

A Sure Foundation

The beliefs that we build our lives on

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

MONTH 1

WEEK 3

READ:

John 10-14

A LIMITED PERSPECTIVE

What we think of who God is determines a lot about who we ourselves become. The problem is that none of us has a large enough perspective to see the whole picture of our infinite God. To the right are pictures I took of a single object, but from different perspectives. Look at just one of the pictures. Can you identify what it is a part of? Is it easier when you look at all five clues? Would it become even easier if you had more pictures of its various parts?

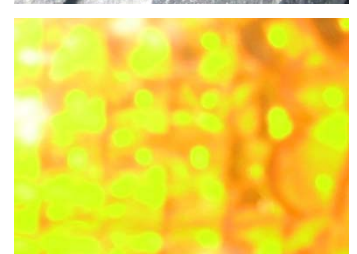
It is like the four blind men trying to describe an elephant. One has hold of the tail and says an elephant is thin and hairy. Another feels the trunk and says an elephant is like a huge snake. The third grasps a tusk and says an elephant is hard and smooth. As the fourth wraps his arms around the tough skin of a leg, he says an elephant is like a tree.

We are blind people when it comes to seeing God. We can only see little bits and pieces at a time and it is easy for us to come to the wrong conclusions from those. We must combine our own experience of God, both in His creation and in our lives, with the accurate lens of Scripture where God reveals to us who He is... at least as much of it as He thinks we can handle.

Which of these best describes how you see God?

- a kind grandfather
- Santa Clause, giving gifts to good little boys and girls
- a frowning judge ready to condemn at the slightest offense
- a ghost, or fairy godmother, or some other make-believe being
- an invisible, always present friend
- a divine being that is far removed from everyday life
- however you experienced your own father for good or bad
- I don't think much about Him

How does this view affect the way that you live? _____



THE NEED TO KNOW

As a small child, my only view of God came from reciting this bedtime prayer:

*Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul will take*

I had no idea who this mysterious Lord was or where He was going to take my soul, but I had no intentions of dying in my sleep and finding out!

I still fear God, but from a much different angle now. My fear of God as a child was out of my ignorance of Him. It was a terror of being zapped by an unknown and therefore unpredictable power. Now my more appropriate and warranted fear of God is simply an acknowledgement of who He is. I don't take a breath but by His grace. I know Him now as Someone I long to be with. I take delight in getting to know He-who-delights-in-me better.

I've gained more pictures to know Him by. I know He loves me; first because the Bible told me so, and then because He has proved it to me over and over. He loves me enough to sometimes give me what I need instead of what I want – just like I try to do for my own children. I have learned to measure my experiences by what I know about God instead of the other way around. In a hard time, I trust that God is teaching me and growing me because He loves me and has plans for me. I choose to trust that He will keep His word to me. That has only come from getting to know Him better and better – through reading His word, through listening to Him, and through practicing a constant awareness of His involvement in my life. The life I live, the faith I count on and my acts of worship will be no greater than the idea I have of God. God has given us what we need to know Him, fear Him and love Him, the real Him, not just an idol that we make up and give the name of God.

How, and why, has your knowledge of God's character grown since you were a child? _____



THE "OMNI" QUALITY OF GOD

Omni means all, but how do you define all? Having only a finite mind, I don't think I can possibly comprehend the "allness" of God. He is so BIG and beyond the scope of our understanding that it is tempting to give Him some limits. Even trying to describe His attributes within the confines of our language is limiting. Even the divine Scripture is not large enough to contain all there is to know about God, but it gives us some pictures. Describe what Scripture tells us about each of these OMNI words:



OMNIBENEVOLENT (John 3:16) _____

OMNISCIENT (Romans 11:33) _____

OMNIPRESENT (Ps. 139:7-10) _____

OMNIPOTENT (Genesis 17:1) _____

Do you have your own omni to add? Which of these is the most meaningful to you at this stage of your life?

THE GOD WHO SEES Gen. 16

Hagar was in a hard position. She had been obedient when Sarah, her master had given her to Abraham to bear a child. She had felt pretty smug when she had managed what her superior had not – a pregnancy. But then Sarah despised her and made things so miserable for her that she ran away, dejected and unloved. But God heard her cries and blessed her with a promise for her son.

God has perhaps hundreds of names recorded in Scripture, but the name given Him by Hagar is perhaps one of the most meaningful pictures of Him for me.

"The God who Sees"



GOD'S CHARACTER REVEALED John



The book of John gives us many pictures that provide insight into the character of God. For one thing, John writes convincingly that as

God's Son, Himself divine, Jesus gives us an accurate picture of God's character through the life that He lived among His people. If we know the Son, we know the Father.

What do we learn about God's character from each of these pictures of Him? Choose the word that best fits the Scripture reference:

wrathful, spirit, true, loving, invisible, accessible, glorious, one, and righteous

- 1:14 _____
- 3:14-18 _____
- 3:16 _____
- 4:24 _____
- 5:37 _____
- 10:7,9 _____
- 10:30 _____
- 14:6 _____
- 14:9-11 _____
- 17:3,17 _____
- 17:25 _____

In Exodus, God said "I AM". God simply exists as all that He is. When Jesus came, He gave us more specific pictures of what that means: "I AM the door of the sheep", "I AM the Good Shepherd", "I AM the Resurrection and the Life", and "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life".

What do these pictures add up to? _____

Figured out the pictures yet? Think two wheels and handle bars mixed with feeling like a dog sticking its head out of a car window and flying down the highway!

JOHN 10

Who are the thieves and robbers in John 10? _____

Who is the shepherd? _____

Who are the sheep? _____

Why do the sheep follow the shepherd? _____

How many flocks are there? _____

Who took the shepherd's life? _____

How "safe" are the sheep? _____

JOHN 11

What was the illness and death of Lazarus for? _____

What did Martha **know** about Jesus? _____

How was the picture that Mary and Martha had of Jesus and what He could do limited? _____

What was the response of Jesus to Mary's tears? _____

What did the chief priests and Pharisees fear would happen if Jesus continued performing signs? _____

JOHN 12

What picture did Mary seem to have of Jesus that others didn't understand? _____

At what point did the disciples put two and two together? _____

JOHN 13

What picture did Jesus show by washing the disciples' feet? _____

JOHN 14

How did Jesus reply to Philip's request to be shown the Father? _____

What will the one who believes in Jesus do? _____

Who will come to teach us more? _____



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For more studies
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