

Nature and Character of God

What Is God Like?

July 28, 2019

I. What is God like?

A. Today, we are beginning a reasonably short series on the nature and character of God. And if you are wondering why we would do such a series, let me give you a couple of reasons.

1. In the words of A.W. Tozer, the purpose for such a study is because “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us,” and the reason for this is because “we are not simply what we say or do, but what we, in the deepest reaches of our heart and mind conceive God to be” (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg 1).
2. Tozer goes on to say that “A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well” (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg 2).
3. And if that is not reason enough to take a serious look at God’s nature and character, then let me add my reasons. The purpose for such a study is to remind you that our view of God powerfully influences our trust in God, our adoration of God, our reverence for God, and our humble submission to God – all of which have a powerful influence on our mental, emotional, and spiritual health, which in turn influences and enables us, by the grace and empowerment of God, to live a God-honoring, God-pleasing, love motivated life.

B. Pray

II. Two presuppositions , five foundational scriptures

A. For me, there are two presuppositions and five scriptures that have been foundational in shaping my view of God’s nature and character, and that also have acted as an anchor for my confident trust in God.

B. My two presuppositions regarding the nature and character of God are as follows –

1. **First presupposition:** God is the supreme being. No one and nothing is superior to God in any way. As the supreme being, He has the right to decide whatever He wishes to decide, to determine whatever He wishes to determine, to bring about whatever He

wishes to bring about, and to bring to a close whatever He wishes to bring to a close. Therefore, my role is to yield to His supremacy.

2. **Second presupposition:** God is perfectly good and His love endures forever. Therefore, He always does what is right and good.

C. Five scriptures regarding the nature and character of God.

1. **First scripture: 1 John 1:5b . . .** God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. In other words, there is absolutely nothing in God that is evil in any way. He is perfectly and completely good in every way and in everything.
2. **Second scripture:** After Moses said to God, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” (**Exodus 33:18**), God responded by passing in front of Moses and proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; [7] who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations” (**Exodus 34:6-7**).
 - a. David wrote something similar in **Psalms 103:10-13 . . .** [God] has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving-kindness toward those who fear Him. [12] As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. [13] Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
 - b. In both the Exodus and Psalm portion, we see that though God’s mercy is great, He in no way ignores or short-changes justice. And in the same way, even though God dispenses justice, He in no way neglects or diminishes mercy.
3. **Third scripture: Psalm 16:11 . . .** You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
 - a. Jesus made two statements, that when put together give us a NT picture similar to these words in **Psalms 16:11**.
 - (1) In **John 14:6**, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

- (2) And in **John 10:10**, Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”
 - b. Only God leads all who listen and obey Him into life – both in this world and in the next. The only path the devil offers and leads us down is the path of corruption, destruction, and death.
 - (1) Now the reason I started with the word ‘corruption’ is because, like rust, much of what the devil offers does not destroy us immediately, but rather it slowly – and almost imperceptibly – destroys us until all is lost.
 - (2) And why is this the devil’s favored method of destroying and killing us? Because only the most foolish of fools would follow him if immediate or swift destruction were the common outcome.
 - c. So once again, only God leads all who will listen and obey Him into life – both in this world and in the next.
- 4. **Fourth scripture: Psalm 18:2 . . .** The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
 - a. We humans often look to such things as self-sufficiency, governments, military might, people, places, and money (in such forms as income, savings, and insurance) for security.
 - b. But the reality is, there is no security apart from God. In fact, the only true, dependable, and lasting security is in God, and it is only accessed by faith in God and obedience to God.
 - c. As the Psalmist said in **Psalm 33:16-19**, “The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. [17] A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. [18] Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, [19] to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.
 - d. And in **Matthew 6:31-33**, Jesus said, “Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
- 5. **Fifth scripture: Matthew 6:9 . . .** “Pray, then, in this way: '**Our Father** who is in heaven . . .’”

- a. God is not just the supreme being, He is also a father who is as loving and nurturing as a mother. It is my opinion that to have God as my father has been one of the greatest gifts I have received from Him, and one of the most blessed experiences I have had with Him.
- b. I know there are a number of statements in God's word that speak of God being our father, but **Romans 8:14-15** says it well, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15] For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"
- c. Beyond the scripture, the hymn, "I Am His And He Is Mine" speaks to me in very deep and meaningful ways about God being my father, and I especially treasure the picture painted by the last two verses.
 - (1) Things that once were wild alarms cannot now disturb my rest; Closed in everlasting arms, pillowed on the loving breast. Oh, to lie forever here, doubt and care and self resign, while He whispers in my ear, I am His, and He is mine.
 - (2) His forever, only His: who the Lord and me shall part? Ah, with what a rest of bliss Christ can fill the loving heart. Heaven and earth may fade and flee, firstborn light in gloom decline; but, while God and I shall be, I am His, and He is mine.
- d. I had an earthly father who did many good things for me, and for that I am grateful. But I am not only grateful for the many good things my heavenly Father has done for me, I treasure the love and relationship He has allowed me to have with Him.

D. Having said all that, let me summarize.

1. I hold two presuppositions about God. **First**, God is the supreme being. No one and nothing is superior to God in any way. **Second**, God is perfectly good and His love endures forever.
2. Along with those two presuppositions, there are five scriptures that have been instrumental in shaping my view of God's nature and character and my trust in God. And those five scriptures tell me:
 - a. That God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.
 - b. And that though God's mercy is great, He in no way ignores or short-changes justice.

