

God: What Is He Like? Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1353

INTRODUCTION

A. Man's Highest Pursuit

To know God and all that He has revealed about Himself is the highest pursuit in life.

1. Proverbs 9:10--"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."
2. John 17:3--"This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Knowing God is synonymous with eternal life. Eternal life is knowing God intimately for all eternity by partaking of His very nature (2 Pet. 1:4).
3. 1 Chronicles 28:9--David gave the following advice: "Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found by thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever."
4. 2 Peter 3:18--"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."
5. 2 Thessalonians 1:8--Jesus will return "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God."

B. God's Highest Purpose

It is a serious matter when those who claim to know God don't. Through the prophet Hosea, God rebuked the people of Israel for performing the sacrificial system with hearts totally estranged from Him. In Hosea 6:6 He says, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." More than any other thing God desires that we know Him.

How Can We Know God?

1. Jeremiah 29:13--"Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."
2. Proverbs 2:3-5--Solomon said, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures; then shalt

thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." There is only one way to know God and that is to make knowing Him your life's pursuit. If you seek only money or success, you'll be distracted from discovering all there is to know about God.

REVIEW

I. GOD: IS HE?

II. GOD: WHO IS HE?

III. GOD: WHAT IS HE LIKE?

A. God Is Unchanging (Immutable)

B. God Is Everywhere (Omnipresent)

C. God Is All Powerful (Omnipotent)

LESSON

D. God Knows Everything (Omniscient)

1. The extent of God's omniscience

a
) In general

(1) God is infinite

Psalm 147:5 says God's "understanding is infinite." That means it is limitless. First Samuel 2:3 says that "the Lord is a God of knowledge." The Hebrew word translated "knowledge" is plural. That intensifies the fact that God's great knowledge is vastly beyond ours.

(2) God is wise

First Timothy 1:17 identifies God as "the only wise God" (cf. Rom. 16:27; Jude 25). Only He knows what He knows. The angels know a lot, and we know some things, but no one knows as much as God. His infinite wisdom and knowledge is unrivaled.

(3) God is authoritative

God never needed to learn anything. When you pray, you're not telling God anything He doesn't already know. He just wants you to line up your desires with His will, and that's why He chooses to work through your prayers. There are no surprises with Him. Isaiah 40:13 says, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor, hath taught him?" Romans 11:34 says: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?" Who taught God? No one.

b) Toward men

(1) God's continuing love for us

Perhaps the most astounding fact about God's omniscience is that even though He knows all about us, we're still here. He loves us in spite of our sin. Isaiah 48:8-11 illustrates God's gracious and merciful love: "Thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time thine ear was not opened; for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it." In spite of their rebelliousness, God faithfully guaranteed Israel's undeserved redemption. The salvation of sinners displays God's love to the world (1 John 4:9-10) and His wisdom to the angels (Eph. 3:10).

(2) God's detailed knowledge about us

Nothing is hidden from God.

(a) The external

Luke 12:7 says, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." God doesn't need to count the hairs on your head--He just knows how many there are.

(b) The internal

i) Revelation 2:23--Christ "searcheth the minds and hearts." He sees our heart and mind just as well as the external characteristics of our bodies.

ii) Psalm 139:12--The darkness of night is no canopy to God because "the darkness hideth not from [Him]." John 3:19 says, "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Though men try to hide their sin, the brilliant light of God's omniscience exposes it.

iii) Psalm 139:4--"There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." God hears your whispers as if they were broadcast.

iv) Isaiah 66:18--Not one of your thoughts is outside the knowledge of God: "I know their works and their thoughts."

v) John 2:24-25--Jesus "knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." For example when Nicodemus asked Jesus a question, Jesus answered the real question he had in his mind (John 3:1-4).

There isn't a secret place in your house or anywhere else where you can hide from God. And you can be confident that is accurate because Deuteronomy 32:4 call Him "a God of truth" and Titus 1:2 says He "cannot lie."

Hosea 13:12 says, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hidden." People look at that verse and hope there are some sins God doesn't know about. But that is not the case. The Bible is clear on the fact that God knows everything. Hosea 13:12, rather than contradicting God's omniscience, is saying that the Northern Kingdom's rebellion was being put away for a future day of judgment. You might call it the divine lay-away plan---sin now, pay later.

