



Pillar Truths Study Series

Who is God?

Purpose: to help Christians grow in their understanding and relationship with God the Father

God's loving-kindness, He threatens the enemies of his people

(Jer 9:23-24 NIV) "This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, {24} but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD."

There are many different ideas about who God is, but we as disciples need to have a healthy, biblical understanding of God that provides a good foundation for our belief so that our faith will endure for the long haul.

Looking at four different perspectives of God:

1. Who is God to the world?
2. Who was God in the Old Testament?
3. Who was God to Jesus?
4. Who is God to you and me?

I. WHO IS GOD TO THE WORLD –

(Acts 17:23 NIV) "For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD..."

Inside each person there is a desire to reach out to and search for God.

- A. The world has many misconceptions about God and religion in general
 1. God as a crutch, man made, philosophy, good idea, greater power.
 2. Some believe that God is a composite of all the good in the world, thus we all create god by our good deeds.
- B. God seems distant or unapproachable so people do things to make him more accessible.
 1. Candles, incense,
 2. Praying to saints because they seem more relatable.
 3. Even some modern praise songs sound like love songs with God or Jesus substituted for "lover."



Pillar Truths Study Series

Who is God?

C. Inside each one of us God has put a desire to know him similar to the desire of an adopted child searching for his or her real parents; a desire to know the one who created them.

II. **WHO GOD WAS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT** – Some are under the impression that the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath and the God of the New Testament is a God of love.

A. **Exodus 15:6-8** – Example scripture that some see as God being unapproachable.

1. Moses at the burning bush
2. Could not enter into the Holy of Holies.
3. God punished all who did wrong (flood, earthquakes, fire)
4. The Law was unattainable.
5. Many judgments we read within a couple pages of the Old Testament actually happened over hundreds of years. Considering that, one may wonder why He waited so long!

B. Actually the bible describes God in the Old Testament and New Testament as one affecting us and being affected by us.

1. **(Psa 149:4 NIV)** "For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation."
2. **(Jer 29:11 NIV)** "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD..."
3. **Jer 31:31-34** – God desires a personal relationship with each of us.

III. **WHO GOD WAS TO JESUS-**

A. **John 8:13-30** - Called God "Father" – Strikingly different from OT

B. **Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16** - Jesus constantly relied on God in prayer.

C. **John 2:16** – Jesus in the temple: protected his father's interests (When he was insulted, he was silent; when God was insulted, he got angry)

D. **Matt 26:30** – Sung hymns – He was a song leader too.

E. It is seen what or who people really rely on during times of stress – Jesus relied on God. **Matt 26:36-46** – Gethsemane

1. All of us in points of weakness pray for easier ways to cope, but most times, none is given. What we need is strength to overcome. If God removed all the struggles from our life, we would stay as spiritual infants.
2. On the cross – "Why have you forsaken me?", Then "Into your hands I commit my spirit."



Pillar Truths Study Series

Who is God?

IV. WHO IS GOD TO YOU AND ME

This is the real question. All Christians need continued growth in their understanding and relationship with God. How can we have a personal relationship with a God who we cannot detect with our 5 senses and are never quite sure he is there?

A. We must have a real-life faith.

1. “Christ lives in you,” “We are more than conquerors.” – Sometimes these statements stir up longing, but for many people they hardly apply to day to day experience. It is like reading recipes to a starving person.
 - a. What should I believe of Him?
 - b. What should I expect of him?
 - c. I prayed and my prayer didn’t get answered.

(Book – “Reaching for the invisible God : what can we expect to find”, by Philip Yancy, Copyright © 2000 Zondervan)

“I know there is a God: I believe he exists, I just don’t know what to believe of Him. What do I expect from this God? Does He intervene upon request (often/seldom), or am I to accept His Son’s sacrifice for my sins, count myself lucky and let the relationship go at that?”

I accept that I’m an immature believer: that my expectations of God are obviously not realistic. I guess I’ve been disappointed enough times that I simply pray for less and less in order not to be disappointed over and over.

What is a relationship with God supposed to look like anyway? What should we expect from a God who says we are His friends?”

“Why pray if God may or may not answer the prayers anyway?” We pray and want something to happen. – Prayer needs to be about the relationship, not just wants and needs – That would not be much of a relationship.

Our relationships with our friends at work, spouse, others – not burden, self focus

2. Our relationship with God is sometimes based on misunderstandings or exaggerations of scripture.
 - a. **(Rom 8:28 NIV)** "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him..."
 - i. We incorrectly interpret this to mean that everything will turn out for the best for the believer. In reality it means that in



Pillar Truths Study Series

Who is God?

- everything that happens, God works for good with those who love him.
- ii. God does not remove all of our problems
- b. **(Matthew 6:25-33 NIV)** – (v26) Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?
- i. This doesn't mean that you will never have to work again.
 - ii. God provides for the birds through life, which includes predators and hardship
 - iii. The lilies do not labor or spin nor survive when drought comes.

Their interest in the love of God

- B. We must deal with doubt. **(Mark 9:24 NIV)** – "...I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"
1. -EX: Thomas doubted resurrection, Peter doubted while walking on water. Doubt and faith must always coexist together. If there were no presence of doubt and all is certain, faith does not apply.
 2. A relationship with God based on blessings creates doubt.
 - a. We sometimes feel that God doesn't love us if he didn't give us what we want.
 - b. Image of God as a father:
 - i. Has their best interest in mind
 - ii. Principles are important
 - iii. Character, honesty, truth, love, must be trained
- EX: I allow my kids to go through hardship. Lessons and growth come from them. I allow them to make poor choices. I make sure their needs are met. I give food, clothes, shelter, love, affection, but only give as many wants as I feel is good for them.
3. **James 1:2-4** – We must reconcile suffering with our relationship with God.
 - i. Suffering is how we mature
 - ii. Protects you **1 Cor 10:13** – provides way out.
 - iii. **1 Peter 1:6-7** – faith is refined and proven genuine through suffering.
 - iv. Wants to develop a mature spirit like Jesus, which includes hardship and struggling through doubt.



Pillar Truths Study Series

Who is God?

C. We must attribute correct things to God.

Some people attribute all things great and small, good and bad to the will of God. This leads to misunderstandings of God's will.

1. **(John 9:2 NIV)** "...Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (did he sin in the womb?)
2. Jesus never counseled people to accept suffering as "God's will," rather he wept for them and healed them.
3. Some attribute bad things happening to God's will and interpret them to mean, "God does not love me," or "God is mad at me," or "God is unfair."
4. God does not punish every bad act, humble every prideful person, or crush the wicked person on the spot. He allows free will, which allows us to freely love Him.
5. Get rid of the "Why" questions.
 - a. "Why" looks backward, faith looks forward.
 - b. We will never understand all the "Whys" in life, it only matters that we grow along the way.
 - c. Heb. 11: All these people retained faith in hardship.

Christians believe that God possesses all the qualities of personhood; unpredictable, rational, free, intelligent, emotional, sometimes cooperative, sometimes resistant. We need to get to know and understand God for our faith to be mature.

Discussion Questions:

What doubts have you had, and how do you handle doubt?

How do you see God in your relationship with him?

What kind of expectations do you have of God? How do you handle disappointment?

How do you tend to deal with suffering?

How has God demonstrated his love for you?

Who is your biblical hero as far as their relationship with God? Why?