

YOUR GUIDE TO



# HOW GOD LONGS FOR YOU TO KNOW HIM



## ABOUT LIVING ON THE EDGE

***Living on the Edge exists to help Christians live like Christians.***


It was established in 1995 as a radio ministry of pastor and author Chip Ingram. It has since grown into an international discipleship ministry with a clear vision: to be a catalytic movement of Christians living out their faith in ways that transform families, churches, and communities for the common good and the glory of God.

Living on the Edge creates Bible-based teachings and tools that challenge and equip spiritually hungry Christians to become mature disciples of Jesus.

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Introduction

# HOW GOD LONGS FOR YOU TO KNOW HIM

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Psalm 19:1)*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

## **This may surprise you – your entire life is built on a single foundation.**

Your thoughts, attitudes, goals, decisions, relationships, career choices, hobbies, and even how you handle success and deal with setbacks: all of these things in your life are determined by your opinions about God.

What you think about God shapes your whole relationship with Him. In addition, what you believe about God determines how close you will grow to Him. A. W. Tozer put it like this:

*“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.”*

Thinking about God isn’t academic or impractical. It’s not just interesting — it has serious and far-reaching implications. Consider these three critical questions:

- What do you think about God?

- What do you think God thinks about you?
- How do your answers to these questions impact your relationship with God and the way you live your life?

What we think about God matters. If you think God wants to punish humanity, you'll live in constant fear. If you believe God is good, you'll trust Him even when life gets tough.

Thinking about God isn't just a Christian activity; it's not even a religious one. Everyone has some kind of belief about God, and here are some mistakes we often make:

- We assume God is like us.
- We reduce Him to measurable and controllable terms.
- We overlook the obvious and significant ways that He has revealed Himself.

## **To See God Clearly, We Need Three New “Focal Lenses”**

### **First Lens: God is not like us!**

It seems so obvious, doesn't it? God is not like us. When we look at Him honestly, we won't see a reflection of ourselves. The Bible tells us we are made in His image and there are similarities, but God is not like us. He is not a bigger or better version of human beings. At our best, we represent but a hint of who He is.

### **Second Lens: Left to ourselves, we tend to reduce God to manageable terms.**

As mentioned above, left to ourselves, we tend to reduce God to a manageable terms. In other words, we shrink Him. Faced with the awesome, all-knowing, all-powerful, holy God, we get so uncomfortable that we turn on our mental compactors and shrink Him, or put Him in a little box, or try to tame Him, or seek to manage Him. Since we can't do this with the true God, we effectively invent a new deity who will submit to our wishes.

### **Third Lens: God can be known only as He reveals Himself to us!**

If we're going to see God accurately — as He longs for us to see Him — we've got to see Him as He's revealed Himself. He is not like us, and He will not submit to our reductions. In fact, it's only when we recognize and encounter God as He is that we will make progress toward becoming all that He has created us to be.

## **Here's the Truth: God Longs for You to See Him**

The story of the Bible is the story of the God who is constantly working to draw us closer to Him. God is invisible, but He's not distant. He sent His Son, Jesus, so that we could enter God's family through faith. God sent His Holy Spirit so that we would have the comfort and direction we need to know God more and live a life that honors Him.

*As he [Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. (Luke 19:41-42)*

Jesus wept because they did not realize that He had come from God. He wept because their blindness kept them from knowing and experiencing His peace and forgiveness. In this passage, God's longing is expressed in terms that remind us of God's faithful intention to reveal Himself whether we recognize Him or not. Our rejection of Jesus does not divert His desire for us. As we read in Luke 23:34, He died on the cross saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

## **What Must I Do to See God as He Really Is?**

The best answer to this question is two words: SEEK HIM. The prophet Jeremiah wrote:

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)*

Seeking God is not a laid-back spectator sport. It will require everything in your being, your heart, and your emotions. Your life must say to God, "I want to see You. I long to know You."