Often it appears that godly people are under more stress than the ungodly. Though many ungodly people prosper now ((Ps. 37:1-2, 9-20), they won't always prosper. Perhaps like Ephraim their sin is hidden for now, waiting for the day of judgment in the future. In Romans 2:5-6 Paul says, "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." There will come a day when the sin that is now hidden will be unmasked and punished.

2. The revelation of God's omniscience

Closely related to God's omniscience is His wisdom. His wisdom could be defined as His omniscience acting with a holy will. Since God knows everything, everything He does is absolutely wise. He knows the end, the beginning, and every step in between. God has perfect knowledge, which results in perfect wisdom (or practical omniscience).

a

) His wisdom in creation

You can see God's wisdom in everything--from the macrocosm of the universe to the microcosm of life. God formed the entire universe out of innumerable component parts. And each part functions in harmony with every other part resulting in exactly what God intended. God's creation is a monument to His wisdom. Psalm 104:24 says, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all."

b

) His wisdom in providence

Ephesians 1:11 tells us that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

c

) His wisdom in redemption

God called people who weren't wise, mighty, or noble to be His people (1 Cor. 1:26). Ephesians 3:10 tells us that God put the redeemed church on display before angels that they might see God's wisdom.

3. The application of God's omniscience

a

) To the believer

(1) Comfort

It is comforting to know that God knows everything. Within the vastness of this universe you're assured that you're not insignificant--God knows you personally.

(a) Malachi 3:16-17--In Malachi's day a small remnant of God's faithful feared that He would forget them and judge them with the rest of the people: "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." God has a book and He doesn't forget who's in it. He knows those who belong to Jesus Christ. He put their names in the Book of Life before the world began (Eph. 1:4).

(b) Psalm 56:8--"Thou numberest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle." It was a common practice in the Orient to hire mourners for funerals. Those mourners would catch their tears in a bottle. Perhaps that was how they proved they performed their task. David's statement that God catches our tears tells us that He knows why we have them. He knows us and every trial we have to endure.

(c) Matthew 6:25-33--Jesus said, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, be not anxious saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

God knows your needs and takes care of them all. In the midst of His care He never makes a mistake. When you take into account God's infinite attributes and knowledge, you have no basis for ever accusing God of making a mistake. Just realize you don't know that much and accept whatever God does as perfect.

(2) Confidence

When I was a child I pictured the doctrine of omniscience as anything but confidence inspiring. My parents were quick to remind me that God knew everything I did. But as I grew up I began to realize that God's omniscience is truly a benefit for the Christian. After twice trying to convince the Lord that he loved Him, Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). Peter appealed to Christ's omniscience. If it weren't for His omniscience, God would be perfectly justified in questioning our love for Him.

(3) Correction

If you knew God didn't know everything and would never find out what you did, what would you feel free to do that you're not doing now? If you want to know where your sinful flesh is the strongest, imagine what you would do if you knew He wouldn't find out. But He does know. Fortunately He is one teacher who never leaves the room. And we can be thankful that His correction is always done in love (Heb. 12:6). In the same way that God's omnipresence is a deterrent to sin, so also is His omniscience. Every sin is committed in God's presence and in His knowledge.

b) To the unbeliever

(1) The futility of hypocrisy

Unbelievers can't play games with God because He knows everything. All hypocrisy is unmasked before Him. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus confronted the religious hypocrisy of the day and tore the masks off the self-righteous. In Ecclesiastes 12:14 Solomon says, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." God sees through every hypocritical front. First Samuel 16:7 reminds us that "the Lord seeth not as a man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

(2) The foundation of judgment

God will be just and accurate in His judgment.

(a) Romans 2:2--Paul said, "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth." The judgment that determines who will be sent to hell for all eternity will be just because God, who has absolute knowledge of truth, will judge on the basis of that truth. And no one can fool God.

(b) Jeremiah 16:17--God said, "Their iniquity [is not] hidden from mine eyes." There is no way anyone can hide from the truthful judgment of God. He knows whose sin remains unforgiven. He knows who has put up a facade of religiosity. He knows whose name is in the Book of Life and whose isn't.

(3) The folly of human wisdom

Since God knows everything, those who are truly wise will learn from His knowledge. Solomon continually counseled his son to seek knowledge (Prov. 8:1-36). A foolish man pursues the knowledge of the world (Prov. 17:24). In 1 Corinthians 1:19 God says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

E. God Is Without Sin (Holy)

1. The proclamation of God's holiness

Holiness is arguably the most significant of all God's attributes. God is holy. When the angels sing in heaven they don't say, "Eternal, eternal, eternal"; "Faithful, faithful, faithful"; "Wise, wise, wise"; or "Mighty, mighty, mighty." But they do sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (Rev. 4:8).

a

) Exodus 15:11--"Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?" The answer obviously is no one.

b

) Psalm 111:9--"Holy and reverend is his name."

c

) Job 6:10--Job referred to God as "the Holy One."

d

) Isaiah 6:3--The angels said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

e

) 1 Samuel 2:2--"There is none holy like the Lord; for there is none beside thee."

2. The pursuit of God's holiness

Perhaps the best way to understand God's holiness is to compare it with sin.

a

) Confessing sin

One of the most revealing passage regarding God's holiness is Isaiah 6. Isaiah said, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly.... Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King" (vv. 1-2, 5). Isaiah was shaken to the core of his being. Why? Because he had seen the holiness of God in contrast to his own sinfulness. An understanding of both your sin and God's holiness are necessary companions. You'll never recognize your sin until you understand God's holiness, yet you can't know His holiness until you see your sin. Once Isaiah saw God in His exalted state, he saw himself for what he was and then poured out his heart to God.

b

) Acknowledging the standard

Between you and God is a gulf separating holiness from unholiness. You are unholy; He is holy. As a result you ought to be shaken to the roots of your being when you see yourself in comparison to His holiness.

God doesn't conform to some holy standard--He is the standard. He never does anything wrong. He never misjudges something. He never makes a mistake. There are no degrees to His holiness; He is perfectly holy. Consequently holiness is the standard for existing in His presence. When some of the angels sinned, God immediately separated them from His presence (2 Pet. 2:4). Similarly when men and women reject Jesus Christ, they are sent "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

c

) Believing in Christ

How can we be holy? By exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ's atoning work on the cross, God imputes holiness to those who believe in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Paul said to the Corinthians, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 6:11; NIV).

3. The perspectives of God's holiness

a

) His hatred of sin

A good way to understand God's holiness is to see it in contrast with His hatred of sin. We can much more easily understand His hatred of sin since we are so familiar with sin.

(1) Habakkuk 1:13--"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."

(2) Amos 5:21-23--God said, "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not take delight in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thine harps." God had instituted ceremonial and sacrificial ordinances for the people to follow, but they performed them out of impure hearts. God hates that. He doesn't want people doing right things with the wrong attitude. Sin is the object of His displeasure, but He loves holiness. Psalm 11:7 says, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness."

b

) His love for the sinner

Although God is holy and hates sin, He still redeemed us. He knows us and despises our sin, yet He loves us. God's holiness, omniscience, and love all act in harmony. To illustrate that kind of love, consider what it might be like to have cancer. Even though your body was infected with cancer, you would love your body but hate the cancer. You would do everything you could to preserve your body--to keep it healthy and strong and minister to its needs. And you would do everything you could to destroy the cancer. In a similar way God loves man but despises his sin.

God never wills for anyone to sin. He gives us freedom of choice, and we so often choose to sin, but He never wills it. He also never tempts anyone to sin (James 1:13-14).

4. The portrayal of God's holiness

a

) In creation

Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many devices." God made man holy.

b

) In the moral law

God's moral law still pervades the world although man has tried to pervert it. Romans 7:12 says, "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good." God's moral law proves that He is righteous, moral, and holy.

c

) In the sacrificial law

Whenever the Israelites offered animals as a sacrifice for sin, God was telling them that death is the result of sin. It also communicated that God cannot be approached without a substitutionary sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:22).

d

) In His judgment on sin

Second Thessalonians 1:7-8 says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." Jude 15 says that the Lord will come "to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." God's judgment on sin is a reflection of His holiness because He must punish it.

e

) In the death of Christ

Perhaps the greatest expression of God's holiness is His sending His Son to die on a cross (Rom. 8:3). God was so holy that He paid the highest price necessary to satisfy His holiness. Hebrews 9:26 says, "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world." That means that if Christ had to continually make an offering for sin as the Old Testament priests had to do, He would have had to die over and over again. But verse 26 says, "Now once, in the end of the ages, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." God's holiness is so infinite that He had to pay the supreme price of bearing sin and dying a sacrificial death.

