

Studies on the character and nature of God

Year B

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Source: Entering God's Presence – Youth With A Mission



God is a Communicator (1)

(God speaks to us.)

Speaking is the most frequently mentioned act of God in the Bible

God's communication is creative - he spoke each part of Creation into being "And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Genesis 1:3 (also v.6, 9,11,14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29)

God's words last forever.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (Isaiah 40:80)

The words God spoke to Israel were so important that they were to be recorded, remembered and taught to children and future generations. (Deut. 6:6-9)

The word God is alive and active: For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. (Hebrews 4:12)

Jesus, the WORD (logos), was there from the beginning.

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)

He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. (Rev.19:13)

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

When Jesus spoke, people were healed and spirits were cast out.

But the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. (Matthew 8:8 (story v.5-13) (Also John 4:46-54)

He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick. Matthew 8:16b

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law. Matthew 7:28-29

God communicates with us in many ways.

We need to learn to listen to His voice, through the still small voice, through the Bible and through wise counsellors.

God's spoken word brings faith.

So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. Romans 12:17 We are designed to live by the words God speaks! (Deut.8:3, Matt.4:4)

Our spoken words are also extremely important, because we are created in God's image:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you. (Matthew 12:36-37)

Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4:29)

And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. (Rev.12:11)

Paul asks for prayer that he be given words to make known the Gospel. (Ephesians 6:19)

The Book of Proverbs contains many references to the use and impact of the tongue.

Wise words satisfy like a good meal; the right words bring satisfaction. The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences. (Proverbs 18:20-21; Also Proverbs 12:13,14,16-19; 15:1,2,4)

Memory/Meditation

Genesis 1:1-3 (NLT)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Proverbs 15:4 (NLT)

Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Genesis 1:26 (NLT)

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

Genesis 1:27-28 (NLT)

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NLT)

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe.

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Questions and activities

1. How did the Creation come into existence?
2. What is a good way to remember God's words? (Psalm 119:11)
3. How did God speak to people in Old Testament times? (Hebrews 1:1-2)
4. How does God speak to us today? (Hebrews 1:1-2)
5. How do we find out what the Son has to say to us?

God is a Communicator (2)

God listens to us. He hears us.

God's extraordinary love for us is evident in the fact that he listens to and hears us. Communication is an act of love, the foundation of relationship. God's communication with us is a genuine two-way dialogue.

God's amazing humility is evident in the fact that he is the great and powerful Creator, yet he is willing to communicate with *us*, his creatures. God pays attention to our needs, problems and concerns.

The Lord heard Hezekiah's prayer to live (Isaiah 38:5-6) and his prayer for deliverance when a massive army was invading. (2 Kings 19:20.)

God listened to Hannah's cry for a child, (1 Sam. 2). She was not only given a son, but she also became the mother of a prophet who was one of the greatest leaders of Israel.

Our God heard Elijah's cry as he was praying for the dead boy and raised him up to life again, (1 Kings 17:22).

God heard the prayers of Cornelius, an unsaved Gentile, and that led to his full salvation, (Acts 10:31).

Jesus listened and responded to cries for help of the blind, (Matt 20:30-34)

God listens to our broken-hearted cries and gives us more than we can ask or imagine, (Eph.3:20).

God also pays attention to the needs and concerns of nations, seen in His attentive care for Israel. (Exodus 2:24; 3:7; 6:5; 22:23,27)

God listens to us when we call out to him:

Then you will call out to me. You will come and pray to me. And I will listen to you. (Jer 29:12)

Call out to me. I will answer you. I will tell you great things you do not know. (Jer 33:3a)

God hears cries for mercy: Ps. 6:9, 28:2, 31:22, 116:1; Matt 20:30-34

The psalmists and prophets repeatedly call out with confident expectation that God will hear:

David cries to the Lord: "Lord, hear my prayer. Listen to my cry for your favor." (Psalm 143:1)

So I will look to the Lord. I'll put my trust in God my Savior. He will hear me. (Micah 7:7)

Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal says, "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire--he is God. (1Kings 18:24)

Solomon's prayer in I Kings 8:28-52 makes 10 requests that God hear from heaven.

