

~ About God ~

“Where I found truth, there found I my God, who is the truth itself.”
- Augustine.

Chapter 2

Who is God?

“The greatest and most unusual thing about Christianity is that it allows any Human being to stand face-to-face before God without fear.”
-Morton Kelsey in Dreams: a way to listen to God.

Introduction ~

Somewhere to start ~

What is God? ~

God is something like us ~

Some of God’s characteristics ~

Some of God’s desires ~

Some of God’s names ~

Introduction ~

Have you ever had a friend introduce you to another friend?

“Kathy, I’d like you to meet Vikki. I know you two will enjoy each other - you’re so much alike!” Often your friend has told you in advance about the person they want to introduce you to. “She’s 5’ 10” tall, normal build, and very athletic. She loves hockey, like you do. I met her in the gym working out about 5 years ago. She’s married and has 2 kids.” This is how we all start any relationship – with only some basic information. Then over time, we fill in the blanks with our own observations and experiences. That is what I have to offer to you in this book.

“Precious person, I’d like to introduce you to God.”

It’s the divine characteristics that follow. They’ve been collected, researched, tested, and experienced for millennia. Now you get the complete introduction -

~ God is Real ~

“There are only two things in life of which I am absolutely certain; that *there is a God*, and that **I am not it,”² the rest is a mixture of conjecture [guesses] and trust from a human standpoint. The good news is that our lives need not be based only on our human standpoint. God wants to be involved!**

~ There is a God ~

I am absolutely certain that there is a God because I have met Him. I recall the divine moments in my own life when the natural world around me vibrated with supernatural life and energy and love. The natural world was at peace in a way that emanated energy, pulsating with richness and joy from every direction - perhaps every dimension! I was caught up in the ecstasy of the moment and desired nothing and no one beyond this present moment. It was much more than a just a connection with a presence. It was as if the entire cosmos were breaking in on a moment between me and God, or as if God were bringing all of Divinity into my humanity, and flooding me with awareness, openness, and beauty. I wasn't scared, and I wasn't overwhelmed. I was in *awe*. I was at peace that passes understanding. I was in the presence of a mysterious God who clearly loved *me* – to expend such energy into this small moment, and allow me to bear witness to it. In those fleeting moments, there is no room for worries, doubt, or fear. I am too filled with awe, and peace, and love-of-God for any negativity. Those moments have come to me alone and in groups. They have come at home, and abroad. They have come to me and to many, many other people. These are the moments that God and I connected most closely.

My first and favorite experience with God's presence was before I was a teenager. We were on a family camping trip in Big Sur California and the family was at the campground. I wandered off into the woods alone. As I headed into the deepening forest it became quiet and I could no longer hear the noise of human commotion. I found a big rock that seemed unusually inviting and I crawled up on top of it. Instead of the usual childlike actions of standing atop the rock, pounding my chest, and feeling like 'king of the mountain' (where a sense of conquering nature is involved); I just sat and became part of the nature that was around me. Maybe the first step in maturing – I was just one part of and with my surroundings. The world did not revolve around me. I was involved with the world. Birds chirped. Wind rustled the leaves. The air had depth and a substantial quality. I had been cool in the moist coastal breeze, and the rock was bathed in a circle of sunlight. As the warmth penetrated my body I felt it begin to penetrate my soul. Suddenly I was aware of being part of a greater world than I had ever felt before (and have only felt very occasionally since). I looked around somehow expecting the birds to talk to me and the critters to come running up, like a Disney movie. They didn't of course, but I was uniquely aware that I was not alone. I could almost feel the moss on the rocks and trees growing and giving out oxygen for me, contributing their tones to the rich, silent symphony. I could almost touch our connectedness. I could almost hear a song of invitation to join in some dance I'd been missing. The dance seemed to be gracefully swirling around me with the caress of the wind and the pulse of the sounds of my heart beating in time with nature's cadence. My heart wasn't alone and I knew it. I was no longer cold or hungry or tired or even curious. I was at peace. I wanted to get up and dance with this newly perceived music and energy, but I chose to

² Quote from movie "Rudy"

sit and absorb it. I didn't want to risk disturbing the peace of the joy I was suddenly a part of. I just wanted to bask in this dimension of grace. I felt a whisper of a voice welcoming me to a world I had been in and not understood. Welcoming me into a heart I had been rambling in rudely and blindly (like a bull in a china shop!). That was the first time I understood some of the depth of God's heart toward me. The profound inclusiveness, the complete belonging, the hint of a role I had to play in a drama I didn't know I'd auditioned for, (but was thrilled to discover I'd already gotten the part); **This was a moment that convinced me beyond a doubt that there is a God.**

~ I am not It ~

The "I am not it" part was learned trying to recreate such moments and finding a total inability to do so. I cannot control my own schedule, let alone any of the events happening around me! I am not God. Divinity is something other than me. I cannot control God! God breaks in on us *as He desires* with creativity, humor, love, and comfort that defy my human ability to communicate.

