 145:9 *NET*

Have you ever thought of how blessed we are that God is the way He is? If He was cruel and mean and bad-willed toward us, we would have no hope. Sure, you could get mad at Him, but you’d

still be completely vulnerable to an all-powerful tyrant who didn't care about your good. Praise God that He is the way He is.

But what does it mean to be loving and good? Well, since God is love (1 John 4:8), we can say that all He does is loving and good. Good isn't something that exists outside of Him, He is the definition of what's good. Observing what God does is observing a perfect lover at work. We understand love by watching Him.

God's goodness and love is displayed in creation. Mankind was thought into existence by His desire, and we were put into a marvelously beautiful place. He could have designed our world only for necessity, but He designed it for pleasure and enjoyment as well. He gave us feelings and colors and landscapes and the vast expanse of space to explore and wonder at. Next time you are moved by an incredible song, remember that it's God who came up with the idea of music. Next time you enjoy the beauty of an ocean-view or the awesome sight of mountains and flowers, praise God for building us such a wonderful environment to enjoy. He is the one who made the varieties of foods and designed your taste buds to enjoy them. He is the one who invented sex and laughter and sleep. The way He created so much pleasure shows us He loves to pour out blessings.

God's goodness and love is also seen in His persistent chasing down of mankind to come back to Him. We remember that if God has no needs; that means He doesn't need us around. And yet He *wants* us around. He wants to do us good. He wants us with Him. After Adam and Eve sinned, it was God who came to find them to preserve relationship. It was God who sent prophets to tell the nations to turn back to Him. It is because God loved the world that Jesus was sent to save us (John 3:16). Jesus died, we're told, so we could be with Him whether we're alive or dead (1 Thess. 5:10). God's amazing love has always been calling back the people that have wronged Him.

God's goodness and love continues to be seen toward those who are still rejecting Him. Jesus points out God is letting the sun and rain fall on everyone whether they love Him or not (Matt. 5:45-46). This basically means God is giving His enemies what they need to live, even while they're fighting against Him! He continues to do them good when they've done Him harm. God has not judged the

world yet, we're told, because He is patient with us and not wanting anyone to perish, but all to turn back to Him (2 Peter 3:9).

This is what's forgotten when people say "If God is good, then why is there evil in the world?" First of all, it is because *we* rebelled against God that the world is full of evil. We are the cause. Second, if God were to eliminate evil from the world, He would have to eliminate *us* because *we* are not good. Instead, Jesus has died to make a way to come back to Him and be changed if we want to return to Him.

There will be a day when those who know God will live in a place free of evil and pain. God *is* going to make all things new and wonderful, but allowing the evil to live there would spoil it again. So if God desires to create a place of perfect love and goodness, then eventually all who continue to resist Him must be removed. This is why a loving God must also be a God who judges and punishes. Part of what makes heaven perfect is that God's will is always done there (Matt. 6:10). Where men insist on doing their will instead of God's, there will always be damage and corruption. To not be with God is to not be with all that is good. No one will end up in hell because God does not love, but because they've rejected the source of perfect love.

Maybe the scariest thing God has given us is free will, that is, the ability to love Him back or not. It's a sobering fact that we are capable of refusing God and going to eternal destruction. We ask, "Why did God even give us the choice to mess everything up?" But the fact that we can choose gives us opportunity to love. Imagine a newborn baby girl who can't move around or go anywhere. The nice thing is; she can't get into trouble. The downside is; your interaction with her is limited. Once the child can walk, she has more freedom to get into trouble. But also, she could use her legs to run to you and give you a kiss. This melts every parent's heart, because the child has shown in their choice that they want to love their parent. Forcing a child to come kiss you doesn't have the same effect. Yes, a free will creates the possibility for rebellion, but it also creates the opportunity for the choice of love.

Since the beginning of mankind, Satan has been working to convince people that God is not good and loving. His temptation in the garden was aimed at making God sound stingy and not good-willed. They believed the lie and so do most people in the world

today. But when Jesus “the God-man” was born, the shepherds heard the angels singing about peace on earth and God’s *good-will* toward men (Luke 2:14). On the cross, suffering in our place, Jesus forever answered the question of God’s goodness and love. We see Him, who had done nothing wrong, voluntarily being crushed for what we’ve done. No one told God to do it or made Him do it; He did it of His own will because He wanted to make a way for us to come back to Him. Do not believe the lie any longer that God is cruel, mean and doesn’t love you. Jesus has proved it false.

It can definitely be difficult to live through the hard stuff of life and remember that God is good. But we have to keep in mind; we are not in that perfect world yet, but a broken one. If everyone’s healthy, it’s not seen as loving to go around cutting people open. But if you’re in a room where everyone is sick and surgery can help them, cutting can be what’s best for them if a doctor knows what He’s doing. God’s wisdom assures us that He does know what He’s doing, and His love tells us He has what’s good in mind. These uncomfortable things will be used for the best. Remember the love He showed on the cross and remember He doesn’t change. He can be trusted.

If real love desires to do what’s best for someone, then it will sometimes be uncomfortable. Anyone who has had a friend or family member struggling with bad habits or addiction knows that it’s more comfortable not to confront them, but if you love them, you have to, for their good. So it is with us. Jesus, who always loved perfectly, did not only say comforting things, but also very hard things. When you read the Bible, you discover how much is wrong with the way you think, and talk and live. God is intervening because He loves you too much to leave you as you are. Don’t believe the lie that He doesn’t love you just because He confronts you. On the cross He set you free from the penalty of sin, and now He wants to set you free from the slavery of sin running your life.