"Seeking" may seem like a vague spiritual concept, but God's Word doesn't leave us in the dark. The following verses are worth highlighting in your Bible:

*My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:1-5)*

Notice what this passage says: You have to take these steps for yourself. A teacher, a pastor, or a preacher can't do it for you. Your personal discovery will be the result of your effort. True knowledge of God only comes firsthand. And the amazing fact is that God longs for you to see Him exactly that way!

There's nothing more important than getting an accurate view of God. In the next few pages, we will hold seven attributes of God up to the light of His Word, examining them as we would examine the facets of a diamond. We'll ask God to focus our view of Him with crystalline clarity. These attributes are God's character traits or divine characteristics. We will think about God's goodness, sovereignty, holiness, wisdom, justice, love, and faithfulness. Each of these attributes will allow us to see God in a new light. We will glean new insight into ways God's attributes combine to affect our lives. Growing in the way we see God will also deeply affect the way we see ourselves.

Before you continue, I'd like to ask you to stop for three minutes. I invite you to shut your eyes and think about who God is and what He's like. Reflect on the character of God and your desire to know Him. Give your heart, soul, and mind an opportunity to consider who made you, who loves you, and who longs to be seen clearly by you. At the end of the time, talk to Him. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you like never before.



## THE GOODNESS OF GOD

*For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Psalm 84:11)*

### Defining God's Goodness

God's goodness is seen in the quality of His work and the beneficial effects of His character. This quality in God compels Him to bless people, deliver them, and store up future gifts for them — all with a sense of delight in the one giving and the gift given.

*"The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes total pleasure in the happiness of His people."*

— A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

God is generous. God looks at you with all your baggage, your junk, and your ups and downs, and He says, "I want to be generous to you. I long to give to you just what would make you happy — not because you deserve it but because there's something about who I am that would bring Me infinite joy to express that generosity to you."

## How Does God Reveal His Goodness to Us?

**Through natural blessings:** These are the daily blessings of life that we tend to overlook, like the weather, seasons, life, and so on. God provides all that we need because He is good.

**Through specific deliverance:** God's goodness is expressed when He saves us from difficulties and troubles.

**Through Jesus:** His Son is the ultimate revelation of the Father's goodness, and He reveals it in at least two ways:

- The undeserved goodness that He gives us
- The promise of future benefits

## How Are We to Respond to God's Goodness?

**Repent of unbelief and ingratitude.** God wants you to know that He has been good, kind, cordial, loving, and generous with you in order to lead you to repentance. He has been drawing you with goodness, not threats. The word repentance means "to have a change of mind" or "to turn around."

**Rest in His goodness when you encounter adversity.** Sooner or later, most of us face situations that are out of our control. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death. A loved one lies suffering or dying. All we can do is wait and pray. How does God's goodness help us then? We can't deny that we live in a fallen world. We know death may come. Though we know God has the power to reach in and revive our loved one, that may not be His good plan. But we are called to rest in His goodness anyway. And we can.

**Risk stepping out in faith.** Trusting in God's goodness transforms our definition of risk. When you and I believe that God is good, we can take the risk of actually living by faith.





# 2

## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

*See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. (Isaiah 40:10)*

### Defining God's Sovereignty

If a person is sovereign, they are the boss. They call the shots. They are "the king." God claims to be King, not just of this planet, but of the entire universe. He is outside of time. He is infinite. He had no beginning; He has no end. He is the ruler of everything. When I think of sovereignty, the idea I always come back to is "God is in control." That's such a comfort. When a loved one lies in a hospital bed, God is in control. In our most difficult times with a child, God is in control.

Because God is sovereign, He is without equal: the King of kings, the Lord of lords, without limitation in any way. He is the only absolutely free being in the universe.

*"God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free."*

— A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

### How Does God Reveal His Sovereignty to Us?

**Through His titles:** God describes Himself as sovereign, set apart in power and authority.

**Through His promises:** God made promises and kept them (two examples: Romans 8:28, Philippians 2:9-11).

**Through history:** God is orchestrating human events for His purpose.

**Through fulfilled prophecy:** God predicts the future with 100 percent accuracy.

**Through Jesus:** The incarnation happened at the perfect time, showing us that He is the sovereign King and the resurrected Savior.

