

Developing a Sturdy Faith

Part 2 - Who is God?

Meet God

 **Psalm 46 (NIV)**

'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'

Do you know Him?

 **Jeremiah 9:23-24**

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, 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. Do not boast about how smart you are. Do not boast about how intellectual you are. Do not boast about how rich you are. You have one boast in this life, and it is that you know God.'

The Message so Far

The dangers of not knowing who God is.

We tend towards rendering a God in our image – Romans 1 talks about this.

 **Romans 1:22 (NKJV)**

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

The God we end up creating is very comfortable with things that we find comfortable.

- we cannot worship God truthfully if we render Him as something that He is not
- He forbids it and will reject it
- We must protect ourselves against it



How can we protect ourselves from faulty thinking about God and who He is?

Our principle source of revelation is the scriptures – as we read them, absorb them, immerse ourselves in the pages, and as we honour the word of God, so God will use His word to illuminate our thinking.

The book of Romans also teaches us that we get glimpses of God through what he has made (Romans 1); all the complexity, beauty, wonder of creation reveals certain things about the mind of God.

But our ultimate authority is the Word of God – and what He says about Himself; how He describes himself, and reveals Himself to you and me.

Can we know God?

- We can't know him exhaustively – we are finite and he is infinite
- We have limitations in all parts of our lives:
 - physical (lifting weights, running speed, tolerances to G forces)
 - emotional (we can only absorb hurts to a limit)
 - intellectual (we can only understand to a point)
- So we are restricted from knowing Him exhaustively (all that He is)
- But we can know Him truthfully – the scriptures reveal the truth about Him to us

How do we know God?

- Scripture reveals that we can only know God through His spirit
- Who knows the heart of a man, but the spirit of the man – who can know the heart of God but the spirit of God?
- As we grow in our dependence upon the Spirit of God, we grow to know more about God

Having a High / Low view of God

We need to have a high view of God – to see Him as He really is.

 **Isaiah 55 (NKJV)**

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

In order to understand God, we tend to have a low view of God – and this is when we force Him into what we can understand, or consider reasonable, or palatable. That’s when He begins to look like and think like us.


When we know God

Routine religion is no longer tolerable.

Routine religion is no longer tolerable when you truly know this God.

Check out this quote from a guy named Charles Misner, scientific specialist in general relative theory commented on Albert Einstein's life.

Albert Einstein (obviously a genius) - listen to what Misner said:

 ***“The design of the universe is very magnificent and shouldn’t be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had little use for organized religions, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the Church said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he had run across did not have proper respect for the author of the universe.”***

- our solar system is 100,000 light years in diameter
- It contains 100 billion stars.
- This is just one galaxy among innumerable galaxies
- Our sun is a modest star burning at a minor 600 degrees centigrade
- traveling 150 miles a second
- It will take 200 million years for it to complete a revolution around our galaxy
- That's one star among 100 billion.

 **Isaiah 40:25-26**

"Look at the heavens. Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name."

- Think about the God that we worship calling 100 billion stars in our galaxy by name
- Some of us struggle with remembering our own kids names
- Our God calls the stars by name

How can you have routine religion when this is the God who we follow?

- This is the God who we revere
- This is the God we pray to
- This is the God we worship

Think of Christians around the world and in years past – they have lost, and continue to lose their lives – and for what? Not their religion. But for this God.

Think of the disciples all of whom died for this God – think of the apostle Paul who was beaten, whipped, imprisoned, stoned, mocked and rejected – not because of his religion. It was because of this God.

- Routine religion is no longer tolerable when you know God
- Apathy is nowhere to be found among people who truly know this God

Casual Worship is No Longer Possible

Once you begin to know God you can no longer:

- worship without affection
- worship without emotion
- worship with indifference

If you know God truly, you will love God deeply.

- How can you know this God, and not feel for this God?
- How can you know this God, but when you worship, look like you are bored to tears?

It doesn't make sense.

Casual worship is no longer possible when you know this God.

Total Surrender is No Longer Optional

When you look at the God of the Bible, then the thought of not submitting to Him as Lord is blasphemous!

When you look at the God of the Bible you will see the one who has all authority over everything in all the universe— including our lives.

And we will realize that every single one of us has sacrificed the right to determine the direction of our lives when you call this God Lord.

Total surrender is not an option.

Global Mission is No Longer Negotiable

Finally, when you know this God, global mission is no longer negotiable.

If what this Word says about God is true, then there are people all around the world that need to hear about Him – millions of:

- Buddhists
- Muslims
- Hindus
- Seiks
- African Animists

Once you know this God, you cannot help but run to the nations proclaiming that He is God.

So let's get Humble!

This is a humbling journey.

 **Psalm 25**

“He guides the humble.”

 **Isaiah 66:2**

“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit.”

We are not investigators doing an examination of God. Rather, we are servants bowing at the feet of God - there's a massive difference between the two! In humility we are asking God to reveal Himself to us.

