

## Introducing God

These broad yet compelling features of God reveal Him as the author of creation and the caring, involved guide for our journey through life to eternity.

1. **God's Creativity**

(Read Genesis 1:1-27)

- God's creativity is revealed in the heavens and the earth (the sun, stars, skies, weather, land formations, oceans, gravity, plants, animals, colors, shapes, etc.)
- God's creativity is revealed in the creatures of the sea (compare star formations and the ½ inch seahorse)
- God's creativity is revealed in human beings (our diversity and ability to be creative)

2. **God's Glory**

(Read Psalm 19:1-6)

- The creation shouts a message of an intelligent creator who cannot be ignored
- The creation tells us of God's majestic qualities

3. **God's Engineering**

(Read Job 39:13-18)

- Consider an ostrich who lays her eggs in the open ground. She lacks wisdom to protect her young, yet her offspring survive
- Consider the defensive abilities of other creatures or the human eye

4. **God's Vastness**

(Read Psalm 8:3-5)

- Consider the immensity of God's work in the creation
- It is estimated that more than 100 billion galaxies exist
- It is very humbling that God focuses on us and cares for us, even though we are seemingly insignificant

5. **God's Omnipresence**

(Read Hebrews 4:12-13)

- Omnipresence means that God is present everywhere, even when we were in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-16)
- The all-seeing eye of God reveals everything, both good and bad (Hebrews 4:13)
- We can't run or hide from God; we will one day have to give an account to this great God

6. **God's Love**

(Read 1 John 4:7-10)

- God displayed His love for us by providing the ultimate gift of Jesus
- God's love is consistent, selfless and in no way manipulative

*What are your own thoughts about these amazing traits?*

*What do you think and feel about God?*

**Further Reading:**

- Exodus 3:1-14—God's Name
- 1 John 1:5-7—God is Light
- 1 Peter 1:15-16—God is Holy
- Romans 2:4—God is Kind
- Romans 11:22—God is Stern

Acts 17:24-31—God is Purposeful

## The Word of God

The Scriptures are inspired by God, giving us hope, exposing our hearts, providing direction for our daily lives, and leading to everlasting life—when faithfully followed.

### **The Old Testament**

39 books—the first five books disclose the old covenant received by Moses and made available to the Israelites (Overviewed in Deuteronomy 4-5)

#### 1. **Provides Divine Guidance**

(Read Deuteronomy 4:9,32-40)

- The Scriptures record the voice of God in written form and His achievements
- The story includes observations, His commands and eternal benefits of obedience
- Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17: The Bible is God-breathed (inspired) and is useful for all who read and apply it

*How are the Scriptures "full of use" in our lives?*

- It gives guidance for salvation and conducting our lives  
*Is it possible to have supreme confidence in your salvation?*

#### 2. **Gives Us Prophecies of Hope**

(Read Isaiah 9:6-7, 53:3-7)

- There is a continuity in Scriptures between predicted and fulfilled events
- Many Old Testament prophecies have a direct relationship to the coming of Jesus Christ, predicted hundreds of years before His arrival on earth



### **The New Testament**

27 books — the first five books reveal the new covenant of Jesus Christ, made available to all mankind (Overviewed in Acts 2)

#### 1. **Reveals Our True Self**

(Read James 1:21-25)

- Saves us and exposes truths about us, like a mirror
- The proper way to respond to the Word is to immediately act upon what is revealed  
*What are some things that we want to hide or forget?*  
*Why would it be helpful to make these hidden things known?*

#### 2. **Provides Discernment/Judgment**

(Read Acts 17:10-11)

- Enables us to compare what religious leaders teach to God's actual words
- Helps us to discern between right and wrong  
*How can you personally be certain of your own beliefs?*

#### 3. **Contains the Path to Rebirth**

(Read 1 Peter 1:22-25)

- Shows us the truth about how to be saved

- Shows us how to be born again through the seed of God's Word and our response  
*Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word?*  
*Are you willing to commit your life to His Word?*  
*Are you willing to let the Bible guide you daily?*

**Further Reading:**

- John 12:47-48— Judges us
- Matthew 15:1- 9— Is above tradition
- 1 Timothy 4:16— Defines life/doctrine
- Romans 10:17— Gives us faith

1 Corinthians 10:1-13— Provides us with warning

## Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ shows us how to live, die and be raised again in an intimate relationship with God. He boldly calls us to be His disciples, but He never calls us to go anywhere He has not been willing to go first. And He gives us the power to walk with Him.

