

541 What Is God Like?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

For some people God is an old man in a white robe with a long beard. Like a doddering grandfather, he is often naïve, very understanding and compassionate, rarely ever stern or harsh. Other people think of God as an angry disciplinarian just waiting for any of us to make a mistake. Still others think God is merely a grand figment of man's imagination. For thousands of years people have built their own idols and called it "God." What is God really like? How can we know the God who created us and loves us?

For thousands of years men took wood, silver, gold, and stone and made idols out of them. They shaped them into images of what they thought God looked like. They developed elaborate rituals to worship these supposed gods, often celebrating with drunkenness and sexual immorality. Ancient worshipers felt the need to pacify their gods to keep them from bringing disaster upon them. If some flood, fire or famine came about, the ancients were sure that some god had been offended. Some even offered human sacrifices to placate the gods they imagined.

Some gods and goddesses had elaborate temples like Diana at Ephesus or the Parthenon in Athens built to the goddess Athena. While many temples had priests and priestesses, these religions were built around making money and did little for the moral or spiritual life of the people. Since idols are actually the figment of one's imagination, they have no revelation or moral teaching to guide their followers. They cannot speak, cannot hear, cannot see, and cannot help in times of trouble. They cannot promise any future life. One might wonder why anyone would have an idol.

Perhaps the reason is that an idol has no moral law that its devotees have to follow. They can tell the idol their beliefs rather than listen to the moral law of the true God of heaven. When men reject God or ignore God, there is still within them the desire to worship something. Out of this desire, they concoct gods to suit their own desires and lusts. The apostle Paul talks very straight about the way people through history have regarded the God of heaven. How we view God and how we react to God is one of the most important factors in how our lives go. God does bless those who love and appreciate Him.

Paul said in Romans 1:18-20, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." The God of heaven hasn't hidden Himself but has revealed his power and attributes through his creation. Yes we can see that God is greater than an idol.

Only an infinite God who does not dwell in temples made with hands could have created this universe—the sun, moon, and stars. He must have infinite wisdom and power to have designed this earth so grand and so beautiful. Rather than think we can construct a god to worship as we wish, we would be far greater served to seek after the only and only true god that is! The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). When men forget the true God, they also lose what is true and good in life and replace it with deception.

Of ancient idolaters, Paul said in Rom. 1:20-23, "So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." The idols caused man not to raise his understanding of God but to

lower it. All he could do is copy the images of the creature instead of the Creator.

Paul continues in Romans 1:24-25, "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen." People often say no to the God that Created them; but when they do, they replace Him with their own lusts. They hurt themselves spiritually and morally when they reject Him and His moral teachings. Every law of God is for our good. Saying no to God always hurts those who say it.

Paul continues, "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (Romans 1:28-32). God and morality are unalterably linked.

It is only when we personally take it to heart that God made us and has authority over our lives, our behavior, and our destiny, that we see the need to discipline ourselves and live as God wills. Men who worship idols live without any morals but their own making. Those who serve the God of heaven have His revealed Word, the Bible, which He has given to guide man to ways of peace and love. This great gift of wisdom helps us to understand that God is not only power, He is also wise and moral and wants the best for our lives. Wherever God's Word goes, it makes man better, nobler and purer.

If we ask the question, "what is God like?" we really do have a good answer. Here's what the gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 17-18 in the English Standard Version say, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" or as the New American Standard Version says, "He has explained Him." We know what God the Father is like by looking at Jesus Christ, His Son. We know His character, His power, His love, and His goodness every time we look at Jesus!

Jesus told the disciples in John 14:7-9, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" The more we know Jesus, the more we know what God is like. God is alive and can be seen in a form we understand, in Jesus Christ. We are blessed to know that our God is real and can be loved.

Paul said about Jesus in Philippians 2:5-8, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." We know that God is loving and compassionate, that He is willing to sacrifice Himself for our sake, because He loves us so very much. Every day we should give thanks for such a God.

Paul continues in Philippians 2:9-11, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Jesus would die for you, but God has given Him a place of authority over all of us. Love and forgiveness are ours, but we must humble ourselves before God and be obedient to His will. We cannot have Jesus as Savior unless we are also willing to embrace Him as “Lord.”

God is not like the idol. The idol is made of material things; it does not care what you believe or do. God is a Father in Heaven who cares about you and about your life and your destiny. He sent His Son Jesus to die for you, He gave you a Bible to guide your life in the right way, He gives you His ear to listen to your prayers, and He gives you hope of life beyond this life. God the Father is a Person, not a force or a lifeless thing. Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father, who is in Heaven.” He is indeed like a loving Father who provides, protects, and corrects us. It is in our best interest to love Him and listen to Him.

The psalmist David said of God in Psalm 139:1-5, “O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.” God knows each of us intimately and loves us dearly. We are so blessed to have a Father such as that!

Our God is so much better than an idol. An idol is worshipped not for its shape but for its imagined power. One can own an idol, whereas one cannot own God. I can control my idol, whereas I cannot control God. People made idols for themselves, for their own benefit. An idol is selfishly owned, whereas God is everyone's God. People believed their idol loved them but not others; it answered their prayers but not others. To own an idol was to own an image of a "god." In ancient times people would bathe, dress, and feed their idols. They felt they could by this means manipulate their god to their own interests. God is not an idol to be manipulated.

He is our Creator, our Lord, our Savior, and our Father. We are to love, fear, and serve Him as the great God He is. God wants to have you as His child. I hope you want to have Him as your Father. The more you get to know the God of heaven, the more you will love Him and want to serve Him. There is no higher calling than to be a child of God.

How do you become a child of God? You do it through hearing the gospel of Christ, how He died for your sins and was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. Hear the gospel and believe it with all your heart.

In faith, repent of your sins. Forsake them and turn to God in love, wanting to do His will. Confess the name of Christ before others. And then undergo the new birth by being baptized in water and into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you are baptized, you become a child of God and are added by the Lord to His church. There is not a more important thing you can do. Then stay faithful to the Lord and His church all the days of your life. The Lord invites you to be His child today, if you will.

Each day we are choosing what God we will follow. Some serve the flesh, some serve money, some serve false gods. We should think and think about what God we serve. We hope you will choose to serve the true and living God. Paul said in Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” The devil himself would love to have you as his slave. He will promise you the world, but all his promises are vain and short-lived.

The devil will lie to you to get your loyalty, but he will only sell you out to the most destructive of masters. Sin always enslaves, then it destroys. How much better to choose God who loves you and will guide you to the things that are healthy and build you up. Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” Who or what is your God?

If He is not the God of the Bible, you need to turn from that idol and serve the true and living God. You will never regret doing the right thing.

Today we offering a free set of six Bible study lessons, entitled “Upon the Rock.” They will help you get to know the God of the Bible. All you need to do is let us know you want them, and we will send them to you. You can download them free from our website (God-answers.org). They take about an hour to go through, and all you need is your Bible and time. We’d love to send it to you, so write to us today at phil@God-answers.org.

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