Everyone in this world is looking for what’s *really* good. Everyone is trying to figure out what can make them feel loved and safe and peaceful. But anything you get, even other good things, will not be enough to satisfy what you’re longing for—and we’ve all experienced it. You wanted that guy, that girl, that car, that job, that friend, that home, that accomplishment, that look, that vacation, that thing, and when you got it? Well, it was probably nice,

but it didn't do what you thought it would. It didn't give you that deep satisfaction and rest. Being near God is the best thing you can have and the only thing that can fill you up. As the psalmist said:

But as for me, the nearness of God is my good.

Psalm 73:28a NASB

There're a lot of things in this world that can be blessings, but if you want what's really good you're wanting God. His love and closeness is what you're craving.

We're all prone to "looking for love in all the wrong places." The Bible actually says that God is jealous (Ex. 20:5). There is a right kind of jealousy – like when a man is angered to find His wife chasing other men. Her love is supposed to be for him! That jealousy wouldn't be there if the man didn't care about His relationship with His wife. It is one of the most flattering thoughts for us that the inventor of the universe actually cares that we stay with Him. His jealousy tells us He actually wants us, and He knows we will never have what's good until we have Him.

If you lose something that isn't very valuable, you won't go to much trouble trying to find it. But when something precious is lost, you will go to great lengths to get it back because you aren't willing to lose it. And this is what's so stunning about what God has done for us. For some reason, Jesus found us worth dying for to get back. You are important enough to God that He didn't want to lose you. No one has more of a right to leave us than God, but no one has suffered more to keep us than God.

We look at what we've done and wonder why we matter so much to Him. How can God be so good to people who have been so bad to Him? We find no other reason than the fact that He is the source of love. He doesn't give it because it's what we deserve, but because it's who He is. God is love (1 John 4:8).

My small mind couldn't find the place where your love grew

But I was blind and failed to see that very place was you

You're where it comes from, You're where it grows

This love that needs no reasons, the love that you have shown to me

The world has a shallow kind of love that only gives when it has something to gain. But Jesus lost everything to give us what we desperately needed. The only right response is to give our highest love back to our maker and the only one who's ever loved us that deeply. May we see His love more clearly, and be so filled with it that we carry it and spill it wherever we go.

CHAPTER 13

God is Just and Merciful

Justice and mercy are two attributes of God mentioned repeatedly in both the Old and New Testaments. It may seem strange to some that we would combine these two into one chapter. On the surface they seem to be complete opposites and many people wonder how God can be both of these things at the same time. But God is never in conflict with Himself; both are equally true of Him. To be able to discuss the two side-by-side will help us see who He is with more clarity.

If something is unjust, or as we say “an injustice has been done”, we’re saying something wrong has been done; someone hasn’t been treated right. So a *just* person is someone who does what’s right and doesn’t do what’s wrong. The words “righteousness” and “justice” often mean exactly the same thing in the Bible. A righteous or just person treats people right, and fair, and how they deserve to be treated.

As for the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are just. He is a reliable God who is never unjust, He is fair and upright.
Deuteronomy 32:4 NET

The judgments given by the Lord are trustworthy and absolutely just.
Psalm 19:9b NET

Everything God does is right. All His thoughts, all of His laws, all of His actions, all of His plans and all of His ways are right. No one has ever had God treat them unfairly or unjustly. It is incorrect to say someone needs to “forgive God,” because God has never treated anyone wrong.

When we say something is right or wrong, we’re judging it based on a standard of morality. God Himself *is* that standard. If God were not there, it would be quite hard to define why we believe anything is right or wrong. If we, as many think, are just highly evolved animals, on what basis could we judge something to be bad? Our only objection could be that it’s not convenient to us or

that it's not helpful for a functioning society. But we couldn't actually protest that it was wrong to rape, kill, steal or whatever else. But we all know there *is* such a thing as right and wrong because there's a just God out there, and we're made in His image. But He doesn't have anyone or anything telling Him how He should be; just and righteous is just the way He is. Something is right or wrong based on whether or not it lines up with Him.

The justice of God is an ignored attribute by many because we know that injustice should be punished, and that we are not just. The Bible affirms God will judge us, and this is not only an Old Testament idea. Jesus himself warned often of God's coming judgment and punishment of those who are not just (Matt. 13:49-50.) We know we're unjust because we do not treat God as He ought to be treated and we do not treat others right. The greatest commandment is to love God with all of our life and energy, but we break it every day. We don't give God even near the love, loyalty, honor, trust and gratitude He deserves for making us and letting us breathe each moment. The second greatest command is to love others like we love ourselves, but none of us come close to thinking and working as much for others as we do for ourselves.

The breaking of these two great commands is manifested in thousands of other sins. We lie, we steal, we use our maker's name disrespectfully, we hate, we murder, we crave the possessions of others, we drink until we're drunk, we break our promises, cheat on our spouses, take sex from people we haven't committed our life to, re-define our sexual identity, take advantage of other people, cheat to get ahead, spend all our money on ourselves while people suffer around us, use religion to get honor for ourselves instead of God, talk bad about people behind their backs, insult one another, disobey our parents—and the list goes on. The point is: no man on earth can claim they have lived right toward God and others. Our *injustice* and *unrighteousness* will be judged and punished by the all-seeing eyes of the Just God (Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:13).