1. **Lived an Unsurpassed Life**

(Read Philippians 2:5-11)

- Came as God in the flesh
  - Made Himself nothing, operating as a servant (slave)
  - Humbled himself by becoming a man, by enduring all the challenges we normally face and, ultimately, by surrendering Himself to die for our sake
  - Exalted by God, and mankind will one day bow before Him
- What would it look like if you imitated this attitude?*

2. **Taught Incomparable Values**

(Matthew 5-7)

- Calls people deal with their hearts (Read chapter 5:1-11)
  - Despises hypocrisy, people pleasing and materialism (Read chapter 6:1-3, 5-6, 19-21)
  - Calls for self-examination rather than judgment (Read chapter 7:1-7, 24-29)
- How does the Sermon on the Mount impress you?*

3. **Had a Remarkable Following**

(Read John 4:7-26, 39-42)

- Did not follow popular prejudices of His day and He even defied them
- What are some of the prejudices you see in our world today? In yourself?*
- Remarkable following consisted of Zealots, religious, prostitutes, tax collectors, insane, officials, etc.
  - Jesus persisted in love by telling the woman the truth she needed to hear
- This woman had a 'good' response to spiritual truth—how else could she have responded?*
- If Jesus saw your secrets, how might you respond?*

4. **Loved Beyond Measure**

(Read John 13:1-15, 34-35)

- He loved fully, even His betrayers
  - Jesus envisioned disciples in the future being known for their love and their unity (John 17:22-23)
- Do you belong to a community where disciples strive to follow this example?*
- In what ways could you exemplify this love?*

5. **Gave an Astonishing Calling**

(Read Luke 5:1-11)

- We come to realize who Jesus is: 'Lord'
  - We come to realize who we are (a sinful person), and accept the call to follow Him and do what He does
  - Read Luke 9:23-26: "Follow me"—to shamelessly and daily give up our life, pick up our cross
- What would keep you from following Him daily?*
- Can you grasp the big picture of this astonishing calling?*
- In time, disciples also reach and teach new disciples.*

*Are you amazed by the Biblical Christ?*

*Do you believe in Him and desire to follow Him?*

To prepare for the next study, please read Matthew 26-28

**Further Reading:**

- Mark 12:28-31—Greatest command
- John 8:30-32—Real disciples of Jesus

## The Church

God's Church is people born again into His family from all ages, races, cultures and lands, bound by shared beliefs, faithfulness to God, devotion to one another and Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

### 1. **Began with Devotion**

(Acts 2:42-47)

- Teaching, fellowship, prayer and meals in homes
  - Awe, praise of God, sharing and added numbers
- Should we strive for such devotion in churches today?*

### 2. **Is Built on Jesus Christ**

(Read Ephesians 2:19-21)

- The family of God on the cornerstone of Christ (Colossians 1:18)
  - The foundation: Apostles and prophets
- How does one make sure that the foundation is correct?*

### 3. **Has Clear Family Guidelines**

(Read Ephesians 4:1-16)

- All are called to be humble, gentle and patient
- Guidelines (7) define the core convictions of the church



- Jesus gave gifts to prepare the church for unity, knowledge, maturity and fullness
  - God designed the body to have boundaries in order to protect His family against external forces
  - He defined the family to be protected from craftiness. *Where do lures usually come from?*
  - The body matures as each member does his or her part with the goal—grow up into Christ
- What part of this directive stands out to you?*

### 4. **Has Many Parts**

(Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

- All members come into the body of Christ through baptism/Spirit
- Each member is unique and fulfills a crucial role; nobody is unwanted or not needed
- Each member needs others and must accept those who are different
- In the church, there will be an assortment of strengths, weaknesses, age-groups, backgrounds, ethnicities and appearances