## **How Are We to Respond to God's Sovereignty?**

**Bow** before the King of the universe, for He alone is worthy of our worship.

**Believe** all that comes into your life is either allowed or decreed by a good God who will use it for your benefit.

**Behold** in awe the mystery and majesty of His kind, compassionate, just, and sovereign rule over all that is or will ever be.



## THE HOLINESS OF GOD

*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)*

### Defining God's Holiness

The dictionary offers definitions like “to divide,” “to mark off,” and “to set apart from all else” to describe the uses of the word *holy*. It's the opposite of profane, common, or ordinary. To be holy is to be different, distinct, or unique. The English roots refer to that which is whole, healthy, happy, sound, complete, and unspoiled. The word *holy* eventually came to mean “spiritually pure, sacred, untainted by evil, sinless.”

When applied to God, holiness is that which divides Him from everyone and everything else. It is the quality of “awesome mystery” in God's being, an essential nature and character that make Him different, distinct, unique from any other thing or person in the universe.

*“We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God's power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine.”*

— A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Tozer reminds us that we can't, with our finite resources, get our arms or our minds around the absolute, sinless, majestic purity of the Creator of the universe. Even with God's help, we will be overwhelmed by His holiness long before we understand much about it.

## How Does God Reveal His Holiness to Us?

**Through people:** In the Bible, people like Moses, David, and Isaiah offer examples of how God's holiness impacts a person's life.

**Through places:** Here on Earth, special places are designated as holy because God has made Himself known there. Heaven is more than a holy place; it's a holy environment. Experiencing God's holiness in the little places of this world serves as part of our training for the real holy land of heaven.

**Through the Law:** The first four of the ten commandments deal with God's holiness, while Leviticus outlines holiness laws for worship.

**Through the Prophets:** A prophet's job was simple: get the truth from God, primarily about His holiness and His benefits, and then give it to people in a loving and powerful way.

**Through Wrath and Judgment:** When people refuse to listen to the warnings of the prophets, God reveals His holiness directly through wrath and judgment. The effects are sudden and devastating.

**Through His Son:** Everything Jesus did proclaimed the holiness of God, in particular the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13).

**Through His Church:** God reveals His holiness through the church gathered and scattered (as individuals).

## How Are We to Respond to God's Holiness?

There are three aspects of holiness as we experience it:

- **Justification:** When we are declared holy before God by faith in Jesus (also called positional holiness).
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made more holy like Jesus (also called practical holiness).
- **Glorification:** Being declared fully holy for eternity (also called permanent holiness).

We must also keep in mind what striving to be holy means for our lives.

**It's a commitment we make.** Holiness does not happen automatically, we must choose it.

**It's a way we think.** What we devote our minds to makes all the difference.

**It's a command we obey.** We are called to be holy as God is holy.

**It's an attitude we develop.** We are called to reject evil behavior without prideful judgment of others.



# 4

## THE WISDOM OF GOD

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! (Romans 11:33)*

### Defining God's Wisdom

Wisdom is more than someone's appearance or how old they are — it has nothing to do with white hair or beard length. Even children, especially children who know God's Word, can often utter astonishing wisdom.

Wisdom refers to the way someone uses knowledge and experience. Wise people see the big picture and make good decisions. Wisdom is rooted in fearing God, because He is the root of all wisdom.

*To believe actively that our Heavenly Father constantly spreads around us providential circumstances that work for our present good and our everlasting well-being brings to the soul a veritable benediction. Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart. There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God. Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress. God has charged Himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him.*

—A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

It takes time and repeated lessons to bring us to the place where we consistently treat God's wisdom with awe and respect. It's easier for us to define God's wisdom than to willingly live under it.