This is real. There is a real God who each one of us will face at a real time—you could mark it on your calendar if you knew when. Many people say "well, I just think God is going to forgive me." Is that the right thing for Him to do? Is it just for a judge to let law-breakers off the hook? What about the wrong things done to you? For God to just say, "Sin is not a big deal," is to say it's not a big

deal that your heart got broken, that your stuff got stolen, that your trust got abused, that your loved one got killed, that you were insulted and lied about—you get the point. We want evil ignored when we've done it, but when it's done to us we want justice. Well, God will judge and because He's a good judge He won't leave evil unpunished.

But isn't God merciful? It is indeed an attribute of God, and one that is heavily mentioned not just in the New Testament, but also the old. There was a time when God walked by Moses and described what He was like. The very first thing God chose to say about Himself was that He was merciful (Ex. 34:6). Jesus also told us our heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). Someone who is merciful feels compassion and pity for your situation and moves to help. God often says that He is a God of compassion, pity and mercy. His justice means He'll never treat someone worse than they deserve. His mercy means that He is inclined to do more for people than they deserve. So the Lord sees our need for forgiveness, but how can He give us the mercy of forgiveness and still deal with sin justly?

As always, the cross is the solution. God has said the penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and to be just, He must follow through with His word. Being forsaken by God is what we deserve for rebelling against our maker, that's what's just. But when Jesus hung on the cross He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me." Something happened that day. Jesus had stepped in to take our sentence. Jesus took the just wrath of God for our sins on himself.

He had never sinned. He had always served and loved the Father with all of His strength. He had always loved others perfectly. He, and He alone, could say He was fully righteous and just. He deserved reward and love from His Father for how He lived. But He gave the reward that was rightfully His to us. We Christians are given the good status with God of a righteous life, while He took our consequence for unrighteous living.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust,
that He might bring us to God.

1 Peter 3:18 NASB

The cross is the ultimate picture of the just and merciful God. It screams that sin is serious and will be dealt with by God severely. But also that God has pity for the mess we've gotten ourselves in and wanted to give us a solution. Remember that if we all were sent to hell to pay for our sins, God would be completely just—they were ours to pay for. It would've been fair for God to do that, but because He is merciful, He had compassion on us and made a way.

Those who don't belong to Jesus yet should not comfort themselves with the mercy of God. Trusting in Jesus and His sacrifice is our only lasting safety with the just God. If we don't belong to Christ the guilt of our sin remains and God will punish us for it. The question isn't whether God is in a just or merciful mood; He's always both. But He can only give forgiveness to those who call out to God for mercy and are willing to leave a life of sin. So, the New Testament says:

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.
2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 *NIV*

But,

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
Romans 10:13 *NET*

Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from evil.
2 Timothy 2:19b *NET*

Jesus came to start a kingdom of people who would once again be with God and follow Him. No one has gotten into His kingdom because they deserved to, but because the King paid the price to give us mercy. And so it is a rule of His kingdom that we who have been given mercy must give it out. Wrong things will be done to Christians, but if we want God's mercy, we are required to forgive the injustices done to us (Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Matt. 18:22-

35). Who are we to demand better treatment out of people than the Almighty God demanded out of us?

We also see the mercy of God in His care for the broken and poor. Those who walked with Jesus describe Him seeing the needs of people and feeling compassion for them (Matt. 9:36; 14:14). His mercy wasn't a passing feeling of pity, but one that took action to help. If we are led by the same Spirit who led Jesus, Christians will see brokenness and want to give mercy. We can say our money is ours and our time is ours, but God's mercy leads us to give up our rights to meet the need. This is so foundational to being a Christian, that Jesus said one day it will be the criteria that judges whether or not we really belonged to God (Matt. 25:31-46). The apostle John points out it's ridiculous to think the loving God is living in someone who can see people's needs and ignore them (1 John 3:17). And the apostle James implies that a faith in God that doesn't produce a merciful person probably isn't the kind of faith that saves a person (James 2:14-17). The people of Jesus' kingdom are moved to meet the physical and spiritual needs around them.

As God pours out His perfect justice and mercy, His people are to be defined by the same attributes.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8 NIV

Jesus scolded the religious leaders of His time who were more interested in religious rituals than authentically walking with God and caring about people. He told them they had failed to do the more important things God had communicated – like *justice* and *mercy* (Matt. 23:23). We are called to be a people who treat God right, treat others right and care for those in need.

Every day of our lives we are in a more fortunate position than we deserve to be. We should not forget that if God had not shown us mercy, we would have no forgiveness, hope or future. Every good thing is a blessing we don't deserve and every hard thing is no worse than we've earned.

May the world see that God is just and merciful because His people imitate Him. May the Spirit lead us to right-living, forgive-

ness, and an active compassion for our neighbors. Let those being crushed under the wrong treatment of others know that God has seen it and will repay the wicked with wrath if they don't turn (Romans 12:19). Let those in a time of need be encouraged to know that Jesus empathizes with us and desires to give us the mercy we need (Heb. 4:15-16).

God has always been and will always be the God of perfect justice and mercy. If we ignore either one of them we will find ourselves worshipping a God we've made up and miss the whole point of the cross of Christ.

