

# What Is God Really Like?

Every disciple of Jesus Christ should be concerned about what God is really like, because every area of our lives—our behavior, our attitude toward others, our outlook on life—will be affected by our concept of God. No concept will ever influence our lives as much as what we conceive God to be like, and this is most obviously true in the area of discipleship.

It is critically important for us to know what God is like because we cannot understand who God is without understanding what God is like, and the more we know about Him the more we will want to yield our lives to Him in discipleship. Furthermore, no one can fully appreciate Jesus Christ and what He accomplished on the cross without knowledge of what God is really like.

Because He desires that we know what He is like, He has provided a special revelation of Himself to all humankind. That special revelation is the Bible—every page of which is God revealing Himself to humanity and expressing His desire that all would come to know Him. God knows if we really know what He is like, we will want a personal relationship with Him. Therefore, we need to look to the Bible to find out what God is like. In theology, a study of what God is like is called “theology proper” because it is a study of God Himself.

Since God reveals Himself through the Bible, it is only reasonable that information from it needs to be assimilated to build a sound foundation upon which to base our concept of what God is really like. Therefore, we will examine the nature, tri-unity, attributes, and virtues of God.

## I. The Nature of God

Read the following verses, and write in the provided space what they tell us about God:

Deuteronomy 6:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Isaiah 45:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
1 Timothy 2:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Christianity is not a polytheistic but a monotheistic religion. Jesus affirmed the importance of monotheistic theology in Mark 12:29–30, when He said the greatest commandment of all is to give total allegiance of one’s heart, soul, and mind to the one true God.

Read the following reference, and write in the provided space what we are told about the nature of God:

John 4:24 \_\_\_\_\_

This means God is not a physical, created being, so He is not limited by a physical body. Yet, God is personal; that is, He is not a blind impersonal force. The Bible sometimes refers to God as having a heart, arms, feet, mouth, and other bodily parts because figurative language is necessary to describe God’s functions. The essence of God is not material but spiritual. God is infinite and cannot be contained in a body or building.

Knowing that His nature and person would be very difficult for humankind to understand, God gave us a full revelation of Himself. Read John 1:14, 18 & 14:9, and explain:

(Note: The word translated declared in John 1:18 is the Greek word from which we get our word “exegeted,” which means “to explain or give a detailed analysis.”)

## **II. The Tri-unity of God**

How can we reconcile the fact that the Bible teaches there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and yet there is only one God? The word trinity is not found in the Bible but was used in the 2nd century A.D. to express the truth of God’s Person as taught in the Bible. The tri-emphasizes God’s three-ness, and -nity emphasizes His unity. Therefore, He is a “tri-unity.”

There is only one event in the entire Bible where all three personalities of the Godhead are manifested at the same time—Matthew 3:13–17. Read and explain: (It is also recorded in Mark 1:9–11 and Luke 3:21–22.)

There are many things about God that are mysterious and incomprehensible to finite man, particularly the fact that God is one and yet is three. If we could understand God and all that He does, we would be equal with Him in intelligence, and the great God we worship and serve would be greatly diminished. He would be a “tinhorn” god.

Many have tried to explain the Trinity with illustrations. For example, God is like a man who is father, son, and husband. Or, He is like an egg that is a yolk, a white, and a shell. Or, He is like water, which can be ice, liquid, or vapor. However, all illustrations fall miserably short because there is not a man, an egg, or a chunk of ice in the entire world like God. He is a mystery beyond human comprehension.

Now that we have looked at the nature of God and the tri-unity of God, let’s move to ...

## **III. The Attributes of God**

The first of these attributes is described in Psalm 139:7–10 and Jeremiah 23:23–24. What is it?

In theology, this is called **omnipresence**. God’s immensity is such the world cannot contain Him. He is above and beyond, as well as in, everything. How does this attribute comfort us (Joshua 1:5 & Matthew 28:20)?

The second attribute of God is described in Psalm 139:1–6; Psalm 147:4–5; Matthew 10:29–30 & Romans 11:33–36. Describe it below:

This is called the **omniscience** of God. No knowledge is unknown to God. There isn't a secret word or deed hidden from Him. He knows the number of hairs on our heads. He doesn't just count them—He knows them. Anything that is, has been, or ever will be, God knows. He never has to learn or find out anything.

The third attribute of God is called **omnipotence**. This means God is all-powerful. Because God is omnipotent, He is also sovereign, or in supreme control of all creation (Heb. 1:3). The Bible often speaks of the omnipotence of God (Jer. 32:27 & Mt 19:26). An understanding of the omnipotence of God is a great asset in the area of discipleship. Read Psalm 121:1–2 and Philippians 4:13, and explain:

The fourth attribute of God is found in Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8 & James 1:17. Read and explain:

God never changes in His nature. This does not imply that God is inactive or that He cannot change His method of achieving His purpose. Just as the same musical tune can be played in different keys, so God expresses His immutability in an endless variety of methods (Num. 14:30–31 & Jer. 31:31–34). God is eternally **immutable** and at the same time eternally active and creative.

Therefore, we know God is everywhere at once, knows everything at once, and controls everything at once. He always has and always will.

Knowing God is one God, who is spiritual, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and immutable, only gives us limited insight into what God is really like and what His attitude is toward us. Therefore, we must finally study ...

#### **IV. The Virtues of God**

The virtue that most uniquely describes God is **holiness**, which means “set apart” or “separated.” This shows that God is unlike any other being (Isa. 6:1–3). Holiness speaks of His infinite perfection. Therefore, He cannot be touched, influenced, or defiled by evil. Yet, holiness is much more than separation from evil and being distinct from all other beings.

Coming to an understanding of the holiness of God should have what effect on us (Isaiah 6:5)?

The second virtue of God is **righteousness**. While holiness is principally concerned with the character or nature of God, righteousness has to do with God's dealing with people. Read the following, and explain the righteousness of God: Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 19:9, and Romans 2:11.

**Truth** is another of God's virtues. He is trustworthy, infallible, and perfectly reliable. With God there is no falsehood, lack of consistency, or deceit (Jn 17:17). Not only is God true, but He actively reveals His truth to us that we may respond and come to know Him through it. Read John 14:6 and 1 John 5:20, and explain:

Finally comes God's goodness, which includes love, grace, and mercy.

**Love** is the very nature of God (1 Jn 4:8). Love is His attitude toward humanity to the extent there is no sacrifice He will not make to bring us to Him. God loves in a perfect way that is not dependent on the loveliness of the object. God's love is also perfect in that He does not simply talk about love, as is the limit of many Christians' love, but He acts in love. To know God only as all-powerful and holy would leave the individual trembling in fear, but to know He is also a God of love brings hope to the heart. How do Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:9 assure us of God's love?

God's **grace** is His favor and goodness to those who deserve His condemnation. Man's sin is a direct challenge to God's omnipotence, righteousness, and holiness. Because of man's sinful nature, which we will study in the next lesson, we all deserve condemnation, but God has elected to show favor and salvation to us (Titus 2:11–14).

Finally, God is a God of mercy. Grace is not getting what we do deserve, while mercy is getting what we do not deserve. In His grace, God forgives us our sin, and in His mercy, He gives us eternal life (Titus 3:5).

As you think about what God is really like, which of His attributes is particularly comforting or compelling to you?

MEMORY VERSE: John 4:24