



The Person of God

Key Doctrines for Starting and Finishing Strong

LESSON 1 | Part 4



"Declare and set forth your case; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me."

ISAIAH 45:21 NASB

MAIN POINTS IN THIS LESSON:

- His Nature, His Essence, and His Character
- How Does God's Character Relate to the Gospel?
- How Does God's Character Relate to Discipleship?

Are the following statements true or false? (circle one)



- You really don't know a person until you know their character. T F
- A person can be a Christian and possess "bad" character. T F

Be on the lookout for the answers to these questions as we study the Word of God.

His Nature, His Essence, and His Character

Once upon a time, a scorpion needed to cross a pond. Wondering how he would get to the other side, he noticed a frog nearby. "Mr. Frog, will you please hop me across this pond?" he asked. The kind, gentle frog said, "Certainly, Mr. Scorpion. I will be glad to do so." So, Mr. Scorpion jumped onto Mr. Frog's back and Mr. Frog hopped from pod to pod, bringing Mr. Scorpion to the other side of the pond. But just as the frog said, "Well, Mr. Scorpion, here we are," he felt an excruciating pain in his back. Mr. Scorpion had stung him. As Mr. Frog lay dying, he looked up at Mr. Scorpion and said, "How could you do this? I brought you from one side of the pond to the other and now you sting me so that I will die." Mr. Scorpion looked at Mr. Frog and said, "I can't help it. It's my nature."

It's important to understand the nature of the one with whom you are dealing, so that you don't end up expecting *one thing*, but getting *another*. Yet this is exactly what happens to many Christians in their dealing with God. However, the good news starts with the revelation of God Himself: His *nature*, His *essence*, and His *character*.

The truth about God is where the disciple must start because everything in connection with our salvation concerns our relationship with God.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes.

"To be saved is not primarily to be happy, it is not primarily to have an experience; the essence of salvation is that we are in a right relationship to God. From the beginning, the great promise of God with regard to salvation is this: 'I will be your God, and you shall be My people' (Leviticus 26:12), so if we find that our tendency is to view salvation in any other way except directly in terms of our knowledge of God and our relationship to Him, it is a false tendency." (Authentic Christianity, Volume 1)

The whole purpose of the Bible and the Gospel is to *reveal God to us* and to *bring us into communion with Him through faith in Christ*, which is what eternal life is all about. Why are we saved? To be happy or to escape hell? No! We are saved, *"that [we] may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:3).

If the disciple is one who knows God and is in a process of becoming more like Him, with the aim of reproducing the process with someone else, then he must be absolutely sure about the nature and character of the God he follows.

How Does God's Nature or Character Relate to the Gospel?

Here is a key verse to understand and memorize. Jesus said in **John 17:3**,

- *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

Here Jesus is stating this truth in the form of a contrast. By using the words "only" and "true" He is presenting God to us over something else.

This is a warning against idolatry and false gods. Jesus is emphasizing that *we must be absolutely certain that the God in whom we believe, the God whom we claim to know, is the only true God*. Why? Because before we can know Him and have fellowship with Him, there must be certain things that we understand about Him.

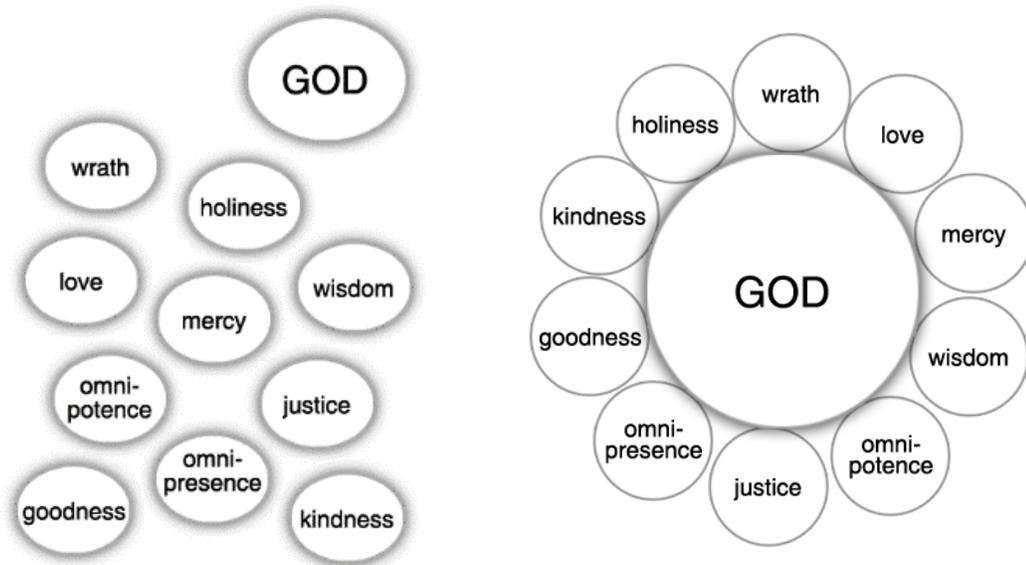
Receiving eternal life and experiencing fellowship with God depends upon a right understanding of the nature and character of the only true God (*1 John 1:2-3; 5:20-21; 1 Thess.1:9; Acts 17:22-29; John 4:23-24*).