CHAPTER 14

God is Gracious

In the list of things God came and told Moses about Himself, the second thing He mentioned was that He was gracious (Ex. 34:6). Peter referred to the Lord as “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10). Paul described the message of Christianity as the good news of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). The letters written to the churches often speak of His grace and show it was so dominant in their thinking that it became part of their regular greetings like “grace to you” and “grace with you.”

Grace is one of the most central truths of Christianity, and something God says about His own character. Grace speaks about His kindness and His giving-nature. God is a giver. There are some things that are given because they are owed, and some things that are given as gifts. If an employer gives you a paycheck, it’s because you deserve money for the work you’ve done for them. But if someone comes and gives you a gift, it’s because they want to bless you, not because you worked for it (Rom. 11:6). God gives, not because we’ve earned it, but because He is a giver. He is gracious.

It is this truth that separates Christian thinking from that of other religions. The Bible states that man cannot earn eternal life or a right standing with God. No matter how hard we work to obey laws and be a good people we all have fallen horribly short.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23–24 *NET*

A free gift is our only hope. Like a bankrupt man who has messed up everything and hand and hope for the kindness and generosity of someone giving them something they don’t deserve. Jesus says we are blessed if we’re spiritually driven to beggary; these are the people who get to be in God’s everlasting kingdom (Matt. 5:3). The Christian has nothing to brag about because we are not good people getting what we deserve; we are messed up people who have been given things we have no right to have.

God says that He will be gracious to whom He wants (Ex. 33:19). Grace is not something anyone is entitled to, but something God chooses to give. So who does He want to give grace to? Thankfully, the Bible tells us:

God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.
James 4:6b *NET*

Those who are willing to acknowledge their need, dependence and lack of worthiness are those God chooses to give grace to. Those who think highly of themselves and depend on themselves are opposed by Him. It says a lot when you look through the Bible at all of the mentions of grace, and see that it is almost exclusively given to those who belong to God. This doesn't mean God's people have earned it. The beggar hasn't earned the right to anyone's money by humbling himself on the street and holding out his hand. But if He never humbles Himself to go down and hold out His hand, He will not receive what a gracious person may give. God is always a gracious God, but only those who humble themselves and give themselves to Him will receive what He freely offers.

The word grace is often translated as favor. When you have the favor of someone, it means they approve of you, they like you, they treat you over-generously. When we ask a *favor* from someone, we're asking for something we're not entitled to. This is probably why it's usually our close family and friends we ask favors of; we know they love us and are disposed to help us—even if they don't get much benefit from it. To be the children of God is to be family and to be in the favor of our heavenly Father. If you are His, He is on your side. He desires to help you and show kindness and generosity to you even when you don't deserve it.

And God's grace isn't only needed for getting your sins forgiven. The New Testament shows the Christian life is one of trust and dependence on God as He constantly pours out graces or favors into our lives. He distributes spiritual gifts (literally graces) to His people to empower them as they help each other (Rom. 12:6). All of our Christian character and growth is also referred to as grace (2 Cor. 8:7). We're told God is able to pour out more and more in our lives to help us have what we need to do every good work (2 Cor. 9:8). Basically, walking in grace is a way of life for the Christian. It

is God in us and with us, making us like Him and empowering us to do all we need to do.

This is why we're told that we can't be a part of Jesus' kingdom unless we're willing to humble ourselves and become like little children. We learn to live a life of dependence on God as He gives us all we need. In all of the big and small in our lives, God desires that we ask for His help and leading, and trust Him to do it. Whatever is going on in our lives, God is not telling us to be stronger, but to trust Him to give us what we need. This means we have to let go of our pride and feelings of self-sufficiency. We get to rest in the knowledge that our Father will give us grace after grace as we need it. Those who trust Him for it get it.

We often fear what might happen if we face a situation we can't handle, but if we are in the grace of God we will be given what's needed for it. Do not judge what you are capable of accomplishing or dealing with based on what you feel you're capable of. Go to God, and as you trust and obey you will find He gives you what you need when you need it, maybe not ahead of time. Our giving God knows what's going on and has planned to give us what's required at the right moment. When Paul asked God to remove a hard situation, God didn't do it, but He was told:

My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in
weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9 *NET*

God's not just saying "It's enough that I forgave you of your sins," though there's some truth to that. Paul is promised that although He is weak, the power of God will be given to Him to sustain Him. The promise is the same for us. Do you feel weak and unable to deal with what's going on? Good. You're seeing clearly and God is waiting to be the one to give you power. Learn to pray "God I don't know how to do this or deal with this, but I'm going to trust you to help me in the way you know is best."

Because grace is un-earned favor, there will always be people who twist it as an excuse to live in sin. They assume that because God gives to the unworthy, He does not care how we live. These people are still outside the grace of God. Paul says:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Titus 2:11-12 *NET*

Notice that it says God's grace trains us to live right. Those who are content living in sin show that they do not have God's grace because they're not being trained to live differently. Humbling yourself and trusting the God of grace will begin to change you.

The great giver has given us life, a beautiful world, forgiveness, the power to live and grow – and most importantly, Himself. How wonderful that no matter how messed up we are, God promises the grace of forgiveness to all who will humble themselves and trust Him. How wonderful to know we can live daily in the favor of God. We have a God who loves to give, and He's strong enough and wise enough to do it perfectly. May we learn to walk in dependence on the God of grace, and may we become givers like Him.

