

Lesson 6: Knowing God

Intro We can only build a relationship with someone we know. If we have wrong conceptions about a person it will negatively affect our relationship with him or her. Discipleship is, first and foremost, a loving relationship with God. In order to have a good relationship with Him, we need to have a clear picture of who He is. Paul understood this basic principle and how important it was for people to find their way to Christ.

Quote #1 “Paul saw that the character of Christ must be understood before men could love Him or view the cross with the eye of faith.” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 273)

God’s character and the Great Controversy This is the very reason why God’s character is at the center of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan is trying his best to tarnish, distort, and downright deceive people about God’s true character so that they will not want to have a relationship with Him. However, Christ came to show us who God really is. But He didn’t stop there. He also came so that God’s character can be formed in us.



Why is it important to know God’s character?

John 17:3

God’s image in us. When God created Adam and Eve in His image, they saw God’s character as it truly is. This is why they could reflect His image. But it all changed at the fall. Satan brainwashed mankind with lies about God’s character and led them into sin. As a result, their image of God was warped, and their relationship with God was destroyed. In order for mankind to have a relationship with God again, they must see God as He truly is. That is why Jesus came to earth!



How did Satan twist the character of God at the fall? (Verses 1-5)

Genesis

3:1-5, 8

What was the result of sin? (Verse 8)

Quote #2 “By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in heaven, causing Him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God’s unjust restrictions had led to man’s fall, as they had led to his own rebellion.” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 500)

Since then Satan has been diligently at work, deceiving mankind by giving a false picture of God. Deception about God’s real character is the foundation of every false religion. The greatest tragedy of all is that people cannot build a relationship with

God demonstrates His character.

In the verses we just read, God's character is plainly revealed in several ways:

1. Instead of speaking to Adam and Eve from the heavenly courtroom, God left Heaven and came to earth. Later Christ did the exact same; He left Heaven and became man.
2. God sought Adam and Eve and asked them questions. Not because He did not know the answers, but to lead them to repentance. The God who asks questions is the God who saves.
3. God's abhorrence of sin is made clear in the declaration given to Satan. It is true that God hates sin, but He loves the sinner.
4. God is also just. Adam and Eve had to leave Paradise and live out the consequences of their sin. But God did not send them out of Paradise without hope. In the sentence given to Satan, lies promise of a coming Saviour who will destroy Satan and save mankind.
5. God revealed Himself as a caring God. He saw mankind with their pitiful leaf garments and knew that they would not be sufficient for the cold world they were about to enter into. So He killed some animals and made coats of skin to clothe them with. God did all of this! **He** killed the animal. **He** made the coats. **He** clothed them. It is important to note that up until that point there was not a single sign of repentance on the part of Adam and Eve. The clothes were not God's reaction to their repentance. They were rather a gift of grace! This is a picture of the salvation He offers us as a gift, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God did not engage in a war of words with Satan and try to refute his accusations. Instead, He showed with His actions: "I am different than what Satan has portrayed Me to be." Throughout mankind's entire history God has continually revealed Himself to us in different ways. Let's see how.

First way



**Romans
1:19-20**

God reveals himself through His creation

How does God reveal Himself to every single person?

What does nature tell you about His character?

Quote #5

"God is love' is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify of the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy." (*Steps to Christ, p. 10*)

Second way God reveals himself through His law.

They knew Him

God openly reveals Himself to those who seek Him. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew Him as He truly is. By faith they lived in deep communion with God. But it wasn't the same for their descendants.

After living in Egypt as slaves for 400 years, a majority of the children of Israel did not know God or His true character. Therefore God revealed His character to them anew on Mt. Sinai.



Exodus

33:18-34:7

What did Moses request from God? (Exodus 33:18)

What does *glory* mean? (Exodus 33:19)

Moses asked: "Show me your *glory*!" And God answered: "I will make all my *goodness* pass before you, and I will proclaim the *name* of the LORD before you." God's *glory* is His **character**! (Note: *Name* is another synonym for *character*.) When Moses asked God to show him His glory, he didn't want to see a great light with a loud thunder. Moses had a burning desire to see and know who God is.

What assignment did God give Moses? (Exodus 34:1-2)

This assignment was a direct answer to Moses' request: "Show me your glory!" By giving Moses His law, God was by default revealing His character. This extremely important to understand! God's law is not just a list of rules. It is a reflection of His character. This is why God's law, just like He himself, is unchangeable and perpetual.

In the Ten Commandments, what characteristics of God are on display?

(Exodus 34:6-7)

God does not change!

Often the argument is used that the picture of God in the Old Testament is different than the picture of God in the New Testament. But this is simply not true. God says about Himself "For I am the LORD, I do not change." (Malachi 3:6)



How do the following Bible texts reveal the truth that God's character is the same in the Old and New Testaments?

Psalm 89:14: _____

Psalm 103:8-13: _____

Jeremiah 30:11: _____

Jeremiah 31:3: _____

Love and Justice

There are many passages in the Old Testament that talk about God's love and His justice. God loves the sinner, but He hates sin. He loves to forgive people for their sins, but He is also a just Judge. God's love and justice are not two opposing aspects of His character. They are inseparable and in the end identical. Because with God there is no love without justice and no justice without love.

Third way



God reveals Himself though Jesus Christ

How did God reveal Himself in times past? (Verse 1)

Hebrews 1:1-3

How did God reveal Himself in these last days? (Verse 2)

How is Christ identified in Verse 3? (Verse 3)

God revealed Himself through Creation, through His Law, and through the prophets. Jesus Christ is the clearest revelation of God's character. He is the brightness of God's *glory* and the express image of His *person*. He came to show mankind the true character of God. Through His words and His life people can see who God really is.



What did the people see according to John's statement?

John 1:14

John writes about the glory of Jesus that corresponds to the Father's character. The character of Jesus reveals grace and truth.



What is Jesus' response to Philip's question "Show us the Father?"

John 14:9

Quote #6

"Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. ...Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God." (*Testimony Treasures, Vol. 2, p. 335-336*)

Quote #7

"He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees and gaze into the pensive face, benignant with love.

Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes." (*Steps to Christ, p. 11-12*)

Quote #8

"But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are 'thoughts of peace, and not of evil.' (Jeremiah 29:11). It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death." (*The Desire of Ages, p. 57*)



When was God's character most clearly revealed?

1 John 4:9-10

Quote #9 “The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother’s yearning sympathy for her wayward child.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 15)

God’s character transforms us Understanding God’s character is not just an intellectual exercise. When we honestly spend time getting to know Him, our love for Him will awaken. The more we contemplate Him, the more we will be transformed.



What happens to us when we behold His glory (= His character)?

**2 Corinthians
3:18**

Quote #10 “If we have a correct knowledge of the character of God, Satan will not be able to overwhelm our souls with doubt and discouragement.” (*Signs of the Times*, April 11, 1892)



**2 Corinthians
4:6**

God’s power to transform the human heart is often compared to His power to create. He said “Let there be light,” in a world filled with darkness and it was so. Likewise He “did shine in our hearts” overpowering the darkness that envelops the natural heart of man. God revealed himself to us so that we can appreciate the beauty of His character. But understanding God’s character is not the end. What comes after we have understood how God really is?

Paul says that God wants “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” As disciples of Jesus we are called to spread the knowledge of God’s character as revealed through Jesus Christ through our lives and words.

Quote #11 “Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ’s character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 67)

Quote #12 “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the Character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then he will come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look

for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain." (*Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69*)



What a privilege and a responsibility! God reveals Himself so that we can know Him and have a relationship with Him. He shows us who He is through His creation, through His word, and through Jesus Christ. By revealing His character to us, God wants to renew our characters. The image of God that was in us before the fall is to be restored step by step through Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:10) Through this restoration Jesus makes us light-bearers, so that others can see who God is and also have the opportunity to be transformed.

In the last days, Christ's followers will reflect God's character so much that they will be sealed. In the Book of Revelation, this is referred to as "having the seal or name of God upon their foreheads." God, who placed His love and law in their hearts through the Holy Spirit, will develop His character in them to the point that they would rather die than betray God. By sealing them, God promises that He will preserve this beautiful character in them in spite of the trials they face. What a promise! Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