- **Hebrews 11:6**—*"...he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."*

What was the secret of our heroes like Abraham, Moses, and Noah? What enabled them to overcome their circumstances, make a difference for God, and impact generations to come? It was their *accurate knowledge of God and the right response to Him* in light of that knowledge. *"...he who comes to God must believe that He is..."* That He is what? That He is who?

"It is essential today that we have a true knowledge of God, not because we worship old pagan deities, but we have a tendency to worship philosophic abstractions in the same way as they did. God is not some great force or energy...some concept...but the living and true God, the God of Creation and the Judge of the whole world. He is not like those false gods or our philosophical ideas. Before you drop to your knees next time and begin to speak to God, before you seek His face, remind yourself.... that you are going into the presence of the only true and living God who is the Great I AM." —D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The Great Doctrines of the Bible, Volume 1

Wrong Views of God



Right View of God

What Is God and Who Is He?

God's nature speaks of what is *intrinsic to His being* or *what He does by nature*. God's attributes refer to those *permanent qualities that constitute who He is*.

1. **God is a *transcendent being*.** (Is.40:18-23, 25-26)
Transcendent means supreme in excellence, or exceeding human knowledge or experience. A good word to explain transcendent is *distinct*. What this tells us is that we can make no comparisons that will give us an understanding of God, unless He grants that comparison. Coming up with your own idea of God and how He works is a sure prescription for error, because the only understanding of God's nature is the one that He gives us. There is nothing in the universe like Him.



Read the following verses and consider the three areas where God is distinct:

- **Isaiah 55:8-9**—Distinct in His *thoughts/ways*
- **Psalms 50:21**—Distinct in His *thoughts*
- **Psalms 97:9**—Distinct in His *power/dominion* (Cf. Ps.99:2; Ex.20:4-6)

2. God is a *spirit* being. (Cf. John 4:23-24)

This is one of the most important self-disclosures that Christ gives us of the essence of God. Notice in John 4:24 that the word "*spirit*" has no indefinite article (i.e. *a spirit*). God is not *a spirit among many spirits*; God is spirit. In other words, *spirit describes His essence and characterizes what God is like*. To say that man is *flesh* is to describe the things that characterize the flesh, like *location* and a *body*, or that which is *material*. God's essence is *not material*, which presents a problem for us because we as humans have trouble understanding that which is not like us.

An example of this is when, after the resurrection, the disciples were having a hard time understanding how a physical body could suddenly appear. Jesus said, "...touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). The Bible reveals that God's essence is spirit, which means that God is invisible (John 1:18) and divine, as opposed to human (Jer.31:35). He is unknowable to human beings unless He chooses to reveal Himself (Matt.11:27; 1 Cor.2:11-14). Just as God is *light* (1 John 1:5) and *love* (1 John 4:8), God is also *spirit*. These are elements in the way God presents Himself to human beings in His Son. This has tremendous implications for the disciple of Christ. It teaches us that God can only be known and worshiped in a certain way.

There are three "**musts**" in the Gospel. In John 3:7 we read, "You must be born again." John 3:14 states, "...so must the Son of Man be lifted up." And lastly, in John 4:24, "...those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The first reference points us to the work of God the Spirit, because He is the One who brings about the new birth. The second "must" points us to God the Son, for He is the One who died to make an atonement for sin. The third "must" points us to God the Father, for He is the object of worship and the One who seeks worshipers. It is only those who have been regenerated by the Spirit and justified by the Son who can worship the Father.

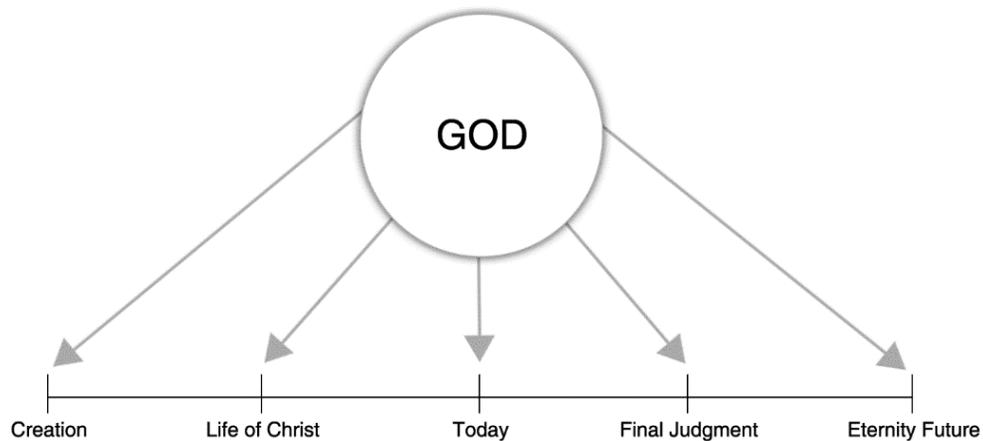
3. God is an *eternal* being. (Ps.90:1-2; Cf. Job 36:26)

The eternity of God has several very important applications for the disciple. First, God's eternity tells us that He is *self-sufficient*. Everything that has been created needs something outside of itself to exist. Plants need water; humans need air; animals need food. To say that God is independent is to say that He is *self-sufficient*. The application for the disciple is clear.