Somewhere to start ~

Many people will point out that to know God you must *experience* God. Talk about God is simply *talk* – it's not GOD. This is True. But God is also the "Word-made-flesh" according to the New Testament Scriptures³. So, needing a starting point for this introduction, we will start with words describing God - hoping those will encourage you to desire to experience God more fully ... in God's time. Many of the words about God that you will read here are the historical record of many individuals experience of God. Each unique glimpse of God has contributed more information fleshing out our picture of the unseen. Like Lewis' map in the last chapter, all these glimpses combine to take us farther than our own experience alone can take us.

~ Creator ~

Since we have to start somewhere, the beginning is always a good place! **According to the Scriptures God is the eternal, pre-eminent power, and creator of the universe.** As such, God created the sun and planets, the earth and all that it includes, and all life that inhabits earth - as an expression of God's Creativity. All that can be experienced with the senses (and much beyond that!) has been created by God. The first words in the Scriptures tell us this:

"In the beginning *Elohim* [Gods] created the heavens and the earth."⁴

³ "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." - John 1:14

⁴ Genesis 1:1

~ Plural ~

This one sentence tells us much more about God! Not only is He creator, but **God is a plurality**. In Hebrew *Elohim* breaks down as *El* meaning “mighty” or “strong”, and the *him* ending is plural indicating three or more. OK, so right off the bat we know that God is powerful and has multiple personalities, facets, or aspects! In Deuteronomy 6:4 the Hebrew Scriptures say “Our God is One God.” The “one” is the Hebrew word *echad* meaning “united one,” as in “altogether.” Even plainer is Genesis 3:22 where God is speaking and says “Behold the man has become like one of us.” From that I gather God talks to Himself!

Looking up the scriptural reference:

In the Bible, the Torah, and the Qur’an, the word is the book name. The chapters are the first number and the verse in that chapter follows the colon. So for this reference you would look in The Bible in the book called Deuteronomy, in Chapter 6 verse 4.

~ A Relationship ~

God can be well-defined in theological [the study of God] terms as a relationship: **God the Father in relationship with God the Son, in relationship with the God the Holy Spirit** (hence why He talks to Himself!). Three revealed aspects of One God, much like facets of a cut diamond, or the three connected lobes of a clover leaf, the three states of water -solid, liquid, and gas, or the three indivisible aspects of humans – body, soul, and spirit.⁵

We see this relationship reflected in the different aspects of God participating in creation. In Genesis 1:2-3 we have “**the Spirit** of God moving over the surface of the waters. Then **Father** God said, ‘*Let there be light*’; and there was light.” Colossians 1:16-17 specifies that in **Jesus Christ** all things were created; in heaven and on earth, and in Him all things hold together. These verses give us a hint at the unified efforts of God in the work of creation. The Holy Spirit hovered around preparing the way, God the Father said “do it,” and the Son made it happen and holds it together. Three aspects of One-God creating together: Father God, Holy Spirit, and Son Jesus Christ. This relationship is called the Trinity, or the God-head.

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Revelation 3:1 tells us of the seven Spirits of God that surround the Throne.

The number seven represents perfection.

Do you suppose that only these three Spirits of God are currently revealed to us? It takes all of our lifetime to comprehend the Trinity. Do you suppose that all of eternity is required to come to know the other four?

I saw this relationship example in my own life recently when our trailer-tire separated from the wheel. It took all three Edons to fix it. My daughter drove the truck up onto the lifts. I held the nut on one side while my husband turned the bolt on the other side. Together, we had that tire changed in 5 minutes. Alone, it would have been a nearly impossible job.

⁵ 1 Thess. 5:23 “may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete.”

