

# Nature and Character of God

---

What Is God Like?

November 10, 2019

---

- I. A review of God's nature and character
  - A. Over the past fifteen weeks, we have looked at God's nature and character from a number of scriptures that tell us what God is like.
    - 1. My primary purpose for doing this study is because our view of God powerfully influences our trust in God, our adoration of God, our reverence for God, and our humble submission to God – all of which have a powerful influence on our mental, emotional, and spiritual health, which in turn influences and enables us, by the grace and empowerment of God, to live a God-honoring, God-pleasing life.
    - 2. A.W. Tozer put it this way, “A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well” (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg 2).
  - B. When we started this study, I gave you two presuppositions regarding the nature and character of God –
    - 1. **First presupposition:** God is the supreme being. No one and nothing is superior to God in any way. As the supreme being, God has both the right and the ability to decide whatever He wants. Therefore, our role as created beings is to yield to His supremacy.
    - 2. **Second presupposition:** God is perfectly good and His love endures forever. Therefore, God always does what is right and good – which results in His being completely and perfectly trustworthy.
  - C. From there we looked at God through a number of specific scriptures.
    - 1. We began with **1 John 1:5**, where we see that God is perfectly and completely **holy** and **righteous**.
    - 2. The second scripture we looked at was **Exodus 34:6-7**, where God described His nature and character to Moses with these words: “The Lord (*Jehovah*), the Lord God (*Jehovah Elohim*), compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; [7] who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”
    - 3. From **Exodus 34**, we looked at God's nature and character as revealed in **Psalms 16:11**, which says, “You will make known to me the **path**

**of life**; in Your presence is **fullness of joy**; in Your right hand there are **pleasures forever**.”

4. After that, we turned to **Psalm 18:1-2**, where David describes God as our **strength**, our **rock**, our **fortress**, our **deliverer**, our **God**, our **hiding place** where we take refuge; our **shield** and the **horn** of our salvation, and our **stronghold**.
5. The next part of God’s nature and character that we considered was His fatherhood, and in doing that we saw that God is a reconciling Father who is also compassionate, a disciplinarian, the giver of good gifts, our provider, and our protector.
6. Following that, we spent a Sunday looking at God’s nature and character through the statement that **God is love**, and we considered various ways He expresses His love and we experience His love.
7. From viewing God’s nature and character through the lens of His love, we looked at Him through the lens of His justice, His justification of sinners, and His being the judge of all mankind.
  - a. One of the scriptures we used to get a clearer picture of the judgement part of God’s nature and character came from the OT and is found in **Ezekiel 18**.
  - b. We then concluded our look at God’s nature and character as a Judge through the descriptions of Him found in **Psalm 7:11-12**, **Luke 12:2-5**, and **1 Peter 1:17-19**.
8. We spent the last three Sundays looking at the fact that it is in God’s nature and character to treasure mutually loving, mutually meaningful, and mutually faithful relationships with us.
- D. And that brings us to today, where we will conclude this study of God’s nature and character by considering how to deal with someone who is convinced you have hurt them or wronged them in some way, when in fact you are innocent.
- E. Prayer

## II. Dealing with someone who believes you have hurt or wronged them in some way when in fact you are innocent.

- A. There is no question but that such qualities as humility, gentleness, patience, compassion, the absence of defensiveness, and the willingness to hear the other person’s side of the story are required when dealing with someone who believes you have wronged them in some way, when in fact, you are innocent. (*Repeat*)
- B. With that in mind, I want to do three things. **First**, I want to give you the strongest possible reason to behave this way when confronted with

such a situation. **Second**, I want to give you the best example possible of someone you could model your behavior after when dealing with this kind of a situation. And the **third** we will get to after the first two.

1. The strongest possible reason to behave in a humble, gentle, patient, compassionate way when dealing with someone who thinks you have wronged them when you haven't is that **this is the way God deals with us**, and specifically with you and me.
  - a. You see, we have put God in this position more than once, and it is possible we will put Him in it again – to our shame.
  - b. But, you say, how have we put God in this position?
  - c. We have put God in this position by being distrustful of Him, critical of what He is doing, complaining about what He isn't doing, and on occasion, we have even been angry with God, while He – whom we are criticizing for treating us poorly or for doing us wrong – is the innocent party.
  - d. And yet, though falsely accused of evils that have never even entered His mind, God does not pull away from us, or abandon us – so as to leave us totally on our own, and He does not withhold the necessities of life from us – such as sunshine and rain, a season for planting and a season for harvest.
  - e. And beyond that, because God is compassionate and merciful in spite our treatment of Him, He does not destroy us for criticizing Him or being angry with Him when He has done nothing wrong.
  - f. Now, if you are grateful that God does not respond in anger or vindictiveness or by pulling away and leaving you totally on your own when you think and speak as if He is a bad god, then it is hypocritical and unloving to treat those who falsely accuse you in a way **other than** the way God treats you.
  - g. Therefore, God's dealings with you provides the strongest possible reason to behave in a humble, gentle, patient, and compassionate way when dealing with someone who thinks you have wronged them – when you haven't.
2. If you can agree that God is kind and merciful toward you when you accuse Him of wrongs He has not done, then **the way** He deals with you can become your best example of how to deal with those who wrongly accuse you.
  - a. And to help you see more clearly how God deals with you under these kinds of circumstances, study those OT stories that provide examples of how He dealt with false accusations against Himself.

- b. For example, we see God's patience, gentleness, and mercy in His dealings with Israel during their time in the desert as they traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land. And we see more of these kinds of dealings with Israel during the reign of the kings.
  - c. On a more personalized level, you can read the OT stories about God's dealings with individuals as opposed to His dealings with the nation of Israel.
  - d. The point is, if we will ponder God's dealings with us, and if we will look at His dealings with Israel and individual Israelites when being wrongly accused, we can get a reasonably clear picture of the mindset, attitudes, and behavior God manifests in dealing with being accused of wronging someone when He is innocent of all charges.
- 3. The **third** and final point I want to make before moving on is that it is exceedingly rare that a conflict or a perceived wrong is truly one sided. In other words, when a wrong or hurt has been perceived by one party, it is rare that the supposed offending party is completely innocent.
- C. Now with all that in mind, let us turn our attention to what we can do when someone thinks we have wronged them in some way – when in fact we have done nothing wrong.

### III. Dealing with someone who is upset at you without a just cause

- A. There are **three** primary reasons someone may be offended or hurt or angered by something you have done or didn't do when they have no justifiable reason to be offended or hurt or angry.
  - 1. The **first primary reason** for someone being offended or hurt or angered without just cause is that they have encountered resistance to their unloving, uncaring, unkind, or otherwise wrong behavior, or they are being asked to do what they ought to do or have agreed to do, but don't want to do and haven't yet done.
    - a. For example, a child may take offense at being corrected or told he cannot do something he wants to do. In the same way, adults are known to take offense or think they are being treated unjustly, or get defensive and angry when corrected, or told they cannot do what they want to do, or asked to do what they ought to do but don't want to do.
    - b. Does that mean the person doing the correcting or telling or asking has done something wrong? NO! And yet, an offense has been taken.

2. The **second primary reason** for someone being offended or hurt or angered without just cause is that they have a fear that is so strong it compels them to be excessively sensitive to any thing – be it words, looks, inferences, or behavior – that raises their fear to a level that makes them feel unsafe.
  - a. For example, if someone's sense of security is based on having approval and acceptance from those around them, then in their neediness for approval and acceptance they become excessively sensitive so as to notice even a look or tone of voice that implies unhappiness with them, or disapproval, or criticism, or outright rejection.
  - b. And when they believe they have discerned such an inference, even though wrongly interpreted, they go away hurt and feeling unloved even though there is no justifiable reason to feel that way.
3. A **third primary reason** for someone being offended or hurt or angered without just cause is the belief that their views and opinions are right, and anyone who disagrees with them must be inherently bad – and therefore worthy of being vilified.
  - a. So naturally, they take offense when a conversation or debate is ended and the other party still disagrees with them, and is still willing to oppose their view or position.
  - b. Two well known topics that commonly expose this third reason are politics and religion.

B. So what are we supposed to do in such cases?

1. The first and foremost thing we are to do when someone has taken an offense at something we supposedly did – but didn't, is to look at the person and situation through God's eyes. Why? Because He is our example of how to patiently, compassionately, kindly, respectfully, lovingly, and mercifully deal with such a person in a way that keeps the door open for reconciliation.
2. The next thing we ought to do is make sure our attitude and mindset are operating within the boundaries of godliness.
  - a. To do this, we must guard our thoughts – and especially our swirling, repetitive thoughts of how unfair it is to be falsely accused or misunderstood, and how bad the other person is for assuming the worst of us when we are innocent.
  - b. If you are new at dealing with these kinds of situations, then you ought to carefully think out how you will approach the person who is unjustly offended, what you will say to begin the

conversation, and how you hope to behave from start to finish. And if you are to do this within the boundaries of godliness, then you must take whatever steps are needed to remain humble and calm – before, during, and after dealing with the person.

- c. Again, if you are new at dealing with these kinds of situations, it is wise, and even necessary to write out your explanation or your side of the story so that you can say it without attacking, zinging, putting down, or otherwise giving the other person a legitimate reason to discount your efforts and continue feeling justified in having taken an offense.
    - (1) Be on guard because any conversation of this sort can easily be derailed through an unwise choice of words or a tone of voice that implies they are bad, foolish, or stupid for having come to their wrong conclusion – especially when addressing those parts of their misunderstanding where you feel they have no excuse for concluding you wronged them.
    - (2) Beyond your words and tone of voice, facial expressions can reinforce your disapproval, or dismay, or a “how could you conclude such a thing” message. Therefore, it is important to go into such a conversation thoughtful of what you are saying with your face and the tone of your voice, because a few wrong looks and an occasional defensive or condemning tone can make it harder for the other person to believe you.
  - d. It is important to treat the person with respect, with humility, and with compassion, regardless of their attitude, choice of words, tone of voice, accusations, or distrust of you and your side of the story.
3. Upon meeting with the person, there is wisdom in beginning with a few pleasantries before jumping into the subject at hand. Once you move to dealing with the issue between you, ask them to tell you their side of the story so that you can hear from them how hurt they are and how they came to believe you offended or hurt them in some way.
- a. Listening in this setting means listening until they are done telling their side of the story. Do not interrupt! And especially do not interrupt to correct a detail or give an explanation.
  - b. If you want to correct a part of their perception of what happened or deal with a specific detail in their story, write it down so you can remember what it was and come back to it after they finish telling their story. But again, don’t interrupt. Listen to the end.

- c. Also, listening means listening to understand their side of the story and their reasons for concluding what they did. Do not listen to prepare your defense or to argue back or to prove how wrong they are. **Listen to understand.** Then when you believe you understand **the how and why** of their conclusion that you offended or hurt them, you can begin deciding what to say in response.
  - d. Finally, if in listening you hear **anything** that implicates you, take full responsibility for it – by admitting what you did was wrong, and by admitting you have no excuse, and by acknowledging you understand how it hurt or offend them, and by asking for forgiveness.
- 4. After they tell you their side of the story, ask if they want to hear your side. In asking, you are giving them the freedom to choose what they want, that is, to choose whether they want to hold on to the offense or open the door to resolving the issue and bring about healing to the relationship.
  - a. When a person is forced to hear your side of the story, they may acknowledge wrong doing, but they won't own their part, and they won't allow your side of the story to change their mind about the issue or about you.
  - b. It is only when we freely choose to deal with a conflict in a manner that seeks to right the wrongs, promote reconciliation, and restore the relationship that we actually and sincerely move in that direction.
- 5. When telling your side of the story, try to do it in a way the helps the other person hear what you are saying. Therefore, avoid using words or labels that offend them or give them a reason to discredit you as a person and therefore discredit your explanation.
- 6. Finally, if you cannot resolve the difference, don't give up. Seek outside counsel for yourself, and if the other side will agree, look for a third party who can help both of you work the problem out in a way that seeks the good of both. But when selecting a third party, select someone both sides trust.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. This ends our study of the nature and character of God, and we have ended in a way that takes what we know about Him and applies it to ourselves in very practical ways. Therefore, let us hold the best possible view of God so that we live the best possible life for God.