## **How Does God Reveal His Wisdom to Us?**

**Through Creation:** God reveals His wisdom through the natural order of His creation, from the sub-atomic through ecosystems, the human body, the universe, and beyond.

**Through Providence:** God works all things together for good.

**Through Redemption:** God's plan to "buy back" people for salvation was wise.

**Through Jesus:** The ultimate picture of God's wisdom is Christ Himself. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says, "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God."

## **How Are We to Respond to God's Wisdom?**

**Wise living begins with reverence for God.**

Fearing God means we recognize Him for what He is – holy – and that we trust in Jesus.

**Wise living grows by receiving His Word.**

The best place to discover God's wisdom is the Bible.

**Wise living requires that we ask for it specifically.**

We need to confidently go to God with the challenges we face. Every decision before us is an opportunity to ask God for wisdom and to follow it.

**Wise living involves learning to trust God completely.**

Ultimately, wise living demands a daily exercise in trust whereby we say in our heart of hearts, "All that comes my way is from the hand of a good and loving God, who, knowing all things actual and possible, is exerting His unlimited power to execute the best possible outcomes, by the best possible means, to fulfill the highest possible purposes for me."



# 5

## THE JUSTICE OF GOD

*Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Genesis 18:25)*

### Defining God's Justice

Justice involves an uncompromising and unwavering allegiance to a standard. Our understanding of justice tends to emphasize this idea of an external set of rules or laws that must be followed. This understanding doesn't apply to God's justice, however. Justice is not a standard God follows; He is the standard. He is not accountable to external sources of justice because justice flows from Him. It's part of who He is.

*"Justice embodies the idea of moral equity, and iniquity is the exact opposite; it is in-equity, the absence of equality from human thoughts and acts. Judgment is the application of equity to moral situations, and may be favorable or unfavorable according to whether the one under examination has been equitable or inequitable in heart and conduct."*

—A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

In other words, justice means that people are going to get what they deserve based on God's clear and full understanding of what they did and why they did it. We may be accustomed to legal tricks, technicalities, and excuses in human courtrooms, but there will be none of that before God. He knows every intimate detail of the case.

## How Does God Reveal His Justice to Us?

**Through History:** Several events in the Bible demonstrate God's justice — Cain and Abel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and others.

**Through the Natural Order:** There is a higher law of justice, and this basic understanding of cause and effect was written into our psyche at the time we were created. Even a casual observer, regardless of culture or background, notices the same basic philosophy anywhere in the world: when you do good things to people, good things come your way; and when you do bad things to people, bad things come your way. Although we can all cite exceptions to this principle, none of us can deny that it is the normal pattern, nor can we deny the personal outrage we experience when this life principle appears not to be operating consistently.

**Through the Human Heart:** Morality is universal, and everyone has a personal sense of justice. People believe they ought to act a certain way, even when they fall short.

**Through His role as Judge:** The Bible clearly teaches that God will judge the world.

**Through the Cross:** Scripture explains that the central reason for the cross was for God to show the whole world His justice.

**Through the Promise of Eternal Retribution:** There will be a final judgment, for believers and unbelievers, and it will carry eternal consequences.

## How Are We to Respond to God's Justice?

**Choose to embrace Jesus.**

We cannot endure God's justice on our own. Only by believing in Jesus can we find eternal life.

**Refuse to seek vengeance.**

In light of God's justice, we don't need to seek our own version. We can leave room for God's wrath when we refuse to repay evil for evil.

**Take comfort in God's justice.**

Not only do we need to keep ourselves from seeking vengeance, we can also be comforted in the fact that God will repay others.

**Meditate on the effects of God's final judgment.**

When we deeply consider the reality of spiritual reward and loss, we see our lives in a new light and are able to move toward spiritual maturity.





# 6

## THE LOVE OF GOD

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1)*

### Defining God's Love

God's love is His holy disposition toward all that He has created. It compels Him to express unconditional affection and selective correction to provide the highest quality of existence, both now and forever, for the object of His love.

