

“How Big is God to You?”

Series: “Transformed by the Greatness of God”

Lesson 1

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Pastor Barber

Introduction

1. Illustration: Have you ever seen something so awesome that it “blew your mind”?

To me, the huge trees of Sequoia will blow your mind!

2. Change in our lives comes when our thinking changes.

(Rom 12:1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

(Rom 12:2) And be not conformed to this world: **but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

(Pro 23:7a) For as he **thinketh in his heart**, so is he: . . .

(Php 2:5) **Let this mind be in** you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

(Php 4:8) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think on these things**.

3. We need to see again the greatness of God.

A. We begin where God begins; Genesis 1:1

Gen 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The name of God here is **Elohim** = plural name for majesty, power, strength (singular is **EI**)

Elohim is used over **30 times** in Genesis chapter one.

Elohim is used **2570 times** in the Old Testament.

Elohim is a plural word = implies the Trinity.

Elohim means “mighty” or the “Strong One”. It contains the idea of governing, creative power and His omnipotence

Elohim is the name by which God makes covenants with men.

B. Look up and see the heavens God created, and preserves man for His name’s sake.

C. Look and see the creation of God around us.

D. Now look in the mirror and see **You**.

Body, mind, emotions and soul

Made in the image of God.

(Gen 1:26) And God said, **Let us make man in our image**, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

(Gen 1:27) **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him**; male and female created he them.

E. See God throughout the Bible

Deuteronomy 6:4

(Deut. 6:4) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

(Deut. 6:5) And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Psalms 45:2-7

(Psa 45:6) Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

(Psa 45:7) Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

John 1:1-3

(Joh 1:1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(Joh 1:2) The same was in the beginning with God.

(Joh 1:3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Applica:

1. What comes into your mind when you think about God?

“It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century [1961] is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.” A. W. Tozer. *The Knowledge of the Holy* (p. 6). General Press. Kindle Edition.

2. When you look up and around and in the mirror what are you seeing?

Don't let God the Creator be lost in His creation.

Don't let science (the laws of nature) become your “God”.

Don't let The Word become impersonal. You can know God who is a person.

Moses

(Ex. 33:13) Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: . . .

Paul

(Phil. 3:8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

Don't let your "self" limit your concept of God.

Many think God is like me only a little bigger, better.

Many have replaced God with "self."

Illus. "I believe" has been replaced by "I feel". We talk about people, not souls.

"Losing our Virtue" by David F. Wells, Erdmans, 1999, pg. 107, 105

4. How big is God to You?

Homework:

1. Look up the following verses and summarize what they say about God.

Deut. 4:24

Psa. 18:31

Psa. 86:10-12

Isaiah 46:9

John 1:1-3

Rom. 1:20-21

2. Read Chapter 1 from *Knowledge of the Holy*, by A. W. Tozer attached here. The whole book can be viewed and downloaded for free here: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/25141>
3. Memorize: John 1:1-3

CHAPTER 1

Why We Must Think Rightly About God

O, Lord God Almighty, not the God of the philosophers and the wise but the God of the prophets and apostles; and better than all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may I express Thee unblamed?

They that know Thee not may call upon Thee as other than Thou art, and so worship not Thee but a creature of their own fancy; therefore enlighten our minds that we may know Thee as Thou art, so that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God.

Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know exactly what our most influential religious leaders think of God today, we might be able with some precision to foretell where the Church will stand tomorrow.

Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God. Thought and speech are God's gifts to creatures made in His image; these are intimately associated with Him and impossible apart from Him. It is highly significant that the first word was the Word: "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We may speak because God spoke. In Him word and idea are indivisible.

That our idea of God corresponds as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God.

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe



there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.

It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.

All the problems of heaven and earth, though they were to confront us together and at once, would be nothing compared with the overwhelming problem of God: That He is; what He is like; and what we as moral beings must do about Him.

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. It includes an instant and lifelong duty to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably. And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has done none of these things, but has from childhood been guilty of foul revolt against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear.

The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind, give beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But unless the weight of the burden is felt the gospel can mean nothing to the man; and until he sees a vision of God high and lifted up, there will be no woe and no burden. Low views of God destroy the gospel for all who hold them.

Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is - in itself a monstrous sin - and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness. Always this

God will conform to the image of the one who created it and will be base or pure, cruel or kind, according to the moral state of the mind from which it emerges.

A god begotten in the shadows of a fallen heart will quite naturally be no true likeness of the true God.

"Thou thoughtest," said the Lord to the wicked man in the psalm, "that I was altogether such as one as thyself." Surely this must be a serious affront to the Most High God before whom cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place.

"When they knew God," wrote Paul, "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Then followed the worship of idols fashioned after the likeness of men and birds and beasts and creeping things. But this series of degrading acts began in the mind. Wrong



ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous. The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true.

Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.

Before the Christian Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, "What is God like?" and goes on from there. Though she may continue to cling to a sound nominal creed, her practical working creed has become false. The masses of her adherents come to believe that God is different from what He actually is; and that is heresy of the most insidious and deadly kind.

The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him - and of her. In all her prayers and labors this should have first place. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past. This will prove of greater value to them than anything that art or science can devise.

*O, God of Bethel, by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led!
Our vows, our prayers we now present
Before Thy throne of grace: God of our fathers! be the God Of their
succeeding race.*

Philip Doddridge



Challenge projects:

Pick a challenge to do this quarter to focus your attention to God. The value is for you to “seek after God” personally.

1. **Keep a journal** of the mentions of God in your **Bible reading**. Give the mention of, characteristics of, or actions of God that are given there. A particularly rich book for this is the book of Psalms. If you already keep a journal, add this to what you already journal.

2. **Record** your God moments, insights, or praises. You will not see what you are not looking for.

(Isa 55:6) Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

3. **Make a playlist** of good Christian songs, hymns that focus on God specifically. Play these songs throughout your day.

(ex. “How Great Thou Art”; “The Majesty and Glory”; “Holy, Holy, Holy)

(Col 3:16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

4. **Read** A. W. Tozer’s “Knowledge of the Holy” and “The Pursuit of God”.

Pick other books that specifically focus on God.

Ex.—“Learning to Worship His Name” link: https://www.partnersinministry.org/Learning_to_Worship_His_Name_p/d-1020.htm

(30 days of the names of God devotionals)