- **2 Corinthians 12:9**—"My grace is sufficient for you, for [My] power is perfected in weakness."
- **2 Peter 1:3**—"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us..."
- **Ephesians 1:3**—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

The second truth that God's eternity teaches us is that God is *timeless*. With God there is no succession of events. History is a meaningless concept to Him (2 Pet.3:8). In the Bible, *a person's name is a description of his or her character*. When God desired to reveal this aspect of His character to Moses, He said, "...say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex.3:14). The verb "AM" is very important because it means that God forever lives in the present tense. He has no past. He has no future (Is.46:9-10).

Think of it like this:



4. **God is an *immutable* being.** (*James 1:17; Mal.3:6*)

God is not only a *transcendent* being, a *spirit* being, and an *eternal* being, but He is also *immutable*, which means *unchangeable*. God not only does not change, He doesn't have the ability to change.

Read the verses below and consider what the Bible reveals about the immutability of God.

- **Psalm 119:89**—God is changeless in His character. (*Cf. Heb.13:8*)
- **Isaiah 46:9-10**—God is changeless in His purpose/plans. (*Cf. Ps.33:11; Mal.3:6*)
- **Numbers 23:19**—God is changeless in His Word/counsel. (*Cf. 1 Sam.15:29*)

A.W. Tozer writes, "*To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself. The concept of a growing or developing God is not found in the Scriptures...For a moral being to change it would be necessary that the change be in one of three directions. He must go from better to worse or from worse to better; or granted that the moral quality remain stable, he must change within himself, as from immature to mature or from one order of being to another. It should be clear that God can move in none of these directions. His perfections forever rule out any such possibility. God cannot change for the better. Since He is perfectly holy, He has never been less holy than He is now and can never be holier than He is and has always been. A deterioration within the unspeakably holy nature of God is impossible. Indeed, I believe it impossible even to think of such a thing, for the moment we attempt to do so, the object about which we are thinking is no longer God but something else and someone less than He.*"(*The Knowledge of the Holy*)

5. **God is a triune being.** (*see lesson titled: The Trinity*)

How Does the Character of God Relate to Discipleship?

Because God's nature is *spirit*, it is imperative to understand that the only way a person can know Him is to *receive a nature like His through the new birth*—not *new rules, new ethical teaching, or new habits*; he must have *a new nature in order to know God and have fellowship with Him* (2 Cor.5:17).

Because God's nature is *transcendent*, the disciple must never seek to rely upon puny, human intellect to know the mind and nature of God. We must diligently seek to discern His ways and His works in the person of Christ and the revelation of Scripture.

Because God's nature is *immutable*, the disciple must maintain this Creator/creature distinction as we approach Him in worship. Christianity offers new life! Eternal life is not a new point of view or an ethical and moral code, but a new life that comes from knowing God. This knowledge is an actual realization of Him who is living and dwelling in us. Eternal life is not merely a quantity of life (duration), but a change in quality of life. Jesus said, *"...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10). Eternal life is a life that is delivered from fear and filled with *"love, power and discipline"* (2 Tim.1:7) to face the world in all its uncertainties and overcome because *"greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."* (1 John 4:4)

Closing:

Application questions: Being a Doer of the Word

- **2 Timothy 3:16**—*"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching [what is right], for reproof [what is not right], for correction [how to get right], for training in righteousness [how to stay right]; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*
1. What did I learn ("teaching")?
 2. Where do I fall short ("reproof")?
 3. What do I need to do about it ("correction")?
 4. How can I make this a consistent part of my life ("training")?

Answer Key:

Are the following statements true or false?

- T
- F

Holy Habits Weekly Devotion



This week's memory verse: **Hebrews 13:8**—"*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*"

This week's holy habit: **The Word**

Throughout this lesson, we have been looking to scripture to develop this holy habit, and to learn more about our Father. A lifelong study of His word will still only scratch the surface of just how awesome He truly is. Through His graciousness, we can gather golden nuggets that will help us to know and appreciate Him more and more. The Bible provides us with a wondrous picture of His character as we meditate on His goodness, and our adoration grows.

Day 1 Read Ephesians 2:4-5.

- Name several ways God's mercy is on display in your life.

Day 2 Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

- List the ways that you readily see the gift of grace around you.

Day 3 Read John 4:8-10.

- Assess yourself...do you show love to your neighbor? How could you be intentional about doing so?

Day 4 Read Jeremiah 10:12.

- Declare some of the ways that God's omnipotence is manifested.

Day 5 Read Psalm 62:8.

- Is God your refuge and strength? How can you make it a habit of thinking and treating Him like He is at all times?

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