5. The practicality of God's holiness

a

) For the unbeliever

The holiness of God demands holiness in everyone, and that can be accomplished only through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:14 says that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord." Ephesians 4:24 says to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The only way to accommodate God's demand for holiness is to accept Christ and receive His righteousness. But to reject the holiness God offers in Jesus Christ is to activate God's justice. The impenitent sinner will receive what he deserves.

b) For the believer

First Peter 1:15 gives us the practical implication of God's holiness for us: "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life, because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Since God is holy, He wants His people to be holy.

(1) It distinguishes us from the world

Positionally we are holy in Christ, but God wants our practical lives to match our position. He wants us to live holy lives. The world needs to see the difference it makes knowing Christ. Second Timothy 2:19 says, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." If you're going to claim to follow Christ, then live a life that proves that you do.

(2) It gives us boldness before God

If you're living a holy life and regularly confessing and repenting of sin in your life, you will have boldness before God. Job 22:23-26 says, "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up; thou shalt put away iniquity very far from thy tents.... Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up thy face unto God." You can't face God and delight in Him when there's sin in your life. Whenever there is sin, you are liable to discover what I have: you'll have a difficult time praying.

(3) It gives us peace

Isaiah 57:21 says, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

God wants us holy even if He has to chastise us (Heb. 12:10). What should a Christian do to become holy? What David did in Psalm 51:9-10: pray for a clean heart. Then we should heed the instruction of Proverbs 13:20 to be around those who will influence us toward holiness.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the highest pursuit in life?

2. What is God's greatest desire?
3. What does God promise to those who seek Him (Jer. 29:13)?
4. Define God's omniscience.
5. Although God knows we are sinners, what is His attitude toward us?
6. What two things does the salvation of sinners display (Eph. 3:10; 1 John 4:9-10)?
7. What does God know about us? Be specific.
8. Explain God's divine lay-away plan.
9. In what way is God's wisdom closely related to His omniscience?
10. How is God's wisdom revealed?
11. In what ways can believers apply God's omniscience to their lives? Explain each one.
12. What should God's omniscience reveal to an unbeliever about hypocrisy, judgment, and human wisdom?
13. What must anyone come to grips with before he can begin to understand God's holiness?
14. What is the standard for anyone to be able to exist in God's presence?
15. How can unholy man be declared holy (2 Cor. 5:21)?
16. Explain the balance between God's hatred of sin and His love for sinners.
17. In what ways is God's holiness revealed?
18. What is perhaps the greatest expression of God's holiness?
19. What is the consequence of rejecting the holiness God offers?
20. What are some practical ways in which a Christian can apply God's holiness?

Pondering the Principles

1. Do you trust God to meet all your needs? That is easier said than done, especially when faced

with especially difficult trials. Yet know that God knows your needs no matter what your circumstances may be, and He promises to meet them. According to Matthew 6:33, what is the believer's first responsibility? Read Philippians 4:6, 11-13. What are we commanded to do? What attitude did Paul exemplify that we should imitate? Begin to put those principles into practice in your life.

2. Before we can pursue holiness we must truly desire it, knowing that God desires us to be holy. Read 1 Peter 1:13; 2:3 and list as many reasons as you can for living a holy life. As Christians, we are in the world but not of it (1 Cor. 5:9-10), yet we still can be negatively influenced by it. For that reason Psalm 1:1 cautions us not to allow the world's system to direct our lives. Verse 2 tells us that God's Word should be our guide. Read Romans 10:17 and 1 John 5:4-5. What is the key to victory over the world's system? What preventative steps can you take to counteract those things in your life that are hindering your spiritual growth toward Christlikeness?

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