

## Lesson 1 Commentary

### What Is God Like?

1. **Genesis 1:1-2** What can be learned about God in the very first two verses of the Bible?

**God is eternal (he existed before anything else), he created all that is, and he is spirit.**

God is above what he made and distinct from it; he is not any *part* of the universe or even *all* of it. He is spirit and cannot be represented by anything found in the world or made by man. The fact that God is invisible does not mean, however, that he is impersonal. God is a personal Being, thinking and acting in his work of creation.

2. **Psalm 96** List the words used to describe God in this song about him.

**God is great. His glory (majesty and splendor) exceeds that of all gods, because they are idols made by human hands, but he made the heavens. God is holy and righteous and strong. He rules over the world and judges it.**

In simple terms, God's holiness and righteousness refer to his purity and perfection. But God is not just holy; he is holy and just. He not only possesses holiness; he requires it. God created man and woman in his own image, and he expects us to "be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16). The fact that the Lord is sovereign, or supreme, means that he has the authority and power to carry out his judgment of those who do not live the righteous life he requires. A single verse which incorporates all three of these aspects of God's nature is Isaiah 5:16. "The LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness."

3. **Psalm 139:1-6, 7-12** What attribute of God is described in each section of this poem?

**God knows everything, and God is everywhere.**

God knows every thing about every person, but his omniscience cuts two ways. None of our needs escape his notice, but neither do our failings. No part of our lives is hidden from God. Other verses which teach that God knows everything, including attitudes of the heart, are 1 Chronicles 28:9 and Hebrews 4:13. The Bible does not teach that God is in every thing, as some religions claim, but that he is fully present in every place. Even though we may never doubt that God is accessible to us at any time, we still tend to think that he is only attentive to us when we are thinking about him. The wonderful reality of his omnipresence is that God is able to give his undivided attention to every person in every place at all times. His ability to concentrate on one relationship is not diminished in the least by what he does to maintain other relationships.

4. **1 John 4:9-10** What does God think of us?

**If we respond to the question in terms of his attitude toward us, the obvious answer is that God loves us.**

What God thinks of us, however, involves not only his attitude toward us but also his assessment of us. God does love us but not because we are lovable. We are sinners, ones who do wrong. The fact that God would sacrifice his own Son for those who fail to follow his ways or seek his will shows just how great is the magnitude of his love.

5. How did God show his love for us?

**God sent his Son to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on a cross to pay the penalty which God imposes on us for our failure to serve and obey him. His death was an *atoning* sacrifice, a sacrifice that makes it possible for us to be at “at one,” or at peace, with God, against whom we sin.

6. **John 3:16-18, 36** What is the result of rejecting God's love?

**Those who reject the sacrifice of God's Son for their sin will perish and never see life. They are condemned (sentenced) to death and to the wrath of God.**

Even the general sense of these consequences is enough to show how serious they are, but the more we learn about them, the worse they turn out to be. For example, “perish” does not refer here to annihilation but to separation (see Matthew 5:30 KJV for this sense of the word), and ceasing to exist is infinitely less severe than eternal existence apart from God. Never seeing life means remaining dead in the spirit (that part of our being through which we relate to God). Wrath refers to the suffering to which those separated from God are destined.

7. How do we receive, or reject, God's love?

**The way to experience the love of God is to believe in the Son of God.**

The supreme expression of God's love was sending his Son to die for us, so refusing to believe in Jesus Christ cuts us off from God's love. Belief in the Son of God involves more than affirming his existence, although that is an essential part of it. The full meaning of belief will be dealt with in the last lesson. The purpose of the first lesson is to determine what the Bible teaches about the nature of God. In the process the study touches on all the other elements of the gospel - the sin of man, the sacrifice of Jesus and salvation by faith. The holiness of God is the main point of the first lesson, however, because it is the basis for all the rest. If God is not holy, there is no sin against God, no separation from God and no need for salvation by God.