It is perhaps this relational aspect that motivated God to create humanity, in the image of Divinity; creatively continuing to create, and relationally adding more to love - as an expansion and expression of Deity. I relate to this desire for I remember when my husband and I had been married for five years; we were happily married, but something was missing. We wanted more to our relationship. Holidays lacked the enthusiasm I remembered from growing up as a child. We needed that wide-eyed wonder back in our lives; we needed children!

It would seem to be this relational aspect of the Trinity which motivated God's self-revelation to creation, for God walked with Adam and Eve in their original home, the Garden of Eden. **God wants to be known and loved**; therefore God has gone to great lengths of self-revelation (which I will review in Chapter 4, God's Self-Revelation). Just as parents talk and sing to their babies in utero so the baby will recognize their voices at birth; God wants to be known and loved by His creation. God has a completely fulfilling relationship with Himself, and wants to expand that joy to include a relationship with you!

What is God?

~ Spirit ~

Ever felt the wind on your face, the energy all around you, smelled the moisture in the air, and known that a storm was coming? God is like that. **You can't see divinity but you can feel it in a very unique way.** By fitting together hints that are all around you, such as; feeling the unseen wind and knowing it has power even when it feels so gentle; and perceiving energy around you in the air and the movement of trees and birds; together with the sweet smell of rain and your experience that when these things



happen storms come; all this makes you aware of an unseen presence. Or what about the times you're sitting at your desk and you feel a presence behind you and turn to find someone standing there. God is like that. When we are connected to Him we feel and see the clues to His existence everywhere. **But we have to be looking and making an effort, to "see" God.**

Just like this picture – do you see Jesus' face? Once you see it you'll always see it!

It is this presence and energy that we don't know where it comes from or where it is going, that we call spirit. God is Spirit: other-worldly, perhaps other-dimensional, non-physical, and not-limited by time and space. God is therefore non-definable and un-containable; a bigger and more complex being than we will ever be able to comprehend.

Just because something or someone is beyond comprehension doesn't mean that it's not worth the try. Here we are making the attempt! Here we are trying to comprehend God.

That is true of us too!
Knowing my name, history,
and physical description does not mean that you know me.
Even those who know me swear they don't know me sometimes!