CHAPTER 15

God is Infinite

We have seen over and over again that the Lord is not like us, and not like anything we know. Everything else has been thought up, built, and sustained by Him. He brought the universe; its laws, time and space into existence. So as we describe things and talk about them, we're used to defining them by their place in time and space and their relationship to all the laws of the universe.

We could talk about an animal and how big it is, how much it weighs, how smart it is, where it is located, how strong it is, how fast it is, when it was born and how long it usually lives. These sorts of facts are associated with everything, but this is creature-talk. Every created thing has its limitations and boundaries in time and space; we are finite. But God, as always, is different. He is infinite.

God cannot be measured since He is not material. God cannot be given an age since He has no beginning or end. God's presence is not limited because He is not confined to space. God's strength cannot be calculated since there's nothing He can't do. His wisdom cannot be graded because He is the source of all wisdom. His level of knowledge cannot be defined because there is absolutely nothing He doesn't know (John 4:24; Isa. 40:28; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 147:5; Rom. 16:27). Since He is the great cause of all creation, He is not restrained by any of these things that define our existence.

Nothing made God or supplies Him with anything, so nothing about Him can be taken and nothing can be added. He doesn't have a certain amount of any attribute because His attributes are not external things that He possesses, but things that He is. No one built God with the concept of love or gave Him a certain amount of it; He is the very source of love. Holiness is not something He got or grew into; it's what He's always been. All that He is has no limit. He is the limitless divine.

It's quite natural that we find this difficult for us to grasp or talk about. Human languages are used to talking about finite things humans can investigate, measure and define. But you cannot fully define the one who is the builder of all of your reference points and

who is referenced by nothing. We think as limited beings in a limited universe and have no way of comprehending an infinite God. He is a mystery that no mind is capable of getting and no language is able to define.

People use the words “infinite” and “limitless” about many things, but it’s always an exaggeration. There are a lot of drops in the ocean, but if you were capable of counting them there would be a limit. An atom bomb is extremely strong, but still has a measurable amount of strength and no more. Everything has a limit and boundary except God. He is literally the only thing the word “infinite” can apply to.

We thank God that while our sin has enormously messed up this world, there’s a limit to it, and God’s infinite grace is more. He says that our sin is enormous, but His grace is more enormous (Rom. 5:20). The limitless resource of God is still greater than the level of need and made a way of forgiveness for us.

Have you ever wondered how the death of Jesus is fair payment for all the sins of the world? How could one man’s death be a just payment for every sinner? The answer, of course, is that he wasn’t just a man. It was the Son of the infinite God. A man is much more valuable than a bug, and if one man died to save the lives of a million bugs we would still wonder if the bugs were worth the cost. The maker of the universe, the infinite Son of God has died to pay our debts. No matter how many finite humans He died for, the worth of all our lives and all of creation wouldn’t add up to even a percentage of His endless worth. The question then becomes not “why was His death enough?” but “why were we worth it to Him?” This may forever stay a mystery to us, but we can praise God for eternity that it’s true.

There is never too high a price to be paid to honor our Infinite Savior. He is worthy of the highest praise and sacrifice we can give. And to be called the friend of a God like this is worth the loss of anything and everything else. To have the Great Infinite Spirit as our companion is the highest privilege any man can have.

Our infinite God is the only thing that will forever captivate our hearts. We will never feel as though we’ve fully gotten Him because it will be impossible to do. We will never become bored of Him or have Him figured out. There will always be more of God; He is the bottomless mystery. We may wonder someday at the epic

creatures that serve Him in heaven, but they will still only be finite creatures. And with all their greatness, we will witness them endlessly stunned by the holy, infinite God.

*You will never be explained, a mystery untamed
Infinite God
We cannot calculate your endless glory's weight
Infinite God*

*There is no boundary to frame you
There is no language to name you
The measurements fail now, and numbers can't speak
Of our infinite God*

CHAPTER 16

Conclusion

As we have gone one-by-one through our maker's attributes, you may have noticed that almost everything about Him confronts us at some point. God is mankind's biggest crisis because humanity is out of proper relationship to Him. You may have also noticed that every attribute points us to the gospel of Jesus. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus are aimed at curing the problem. God is our greatest crisis and has offered our only cure. The question left for every man and woman now is: will we take the cure and to what extent?

Magnets are either drawn toward each other or repelled from each other based on which way they are facing. And so it is with God. The heart that refuses His forgiveness and refuses to let Him be in charge will be pushed away from God. But those who will turn to trust in the work of Jesus and let Him be their ruler will be pulled like a magnet into attachment with God. Jesus has done the work, but who will turn back to proper relationship with Him?

A life with God can be started in one moment, but it is cultivated through a lifetime day by day. Why do we see some Christians full of joy and peace and passion while others have very little evidence of spiritual life? The answer for some is that although they call themselves Christians they have never truly become children of God. For others, the answer is that they're not being transformed much into new creatures because they're not renewing their mind (Rom. 12:2). With one initial decision, a person can decide to turn from their old life to trust and follow Christ, but it is only the beginning of a journey. We must learn to think about God, everything, and ourselves the way we're supposed to.

