

Foundations 2 – God

Have you ever gone **Razor Clamming**? Barbara has a great recipe for cooking Razor clams. You can get them with a shovel but I use a special “clam gun.” I ordered it special because it is a lot wider than I could get up here at the time. And the way you find where to dig is by looking for little “dimples” in the sand. And you know, if the clam could think, he would be thinking *“how in the world does that human know exactly where I am, that he can come into my world and do anything he wants with me.”*

Well, the intelligence, power and ability of a human compared to a clam are worlds apart, and the same kind of a divide exists between us and God. His intelligence, power and ability are beyond our comprehension.

Psalm 145:3, *“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom.”* This subject is so great that the most we can do is to scratch the surface.

As humans we do not have the ability to understand God fully. Isaiah 40:28, *“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, He will not grow weary, and His understanding no one can fathom.”*

However, having **some** understanding about the nature of God is important because a great deal of the meaning and the depth of our spiritual lives depend on our conception of God.

But I don't pretend to be an expert. And, actually, I don't know if I am wise enough and learned enough to do this correctly. The subject is so awesome and the consequences of our conclusions so tremendous that I can only approach this with a humble heart and full of humility.

The study of God's nature should be seen as a means of a more accurate understanding of Him leading to a closer personal relationship with Him.

There are many different views of God:

1. Some people think of God as a **celestial policeman** who looks for opportunities to pounce on anyone who strays. They seem to have a powerful and vindictive being in mind.
2. The opposite view is that God is a **grandfatherly** type. He is an indulgent, kindly old gentleman who would never want to lessen humans' enjoyment of life.

3. Also some see Him as a "**great whatever**," a hazy, undefined something. The "Force" opposite the "Dark side."

Let's look at some attributes of God, at the very qualities that constitute what and who He is. Keep in mind that these are **permanent qualities**; they are not something that He gains or loses.

For our purposes we are going to divide the attributes into the **Greatness of God** and the **Goodness of God**.

I. His Greatness:

1. God is Spirit, which means He does not have the limitations that come with a physical body. He is not limited to a particular location so He cannot be contained or controlled. He is not destructible like a body would be.

John 4:24, *"God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in Spirit and Truth."*

2. God has a personality. God by His very nature is difficult to understand but there are some things that help us understand a little bit about Him.

For instance, He has a name and Hebrew names not only specify a person, they describe the person.

Yehweb = I am. He is eternal, never appears in any other form, such as "I was, or I shall be." It is always present tense, "I am."

Elohim = indicates the trinity or Godhead and the majestic power of God.

EI Shaddai = refers to being all powerful, all-sufficient sovereign ruler.

Yehweh-Rapha = The Healer

Yehweh-Jireh = My Provider. (One who can see ahead and provide what will be needed.)

EI Gibor = The mightiest and most heroic being.

EI Roi = The all-seeing one. One from whose eye nothing is hidden.

Our God is **personal**, He is an individual being, with self-consciousness and will, capable of feeling, choosing, and having a relationship with us. (In Genesis 3 God walks and talks with Adam and Eve.)

When we read about God walking and talking with humans that is a temporary manifestation of God, (called a **Theophany**,) it nonetheless, depicts God as having all the things associated with personality: He knows, feels, wills and acts.

He is pictured as our Father, which means the relationship we have with Him has a dimension of warmth and understanding.

It also means our relationship with Him is not a one-way street. He is a Person, not an object or force. The idea that God is something to be used to solve all our problems and to meet all our needs is not religion, it is magic.

He, as a person, is to be loved for **what He is**, not for what He can do for us.

3. God is alive. His very name "*I Am*" indicates that He is a living God, but His life is different from other living beings. Exodus 3:14, "*God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'*"

God is eternal, never was there a time that He did not exist. All other creatures need something to sustain life – food, warmth and protection, but not God. He does not depend on anything outside of Himself.

Acts 17:25, "*And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.*" God acts on our behalf, not because He needs something from us but because He loves us.

4. God is infinite. He is not subject to the limitations of space; this is referred to as **omnipresence**. All finite things have a location – not God. If something is in one place it cannot be in another but this does not hold true for God.

He is everywhere at the same time. This is called **Immanence**. There is not anyplace where He cannot be found.

Jeremiah 23:23-24, "*Am I only a God nearby, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Declares the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Declares the Lord.*" Psalm 139:7-12, "*No matter where you go He is there.*"

God can be in countless places and involved with many different situations simultaneously.

God does not move from one place to another as a sort of divine superman who flies at infinite speed. Rather, He simply has access to the whole of the creation at all times.

You know what this means? It means you cannot hide from God. Proverbs 15:3
“The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

5. Time does not apply to God.

Psalm 90:1-2, *“Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.”*

God is Timeless. He does not grow or develop – He has always been what He is.

Like a person who watches a parade from a 20 story building. He sees all parts of the parade at all the different points of the parade not just what is in front of Him. He sees what is gone, what is and what is coming – all at once.

6. His understanding (or knowledge) is immeasurable. Psalm 147:5, *“Great is our Lord and mighty in power, His understanding has no limit.”*

7. God has access to all information. So His judgments are perfect. He never has to revise His view of something because of additional information. We can pray confidently, knowing that God will not grant something that is not good. We can trust God to know what is best.

8. God is omnipotent – all powerful. For instance, He has power over nature. The **plagues** in Egypt. Jesus **stilling** the storm (Mark 4:35-41). **Walking** on water (Matthew 14:22-33).

He controls history. Paul, referring to all peoples, spoke of God, *“Having determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”* Acts 17:26. What God chooses to do, He does, for He has the ability to do it. Psalm 115:3, *“Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”*

Know this, God is in control of all things whether we understand it or not.

BUT WHAT WE ARE DEALING WITH IS NOT ONLY A "GREAT" GOD BUT ALSO A "GOOD" GOD. And this is important to know because it is possible to be “great” without being “good.”

II. The Goodness of God, He has absolute purity or goodness.

1. He is untouched by the evil of the world. James 1:13, "...For God cannot be tempted by evil." Job 34:12, "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice."

2. Our God is righteous and His law is perfect. Psalm 19:7-10, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold."

The righteousness of God also means that He lives by the same rules that He gives us. He does not say, "Do as I say, not as I do." Jeremiah 9:24, "...I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD."

Because God is righteous we can trust Him. He is honest in His dealings. We need not be afraid to enter into a relationship with Him. Leviticus 11:44, "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy."

3. Our God is Just. He not only requires that we conform to His law, He Himself conforms to it. Like a judge that obeys the law in his personal life and also administers the same law, applying it to others. He doesn't show favoritism.

Now, as humans, sometimes we may think that He isn't always just. We see sinful lives that are not punished and righteousness that seems to go unrewarded. It seems like sometimes that crime **does** pay.

And this isn't just a modern thing, thousands of years ago in Psalm 73:12-17, a writer wrote: "This is what the wicked are like— always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me **till** I entered the sanctuary of God; **then** I understood their final destiny."

God enabled him to see their final destiny and then he understood that God is just, He doesn't work on our time table. But when everything is said and done, He sees that Justice **is** done.

And you know what else? **God does not owe you an explanation.** Just as you don't have to explain yourself to your 5 year old kid who doesn't understand why you did something. God doesn't have to explain His actions to us.

And even though God is not answerable to me, I still ask Him about things. I ask knowing that He is under no obligation to answer. And if He does give me insight into something, it's because He is showing me grace.

Just as God is Just, we are also supposed to treat others fairly and justly. Amos 5:15, *"Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts."* James 2:9, *"But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers."*

4. Our God is Truthful. Hebrews 6:18, *"It is impossible for God to lie."* Not only will He not lie He cannot unknowingly say something that is not true because He is all knowing. (**Omniscience.**)

So everything God tells us is guaranteed to be true. And God also want us to be honest in all situations. 2 Corinthians 4:2, *"Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*

5. Our God loves. Maybe His basic attribute. 1 John 4:7-8, *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."*

He is concerned for our wellbeing for our own sake, not for what He can get out of us. God does not need us or anything we have.

Since God is Love, then the description of Love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 describes Him, *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."*

And there is God's Grace & mercy. By this we mean that God deals with His people not because they are worthy, not with what they deserve, but simply according to their need.

Think about this, it would be possible for God to love us unselfishly but still insist that His love be deserved. That is the way most of us love.

Psalm 103:8,10,13 *"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."*

Now we all know that God is love but we need to remember that He is also **just** and will judge the world.

*"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with **justice** by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."* Acts 17:31

Some people think that it is impossible for love and justice to go together. They say the Bible says that God is merciful, gracious, forgiving and long-suffering. But on the other hand His justice seems so severe. Aren't these two traits in conflict with one another?

But if love does not include justice, it is mere sentimentality. You ask God for something and you don't get it and so you say God doesn't love you. But giving someone something that makes him feel good for the moment, is just indulging his whim, it might actually be bad for the person. **Like a child crying to play with a sharp knife.**

Also, keep in mind that God knows all and justice requires that you take into account that giving one person something that is good for him might be bad for someone else.

What if an evil man blew up an orphanage in Africa, and he is not caught and after a while he dies and goes before the judgment seat of God and God tells him, *"I don't want to hurt anyone so just go right into heaven."* **How much love would God be showing the orphans?**

Love is not simply an emotional reaction to a situation. Love is much wider in scope – it includes justice, a sense of right and wrong, and all mankind.

This means that God is concerned about our ultimate welfare but also has a passion to do what is right and to enforce the **appropriate consequences** for doing wrong. God's justice requires that there be payment of the penalty for sin. God's love desires that we be restored to fellowship with Him.

That is why His Son had to die on the cross. His justice required that our sin be paid for, His love provided the payment. His Son.

Romans 3:23-26, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this...to demonstrate his justice, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."*

The great price He paid shows us how far in debt we were! Mankind's debt was so large only God Himself had enough value to cover everyone's sin.

6. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW GOD?

"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." 2 Thess1:6-8.

"...Now this is eternal life; that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3

This is my prayer for you: *"..I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better..."* Ephesians 1:17

For when we really know God we know that he is good, that he is powerful, that he is in control, and we can trust him with our life.... that He wants only the best for us --- and that he is actively working in our life to bring about good.

And we can with confidence and boldness face life's tragedy and chaos, because we know someone who is much bigger than the chaos, someone whose goodness overwhelms every tragedy and someone who genuinely cares about us.

KNOWING GOD FREES US TO LIVE OUR LIVES, BECAUSE LIFE NO LONGER DEPENDS ON US WHEN WE DEPEND ON GOD....

Ps 33:8 *"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him."*

JESUS SAID THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT IS: *"...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."* Matthew 22:37-38