- c. And that it is only God who makes known the path of life.
 - d. And that there is no security apart from God, and the only true, dependable, and lasting security is in God.
 - e. And finally, that God is not just the supreme being, He is also a father who is as loving and nurturing as a mother.
- E. I know that my two presuppositions and five scriptures only make up a small part of what we can know and understand about God – for there is so much more that the scriptures tell us about God. And yet, of all that we can learn and know about God, the reality is, we don't know much about Him.
1. Now you may be wondering why I've just said we don't know that much about God –
 - a. When we have been created in His image,
 - b. And when He has revealed Himself to us through nature and the OT and NT,
 - c. And when He has given the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for our instruction and growth – not only in living a godly life, but also in getting to personally and intimately know God and His ways.
 2. However, the reason we know so little about God is because the enormousness of God, the holiness of God, the love of God, the mind of God, and the character of God is so vast and complex that knowing Him in His entirety is beyond the abilities of our humanity and it is beyond the amount of time we have in this life to discover and learn all there is to know about God.
 - a. Added to all that is the fact that God has no beginning. He has no starting point and no creator. He always was – and this is a concept we can define and talk about, but have no ability to fully comprehend it because apart from God, everything we know has had a beginning, including ourselves.
 - b. In other words, though God created us in His own image – which means we are like Him in some ways – we are inferior to Him in all ways.
 - c. Therefore, we can know some things about God, but because of the limitations of our humanity, we do not and cannot know all there is to know about God.
 3. However, **what we do and can do know is enough to enable us** to believe in Him and trust Him and relate to Him and submit to Him and obey Him and love Him as we ought.

F. To help us get some sense of how much we don't know about God, let me draw some comparisons between God and us. These comparisons, though put into words we understand, portray characteristics of God that our human minds only partially grasp. I trust you will see the truth of what I am saying in the following comparisons.

1. **God is self-existent**, that is, no one created God or sustains God. He gets life from Himself and is therefore fully self-sufficient. In contrast, we are created beings who are dependent on God, His creation, and the efforts of others like us for survival.
2. **God is eternal**, that is, He has no beginning and no end. He always was and always will be. Therefore, time has no effect on Him. We, on the other hand can only come into existence by having a beginning. And as to our end, time has an effect on us as shown by the fact that we age and will ultimately die. And yet there is a part of us that will live forever – and in this respect we are like God.
3. **God is infinite**, that is, He is boundless, measureless, unlimited. In contrast, we are finite, that is, we are subject to such limitations as a human body, human intellect, space, time, the laws of nature, and the circumstances of life.
4. Now when we say God is infinite, we mean this in four major ways or areas.
 - a. **God is omniscient** – which means God is all-knowing, while we have limited knowledge which is limited by such things as our humanity, age, maturity, access to information, level of intelligence, education, experience, and inquisitiveness.
 - b. **God is omnipotent** – which means God is all-powerful, while we have limited power which is limited by such things as our humanity, age, physical condition, health, creativity, wisdom, ability to influence others, access to weapons, and fears.
 - c. **God is omnipresent** – which means God is everywhere present, while we can be in only one place at a time – limited by our human body, by time, and by space.
 - d. **God is all-wise** – which means God has the ability to discern and properly judge what is true or right or best in any and every situation, while we begin as babies who lack both the ability and maturity to properly discern right from wrong, good from bad, and best from better.
 - (1) Now it is true, we do grow to adulthood – which gives us opportunity and time to gain knowledge and wisdom. Yet no matter how much we gain, we still only know in part and

we still are not as wise as God. And sadly, even as adults we can continue to be foolish, or we can choose to pursue knowledge while neglecting the pursuit of wisdom.

- (2) In other words, whatever wisdom we may gain over the years will never compare to the wisdom God has – which is why James encourages us to ask God for wisdom when and where we see we lack wisdom.
5. Moving on, we see that God is not only infinite, He is also **immutable** – that is, He is changeless, or as the scripture says, He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (**Hebrews 13:8**). However, we are as changeable, and at times we are inconsistent, erratic, and even unpredictable.
 - a. But beyond that kind of changeableness, our bodies change as we go from birth to death, the way we think and what we value changes, and our behavior tends to change according to the situation.
 - b. Now let me say right now that our capacity to change is both good and bad. I suspect we all understand the bad side of our changeableness. But on the good side is the ability to repent, change unbelief in God to faith in God, and grow from a practicing sinner to seeking God and pursuing a life of holiness.
 - c. However, we are not immutable like God.
6. **God is faithful**, that is, He is consistently reliable and loyal, while we too often fail miserably at this very noble quality of character in relation to God, and if we are married, in relation to our spouse.
7. **God is love**, while we are too often selfish. And beyond that, even our best expressions of love are often mixed with a self-interest that diminishes the quality and sincerity of the love we wish to show.

III. Conclusion

- A. So, what is God like? We don't fully know because He is far beyond our human ability to comprehend and understand. And yet, because God made us to know Him, and because His compassion is greater than our weaknesses, it is possible for us to know at least enough about Him to believe in Him, submit to Him, obey Him, and love Him as we ought.