There are requirements for God to answer the prayers he hears:

clean hands, a pure heart, pure motives, faith, for us to be in right relationship with our brothers and neighbors, (Ps.15, James 4:1-3, Matt 5:24, Mark 11:24, Luke.22:42).

Another requirement is that we ask according to his will. (1 John 5:14-15.)

Memory/Meditation

Psalm 5:3 (NLT)

Listen to my voice in the morning LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.

Psalm 34:15 (NLT)

The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right; his ears are open to their cries for help.

Psalm 10:17(NLT)

Lord, you hear the longings of those who are hurting. You cheer them up and give them hope. You listen to their cries.

1 John 5:14-15 (NLT)

There is one thing we can be sure of when we come to God in prayer. If we ask anything in keeping with what he wants, he hears us. If we know that God hears what we ask for, we know that we have it.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Psalm 116:1-2 (NLT)

I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

Questions and Activities

1. Explain how communication with us is an act of God's love.
2. Give two examples from the Old Testament where a person cried out to God, and God answered.
3. Give an example from the New Testament.
4. Write a Bible verse that tells us that God listens to US when we call to him.
5. What are the requirements for God to answer our prayers?
6. What does it mean to pray 'according to God's will'? (1 John 5:14-15)

God is a Shepherd

I am the good shepherd; and I know my own and my own know me –
I lay down My life for the sheep. (John 10:1-15)

Jesus, the Good Shepherd has the power of the shepherd is to fight on behalf of the sheep.
Psalm 23 describes the Good Shepherd, who cares for his sheep, leads and protects his sheep.

In Bible times, being a shepherd involved:

Care

- finding food and water for them
- Treating cuts and bruises

Leading

- choosing the way that they should go
- Keeping the flock together
- Keeping the sheep close to himself
- Knowing them all by name.

Protecting

- from wild animals
- Finding them the shelter of a sheep fold at night
- Teaching them to stay together

In Jesus' day, shepherds either wandered from place to place and lived in tents, or lived in villages. Peasant shepherds who lived in a village had the right to let their flocks feed in the pastures near the village. When food supplies got scarce, they would move their herds to higher pastures in the hot summer or to warmer valleys in the winter.

Life was often difficult for shepherds who spent most of their time outside watching over the herd and often slept near their flock to protect it from robbers and wild animals. At night, they gathered their flocks into places called sheepfolds. These could be stone walls made by the shepherds or natural enclosures like a cave. Shepherds counted their flocks when they came into the fold at night by separating the sheep from the goats with a walking stick. They counted them again in the morning when they left for the pastures.

A flock often included both sheep and goats. Sheep are timid animals that need constant protection. Goats are harder to handle than sheep, because they like to climb up the rocky hillsides. Sheep produce wool for clothing and meat for special meals. Many sheep were also used for sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.

God is pictured as a tender, compassionate Shepherd, a model for all who lead and teach:

He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young. (Isaiah 40:11)

But he led his own people like a flock of sheep, guiding them safely through the wilderness. (Psalm 78:52-53a; also Psalm 23; Psalm 100:3-4)

Jesus told the story of a shepherd searching for a lost sheep. (Read Luke 15:3-7.) He identified with shepherds, even though it was a lowly occupation, calling himself the Good Shepherd who would sacrifice his life for his sheep (John 10:11-16)

God promises the things that a good shepherd was expected to provide:

The shepherd provides food and water: He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. (Psalm 23:2)

So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? ... your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (Matt.6:31-33)

But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life. (John 4:14)

The shepherd provides care and protection: The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

Just as one of the characteristics of a Middle Eastern shepherd was his personal knowledge of his sheep, so we have a shepherd who knows and wants relationship with us:

I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. (John.10:14-15)

Hearing the voice of the shepherd:

As the sheep knew the sound of their shepherd's voice, so our God wants us to hear His voice: Jesus says in John 10:3-5 ...the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ...he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.

Other Bible passages:

Ezekiel 34 - The false shepherd compared to the good shepherd

Matthew 25:31-36 - Separating sheep from goats

Matthew 10:6- Sheep amongst wolves

Micah 2:12-13 - The sheep gathered in the fold.

Meditation/Memory:

John 10:14-15 (NLT)

I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.