Here's the plan

We're going to track like this:

1. Take a look at the names of God
2. We're going to review the attributes of God
 - a. His greatness
 - b. His goodness

3. Finally we're going to delve into the mysteries of God
 - a. The Trinity
 - b. God and Evil

The Names of God

Quick Review!

1. Command 1 - put God first
2. Command 2 - do not diminish God by diminishing our view of him
3. Command 3 - we must not use God's name for unholy purposes

God starts the Ten Commandments talking about His name.

 **Exodus 20:2-4 (NKJV)**

"I am the Lord your God ...

[1] You shall have no other gods before Me.

[2] You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ..."

Then He says,

 **Exodus 20:7 (NKJV)**

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

What we are seeing is a God who is very serious about His name.

 **Psalm 113:3,**

"My name will be praised from the rising to the setting of the sun."

This same verse is quoted again in Malachi 1 when God is rebuking the priest who had defiled His name, and He basically says to them, "***Even if you defile my name, I want to remind you that my name will still be praised from the rising to the setting of the sun.***"

The Hebrew Mind

In the Hebrew mind God's name could not be separated from his reality. For this reason God's name could not be treated lightly. They would not even pronounce his name for fear of violating the third commandment. God's name in Hebrew is Yahweh, but the Jews wouldn't pronounce his name, they would use the word Adonai (i.e., Lord) or Elohim (i.e., God). They did this even when reading from the biblical text.

The Essence of Blaspheming God's Name

One of the renderings of the word blasphemy – “was to lift up the name of God to ... nothing”

God is very serious about His name.

Why is God so into His name?



Stop and think for a minute how many religious leader's names are used as swear words today.

Buddha? Mohamed? Zoraster? Vishnu? Krishna? Christ?

There seems to be a bunch of reasons why God demands protection around His name.

1. The Names of God Provide Revelation of God


- The names of God are not ones that we have made up
- These names are revealed to us by God himself
- They're gifts from God to us
- They're His revelation to us

When Moses is about to go to the Israelites in order to lead them out of Egypt, he says,

 **Exodus 3:13 (NKJV)**


“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

God says,

 **Exodus 3:14 (NKJV)**

“Say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM’ has sent me to you.”

Then later in Exodus Moses is before God and he prays:

 **Exodus 33:18-19 (NKJV)**

“Show me your glory.”

Listen to how the Lord responds.

“I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.”

So Moses says, "**Show me your glory.**" God says, "**I'll show you my name.**"

Here God is equating His name with His glory. This is how God reveals Himself to us in Exodus chapters 33 & 34.

When God does pass by Moses, He starts off proclaiming His name by saying,

 **Exodus 34:6-7**

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth"

The names of God give us revelation from God.

2. The Names of God Lead to Adoration of God

God's name is His self-revelation that produces praise among His people.

When we sing praises to God, we praise His name.

 **Psalm 8:1**

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

The picture here is that when we understand the names of God it will fuel our praise to God. When we praise God, we praise His name. This is foundational for our worship.

3. The Names of God Provide Refuge and Protection in God.

 **Proverbs 18:10**

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."

The more you understand the name of God, the more you will find it a shield and refuge and strength and protection. When life was not going as it was supposed to, and the storm clouds are surrounding you, you find protection in what?

You find protection in His name.

4. The Names of God Symbolise the Location of God's Glory Among His People

Next, when God talks about the Tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament, He talks about the place that will bear His name.

Listen to what He says in

 **Deuteronomy 12:5**

"You are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to **put His name there** for His dwelling."

 **1 Kings 9:3**

"The Lord said to him: 'I've heard the prayer and plea you've made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, **by putting my name there forever.**'"

So God's name shows identification with this location and where His glory dwells.

Again, we're seeing His name and His glory going together.

Now here's the beauty. Why do we need to see that in the Old Testament? Because when you get to the New Testament you don't have a Tabernacle or temple. Instead, what's the temple? The temple of the Spirit of God, the place where God dwells, is our bodies. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, which leads to this next truth.

5. The Names of God Demonstrate Our Identification with God

You are the temple of God! You are the place where God lives!

You need to let this soak in for a minute - you are the place where the name of God dwells!

What an amazing thought.

We bear His name. Your life bears the name of almighty God.

This should cause us great humility.

We're baptised into what? We are baptised into His name.

 **Matthew 28:19**

"...baptising in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Identification with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We're identifying with God. We bear the name of God, which is why in Ezekiel 36 God says,

 **Ezekiel 36**

"I will show the holiness of my great name through you."

God shows His name off to the world through our lives. We bear His name - we are baptised into His name.

6. The Name of God is Power for Our Salvation

You get to Psalm 54 and David says:

 **Psalm 54:1**

“Save me, O God, by your **name**.”

Peter stands up in Acts chapter 4 and says:

Acts 4:12

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is **no other name** under heaven given to men by which we can be saved.”

7. The Name of God is Authority for our Mission

It's the power of God for our salvation, but not just the power of God for our salvation. The name of God is authority for our mission.

Check out Acts 2-5 and all the references that mention the name of Jesus. It's everywhere.

And it shows us that the name of Jesus is supreme for our authority, our mission, our confidence, our salvation.

Let's pray.