### 5. **Has Responsibilities**

(Read Romans 12:1-8)

- Using your “different gifts” to build up the body
- Read 1 Corinthians 9:7-14. Giving—members give to support gospel ministers, expenses, the poor, etc.
- Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Meeting together—the privilege of “access” leads to purpose, encouragement and spurring one another

- Etc. (taking care of the needy, serving each other, carrying out the great commission, help one another in various life challenges)

*How does the thought of responsibly giving your time and resources to Christ's church sound to you?*

*Do you desire to be part of the church intended by God?*

**Further Reading:**

- 1 Corinthians 3:1-9—Unity vs. division
- Hebrews 3:12-14—Daily encouragement
- Romans 15:1-7, 14—One heart/mind
- 2 Corinthians 8-9—Other needs

## The Gospel

The word gospel means ‘good news’, Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. An apostle once said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”

### 1. **First Importance**

(Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-6)

- The foremost Christian belief is “the gospel”
- The gospel is defined as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ  
*At this moment, what does Jesus’ death on a cross mean to you?*

### 2. **His Death**

(Matthew 26:31, 26:36 – 27:50)

There are at least eighteen compounding “just when you thought it couldn’t get worse” agonies that crescendo:

- Read 26:31,36-46
  - He faced desertion, even by His closest friends
  - He agonized in Gethsemane
  - He was disappointed with His friends
  - He was betrayed by one of His friends, Judas
- Read 26:55-68
  - He faced a conspiracy of false accusations and lying witnesses
  - He was charged falsely with blasphemy
  - He was spat upon, punched and slapped
  - He was taunted with religious mockery
- Read 26:69-75
  - He suffered Peter’s blatant denial
- Read 27:1
  - He received the death sentence at trial
- Read 27:11-26
  - He was given equal status with Barabbas, a notorious prisoner
  - He was subjected to a mob jury
  - He was tortured by flogging
- Read 27:27-31
  - He was humiliated—stripped and mocked as a king
- Read 27:32-44
  - He was crucified, intended to be the cruelest form of execution
  - He endured the crowd’s jeering
- Read 27:45-50
  - He suffered separation from God, taking upon Himself all the sins of mankind
  - He experienced physical death

*On the left side of a sheet of paper, list the known sins committed against Jesus and label it ‘The People’*

The People

Jesus

Pride

Envy

Lies

⋮

*So far, why do you think this is good news?*

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 18-21

*Switch the headings on the columns:*

*What does this say about God's love for them?*

*What does this say about God's love for you?*

3. **His Burial**

(Read Matthew 27:51-66)

- Upon Jesus' death, there was an earthquake, as if the earth was groaning at the injustice
- The tomb was secured with soldiers, and a massive stone and Roman seal were at the entrance

4. **His Resurrection**

(Read Matthew 28:1-7)

- The area was shaken by an earthquake and the tomb was found empty
- The news came quickly about His resurrection; many witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
- *Why is the resurrection such a big deal?*

5. **His Commission**

(Read Matthew 28:16-20)

- The disciples met with Jesus after the inconceivable resurrection occurred
- They believed but some had their doubts
- *Do you believe in Jesus and His resurrection?*
- Jesus called them together to charge his disciples— "make disciples, baptizing in the world as you go, continuing to be taught everything"  
*How do you think you would feel if you were there?*  
*Have you come to a decision to be a disciple of Jesus?*  
*Do you understand this implies lifelong learning, being taught (apprenticeship)?*

*What is "the gospel"?*

*Very soon, take some time to reflect personally on your past and present sins.*

*The next study covers our response to the gospel.*

**Further Reading:**

- Luke 24:13-53—A gospel discussion
- Romans 3:9-20—Lost without God
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25—Fools for Christ
- 1 Peter 2:13-3:22—Living the gospel

## The Promise

Through Jesus, God promises salvation and a resurrected spiritual life for the journey. The promised is received on conditions of our acceptance.