God is something like us ~

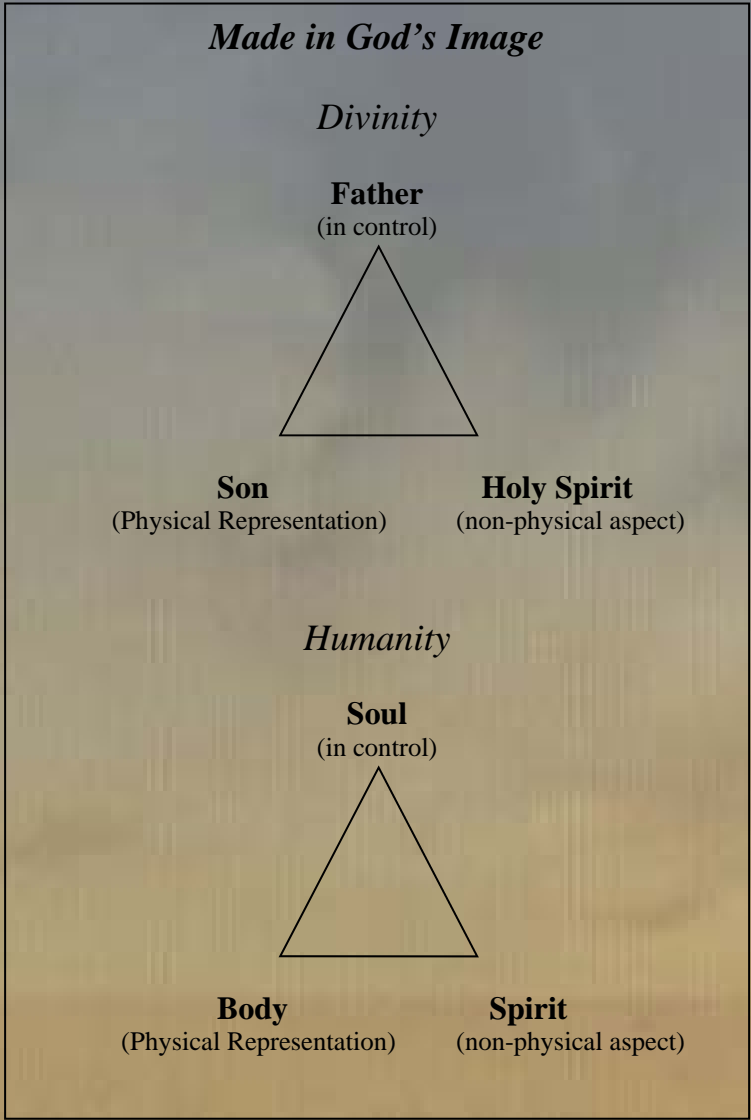
~ Gender Inclusive ~

God is inclusive of all male & female characteristics. Genesis 1:27 tells us that God made humanity in the Divine image, “*God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”* Knowing that we are made in God’s image gives us perhaps the greatest insights into God as we examine ourselves. Aldous Huxley observed that “The finding of God is a coming to one’s self.” As we look at humanity as creation-in-God’s-image we learn much. Since we are male and female – Divinity must have male and female characteristics. The Jewish name for God is YHVH; understanding God’s gender inclusivity, the YH of God’s name is masculine and the VH is feminine. The two together represent a complete unity to Jews, and are God’s name.

It is unfortunate that so many languages arbitrarily chose gender-specific references for things and do not have gender-inclusive words such as:

- Hes meaning “he & she”
- Himer meaning “him & her”
- Hiser meaning “his & hers”
- Himerself meaning “him-self & herself”

I wish I could use these word creations throughout this book, but that would focus on only one issue and distract from the real purpose of the book. So please note that just because we tend to use masculine pronouns referring to God does not mean that God is *only* masculine. In order to emphasize this point; **throughout this book I will use both He and She interchangeably when referring to God.**



~ Trinity ~

Historically God the Father has been seen in the masculine, and Jesus the Son humanly embodied Himself as a male, while the Holy Spirit has been seen as the feminine figure of the Trinity, for She embodies the collection of the more feminine attributes of comforter, counselor, intercessor, and companion. (See Chapter 5, *Who is Jesus Christ?*; and Chapter 6, *Who is the Holy Spirit?* for much more on this aspect of the Holy One.)

We too are three-in-one! **Our Trinitarian design of soul, spirit and body reminds us of God's Trinitarian design which is composed of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.** Our humanity is ruled by our soul just as the God-head is ruled by the Father. Our spirit quietly supports all of our activity without much fanfare, just as the Holy Spirit most often defers to the Father and the Son. And our body enacts our will and is the physically identifiable portion of us, just as the Son is the producer of God's will, and the physical manifestation of the Trinity.

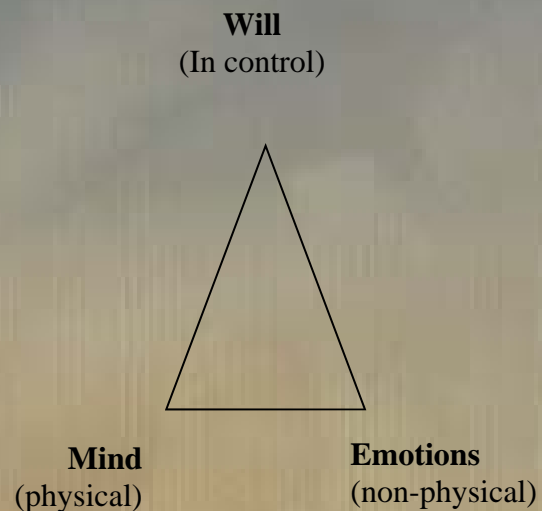
Our soul is also Trinitarian made up of our will, mind, and emotions. Our will controls our psyche, our mind (or brain) houses our psyche, and our emotions are a powerful, non-physical force to contend with.

~ Wants to be Known ~

As we continue to examine ourselves for clues about Divinity, we can see many hints into God's feelings through our own. **We see our need to be loved-for-who-we-are mimicked in much of Biblical history:**

- Joseph throwing off the headdress of Pharaoh and revealing himself to his brothers as one of them is a wonderful example. When facing his brothers after many years on his own, he did not want to be seen as Pharaoh's governor, the second in command in all Egypt; he wanted to be seen as one of them! This story is told in Genesis 45.

Soul is called Psyche in Greek.
It is the psychological part of us—
containing emotions, intellect and will.