The source of this loving disposition is in God — God is not the object. We don't provoke, trick, or convince Him to love us. We cannot earn or win God's love. He doesn't love us because of who we are but because of who He is. His nature and character compel Him to express unconditional affection toward us.

God is affectionate and gracious when we are good, and He is affectionate and gracious when we are evil. His love is tough and complete, which means it includes selective correction. God cares so much that when we move in directions that would be harmful for us, He disciplines us and brings us back in line because He wants the very best for us. He is well disposed toward us. He wants the highest quality existence we can have.

### How Does God Reveal His Love to Us?

**Through Creation:** In Genesis, we human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation — made in His image — and the way we were created tells us about His love.

**Through Providence:** Long before we believed, God did wonderful, kind, and good things every day in this world, causing rain to fall and crops to grow, and bringing joy to the hearts of people who were evil.

**Through the Incarnation:** The fact that God took on human flesh to pursue us in our own environment tells us volumes about His compassion.

**Through Discipline:** God's love is revealed in the way He confronts and corrects our self-destructive behavior.

**Through the Holy Spirit:** Our awareness of God's love is a direct result of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**Through Jesus:** His life modeled God's love. His teachings reveal God's love. He died on the cross as a demonstration of God's love.

## **How Are We to Respond to God's Goodness?**

**We must receive.** The free gift of salvation must be accepted in faith.

**We must believe.** We can do this by saturating our minds in His love, asking God to help us grasp His love, and refusing to seek love in cheap substitutes.

**We must give it away.** Loving others proves we have experienced God's love.

# 7

## THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

*Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)*

### Defining God's Faithfulness

Before we look at God's faithfulness, consider three observations about the role of hope in our lives:

1. We all depend on something or someone to "hold us up" inside.
2. When that something or someone is "coming through for us," we experience a sense of peace, satisfaction, and optimism about the future.
3. When that something or someone fails to come through for us, we experience a sense of anxiety, dissatisfaction, and ultimately despair.

The secret to a life of unending joy and peace involves finding something or someone who will come through for you 100 percent of the time in any and every situation — forever.

*"All of God's acts are consistent with all of His attributes. No attribute contradicts any other, but all harmonize and blend into each other in the infinite abyss of the Godhead ... God, being who He is, cannot cease to be what He is ... He is at once faithful and immutable, so all His words and acts must be and must remain faithful."*

—A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

We can trust that God will be there for us, and we can trust that God is consistent and that all of His attributes work together.

## **How Does God Reveal His Faithfulness to Us?**

**Through Creation:** The consistent endurance of creation points to God's faithfulness. Just as we can trust that the sun will rise every morning, so can we trust in God.

**Through His People:** God demonstrated His faithfulness by making promises and keeping them (consider, for example, Abraham and Peter).

**Through His Spirit:** Listen to the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit and know that we can rely on His power and should obey Christ's commands.

**Through His Word:** God's Word always accomplishes God's purpose. When you test the teachings in Scripture, they are always 100 percent true.

**Through Jesus:** God's Son wears faithfulness like a belt (Isaiah 11:5), while Faithful and True is His title at the end of time (Revelation 19:11).

**Through His Shaping of Our Lives:** God is faithful when we are weak and tempted and when we sin and fail.

## **How Are We to Respond to God's Faithfulness?**

1. Put your past behind you today. Confess your sins and move forward in Christ.
2. Bring your present problems, pain, and failures to Jesus today.
3. Place your hope for the future in the One who will never let you down.
4. Tell someone each day how God has been faithful to you.



## **KEEP DISCOVERING THE REAL GOD**

**To discover more about The Real God, check out these other resources from Chip Ingram:**

The Real God Book

The Real God Workbook

The Real God Family Devotional (videos + discussion guide)

The Real God Sermon Series (CD, MP3, or DVD)

Check out [www.LivingontheEdge.org](http://www.LivingontheEdge.org) for these and other great resources that will help you grow spiritually.

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