I'm hoping you've had a taste of how many things are brought into the light when you're focused on the true God. We remember how small and dependent we are. We remember how amazing and wonderful He is. We see what in our character needs to become like His. We remember why He can and should be trusted. We are brought to a higher respect and gratefulness for who He is and what the gospel has done for us. We need Him to be at the forefront

of our minds every day. We have to be reminded of these things over and over. A month from now and a year from now you will have a whole different set of circumstances and these truths might not be fresh in your thoughts.

It's impressive to think how well advertising works. The business-world has learned that if you put information into people's minds enough, they will act on it. What you think about will drive your desires, and your desires will drive your actions. It is crucial, then, that what we feed our minds corresponds to reality. Then we desire the right things and are more prone to take the right actions. Since God is the creator of our reality, the sustainer of our reality, the helper of our lives and the judge of how we live, we must keep Him at the center of our attention. We must set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:2). Since it was the invisible God who made all the visible world (Heb. 11:3), there is much more to reality than our eyes can see and it must be focused on. How can we keep God at the forefront of our thinking?

The Scriptures. The world thinks about life from a god-less perspective, the Bible talks about things as they really are, with God in mind. The Scriptures tell us what He is like, what He has done in the past, what He desires in our lives, what He thinks about things and some of what's to come. We need to be informed and reminded constantly of all of these things so we don't believe the fictitious perspective of the world around us. I'm often amazed how many wrong things I've been told in churches (or even thought and taught myself) because I listened to men more than the Scriptures. Let the Bible be part of your daily life and wrestle out what it really means, not just what you want it to mean. Being saturated in the Bible will keep your perspective adjusted to the reality of God.

Prayer. Trying to interact with God without studying the Bible is foolish because you often think wrongly about who you're interacting with. But reading the Scriptures and not praying is to never interact with the true God you're learning about. Learn to develop a deep prayer life--few do these days. Make time to get alone often and talk to your Heavenly Father, not about what you *think* you should talk about, but about whatever's on your mind. Honestly speak to God about what's going on in your life, what you're think-

ing about, what you're confused about, and what your needs are. Thank Him for all things, give Him honor and respect as your maker, sustainer, and savior. Ask for His help in being transformed and doing His will. The best way to learn to pray is just to get alone and learn to be honest with Him. Those who have seen God do the greatest things have been those who've become addicted to spending time with Him.

Fellowship. We all know we tend to be greatly shaped by the people we're regularly around, so this should not be a surprise to us. The Christian life is meant to grow and thrive in a community of people who are striving to live in the truth and leadership of Jesus. Ask God to help you find people who have a healthy fear of Him, who are hungry to know Him, obey Him, and study the Scriptures. Seek God with them, serve them and learn from them. If all you can find is a few devoted Christians, be with them and pray God draws more. It's better to be with a small number of real believers than a large number of "maybe-believers" or "make-believers." If you want to hear from God, be moved by God, be carried by God, then it will be with His people. They are Jesus' body and so He will speak to you through them, move you through them and carry you through them. And they'll need you there too.

Obedience. If people are truly saved but not moving forward with God, it is usually because they're not obeying. Beware of the habit of reading the Bible and listening to good Bible teaching but not making changes in your life. Then you're just learning information and missing the point of it. Many people are asking God to speak to them and reveal things to them but they have not acted on what He's already spoken and revealed. Jesus said we show our love by keeping His commands, and if we do, He will show himself to us (John 14:21). The way to learning is the way of obedience. May a church rise up in our generation that is just as good at obeying God as they are at talking about Him! If we aren't being changed by His truth then we still don't get it. Think again about the kind of God we're talking about:

He is the great cause of everything we know. He is the reason we are. He has no creator, no cause, no source. There was no beginning to Him and there will never be an end to Him. There is

nothing He needs and nothing He depends on. Five thousand years ago He was just the same as today and will be no different 5,000 years in the future. He will never be changed. He knows absolutely everything about everything, in every time and every place. He has a perfect wisdom that always knows the best things to do and the best way to do them. His presence is everywhere. There is nowhere to hide from His presence and nowhere you can be taken from it. There is nothing too hard for Him, the God of limitless power. There is nothing to stop Him from carrying out His plans and no one to threaten His rule. He is Holy, completely unique and completely perfect. He always does right. No one has been treated unfairly by Him and no one ever will be. He burns with anger against evil and will judge every thought and every action. He punishes the wicked. And yet He is good-willed and loving toward all He has made. He supplies His enemies with good things and pains Himself to invite them to be friends. He is slow to become angry and patient—not wanting us to perish. He pities the hurting and the needy and hears their cries. He is the great giver and delights to give His children good gifts. He is limitless, bottomless and beyond what any of His creatures in heaven and on earth can grasp. Somehow one and three, Father, Spirit and Son. He is God.

The only right response to a God this great who has loved us the way He has is to give absolutely all of ourselves to Him. He is not someone you let into your life; He is someone you build your entire life around. He should be trusted more than anyone or anything. He should be loved in such a way that every other love looks pathetic by comparison. He should be honored for His greatness and thanked for all we're constantly receiving from Him. He should be obeyed and followed no matter what it may cost us. His passions should become our passions, His plans should become our plans, His words should become our words. His greatness and the things He's done should be spoken about, written about, sung about, painted about, and proclaimed through every medium. His words should be meditated on, memorized, studied, taught, and obeyed. Intimacy with Him should be the privilege we dream about and chase with all our heart. Loyalty should be given to Him regardless of consequence. Every act of life should be done as a thank-you and tribute to Him. We should crave every bit of His character to become part of ours, so the world will see and be

drawn to the beauty of His perfection. His name should be honored, His kingdom should be advanced, His will should be done.