- The Greeks thought you could separate Psyche/Soul from body and be "out of your mind".
- Jews saw no such capability of separation and saw humans as a unity of body, soul, and spirit.

Any chance God wants to be accepted as The Almighty, but seen as related to us?

- Another reflection is seen in Samson's worn-out willingness to reveal the source of his strength to Delilah in vain hope that she really would love him. After wooing this foreign lover for many years, if he really let her in – and told her his secret, would she return the trust and intimacy? This story is told in Judges 16.

How about your life?

- Have you ever distanced yourself from a friend because she just wouldn't let you be who you are, and kept trying to change you?
- Have you ever wanted to be included in a special family?
- Have you ever risked-it-all for love?
- Have you ever been rejected; violated; betrayed?

Do you think God might feel that way too? – Since we do?

~ Truth ~

We see our desire for truth reflecting God's character, for **God is the God of Truth.**⁶ This theme of truth is clearly displayed for all humanity throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The Psalms and Proverbs are all about Truth.

- **Some truth is conditional** - right now, under these circumstances, something is true.
(Right now because I'm hungry – I'm grumpy. That's not always true about me, but right now it is!)
- **Other Truth is eternal** – true in all circumstances and for all time.
(I'm female – that will always be True about me.)

God's Truth is eternal. She knows what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen. God knows *EVERYTHING!* He knows how everything works; therefore, when She says something, we can count on it to be accurate. To help communicate this, I have capitalized the word Truth when talking about God's eternal Truth, and left the conditional truths in small letters to help distinguish the two throughout this book.

Fun Fact:

It's very interesting that the word, *truth*, and the word, *peace*, are each used in roughly 350 verses of the Bible. And there are 12 verses in the Scripture in which truth and peace occur in the same verse. Twelve is a number that has to do with divine order, with God's order. If we will let Him line us up with the Truth, we will be at peace.

-taken from *Rescue the Captors 2* Russell Stendal's book about his true life adventures

Some of God's Characteristics

~ Eternal ~

God is eternal, "*From everlasting to everlasting you are God*" we are told in Psalm 90:2. God has always been and always will be. We see this suggested in the expansion of the cosmos, and the scientific theory of the multi-millennial age of the earth, and the eastern religious concept of reincarnation. All these may not be Truths, but they certainly reflect humanities efforts to explain scopes beyond our understanding. God is clearly not limited as we are by time or space. God is all places all the time. Divinity has all the time in the world just for you and me, and everyone else – all at the same "time." For "time," only constrains us - not God.⁷

⁶ Psalm 31:5

⁷ "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2

~ All-Powerful ~

God is all-powerful and limitless we are told in Psalm 147:5. We see this all-powerful characteristic suggested in nature by thunder & lightning, in typhoons & hurricanes, and in volcanoes & earthquakes. We see a suggestion of God's limitlessness in the Cosmos, as well as the creation and recreation of the earth. (Having destroyed Earth once with a world-wide flood, God is planning to destroy it finally with fire, before recreating it again as the paradise it was originally intended to be.) There must be no shortage of creativity or resources with plans like those!

Another place we see God's limitlessness suggested is in the growth and regeneration within the seasons. The fall season seems to suggest that God is not economic as each tree loses every leaf it owns each winter, and many plants appear to cease to exist. Yet, each spring they reappear in their full glory. Even while God does not guard each created item, but seems to "waste" much, God also "wastes" nothing as scientists tell us that each molecule simply breaks down and joins another form of creation. **Everything is shared, nothing is permanent. All is lost so that more can be gained.**

~ Mysterious ~

Theology [or the study of God] can be very confusing, because God is confusing. The Trinity is so big and so diverse that it is quite impossible to truly understand Divinity completely – perhaps that's what eternity is for! **We can only begin to understand God now and so must leave lots of space for the Holy Ones' mystery.** (Learn to be Ok with not 'getting it'!)

A Friend called Grace -

By Phillips, Craig & Dean

Tears dripped off her crimson face
She covered her head tryin' to hide her shame
Caught and condemned, now she can't get away
Just a pawn in the hands of a Pharisee game.

The noise and the rage of the frenzied grew as they
struggled for the power in an ageless feud
And as she softly cried, They again reviewed
The obvious fate of this ill-repute

Then a voice ended all debate
His words of hope sent the crowd away
The hand that flung the stars in space
Lifted her face and she heard Him say

Let me introduce you to a friend called Grace
Doesn't care about your past or your many mistakes
He'll cover your sins in a warm embrace,
Let me introduce you to a friend
A friend called grace.

~ Paradoxical ~

A paradox is two seemingly opposite things which co-exist. **God contains both characteristics and everything in the middle.** For example, God is both love & justice – at the same time! The best example of this paradox I ever heard was the story of the judge who heard a case in court. A man had a pricey ticket for something he admitted doing. The man was clearly remorseful and down-on-his-luck. He had no money to pay the ticket and would have to go to jail. But he had committed the crime, and the judge was legally-bound to bring justice. The judge pronounced the man "guilty-as-charged" and dropped the gavel. He then called the bailiff over and handed him a \$100 bill. "Pay this on that man's ticket so he is free to go" were his instructions to the bailiff. He had pronounced the just sentence and then shown love. **It requires phenomenal strength, wisdom, and resources to be able to be both just and loving at the same time while acting on both simultaneously, but God is that big.**

~ Love ~

We feel our thirst for love, and our willingness to do just about anything for it, in the passion of Jesus Christ.⁸ (See Chapter 5, Who is Jesus Christ?) **For God is Love.**⁹ His proof of that is:

- Our daily provision of light and air and food and beauty and opportunity;¹⁰
- God’s historical pursuit of relationship with us;¹¹
- God’s willingness to forsake limitlessness and become human;¹²
- Jesus’ obedience to overcome evil¹³ through His death and resurrection;
- The Holy Spirit’s offer of adoption into the family of God.¹⁴

God loves us so much He was willing to go to Hell, so He would not have to live in Heaven without us. Paradoxically, God loves us in spite of our sinful condition and yet loves us enough to seek to improve that condition. He loves us as we are, and loves us enough to challenge us to become more than we currently are.

~ Just ~

Justice is adhering to a standard that requires the solution that is best for everyone and requires compensation for wrongs done to others. God wants to be included in that scenario – what is the solution that is best for me and you and God altogether?

The Scriptures clearly show that God’s morality is just and retributive (God takes slights personally!). *“An eye for an eye ...”*¹⁵; and *“vengeance is mine,”*¹⁶ both came from God’s lips. Jeremiah 51:56 tells us:

“For the Lord is a God of recompense, He will fully repay.”

God will bring justice to those who oppress others and ignore Her.¹⁷ The Scriptures are equally clear that the just sentence for humanity is eternal condemnation.¹⁸ Yet; paradoxically, God offers grace through His sacrificial death which brought justification. He *will* pronounce the just sentence, but *has already* offered the way of escape, at the dearest possible cost to Herself.

⁸ “God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romas 5:8

⁹ 1John 4:8

¹⁰ “From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.” John 1:16

¹¹ “Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you...and gather you from the west...” Isaiah 43:4,5

¹² “The Word [Jesus] became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” John 1:14

¹³ “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

¹⁴ “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

¹⁵ “But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.” Exodus 21:23,24

¹⁶ *“It is mine to avenge; I will repay.”* Deuteronomy 32:35

¹⁷ *“Every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God.”* Isaiah 45:23

¹⁸ “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romas 3:23; “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romas 6:23

~ BIG ~

When I begin to think about all the characteristics and paradox's that are God, if I try too hard my internal computer crashes and I can make no sense of God at all. It is at those times when I have to remind myself that we are talking about **God** here! When I am up in an airplane, I can no longer even see the humans down below; and I am still in earth's atmosphere. Yet there is

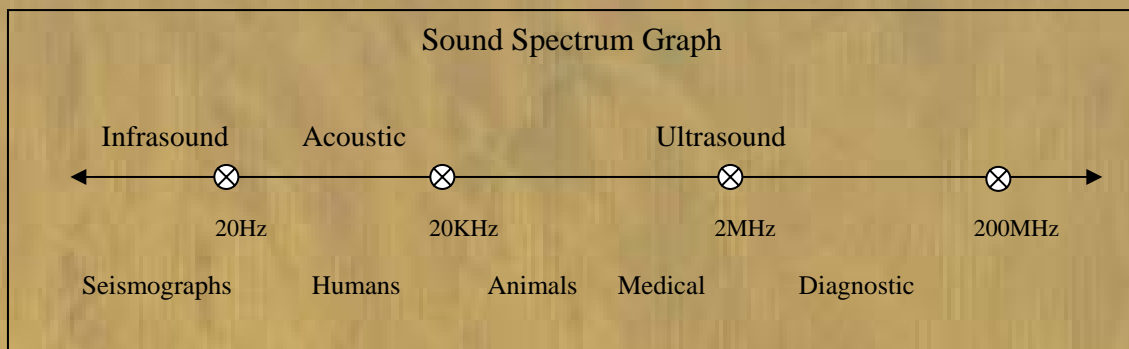
still an entire universe above me! God is **really, really**

BIG.

Can an amoeba fathom me?

~ Whole ~

Another way to think about God is using the sound spectrum. Scientists tell us that there are sounds too low for us to hear with our ears, so we use them in seismographs to monitor earthquakes. Then sound passes through the frequencies we can hear, and into the ones our pets can still hear, but we can't, and up into ones still higher that we use for radio waves, and ultrasound. We hear and understand only a fraction of that spectrum. But **God for this example would be the whole spectrum! Nothing is lacking.**



~ Extreme ~

Let's play devils-advocate for a moment. I was just talking about God being really, really **big**. But what if God's really, really small?

Just because humans built the Beijing Bird's Nest doesn't mean we're bigger than our creation (those Olympic engineers were not several acres in size – Chinese people are normally small in stature!).

Molecular scientists are now looking at the universe and looking for the “God particle,” the smallest unit in the universe that is in everything. Evidently this miniscule element keeps cropping up in their calculations. Jesus did say that He holds the universe together! Whether God is **extremely large**, extremely small, or neither - **She's extreme!**

~ Judge ~

I've only touched on a *few* of the aspects of God for this book. It's encouraging to know that God may be mysterious, unknowable, and extreme; but we also already have a tremendous amount of information about the Holy One! Here, I have tried to cover the basics and I will provide “For Further Study” suggestions throughout this book on ways to continue your study in your areas of interest.

Because; as I mentioned earlier, **God is Just and will judge everyone** based not only on what they've done, but **maybe more importantly on what they have *believed* about God.**¹⁹ So I encourage you to study and consider God and enter into the discussion, so that you can determine what *you* believe; separate from what your parents, your spouse, Hollywood, or the evening news believes. **How will you answer your God when He asks what your life has been about?**

~ Trustworthy ~

We are told in Psalm 20:7 that “*Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God*”. In Hebrew, the phrase *to boast in* means to have confidence and trust in. **I hope that as you've read about God, and many of the Divine characteristics, you will have increased confidence and trust in Almighty God and boast away!** For as Oswald Chambers tells us:

“The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.”

¹⁹ “The Lord judges the peoples; Vindicate me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me.” Psalm 7:8

~ Holy ~

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty,”²⁰ sums up the theme of the whole Old Testament. Holy means “set apart” the basic concept is that of separation, or separateness. As much as I have used our similarities to God to reveal Divinity to us in this book, it is important to remember the paradox - God is other than us. **Divinity is not limited by the constraints that define humanity.** God is other-worldly; above the fray that consumes us. God is higher, bigger, wiser, and totally better than everything in creation – in every way. We must attempt to rise up to God’s level and emulate Him, not attempt to bring Her down to our level and pretend that we are in charge. **Trusting God is easier as we begin to comprehend Her Holiness.**²¹

For Further Study – on The Names and characteristics of God

- Check out Kay Arthur’s book ~ *Lord, I Want to Know You*. A short study that guides you to look up and learn the many names of God.
- Then there’s J.I. Packer’s classic ~ *Knowing God*. A very thorough and illuminating review of God’s character.

Some of God’s desires ~

~ Perfection ~

God desires that all of creation be restored to the original, perfect design. Then we will proceed with whatever Divine plan was originally intended for perfect creation in co-creative²² relationship with the Almighty. God doesn’t want you to be perfect or earn your own way now. **God wants us appreciative of and dependent upon Divinity - now.** God is building that relationship and trust for the time when we will be restored to the perfection of the original design and can move on together from there – having known evil.

~ Relationship ~

God created us to be in relationship with Divinity. We are told in Genesis that upon creation, Adam & Eve walked in the Garden of Eden with God daily.²³ They walked and talked and laughed and played – together, sharing themselves and the unfolding experiences – together.

