

THINKING IT THROUGH:

1. What is the difference between Christianity and other religions of the world?
2. What aspect of God makes you stand in awe? Why?
3. How does God's omnipresence affect you personally?
4. How does God's omniscience affect you personally?
5. How does God's omnipotence affect you personally?
6. Is it unjust that God should save one and not another, or is He unjust to save any at all?
7. How does God's justice and love present Him with a dilemma?
8. How has God's love been expressed to man since the beginning of time?

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Describe God:

Day 1: Read the narrative of Sodom, Genesis 18:16-19-29. What did you learn about God?

Day 2: Read the narrative of the twelve spies, Deuteronomy 1:19-46. What did you learn about God?

Day 3: Read the narrative of Manasseh, Chronicles 33:1-20. What did you learn about God?

Day 4: Read the narrative of Jonah, Jonah 3. What did you learn about God?

Day 5: Read the parable of the workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20:1-16. What did you learn about God?

Day 6: Read the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30. What did you learn about a God?

Day 7: Read the narrative of Moses, Exodus 33:12-23. What did you learn about God?

Memory verse:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord.
Hebrews 12:14

Lesson 4

One True God

ONE GOD

God exists! If there were no Being called God, then we would be left to impersonal fate. We would be solely dependent on our own resources, and we would be limited to our own observations. However, if there is an all-powerful, eternal God Who loves us, then the possibilities for our lives are endless. Webster defines God as follows:

“the supreme reality; a being believed to have supernatural attributes and powers and to require worship.”

In light of this study, when we refer to God, we mean the Christian God called “Yhwh.” God is what He is; Yhwh is His name:

Say this to the people of Israel: **I AM** has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: **Yhwh, the God of your ancestors**—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. (Ex.14:14-15 NLT)

There are many Scriptures which support the existence of only one God, denying the existence of all other deities:

See now that I, even I, am he; **there is no god beside me**. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and **no one can deliver from my hand**. (Deut.32:39 NRSV Is.45:5-6)

To believe that other gods exist besides Yhwh is to contradict what God has revealed to us about Himself in the New Testament:

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and **that there is no other God but one**. (1Co.8:4 NKJV)

However, the concept of a tri-unity—one Being, God, existing in a plurality of persons—is also clearly stated in the Old Testament:

If mankind goes to hell, it won’t be God’s fault. God has been patient, but mankind did not respond to God’s calling because their nature desires sin. However, if a solution to man’s destruction can be found, it cannot come from man himself because he is the violator. A solution can only come through God:

*“I, even I, am the LORD; **And there is no savior besides Me**.*

(Is.43:11 NASB)

Therefore, God’s love for mankind prevents Him from ever taking pleasure in the death of any man; for this reason, He is patient in waiting for mankind to turn to Him.

of Nineveh of their impending doom, in the hope that they would change. When the king heard the judgment of God, we read:

*Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: **No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything.** They shall not feed, **nor shall they drink water.** Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. **All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands.**"* (Jn.3:7-8 NRSV)

God spared the people of Nineveh because they turned away from their evil ways and violence. God is not a vengeful God Who delights in the destruction of His creation. God's love can be clearly seen in the Old Testament. Many times God would warn Israel through His prophets about the consequences of their actions. The first example of God warning man to change his ways is clearly seen with Cain:

*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? **If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?** But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."* (Ge.4:6-7 NIV)

When God's justice is about to punish the wicked, His love warns them in the hope that they will heed the warning and turn from their wickedness. This is why God sent the prophets to warn the people of His judgement:

*And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. **Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgment.*** (2Pe 2:5 NLT)

God's love always motivated Him to warn mankind of their impending doom, in the hope that some would turn from their sin. His love is expressed in His patience with wicked men and His hope that they would eventually turn:

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but **is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*** (2Pe.3:9 NASB)

For six thousand years, God has put up with mankind's sin, waiting for the few who would turn from their sin. This is an expression of love:

*But You, O Lord, **are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness and truth.*** (Ps.86:15 NASB)

*In the beginning **God created the heavens and the earth.** And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and **the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*** (Ge.1:1-2 NASB)

The Scripture could have said, "God was hovering over the waters"; instead, Scripture says that the Spirit of God, which is one part of God, independently hovered over the waters. Again, we catch a glimpse of the tri-unity in the creation of man when we read:

*Then God said, "**Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.**"* (Ge.1:26 NKJV)

Then God (singular) said, "Let Us (plural) make man in Our (plural) image." God is revealing Himself as both singular and plural. In the New Testament, He also reveals Himself as the Word, Who created everything:

*In the beginning **was the Word**, and the **Word was with God**, and the **Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* (Jn.1:1-3 NKJV)

The Word was God and was with God. The plurality of God is clearly presented when man sinned by eating the forbidden fruit:

*Then the LORD **God said**, "See, the **man has become like one of us**, knowing good and evil."* (Ge.3:22 NRSV)

The New Testament clearly teaches that God is a single Being Who exists in three distinct persons. The first indication that God is one Being existing in three persons is when the angel announced to Mary that she would miraculously be expecting a son:

*And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered and said to her, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will** overshadow you; and for that reason **the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.**"* (Lk.1:34-35 NASB)

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinctly seen at Jesus' baptism when each person of the one God is in a different location, doing something different simultaneously:

*When He had been baptized, **Jesus came up immediately from the water**; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw **the***

Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly **a voice came from heaven, saying**, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt.3:16-17 NKJV)

The Bible divides the salvation of man not only into three actions but also into the three different "Persons" of Yhwh:

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect... who have been **chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, through the **sanctifying work of the Spirit**, for **obedience to Jesus Christ** and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.* (1Pe.1:1-2 NIV)

Each Person of the trinity has a different role in the salvation of man. These roles indicate that each Person of God is a distinct Being. Furthermore, each Person has His own function and attributes:

*The **grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**, and the **love of God**, and the **fellowship of the Holy Spirit**, be with you all.* (2Co.13:14 NASB)

In the great commission, Matthew uses the singular word "name" for the three Persons of God:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* (Mt.28:19-20 NKJV)

Therefore, throughout this study when we refer to one of these three, we simply are referring to the only true God called Yhwh.

THE GOD WHO IS

The Bible teaches us that He is the only true God and that He is an eternal Being:

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, **from everlasting to everlasting you are God**.* (Ps.90:2 NRSV; Ps.41:13)

Since God existed before the creation of the world and will live forever past the end of this world, we say that He is eternal—without beginning or end:

*But the LORD is **the true God**; He is **the living God** and the **everlasting King**.* (Jer.10:10; NKJV Ge.1:1; Re.1:8; Jn.1:1-2)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. (Ro.1:18 NRSV)

Just as physical death separates us from the ones we love, eternal death separates us from the God Who loves us. People go to hell because they ignore God even though He provides everything that we need. In hell God ignores man's needs, and man is left with only the things he can provide himself. Therefore, God's justice demands that the penalty of death be given to whoever sins, and His holiness will not tolerate sinners in heaven.

GOD IS LOVE

Finally, God loved His creation. He did not create mankind in order to destroy them. However, God is absolutely just; His justice demands that the full penalty for disobedience be served:

God is just. (2Th.1:6 NIV)

On the other hand, as much as God is just, God is also love:

God is love. (1Jn.4:16 NKJV)

Since God is both loving and just, a conflict emerged. God's holiness demands justice, yet God's absolute love is expressed in His mercy and grace:

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. (Ps.116:5 NRSV)

If God showed His love to mankind by forgiving them, His justice would be violated. But if God upheld His holiness as expressed in true justice by punishing man, His love would be violated. God's love prevents Him from taking pleasure in the destruction of those He must punish—even though His justice demands it:

*'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. **Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!**'* (Eze.33:11 NASB note verses 23& 32)

God's love always motivated Him to send a prophet to warn the people before He acted in judgement. When the city of Nineveh had surpassed God's threshold for evil, God planned to prematurely judge the city by unleashing His wrath upon it. God's love sent Jonah to warn the people

sinners who cannot stand before a Holy God without being judged and condemned to face the full fury of His wrath:

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of **our sinful nature** and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of wrath**. (Eph 2:3 NIV)

Since God knows us intimately, He does not need a trial or witnesses in order to establish guilt. His knowledge is 100% accurate:

*For I know my transgressions, and **my sin is ever before me**. **Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.*** (Ps.51:3-4 NRSV)

True justice does not consider whether a person has done good, but only whether he has committed the wrong. One sin, any sin, will condemn a person to hell:

*For whoever **keeps the whole law** and yet **stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it**. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a law-breaker. (Ja.2:10-11 NIV)*

Some might claim that because of their ignorance about God's Law, they should be exempt from punishment. However, in earthly society, if I break a law without knowing its existence, an earthly judge will still hold me accountable for the offence. God is no different:

For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law. (Ro.2:11-12 NASB)

What I believe about God or whether I go to church is immaterial to Him. God is impartial; He will judge each man's work strictly according to His Law:

*Since you call on a Father **who judges each man's work impartially**, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.* (1Pe.1:17 NIV)

God is an impartial judge, judging all men's actions by His standard:

God "will give to each person according to what he has done. (Ro.2:6 NIV; Mt 16:27; 2Co 5:10; 1Pe. 4:17)

One sin will give us the verdict of guilty, and the penalty for sin is eternal separation from God. For this reason, we will face the wrath of God for our sin:

In heaven, we will constantly be reminded of the eternal existence of God by the seraphim surrounding His throne:

*The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, **Who was and is and is to come!**" Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, **who lives forever and ever.** (Re.4:8-9 NKJV)*

Just as eternity is incomprehensible to man, God Himself cannot be understood by our minds' limitations:

*"Can you **discover the depths of God?** Can you **discover the limits of the Almighty?**" (Job 11:7 NASB)*

A finite man cannot intellectually grasp the concept of an infinite, eternal God. For example, a finite man may change his mind many times each day, yet our infinite God is consistent—He does not change:

*God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so **he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act?** (Nu 23:19 NLT)*

God's inability to change over eternity provides security to His people. His standard of morality yesterday is the same for today and forever:

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, **who does not change like shifting shadows.** (Ja.1:17 NIV; He.1:12)*

Since God does not change, the past is the key to understanding not only the present, but the future as well:

*I know that **whatever God does, it shall be forever**. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. **God does it, that men should fear before Him.** (Ecc.3:14 NKJV)*

God's inability to change gives us confidence today in all that He has promised His Church two thousand years ago:

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2Co.1:20-22 NIV)

God's unchanging nature ensures us that His promises of yesterday are for today and forever. Since Jesus is God, we read:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

(He.13:8 NASB)

Therefore, the fact that we serve an eternal, unchanging God gives us confidence. He was, is, and always will be the same. All that He has promised to His church in the first century is a promise for the church today.

GOD IS HOLY

God is also holy—absolute, sinless perfection; however, the concept of holiness is beyond human comprehension:

This God—his way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true.

(Ps 18:30 NRSV)

Holiness is the absence of all wickedness:

*Therefore, hear me, you who have sense, **far be it from God that he should do wickedness**, and from **the Almighty that he should do wrong**.*

(Job 34:10 NRSV)

God's holy character finds evil repulsive and sin unacceptable, causing Him to be separated from those who do wrong:

*But **your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God**, And **your sins have hidden His face from you**, so that He does not hear.*

(Isa.59:2 NASB)

God no longer walked with man after He sent them out of His garden because they had sinned. God is perfect, and sin is imperfection. Sin isolates us from our perfect God:

*Your eyes are too pure **to look on evil**; you **cannot tolerate wrong**.*

(Hab.1:13 NIV)

Man's sin prevented him from having a relationship with God. In the temple, God remained in the Holy of Holies with a curtain separating Himself from the daily activities of the priests. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God only allowed a view of His back:

*But He said, "You cannot see My face, **for no man can see Me and live!**"*

(Ex 33:20 NASB)

*What then are we to say about these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, **will he not with him also give us everything else?***

(Ro.8:31-32 NRSV)

GOD IS JUST

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in a garden that He had prepared for them. He allowed them to eat of any tree they desired except one, the one which He reserved for Himself—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

*Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but **from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.**"*

(Ge.2:15-17 NASB)

Mankind knew the penalty for eating the forbidden fruit, yet because they had a nature that was predisposed to sin, they ate the fruit:

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, **she took from its fruit and ate**; and she gave also to her husband with her, **and he ate**.*

(Ge.3:6 NASB)

Once man ate of the forbidden fruit, God had to punish them according to His Law. God loved His creation and created man with a spirit to live with Him forever. He did not want to destroy mankind. However, God is a just judge and must punish mankind according to His Law:

***God is a just judge**, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*

(Ps.7:11 NKJV)

Twice God prematurely judged society because it had reached an intolerable threshold of evil. God sent His wrath upon it:

*For if God... **did not spare the ancient world**, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, **when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly**; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter.*

(2Pe.2:4-6 NASB)

These societies were judged and suffered God's wrath before the appointed time at the end of the world. However, all mankind are

*From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. **What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.*** (Isa.46:11NIV)

Because God created all things, there is nothing that He cannot do:

For nothing is impossible with God. (Lk.1:37 NIV; Mt.19:26; Job.42:2)

God not only created the universe and the heavens, but He also sustains its order, by His laws of nature. Any time God desires to deviate from those laws, He can do as He wishes:

*"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, **for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.*** (Re.4:11 NIV; Co.1:16-17 He.1:3)

All Satan's forces were created by God; hence, their collective power cannot overcome God. They cannot harm us apart from the will of God; in other words, God limits their effect in our lives:

*We know that those who are born of God **do not sin**, but the one who was born of God **protects them**, and the **evil one does not touch them.*** (1Jn.5:18 NRSV; 1Jn.4:4; Ro.8:31-39)

This does not mean that we will not go through trials; rather, God will be with us through the trials—granting us the strength to thrive. Since He is everywhere at once and knows everything about us at any given moment, He can and will give us the strength to stand:

*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to us all. And **God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*** (1Co.10:13 TNIV)

God promises to provide everything to meet our needs:

*And **God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*** (2Co.9:8 NIV)

Because God is all powerful, we know that we can trust Him to do as He has promised. Therefore, we can say:

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

(Php.4:13 NKJV)

Therefore, the knowledge that no one is greater than God grants us peace:

If Moses had stood before the glorified face of God, he would have died instantly, been judged, and been sent to hell for his sin. A sinful man cannot stand before God:

*The men of Beth-shemesh said, "**Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God?**"* (1Sa 6:20 NASB)

For this reason, God's Spirit could not live in man's heart because all hearts were evil, and man's nature was bent on sin:

*"**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*** (Jer.17:9 NKJV)

Sinners cannot dwell with a Holy God, not on earth or for eternity in heaven:

*For You are not a God **who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You.** The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; **You hate all who do iniquity.*** (Ps.5:4-5 NASB)

Since man is wicked, God sends them after death to the only place He does not go—hell:

*For there is no difference, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** (Ro.3:22-23 NKJV)

If a man ever hopes to live with God in heaven, then all his sins must be removed from his record and all his wickedness must cease:

*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and **to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*** (He.12:14 NIV)

Therefore, God is holy—absolute, sinless perfection; hence, once mankind had sinned, they were separated from God.

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT—ALL PRESENT

Out of all the qualities of God, three are necessary for us to grasp because they dictate His relationship with man. The **first** is that God through His Spirit is always present everywhere. No place exists in our physical universe where we can escape Him:

Am I a God near by, says the LORD, and not a God far off? Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD. (Jer.23:23 NRSV)

This can be considered in a negative light for those who commit sin, for there is no place to escape the ever watchful Spirit of God:

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where **can I flee from Your presence?** If I ascend into heaven, **You are there**; If I make my bed in hell, behold, **You are there**. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, **even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.** (Ps.139:7-10 NKJV)

However, for the Christian, God's omnipresence is a comfort. He is always present, never too far away that He cannot hear or help. He will guide us and will see us through all situations, no matter what may come:

*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and **has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings**, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that **they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being.*** (Ac.17:26-28 NKJV)

Therefore, the concept that God is always near gives comfort to Christians; for He is always ready to intervene on our behalf.

GOD IS OMNISCIENT—ALL KNOWING

Second, God's knowledge is infinite; at any given moment, nothing in the universe is beyond His awareness:

*He counts the number of the stars; **He gives names to all of them.** Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; **His understanding is infinite.*** (Ps.147:4-5 NASB)

God's knowledge is infinite, while arrogant man's knowledge is finite. Someone once asked, "Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God?" For those who commit sin, this concept brings fear. God's knowledge is not based on physical sight but on intuition, a perfect awareness that penetrates even total darkness:

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," **even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.*** (Ps.139:11-12 NRSV)

Some people commit wickedness in darkness, thinking that they will escape judgment. God knows everything that all people have ever done or will do, and He will judge them according to their actions:

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (He.4:13 NIV)

For the sinner, God's omniscience should instill fear; but for the Christian, it offers hope. He knows what we are going through and how much we can endure:

*O LORD, **You have searched me and known me.** You know my sitting down and my rising up; **You understand my thought afar off.** You comprehend my path and my lying down, **And are acquainted with all my ways.** For **there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.*** (Ps.139:1-4 NASB)

He knows us more intimately than we know ourselves; we can trust His wisdom. God does not only know how many hairs we have, but He also has each one numbered—hair number 1,417 just fell out!

The very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Mt.10:30 KJV)

The significance of God's knowledge for the Christian gives us tremendous peace because He knows what was in the past, what is in the present, and even more important, what will be in the future:

*My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. **In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.***

(Ps.139:15-16 NRSV)

God knows what is about to happen around the next corner, during the next event, and in the next year. Therefore, God knows what we are going to need before we need it. He knows how much we can endure—giving us the hope that He will intervene at the right moment, providing all that we need.

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT—ALL POWERFUL

Many times we have knowledge about a situation but do not have the power to intervene. The **third** attribute of God is that He is the Almighty. God is all powerful; there is no one greater or stronger. No one can stop what He has planned: