

Introduction – What is God like?

- How would you describe God in one sentence to an eight year old?
- What words would “have to be” in your one sentence description of Him?
- What would be the most difficult aspect of explaining to an eight year old what God is like?
- Why is it so important that we see God as He really is?
 - 1 John 3:2
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18
 - A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 1

A basic guide to help you see God as He longs to be seen:

• **Three facts to consider**

1. God is not like us!

- Isaiah 40:25-28
- 2 Samuel 7:22
- Romans 11:33-36

2. Left to ourselves, we tend to reduce God to manageable terms!

- Romans 1:21-23
- Job 38-42:6
- Exodus 32:1-6

3. God can only be known as He reveals Himself to us!

Through:

1. Nature
2. Word
3. Jesus

Psalm 19, Romans 1:19-20

John 1:1-4, 5:37-40

John 1:14-18, Hebrews 1:1-3

- **Three questions to ponder**

1. Is it really possible to completely see God just as He is?

Answer = No and yes!

- Exodus 33:18-20
- John 4:24
- John 14:5-9
- 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

2. What must I do to see God as He really is?

Answer = seek Him!

- Jeremiah 29:11-13
- Luke 11:9-13

How? = Proverbs 2:1-5

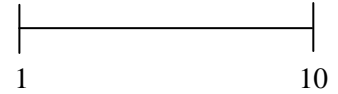
3. How do you know if you are seeing God as He is or not?

Answer = J.I. Packer's four evidences of a real knowledge of God

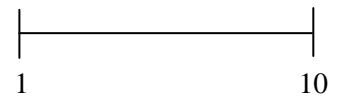
Four indicators of “seeing God as He longs to be seen”:

Self Evaluation -

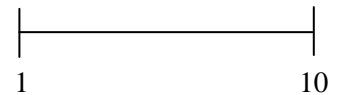
1. Those who know God have great energy for God.



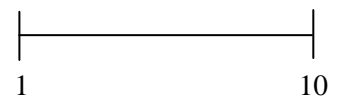
2. Those who know God have great thoughts of God.



3. Those who know God show great boldness for God.



4. Those who know God have great contentment in God.



Practical Application:

1. Look up and study the passages given in the Basic Guide to see God with 20/20 vision.
2. Purchase Tozer’s *Knowledge of the Holy* and J.I. Packer’s *Knowing God*, and begin reading with chapter one.
3. Meditate for three minutes on “who God really is” each time before you pray this week.

Introduction: Sometimes, “Perception is Everything!”

- What we think people “think of us” determines how we respond to them.
- How we think about God determines how we respond to God.

The importance of our study:

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.

For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. **We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.** This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church.”

A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

Defining “The Goodness of God”

- Revealed to Moses Exodus 33:19; 34:5-7
 - Moses' Request = “Show me Your glory” Exodus 33:18
 - God's Promise = “All My goodness (tôb) will pass before you.” Exodus 33:19

“Within the cluster of God’s moral perfections there is one in particular to which the term ‘goodness’ points – the quality which God specially singled out from the whole when proclaiming ‘all his goodness’ to Moses, He spoke of Himself as ‘abundant in goodness and truth’ (Exodus 34:6).”

“This is the quality of generosity. Generosity means a disposition to give to others in a way which has no mercenary motive and is not limited by what the recipients deserve, but consistently goes beyond it. Generosity expresses the simple wish that others should have what they need to make them happy. Generosity is, so to speak, the focal point of God’s moral perfection; it is the quality which determines how all God’s other excellences are to be displayed.”

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

“The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people.”

A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

How Does God Reveal His Goodness to Us?

1. Through His Nature

Psalm 145:7-9

2. Through His deliverance

Psalm 107

- Redeeming the helpless from their enemies
- Rescuing us from the “shadow of death”
- Healing our diseases
- Protection from the storms that threaten to sink our lives

3. Through His Son, Jesus

Mark 10:18

- Undeserved goodness

Romans 5:8

- The promise of future goodness

Romans 8:32

- The source of all goodness

James 1:17-18

How are we to respond to God's goodness?

1. **Repent** of our unbelief and ingratitude.

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Romans 2:4 (NIV)

2. **Rest** in His goodness when encountering adversity.

¹⁹How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You, which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, before the sons of men! ²⁰You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man; You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.

Psalm 31:19-20 (NASB)

3. **Risk** stepping out in faith like never before!

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Psalm 84:11 (NASB)

Practical Application:

1. Read chapter 16, "God's Goodness," from Tozer's *Knowledge of the Holy* OR read chapter four, "The Goodness of God," from my book *God, As He Longs for You to See Him*.
2. Take three minutes each time before you pray this week and count five evidences of God's goodness to you since you last prayed.

Introduction: In flight; Hong Kong to Beijing 1999

Q: What makes you think your god is better than everyone else's god?

A: Because the God I worship . . .

- . . . is before **all** things. Colossians 1:17, Psalm 90:2, Revelation 1:8, 1 Timothy 6:16
- . . . created **all** things. Genesis 1:1, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16
- . . . upholds **all** things. Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:17
- . . . is above **all** things. Ephesians 4:6, Isaiah 45:5-12
- . . . knows **all** things. Isaiah 46:10, Psalm 139:4,6
- . . . can do **all** things. Jeremiah 32:27, Luke 1:37
- . . . accomplishes **all** things. Isaiah 14:24 & 46:10, Ephesians 1:11
- . . . rules over **all** things. Daniel 4:34-35, 1 Chronicles 29:11-12
- . . . is in control of **all** things. Job 42:2, Romans 8:28
 - *earthly kings* Proverbs 21:1, Revelation 19:16
 - *human events* Daniel 2 & 7, Psalm 33:9-11
 - *good angels* Colossians 1:15-16, Revelation 4:8
 - *Satan & bad angels* Job 1:6, Ephesians 1:21, Philippians 2:10
 - *human decisions* Ephesians 1:11, Romans 8:29-30, Acts 2:23; 13:48

In a word, I worship the Sovereign God of the universe.

Defining the sovereignty of God:

- Sovereign = **adj.** (1) above or superior to all others; chief; greatest; supreme (2) supreme in power, rank, or authority (3) of or holding the position of ruler; royal; reigning (4) independent of all others (5) excellent; outstanding – **n.** (1) a person who possesses sovereign authority or power; specific, a monarch or ruler
- Synonymous Meaning = *ruler, ultimate authority, “in control,” King of kings, Lord of lords, without equal, without limitation in any way, the only absolutely free being in the universe.*

“God’s sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free. The reasons are these:

“Were there even one datum of knowledge, however small, unknown to God, His rule would break down at that point. To be Lord over all the creation, He must possess all knowledge. And were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end His reign and undo His kingdom; that one stray atom of power would belong to someone else and God would be a limited ruler and hence not sovereign.

Furthermore, His sovereignty requires that He be absolutely free, which means simply that He must be free to do whatever He wills to do anywhere at any time to carry out His eternal purpose in every single detail without interference. Were He less than free He must be less than sovereign.”

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

How does God reveal His sovereignty to us?

- Through His Titles - SOVEREIGN LORD, MOST HIGH, ALPHA & OMEGA, KINGS OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS
- Through His **Promises**
 - Romans 8:28-30
 - Philippians 2:9-11
- Through His **Story**
 - Of Israel - (Joseph) Genesis 37-50:20
 - Of the Nations- (4 Kingdoms) Daniel 2, 7
- Through **Prophecy**
 - He reveals mysteries Daniel 2:27
 - He explained the future of His people Isaiah 44:6-8 (NLT)
- Through **Christ**
 - His birth Galatians 4:4, Matthew 2:3-6
 - His life (fulfilled hundreds of prophecies) Matthew 4:14; Matthew 12:15-2
 - His teaching John 8:48-58
 - His death and resurrection John 10:17-18
 - His ascension and ultimate reign Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 19:11-16

Two questions the sovereignty of God raises:

1. If God is sovereign, why did/does He allow evil, pain, and suffering?
2. If God is sovereign over all people and events in history, doesn't this make a sham of human responsibility?

How must we respond to a sovereign God?

- **Bow** before the King of the universe. Philippians 2:9-11

Application = Absolute **surrender** of all you are and all you have!

- **Believe** all that comes into your life is either allowed or decreed by a good God who will use it for your benefit.

Romans 8:28-29, Genesis 50:20

Application = Absolutely refuse to **worry**!

- **Behold** in awe the mystery and majesty of His kind, compassionate, just, and sovereign rule of all that is or will ever be.

Romans 11:33-36, Genesis 50:20

Application = **Worship** God for who He is, not merely for what He has done!

Practical Application:

1. Read about the sovereignty and majesty of God in chapter 22 from Tozer's *Knowledge of the Holy*, chapter four from Packer's *Knowing God*, or chapter five from my book *God, As He Longs for You to See Him*.
2. Look up the passages on page one of this handout and consider "who it is" you worship.
3. 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.

Question:

What comes to your mind when you consider the word “Holy”?

My earliest memories are . . .

- A ring in the mouth
- A uniform to earn
- An aisle not to cross
- A glass to drink from only once a year

Defining the Holiness of God:

- Root Word = to divide, to mark off, to set apart from all else; it's the opposite of profane – or to be common or ordinary – to be holy is to be different, distinct, or unique from the common or ordinary.

- The Holiness of God is that which divides Him from everyone and everything else. It is the quality of God being different, distinct, unique – one of a kind.

Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?

Exodus 15:11 (NIV)

*Who is like you--
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders?*

- God's Holiness refers to both His majesty and moral purity. Holiness is the absolute absence of evil (1 John 1:5) and encompasses and defines all that is pure, whole, righteous, and healthy in the universe.

"We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God's power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine."

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

How does God reveal His holiness to us?

- **Through People**
Moses' Life (Exodus 3), David's Sin (2 Samuel 11), Isaiah's Crisis (Isaiah 6)
- **Through Places**
Burning Bush, Red Sea, Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, The Church Gathered (Acts 3:23-31), Heaven (Revelation 4)

- **Through the Law**
10 Commandments (Exodus 20), Leviticus, Deuteronomy
- **Through the Prophets**
Samuel, Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah
- **Through wrath and judgments**
Achan (Joshua 7), Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5), Israel's Diaspora (Nehemiah 1),
The Church Disciplined (1 Corinthians 11)
- **Through His Son**
 - a holy birth
Isaiah 7:14
 - a holy life
John 8:46
 - a holy sneak preview
Mark 9:2-10
 - an unholy death
2 Corinthians 5:21
 - a holy resurrection
John 20:26-31
 - a holy ascension
Hebrews 4:14-16
 - a holy priesthood
Hebrews 9:11-28
- **Through His Church**
Gathered (1 Corinthians 3:16), Scattered (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

God's holiness raises two important questions:

1. If God is so holy that He cannot even gaze at sin, how can sinful people like us have a relationship with Him?
2. If trusting in Christ's work on the cross blots out our sin before God and we are holy in His sight, why do we keep on sinning?

How must we respond to the holiness of God?

- It's a Commitment we make. Hebrews 12:14
- It's a way that we think. Ephesians 4:17-24
- It's a command we obey. 1 Peter 1:14-16; Hebrews 13:4
- It's an attitude we develop. Proverbs 8:13; 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is God so adamantly against sin and evil? How does this fact form your view of God's love and desire for wholeness and health for all He has made?
2. Explain why you living a holy life is so important to God? Beneficial to you? Consistent with who you are in Christ?
3. What specific steps do you need to take to "be holy" as He is holy?

Introduction: What a difference it would make in life's most difficult times if we could believe that God is "all wise!"

"To believe actively that our Heavenly Father constantly spreads around us providential circumstances that work for our present good and our everlasting well-being brings to the soul a veritable benediction.

Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart.

There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God. Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress.

God has charged Himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him."

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

Question: How can we learn to rest and trust in the wisdom of God?

Defining the wisdom of God:

- Definition = “that attribute of God whereby He produces the best possible results by the best possible means” - Berkhof
- Definition = “the quality of being wise; power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action based on knowledge, experience, and understanding.”
Root words – ‘to see, to know’ - Websters

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

1 Timothy 1:17 (NIV)

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!”

Romans 11:33 (NIV)

“In the Holy Scriptures wisdom, when used of God and good men, always carries a strong moral connotation. It is conceived as being pure, loving, and good . . .

Wisdom, among other things, is **the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means**. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision.

All God’s acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And **all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined.**”

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

How has God revealed His wisdom to us?

- Through **creation** Psalm 19:1-7, Psalm 104:24
- Through **providence** Psalm 33:10-11, Romans 8:28
- Through **redemption** 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

“God’s almighty wisdom is always active, and never fails. All His works of creation and providence and grace display it, and until we can see it in them we just are not seeing them straight. **But we cannot recognize God’s wisdom unless we know the end for which He is working.** . . . God’s wisdom is not, and never was, pledged to keep a fallen world happy, or to make ungodliness comfortable. Not even to Christians has He promised a trouble-free life; rather the reverse. He has other ends in view for life in this world than simply to make it easy for everyone.

What is He after, then? What is His goal? What does He aim at? . . . He plans that a great host of mankind should come to love and honor Him. **His ultimate objective is to bring them to a state in which they please Him entirely and praise Him adequately, a state in which He is all in all to them, and He and they rejoice continually in the knowledge of each other’s love** – men rejoicing in the saving love of God, set upon them from all eternity, and God rejoicing in the responsive love of men, drawn out of them by grace through the gospel.”

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

- Through His **Son** 1 Corinthians 1:30, James 3:17

How must we respond to the wisdom of God?

- We must learn to live wisely! Ephesians 5:15-17

HOW?

1. It begins with reverencing for God. Proverbs 1:7; Job 28:28
 2. It grows with receiving His Word. Psalm 119:97-100
2 Timothy 3:15-17
 3. It requires asking for it specifically. James 1:5; Colossians 1:9
- We must learn to trust completely - that all that comes our way is from the hand of a good and loving God who knowing all things actual and possible, is exerting His unlimited power to execute the **best possible outcomes** by the **best possible means** to fulfill the **highest possible purposes**.

Assignment for Spiritual Growth:

1. Sit quietly for 15 minutes and ponder your most difficult circumstance through the lens of God's wisdom.
2. Read J. I. Packer's *Knowing God* chapter ten, focusing especially on pages 93-97 which offers valuable insight into our purpose in life and how to live it. This is the finest overview of Ecclesiastes that I've ever come across.

**Introduction: Two Questions -
that Disturb Believers and Unbelievers Alike**

1. Why do bad things happen to good people?

2. Why do good things happen to bad people?

The Real Issue is . . . “Life’s not **fair!**”

Defining “The Justice of God”

- Revealed through Abraham

Genesis 18:25 (NIV)

“Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

- Revealed through the Psalmist

Psalms 97:2 (NIV)

“Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.”

“Justice embodies the idea of moral equity, and iniquity is the exact opposite; it is *in*-equity, the absence of equality from human thoughts and acts. Judgment is the application of equity to moral situations and may be favorable or unfavorable according to whether the one under examination has been equitable or inequitable in heart and conduct.”

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

“. . . it becomes clear that the Bible’s proclamation of God’s work as Judge is part of its witness to His character . . . It shows us also that the heart of the justice which expresses God’s nature is retribution, the rendering to men, what they have deserved; for this is the essence of the judge’s task. To reward good with good, and evil with evil, is natural to God. So, when the New Testament speaks of the final judgment, it always represents it in terms of retribution. God will judge all men, it says, ‘according to their works’ (Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:12f).”

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*

How does God reveal His justice to us?

1. Through the natural Order Romans 1:18-20

2. Through the Human heart Romans 2:15-16; Acts 28:3-6

“These, then are the two points I wanted to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.”

C. S. Lewis

3. Through His Role as judge Hebrews 12:23; 2 Timothy 4:8; John 5:22

4. Through the cross Romans 3:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished- ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

5. Through the Promise of eternal retribution

• For Believers 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

• For Unbelievers Hebrews 9:27

How are we to respond to God's justice?

1. Choose to embrace Jesus today as your Savior rather than meet Him as your righteous judge later.

John 5:22-24

2. Refuse to take revenge when treated unjustly knowing God and God alone is judge.

Romans 12:17-21

3. Take comfort when you encounter injustice knowing God will “balance the scales” either in this life or the next.

Psalms 73

4. Meditate deeply on the reality of the “judgment seat of Christ,” the promise of spiritual reward and loss.

2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Introduction: What's the source of your hope?

- **Three Observations about the Human Species:**
 1. We all depend on something or someone to “hold us up” inside.
 2. When that something or someone is “coming through for us” we experience a sense of peace, satisfaction, and optimism about the future.
 3. When that something or someone “fails to come through for us” we experience a sense of anxiety, dissatisfaction, and ultimately despair.
- **Conclusion:** It seems that the secret to a life of unending joy and peace is to find something or someone who will “come through for you” 100% of the time in any and every situation forever.
- **The Solution:** Lamentations 3:21-24

Defining “The Faithfulness of God”

- **Definition** = “Steadfast in affection or allegiance (loyal), firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty (conscientious), given with strong assurance (binding), true to the facts, to a standard (constant).” - Websters
- **Synonyms** – Dependable, trustworthy, loyal, staunch, resolute, constant, reliable, true to one’s word, keeps one’s promises, true to and consistent to one’s character, someone “who comes through for you.”
- **Why Is God Able to Be Faithful 100% of the Time?**
 1. He is **all-knowing** – He is never caught off guard. Romans 11:33-36
 2. He is **all-powerful** – He never encounters anything or anyone who can thwart His plans or purposes.
 3. He is **holy** – He is pure, honest, full of integrity, unable to lie, and therefore, is always consistent with His character and His Word. Isaiah 6:1-6
 4. He is **eternal** – He is not affected by space or time; He knows the end from the beginning. Psalm 90:2
 5. He is **omnipresent** – Nothing can happen outside the sphere of His influence. Psalm 139:7-11
 6. He is **immutable** – He never changes; is never different then He is now, He is never in a bad mood, and never has a bad day. Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8

“All of God’s acts are consistent with all of His attributes. No attribute contradicts any other, but all harmonize and blend into each other in the infinite abyss of the Godhead. . . God, being who He is, cannot cease to be what He is, and He is at once faithful and immutable, so all His words and acts must be and must remain faithful.”

A.W. Tozer – *Knowledge of the Holy*

- **Summary:** God is 100% faithful to His Word, His promises, His people, and His character because He cannot be otherwise. **He will never let you down!**

God reveals His faithfulness to us through . . .

- His creation Psalm 19:1-6; 57:10; 119:90; 145:13-6

- His people
 - The Patriarchs Genesis 12:1-3
 - Israel Micah 7:20
 - David Psalm 132:11
 - The Church Matthew 16:18

- His spirit John 14:15-18, Galatians 5:23

- His character Numbers 23:19, Isaiah 25:1

- His word Isaiah 55:10-11
 - His Word is true John 17:17
 - He keeps His covenants Deuteronomy 7:9
 - He keeps His promises Hebrews 10:23
 - He fulfills His predictions Isaiah 42:8-10

- His Son Isaiah 11:5, Revelation 19:11

- The shaping of our lives when . . .
 - We are weak 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
 - We are tempted 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - We sin 1 John 1:9
 - We utterly fail 2 Timothy 2:11-13

How can we respond to God's faithfulness?

1. Put your **past** behind you today!

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (NIV)

2. Bring your **present** problems, pains, and failures to Jesus today!

²⁸Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

3. Put your **hope** for the future in the One who will never let you down!

²³This 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, ²⁴but 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.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NIV)

4. Tell someone each **day** how God has been faithful to you!

I will sing of the LORD's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

Psalms 89:1 (NIV)

Resources: The Book of Psalms, *Tired of Trying to Measure Up* by Jeffrey VanVonderen
Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret by Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor

Introduction - Three facts about love

- **Fact #1:** It's a Universal Need = We are all looking for love!
- **Fact #2:** There's a Universal Solution = God loves all people everywhere and longs to meet the deepest needs of their heart for love!
- **Fact #3:** There's a Tragic Disconnection = Nevertheless, most people remain starved for love for three primary reasons:
 1. They don't know God loves them.
 2. They know of God's love, but have not received it.
 3. They have received God's love, but don't know how to experience it in daily life.

“Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can indeed present a great temptation, **but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection.** When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. . . **Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life** because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the ‘Beloved.’ **Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.”**

- Henry Nouwen
(As quoted in Brennan Manning's, *Abba's Child*)

Defining “The Love of God”

- **Definition** – God’s love is His holy disposition toward all that He has created that compels Him to express unconditional affection and selective correction to provide the highest and best quality of existence both now and forever for the objects of His love.
- **Characteristics of God’s agape love include:**
 - It is a giving love John 3:16
 - It is a sacrificial love John 3:16
 - It is an unconditional love John 3:16
 - It is a boundless love Ephesians 3:14-21
- **God’s love is expressed primarily through His goodness, mercy, longsuffering, and grace.**

Ryrie’s Basic Theology, pg. 44
- **God’s love for you means . . .**
 1. His thoughts, intentions, desires, and plans for you are always for your good and never for your harm.
 2. He is kind, open, approachable, frank, and eager to be your friend.
 3. He emotionally identifies with your pain, joy, hopes, and dreams and has chosen to allow your happiness to affect His own.
 4. He takes pleasure in you just for who you are totally apart from your performance and/or accomplishments.
 5. He is actively and creatively orchestrating people, circumstances, and events to express His affection and selective correction to provide for your highest good.

God reveals His love to us through . . .

Creation - He made you for Himself. Genesis 1:26-27, Colossians 1:16

Providence - He shows His kindness to all. Matthew 5:44-45, Acts 17:24-27

Incarnation - He is proactively pursuing you. Luke 19:10, John 4:23-24

Discipline - He chastises us to protect us from self-destructive behavior.
Hebrews 12:6

Holy Spirit - He supernaturally pours His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
Romans 5:5

Son - Jesus revealed the nature of God's love for us.

- Jesus' **life** modeled compassion, grace, and truth John 1:14
- Jesus' **teaching** explained God's love Luke 15
- Jesus' **death** demonstrated the extent of God's love 1 John 3:16, Romans 5:8

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8 (NIV)

**An object's value is always determined by the price paid for it.
To God, you are worth the price of His Son's death in your place.**

How must we respond to God's love?

1. We must receive by faith in **our hearts**. John 3:16

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

John 1:12

2. We must believe it by faith in **our minds**. 1 John 4:13-16

HOW?

1. Saturate your mind in the truth of God's love for you. Romans 8:28-39
2. Ask God to help you grasp His love for you. Ephesians 3:14-21
3. Refuse to seek love in cheap substitutes. 1 John 2:15-16

3. We must bestow it by faith through **our wills**.

- The command John 13:34-35
- The calling 1 John 3:16-18
- The promise Luke 6:38

Resources: A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy* – chapter 20,
J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* – chapter 12, Chip Ingram, *How Great a Love*