*Do you believe in the gospel?*

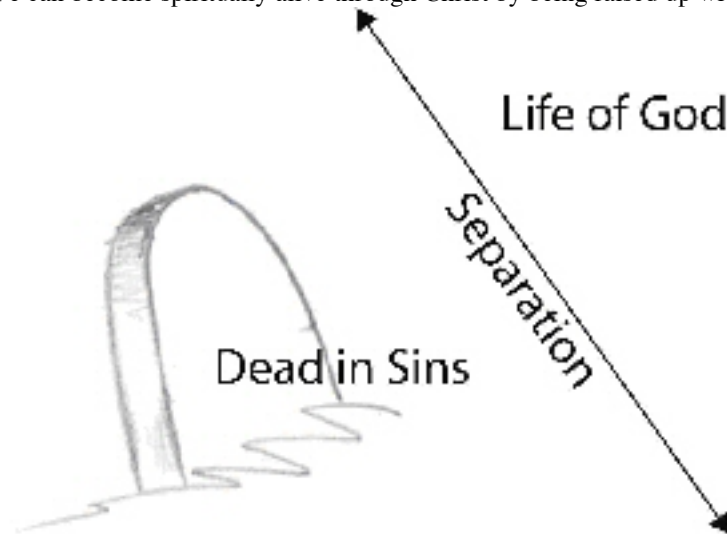
*Do you know what the word “salvation” means?*

*What are you willing to become for God?*

### 1. **Bad News and Good News**

(Read Ephesians 2:1-6, 4:18-19)

- All of mankind has been pronounced spiritually dead
- We are dead because we follow the ways of the world and Satan
- God intervenes when we are helpless and offers to rescue us
- We can become spiritually alive through Christ by being raised up with Him



### 2. **A Message for All Time**

(Read Acts 2:1-5, 22-24, 36-42)

- God gets the attention of many with signs
- Convinced:
  - The audience knows about His life, miracles, death, resurrection and their share of guilt
  - Jesus is *both* Lord and Christ
- Convicted: “cut to the heart”  
*Have you ever come to this level of conviction?*
- Converted:
  - Repentance (changing your mind, heart and life) is a step toward accepting God’s promise
  - Baptism (Gk, *baptizo*, immersion) is also an acceptance of the promise
  - Receiving forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit

*Have you ever repented with a true change of life?*

*Have you ever been immersed for the forgiveness of sins?*

- For All: The fuller truths about Jesus and the Gospel were revealed for all time, for all who are far off

### 3. **Our Sinful Nature**

(Read Colossians 3:5-9)

Sexual immorality, or *fornication*—sexual vices, sex outside of the marriage relationship

Impurity—unclean, lewd behavior and unnatural acts (Romans 1:18-25)

Lust, passions—unrestrained desire/stare, or as if indulging in sexual activity in your mind

Evil desires—an active impulse or condition toward wickedness, malice or sinful cravings

Greed—to covet/keep something for yourself at another’s expense

Idolatry—debasement by worshipping or serving things or people and not God

Anger—a wrathful state, having an outburst with revenge in mind

Rage—a violent motion, an outburst without thought of control

Malice—an evil habit of mind, wanting harm to fall upon someone

Slander—wounding another’s reputation, abusive report or speaking evil of a person

Filthy language—unseemly words to debase something or someone

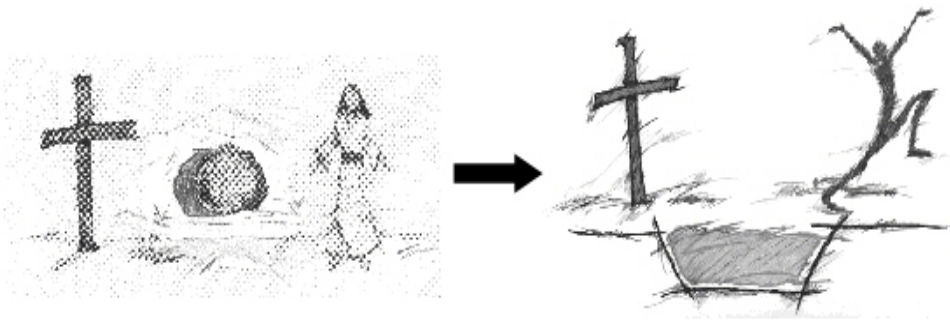
Lying—stating something false to protect or puff up yourself