We Christians have been forgiven. We have been called to be the people who represent this God and the people who He lives with. Let us give our lives and energy to knowing Him, loving Him, and making Him known – the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit: the One True God.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON THE ATTRIBUTES TO GOD

(The author of course does not necessarily endorse everything from these teachers or their material, but has found them beneficial for growth on the subject of God.)

Books:

The Knowledge of the Holy -A. W. Tozer
The Attributes of God -Arthur W. Pink
Classic Sermons on the Attributes of God -Wiersbe
Concise Theology -J. I. Packer
Systematic Theology (volume 2) -Dr. Norman Geisler
Knowing God J. I. Packer
The One True God -Paul Washer
On Who is God -Mark Driscoll
Who is God? (Basic) -Francis Chan
The Existence and Attributes of God -Stephen Charnock
Let Me See Thy Glory -Bob Deffinbaugh

Audio Teaching:

Steve Gregg: (thenarrowpath.com + topical lectures + knowing God)

William Lane Craig: (reasonablefaith.org + Media/Audio + doctrine of God)

Tim Keller: (sermons2.redeemer.com + Who is God)

Various: (sermonindex.net + Audio Sermons/by topic + attributes of God)

**If this resource blessed you, please help spread the word about it.
Thanks!**

To connect with Isaac online, visit **thejustrace.com**

Open Up Our Eyes

C G D/F#
Give us thirst to find you Jesus
C G D/F#
Give us light to see you
C D Em C/B
We want to know you as you are
C D G
We want to know you as you are

C G D/F#
Open up our eyes, Open up our hearts to see
C Em D/F# C
Show us who you are, Show us what we're supposed to be

C G D/F#
Give us ears that hear you
C G D/F#
Give us hearts to trust you
C D Em C/B
We want to know you as you are
C D G
We want to know you as you are

C D Em G D/F# Em
Give us wisdom, we want to know you Father
C D Em G D/F# Em Am D/F#
Your revelation, we want to know you deeper

Strong Enough (capo 7 for recorded key)
A/F# E B
The universe hangs by a thread from your hand
A/F# E B
Built with only words from your mouth
A C#m B
You must be something so amazing
A C#m B
We must be fools to ever fear

E E/G#

You are strong enough

A

To follow through with everything you've promised me

E E/G#

You are strong enough

A

To rescue me from any kind of enemy

A/F# B/G# A B

If our God is for us than who'll be against us?

A/F# B/G# A B

You are strong enough

Your enemies will find there's no hope

To challenge strength divine –the endless force of God

There's no defense from You

There's nothing You can't do

A C#m B

You will give us strength through the fray

You will carry us all the way

You will give us life past the grave

You will wipe our tear-drops away

Never changed

C G D

Where can we find a place to stand?

Em C

The world and all its people, shift like the sand

C G D

You are the rock, our constant place

Em C

Unmoved and permanent through all time and space

Em C G

And all you are, You've always been

D G

And all you are, You'll always be

G Am C C Em D
Nothing can take what we have in you
G Am C C Em D
Nothing can break what we build on you
G D G/B C
You have never changed, You will never change
Em D C
You have never changed my God

Your purpose fixed, your word is sure
 The heart made sick with change, finds you the cure
 You'll never change, perfection shows
 You cannot turn to less, and you cannot grow

Em D G/B C
 You are the rock, we will stand on you
 You are the rock, we will hide in you
 You are the rock, nothing moves you Lord
 You are the rock, You are the rock

Infinite God

E E/Eb A
 You will never be defined, the limitless divine
A/F#
 Infinite God
C#m E/Eb A
 You are there before the start and after all the ends
B
 Infinite God

E D
There is no boundary to frame You
A B
There is no language to name You
C#m B A
The measurements fail now, and numbers can't speak
B
Of our infinite God

Am Bm C
We were made by the unmade God
G C
You are the the great I AM!
Am Bm C D C-G-D
We were caused by the uncaused God, The great I AM

Every star the heavens hold, every galaxy untold
 Owes you gratitude
 Every sun and moonlit sky, every baby's newborn cry
 Owes you gratitude

C G Em D
 Before we came to be, You are the Great I AM
C G Em D
 Before the earth and and sea, You are the Great I AM
C G Em D
 Before the stars would shine, You are the Great I AM
Am Bm C
 Before you started time,

This Love

F Am G
 I searched my mind wondering why you love the way you do
F Am G
 But I can't find a motive for the things that I have seen in you
C/E F
 Where does it come from, where does it grow
C C/B F-Am-G
 The love that needs no reason, the love that you have shown to me

F Am G
You thought me into existence
F C C/E
You sought me with loving persistence
F Am G F
You bought me and purchased forgiveness with your own blood

Am G
What is this love?