This life is practice for choosing relationship through obedience to God now. God wants us to begin walking in relationship with Divinity even in this fallen world; even though it is harder and more complicated. God wants us to be Godly hands and feet in this world revealing the Divine love we discover to the hurting people around us.

²⁰ Isaiah 6:3

²¹ “The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble... He is exalted above all the peoples...Holy is He.” Psalm 99:1,2,3

²² Genesis 2:19 “Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast ...and brought them to the man...whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.”

²³ Genesis 3:8 “They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”

~ Obedience ~

God desires that we live life to its fullest and since He made us and knows our frame; She guides us in how to do that. Like the owner's manual on the human, the Scriptures are full of specific instructions and guidelines on how to do this. This is one of the areas of Scripture that overwhelm people. "I really can't do all that!" they moan. ***That's the point!*** God knows us, and that we were made in His image to reflect Her love and power. That fact requires constant reminders that ***we are not yet perfected***, and will only become so in ***constant unbroken dependence on GOD***. So The Almighty gives us BIG challenges to make the point. And when we give up and ask for help – it's possibly His favorite moment! God comes riding up like a prince on a white horse and saves us, making miracles happen in us and around us. We all know the story – Sleeping Beauty has been poisoned by the evil witch and can't save herself. The prince rides up, kisses her, and restores her to life. Then, they ride off together to unknown exploits "happily ever-after."

Some of God's names ~

The vast majority of the time when people use the title **"God" they are referring to all the characteristics of Divinity**. The Jewish tradition so highly values the name of God that they will not say it out loud for fear of saying it "in vain" which is the third commandment (not to misuse the Lord's name). They only use the consonants to write God's (proper noun) name – **YHVH** (they call this a Tetragrammaton).

Christians go beyond Jewish tradition and often refer to the different aspects of God's character using the personalities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In those situations they are focusing on different sets of characteristics of Divinity. Using the name "Father," they might be focusing on God's familial orientation, His ultimate authority, or His protective capacity. When using the name "Son" or "Jesus Christ," they might be connecting to God's redemptive plan, or His desire to reveal Himself to us, or His sacrificial qualities (See Chapter 5, Who is Jesus Christ?). When using the name "Holy Spirit," they could be wanting to point out God's comforting capacity, Her intimacy, Her power, or Her promise of perfection (See Chapter 4, Who is the Holy Spirit?).

The first name God revealed for Himself was "I AM". I exist. I was, I will be – I Am. **"I AM WHO I AM;"**²⁴ meaning I define myself, I'm in charge, I am the ultimate authority (I make the rules!).

My favorite name for God is the one Jesus Christ used when talking to His Father ~ "Abba,"²⁵ an endearing title translating to something along the lines of **"Dearest Daddy."**

²⁴ Exodus 3:14 "God said to Moses, **"I AM WHO I AM."**"

²⁵ Mark 14:36 "And [Jesus] was saying, **"Abba! Father! All things are possible for you."**

Thoughts while reading this Chapter ~

Date:

Activities ~

Consider building a relationship with God ~ Three things you can do to head in that direction:

1. Think about it. What an amazing thought – that an Almighty God who created me would want to talk to me. Especially in light of the fact that I usually want to complain! But think about it; have you ever painted a painting that you worked really hard at? Did you find yourself thinking out loud “you need something there – yes, some more red, that’s it!” We laugh and say “Oh it’s just an object!” Yes, and it’s an object of our affections! Our painting brings us joy based on the time and energy we invested into it. Now think about God’s perspective - we bring our creator joy just by being, simply because God has invested time, energy and effort into us. Imagine the enhanced level of joy and relationship possibilities if God’s painting would really answer back to Her compliments!

2. Open a dialog. Anytime we want to build a relationship we need to talk to the person and open a dialog. Talking to God is usually called Prayer. In spite of the different title, approach it as you would any new acquaintance.

“Hi, I’m _____. I’m honored that you might want to talk to me.”

Or, there’s always my personal favorite:

“God I’m having a tough time here – help!”

3. Consider every attribute a perfect Father would have in your opinion. Write them down. Then, consider the possibility that God is those attributes, and look for confirmation of that assumption in reality. For instance, if a perfect Father is generous; do you have all you *need* and much more? (The fact that you don’t have a Roles Royce is *not* a realistic standard!)

For Group questions and activities see: www.GodforEveryone.com