*Which sins are particular to your sinful nature?*

#### 4. **Our Triumph: Spiritual Nature**

(Read Colossians 2:6-15)

- Receiving “Jesus as Lord” and “being taught” is discipleship
- The circumcision of our sinful nature is a painful process
- We are forgiven and then raised up with Christ in baptism by His power
- God also willingly cancels the debt owed due to our sins. Through His victory, we experience triumph



#### 5. **The Pledge of a Good Conscience**

(Read 1 Peter 1:3, 3:19-21)

- a. God gives the gift of the “new birth” (being born from above)
- b. Faith, repentance and baptism do not earn us the new birth
- c. We simply accept His gift in this pledge
- d. We are accepting God’s terms for surrender and are saved
- *Are you ready to accept God’s gift on His terms?*
- *If not, what is holding you back from the promise?*

#### 6. **Justification, Mercy and Grace**

(Titus 3:3-8)

- a. The promise conveys God’s mercy (love and kindness)
- b. Justification comes through grace (a gift of favor)
- c. Saved by washing of rebirth, renewal by Holy Spirit
- d. Devoted to serve God out of gratitude

*Are you willing to look at the responses of others in the Bible?*

#### **Further Reading:**

- Acts 8:26-40—Foreign Official
- 16:16-34—Prison Guard
- 22:1-16—Religious Leader

## Eternity

Eternal life awaits us at the end of this life's journey if we trust God, exhibit courage and rightly respond to God's invitation.

### 1. **Eternal Life**

(Read John 3:16-21)

- Eternal life is made possible because of God's sacrifice of His Son (The Gospel study)
- Our part is "living by the truth"

### 2. **Eternal Accommodations**

(Read John 14:1-6)

- Heaven has been prepared for those who love God
- Jesus is preparing a room in heaven for His disciples
- Heaven will be so much better than the best offered here on earth

### 3. **Eternal Repercussions**

(Read Revelation 21:1-8, 22:1-5)

- God will dwell with man without the challenges and curses of this earthly life
- Those who overcome will receive heaven's rewards
- Others (liars, adulterers, etc.) will be disqualified
- In heaven, there will be healing, the ability to see God's face, no more night or fear, etc.

### 4. **Eternal Costs and Blessings**

(Read Mark 10:17-31)

- The biggest tests deal with greed, sensuality and time
- Jesus on greed: Giving up earthly riches for real riches
- The decision to follow Christ means leaving everything
- The benefits of heaven far outweigh the losses

*What do you think Jesus means when He says "a hundred times as much in this present*

The Costs	The Blessings
Pleasures of sin	Clean conscience
Lifestyle change	Great relationships
Persecution	Purpose
⋮	⋮
⋮	⋮

*age"?*

### 5. **An Eternal Celebration**

(Read Matthew 22:1-14)

- Many were invited to attend the banquet but turned it down
- The banquet pictures a feast of blessings that God prepared

*Which response best describes you?*

  - *ready and dressed (with Christ) for the occasion*
  - *will harm the messengers (persecute presenter)*
  - *go on with your business (non-committal)*
  - *try to sneak in without proper clothing (pretender)*
- Read 2 Peter 2:20-22: When someone leaves Christ after they have accepted His invitation (take off their wedding clothes) they are worse off

*Are you sure of your decision?*

### 6. **An Invitation to Eternal Life**

(Revelation 22:17)

- The last chapter of the last book holds an open invitation
- The Spirit and the bride offer the promise of the "free gift" for those who are thirsty

#### **Further Reading:**

- Luke 14:25-32—More on implications

- 1 Corinthians 15:35-58—A new body
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-5—New clothing