My small mind couldn't find the place where your love grew
But I was blind and failed to see that very place was you

Dm Em
When we were still your enemies, You took up our infirmities
F G
And innocent you died that day to pay the price we should have
paid
Am C
I'm amazed to ponder how your eyes can see me blameless now
F Am
The God who doesn't need a thing has crushed His Son and
G F-Am-G
offered me new life

F G
You're where it comes from, You're where it grows
F G
The love that needs no reason, the love that you have show to me
Dm-Em-F-G Am-C-F-G-F

You Know Everything

C Em D/F# G
The darkest corners of the universe
C Em D/F# G
The deepest secrets of every man

C Em D C Em D
You know everything. You see everything

You count the teardrops nobody sees
You hear the prayers of our silent screams.

C Em D C Em D
You know everything. You see everything.

Before You suffered to keep me around
 You knew I'd fail You and let You down

C Em D C Em D
You knew everything in me. And still gave everything for me.

CMaj7 - D6add4add9 - Bm11#5 - Am9 (for the rest of song)

What kind of love is this? Choosing a messed up friend like me.
 What kind of love is this? Knowing my faults and still You wanted me.

	CMaj7	D6add4add9	Bm11#5	Am9
E	-----0-----	-----0-----	-----0-----	-----0-----
B	-----0-----	-----0-----	-----0-----	-----0-----
G	-----0-----	-----0-----	-----0-----	-----0-----
D	-----9-----	-----0-----	-----7-----	-----5-----
A	-----7-----	-----9-----	-----5-----	-----3-----
E	-----8-----	-----10-----	-----7-----	-----5-----

Our Maker Three in One
 (capo 3 for recorded key)

A E C#m B
 You are more than our minds can hold

A E C#m B
 You are more than our songs have told

A/F# E B
 You are what you are and we don't know how

A/F# E C#m B
 You are what you are so we worship you now

E A A/F# B
Our Maker Three in One

A C#m B
You are the Father, Spirit, Son

E A A/F# B
Our Maker's mystery

A C#m B
Undivided, One in three

You're a God we'd have never guessed
Far beyond what our words express

C#m E A
Our thoughts are too small

To apprehend You
C#m E A
And our minds are too weak
B

To comprehend You

Who Can Compare?
(capo 3 for recorded key)

G Am
You drew the lines of where the sea would meet the shore
F

The sky would meet the floor
D

Who can compare?

G Am
You showed the sun just when to pass the time to night
F

And when to come back bright
D Em Bm7 C#
Who can compare?

G Em
Neeper of nothing and giver of all

C

Every living thing survives

D

By the strength Your boundless love supplies

G

Em

Lord of power beyond compare

C

The universe sits in Your hands

D

And eternity is where you stand

You tell the rain clouds when to hold and when to bleed

To satisfy our need

Who can compare?

You made the countless stars and set them into place

To fill the void of space

Who can compare?

G G/B C

Oh Who Can Compare to You?

Em D/F# C

Oh You are the Holy God

The Wisdom of God

A E A B/G#

You plan the perfect ends, You use the perfect means

A E B

You hold the perfect truth and wisdom for all things

A E A B/G#

You only You are wise, You see with flawless eyes

A E B

You choose with loving care and wisdom for all things

C#m E/Eb A

You, only you are wise

E C#m-E/Eb-B

If we cannot hear the answer

E C#m-E/Eb-B
If we cannot see the way
A B C#m E/Eb E
We choose trust you, and your choice of wisdom Father
A B E (C#m after 2nd Chorus)
There will be no better way

A E A B/G#
You see the outcome now, You know the best way how
A E B
You've built a faultless plan with wisdom for all things
A E A B/G#
You give your people rest, through every trial and test
A E B
You hold the love and power and wisdom for all things

A B
Your ways are high above
High above, we trust the wisdom of God
Your ways are perfect love
Perfect love, we trust the wisdom of God

A B E A/F#
There is no better way than the way you've chosen

Because of You
(capo 3 for recorded key)

C#m E A
Because of Your mercy, I will show Your mercy too
C#m E A
Because You are graceful, I have all I need in You
C#m E A
Because of Your knowledge, let my secret parts be true
C#m E B Riff (see below)
Because of Your wisdom, I will trust alone in You
Because You are holy, I will tremble at your name
Because of Your justice, I'll leave sin and preach the same
Because of Your power, there's no rival to Your throne
Because You're everywhere, I will never be alone

A B B/G# A
Help us remember the God that You are
A B B/G# A
Help us remember Your Son and His scars
A/F# B/G# A B
Teach us to fear You and we will walk in Your ways
A/F# B/G# A B
Teach us to love you, teach us to number our days
A B C#m-E-B
They're all for You, We are because of You

Because You are loving, we've a Father's care from You
 Because You are endless, we'll have always more of You
 Because you're unchanging, we can build our lives on You
 Because you are faithful, all Your promises come true

A B B/G# A
We are coming back to the way it's supposed to be
We are coming back to a life of dependency
We are coming back to the joy of knowing You
We are coming back, would You come and make us new

RIFF CHORDS (adjust up 3 if capo'd)

E | ---0---0---0---0---0---0---0---0
 B | ---0---0---0---0---0---0---0---0
 G | ---9---13---6---11---9---4---6
 D | ---x---x---x---x---x---x---x---x
 A | ---7---11---4---9---7---2---4
 E | ---9---0---5---11---9---4---5

You are Good

C#m E/Eb E A
 I see the clouds take a drink from the ocean's cool and deep
C#m E/Eb E A
 And like a train through the sky, carry water to the dry
Eb/E A B E
 All of it sings out -You are good

