

## "The Nature of God"

Do you know the God of the Bible? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're looking at what God declares about Himself. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's Word opens our hearts to the truth about God, about life, about morals, and about eternity. We do well to follow Paul's advice to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." We must study God's Word and handle it accurately to know the truth. We can't pick out one passage, hold tight to it, and then ignore other inspired passages. We want the whole truth, not just part of the truth. Thanks for taking time with us. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

I believe in the God of the Bible. Many have notions about God, but the God they think exists and the God of the Bible are not the same. They've locked in to one or two characteristics of His love and grace and ignored other vital characteristics. We must come to understand God is God, and we aren't. God makes the rules, and we don't. The Lord loves us but is our judge at the end of time. Our culture has wanted to hush God up. They don't want to hear about sin, repentance, or hell. They would rather have a God who allows them to do anything that they wish and never punish them; but that's a fantasy. It's not the God of the Bible.

Fantasy is never as good as the truth. It's fictional not real. People often deceive themselves with the fictional, which cannot save them. Only the truth can set us free. Don't shortchange your salvation by believing in a manufactured God rather than the God of the Bible.

Now, this is an important study on the nature of God; and we offer it free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have free materials on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). And also on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Isaiah 1:16 to 20, and explore the nature and character of God in the Bible.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 1, verses 16 to 20. And here Isaiah, inspired prophet, talks about the desperate need of Israel to change. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You'll eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.' Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father help us to live in ways that honor You, and honor Your teaching, to love You and to serve You. And Father help us to stay away from sin and from the evil of this world. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

To know God is the greatest knowledge of all. We must understand as much as we can about Him, and this will take a lifetime of study. We certainly can't say everything in one program. But we can scratch the surface in understanding God's love on one hand and His justice on the other. God is both loving and just. One doesn't exclude the other. And so, let's examine God's ways a little.

God is the Creator. Genesis 1 verse 1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Yes, there was a beginning, a creation. The order and design of the universe necessitates that we recognize a Supreme power that ordered and designed all that we see. Romans 1 and verse 20 says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made." Now we are part of that creation. The Lord God made you and me! He made us all. Genesis 1:27 reminds us, that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:26 to 28, that "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He's not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'" God wants you to find and to love Him and serve Him.

Now God has the right to be part of your life. Nehemiah 9 and verse 6 says, "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of the heavens with all their host, The earth and all that's on it, The seas and all that's in them. You give life to all of them, And the heavenly host bows down before You." Because the God of the Bible created us all, He is Lord of all. Now whether you believe in Him or not, one day you'll have to face and be judged by the One who made you.

We can't understand the God of the Bible without seeing that He is the God of love. 1 John 4:7 to 9 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." Yes, God is love indeed, and to know Him is to know what true love is all about. Love takes place when one is willing to sacrifice for the needs of others. And God sacrificed His Son Jesus so that we might live with Him eternally.

Now Jesus didn't merely give up His life; He bore the painful cross for hours. He gave Himself by bearing the punishment due to us for our sins. Isaiah 53:4 to 6 says, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." God punished Jesus for your sins and mine. He took the punishment that was due to us.

He is indeed the God who forgives! And God said to His people in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins"; but God's love doesn't stop at forgiveness. God's love embraces every aspect of our lives. Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The Lord God cares for His own. To them God represents several things. Romans 15:13 calls Him the "God of hope." Romans 15:33 calls Him the "God of peace." 1 Peter 5:10 calls Him the "God all grace."

We can see God's loving care for us all around us, it's in this world. He gives us air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, and clothes to wear. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:31 to 34, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So don't worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Yes,

God is a loving and caring God for those who love Him; but we must not so exaggerate one characteristic that we miss other characteristics that also define God's nature and character.

1 John 3:1 to 3 points out, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world doesn't know us, because it didn't know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we will be. We know that when He appears, that we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." God's character calls us to live a godly life of moral purity. God didn't forgive and save us so that we could continue to wallow in sin.

Our God is a Holy God. The prophet and king David wrote in Psalm 5 verse 4, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You." Now we may laugh and smile at evil, but evil offends God. 1 Peter 1:14 to 16 says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

Many people think sin doesn't exist or doesn't matter to God, but God takes note of wickedness. We can't assume that God thinks about sin the way that we do. Isaiah reminds us in Isaiah 55:6 to 9, "'Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,' declares the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.'"

God sees and knows all things. We get so accustomed to the values and morals of our culture, that we think surely God must see things like we do. Some think He must approve what we approve and disapprove what we disapprove. In many cases people have manufactured a fantasy God who is just like themselves, and thinks like them, and follows their advice. We don't create God; God created us. The manufactured God of the twenty-first century culture is not much different than the manufactured idol of ancient times. The idolater can tell the idol what is true; and people today think they can tell God what is right and wrong. The true God of the Bible, however, is Lord of all and tells us what to do. Idols of ancient times were fantasies, who could do nothing! Only the true God could answer prayer and make a difference.

God asked in Isaiah 46:5 to 7, "To whom would you liken Me And make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse And weigh silver on the scale Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it; They set it in its place and it stands there. And does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; It cannot deliver him from his distress." What a foolish notion that one could make an idol whom they perceive to be a god! It can't speak, hear, or do anything. It is just a hunk of wood, stone, gold, or silver.

The Corinthian Christians of the first century were tempted to eat things sacrificed to idols. The apostle Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 8:4 to 6, "Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."

Now God sees our behaviors, He hears our words, and He knows all about us. He knows the good and the evil. He always knows. We may think God overlooks our sins, but God doesn't approve of sin. God is offended by our sins; after all, we're sinning against Him. Sin is breaking God's laws and resisting His will in our lives. God hates sin, and God doesn't want us to live in sin. God wants us to repent and to come to Him. And when we sin, we separate ourselves from God.

In Psalm 50 verses 16 to 21 God says to the wicked, "What right have you to tell of My statutes And to take My covenant in your mouth? For you hate discipline, And you cast My words behind you. When you see a thief, you're pleased with him, And you associate with adulterers. You let your mouth loose in evil And your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. These things you have done and I kept silence (God says); And you thought that I was just like you; (and then God says) I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes."

God made us in His image, but God didn't make us sinners. We chose to do evil on our own. While we changed from innocent to evil, God remained pure and holy.

Now we're all born innocent. Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 19:16, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the heaven or the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." But living in a wicked world, we learn to sin. And Paul explained the change from innocent to guilty in Romans 7 verse 9, he said "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died." Once we're old enough to know right from wrong and sin, we become spiritually lost and dead in sin. God wants to forgive us. He wants us to know the truth and to live godly lives that honor His will. Are you willing to serve God?

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we're thankful that You have taught us right and wrong. Help us to serve You, and to do what is right, and to refuse to do what is wrong. Father forgive our weaknesses and our sins, and help us always to do Your will out of love and faith. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

We will never understand God correctly until we understand how He has many facets to His nature and character. We should also understand how our Creator views us. He's hurt to the depths of His heart and offended when we transgress His will, and yet He still loves us. He's just and will punish sin; but God is also full of grace and mercy for those who repent. Our Lord God says to us just what He said to Israel in Isaiah 1:18 to 20, "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You'll eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

My friend, you are a free moral agent and you choose the direction of your heart and life, you're responsible for yourself. If you rebel against God, you'll only bring suffering on yourself; but if you consent and obey the Lord, you will be blessed. Why not decide to love and believe in the Lord Jesus. Why not consent, why not obey, and consenting and obeying means that you're willing to confess your faith and to repent of your sins. Once you have repented and confessed Christ, you must be born again (John 3 and verse 7) and that takes place by being baptized into Christ, being born of water and the Spirit. And this is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now once you're forgiven, you become God's child, you become a citizen of His kingdom, you become an heir of heaven. Now this gift of God's grace is wonderful and must never, never be taken for granted. So host fast, hold fast your devotion to the Lord, and never, never give up on Him.

We pray that today's study about the nature and character of God has helped you to have a deeper understanding of what God is like. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed

copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to us. And our e-mail address is [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office, and you can call us toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area on our website, that's [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! We do ask that you subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs, when you do that it helps us to spread the program to other people. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now you write in and ask for them, and we'll be glad to send them out to you. And there are eight lessons in the course. Now don't worry if you get a hold of us, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church, because everybody needs a church family. And I realize some of you can't come to church every week because of health; but I am speaking to those who can come. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week. Keep searching God's Word with us. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.