

The Character of God Tools

What is God like? What comes into your mind when you think about God? Often we assume that our perceptions of God are accurate and true, that we somehow instinctively know what He is like. However, all of us have had our perspective of God impacted to a greater or lesser degree by how others view God and by our own life circumstances. Not only that, but what we say we believe about God is not always reflected in the way we live our lives. If we really believed God is all-powerful, would we worry so much? If we saw and accepted God's holiness, like Isaiah did when He saw God "high and lifted up", could we so easily fall into the same old sinful thoughts and behaviours? What we actually believe about God and His character determines everything about our lives – how we view ourselves, how we see others and how we live our lives.

A.W. Tozer, writing in the 20th century, believed that we (North American Christians) had lost our spirit of worship and our ability to withdraw inwardly and meet God in adoring silence. He felt it was critical that we, the church, grow in this area – that we purify and elevate our concept of God. One of the best ways to see God's character is to explore His attributes. Tozer taught that an attribute of God is whatever God has revealed about Himself to His creatures. It is how God is. We think of them separately but they cannot be separated. All of God's acts are consistent with all His attributes, and they harmonize and blend into each other.

Choose one or more tools below to investigate God's character and His attributes. Be sure to discuss what you have learned with at least two others, and notice how your changing beliefs about who God is impact how you feel about and talk with God, as well as how you live your life.

Level 1

Option 1

Invite a friend or two to go with you to the class series "Introduction to Theology – Understanding the God Who Is Love". This 5-week series of classes takes a foundational look at the essence of God, who is love, and the various ways God has chosen to demonstrate his love to us and through us to the world. Come and discover the heart of God's love. The class is offered Sunday mornings, October 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 from 9:15-10:15am in the Chapel (Central Campus). You can register through the website at www.cschurch.ca (Look under Spiritual Development and then Learning and Growth Events) or email empower@cschurch.ca

* Most resources are available through the Appleseed Resource Centre (library or bookstore).

Option 2

Listen to Pastor Henry's 8-week "God Is" sermon series (preached Dec. 23, 2007 – April 20, 2008 – available in the Library) with several friends and meet and discuss each sermon together – what you learned about God and yourself, and what you can now apply to your everyday life. (Note: this sermon series will be re-preached by Pastor Henry in September and October of 2011.)

Level 2

Option 1

Find a couple of friends to read through The Good and Beautiful God by James Bryan Smith. As you go through each of the chapters, be sure to also go through the "soul training" exercises and discuss 1-2 reflection questions. (Note: There is a guide at the back of the book for how to use this as a small group study.)

Option 2

Chip Ingram's challenging but accessible book God: As He Longs for You to See Him examines seven of God's major attributes: goodness, sovereignty, holiness, wisdom, justice, love, and faithfulness. You'll see God in a whole new light, changing the way you pray, the way you live, and the way you think about the world around you! As you go through the book with several others, use the following questions taken from www.christianbook.com to guide your discussion:

1. After reading Chapters 1-2, what have been some of your misperceptions of God? How has that affected the way you live?
2. After reading Chapter 3, what steps will you take to see God as He longs to be seen?
3. Do you ever feel guilty for having "too much fun" or feeling "too blessed", as if God may suddenly yank it all away? How does this conflict with the goodness of God after reading Chapter 4?
4. In Chip's first point under "How Are We to Respond to God's Goodness?" (pages 68-69), he mentioned we must repent of our unbelief and ingratitude. Which one do you need to deal with today?
5. List the top two struggles/fears in your life and consider what your response should be to these if God is both *good* and *sovereign*?
6. After reading chapter 6 has your view of God's holiness changed?
7. Recall a time in your life when you were in the midst of a great struggle. Now that you have a greater grasp on the wisdom of God, ponder on how you can look at that struggle through the lens of God's wisdom. How can you learn to rest and trust in His wisdom?
8. Re-read the questions on page 151-152. Which one do you struggle with the most and why?

9. On page 184 Chip asks the question, “What would my life feel like and be like if I really believed God thinks of me in this way?” He then lists five implications of God’s love for us. Which of the five did you need to hear today and why?
10. What prevents you from knowing God’s love in your mind, and gives you a tough time experiencing it in your heart?
11. How are you replacing God’s love with cheap substitutes? Is it more stuff? Puffed up ego? Unhealthy relationships? Food?
12. How has your human love experiences shaped your view of God’s love? Commit to separate God from the actions of humans today and accept His love.
13. How has God proven faithful to you throughout your life?
14. How have you responded to God’s faithfulness in your life?

Level 3

Option 1

Join with several others in reading through J.I. Packer’s classic book Knowing God. He believes that the root of much of the church’s weakness today is ignorance of God which is characterized by ignorance of His ways and ignorance in the practice of communion with Him. Knowing God is crucially important for living of our lives. To disregard the study of God is to sentence one-self to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded as it were, with no sense of direction. A Knowing God Study Guide is also available to guide you through discussing what you are learning with others.

Option 2

Join with several others in reading through another classic book on the attributes of God, A.W. Tozer’s The Knowledge of the Holy. Chapters 1-3 can be discussed together as the introduction, and then Chapters 5-22 each focus on an attribute of God. Since each chapter is 5-6 pages long, you can discuss 2-3 chapters each time you meet, depending on how quickly you want to go through the material.

Going Deeper Resources *

Know the Truth by Bruce Milne (especially chapters 5-6)

The Doctrine of God by Gerald Bray (especially chapters 2-3)

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