John 10:16 (NLT)

I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young. Isaiah 40:11 (NLT)

Psalms 100:1-3 (NLT)

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

John 10:27-29 (NLT)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand.

Psalms 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Questions and Activities

1. In John 10:14-15, who are the sheep and who is the shepherd?
2. What was the role of the shepherd in Bible times?
3. How does Jesus fulfil this role for his followers?
4. In John 10:5, give some examples of 'strangers' that might want to lead the sheep astray.
5. Why don't the sheep follow the stranger?
6. How do we get to know the voice of the shepherd? (John 10:3-5)
7. Choose two verses from Psalm 23 and write them. What do these verses mean to you?

Jesus is the Way

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me,” (John 14:6).

It was prophesied of the Christ: “the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD”, (Isaiah 11:2).

Jesus was “filled with wisdom” and even so, he “grew in wisdom”, (John 2:40,52). People were astounded by his wisdom, (Matt.13:54; Mark 6:2) and His way of acting and speaking was marked by wisdom.

James says: “the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness”, (James 3:17-18.) These are apt descriptions of the way Jesus lived his life, leaving us an example that we should imitate.

More than Jesus being the way to God, he shows us the way to go when we walk closely with Him. Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left, (Isaiah 30:21). So when we walk closely with the Lord, we can hear His voice telling us which way to go.

About a hundred verses in the Old Testament make reference to “the ways” of God.

He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is! (Deuteronomy 32:4)

God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!” (Deuteronomy 32:4.)

The Lord is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness, (Psalm 145:17).

Moses says “let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor,” (Exodus 33:13).

Proverbs describes the impact of following God’s ways of wisdom:

She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying, (Proverbs 3:17)

The way of the Lord is a stronghold to those with integrity, but it destroys the wicked, (Proverbs 10:29). This means that God is a refuge to those walking in His way, those who do evil, will be judged unless they repent.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7)

Jesus is “the way ... to the Father” (John 14:6)

There are not many ways to God. Jesus is the only way. Only Jesus gives us access to the Father, (Rom 5:1-2).

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, (Acts 4:12).

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place, (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Memory/Meditation

John 14:6 (NLT)

Jesus told them "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

2 Samuel 22:31-33 (NLT)

God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. For who is God except the LORD? Who but our God is a solid rock? God is my strong fortress, and he makes my way perfect.

Acts 4:11-12 (NLT)

For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, 'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

Hebrews 10:19-20 (NLT)

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

Psalms 25:8-10 (NLT)

The LORD is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The LORD leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.

Questions and activities

1. Jesus showed us the way to live. Give an example.
2. Describe the ways of God, as recorded in the Old Testament.
3. If we want God to show us the way to go in life, what should we do?
4. What is the major difference between Christianity and other faiths? (Think about Jesus being the way.)
5. What does the Bible say about the way being narrow? (Matt 7:13-14 & Prov 16:25)

Write a response to "Jesus is the Way". How do I stay faithful in following God's ways?

God is Light

God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7).

Genesis 1

In the beginning there was only God.
The earth was formless and empty.
Darkness was over the waters.
God said, "Let there be light, and there was light."
God separated the light from darkness.
There was evening and morning, the first day.

What does this mean?

God has always been there – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Together they created the world out of nothing.
Light enables life to exist.
God is good. His goodness is represented by light.
The Bible tells us to "walk in the light as He is in the light." (1 John 1:7). To walk in the light means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. In every situation say, "What would Jesus do?"

Do you want to achieve great things for God? Ask God to shine His light on you. May your words, thoughts and actions be a reflection of God's light.

Jesus is the light

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." John 8:12
It was prophesied in the Old Testament that a Saviour would come, who would be a light to those walking in darkness. Read Isaiah 9:2,6 & 7

Light is a symbol of purity:

Genesis 1 - God's light
Ephesians 5:8-11 - Live as children of the light.
Deuteronomy 6:18 - Do that which is right and good.
Galatians 5:22 - Goodness is a fruit of the Spirit.
Romans 13:12 - Put on the armour of light.
James 4:7 – Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
Matthew 5:13-16 - Christians as salt and light.
1 John 2:28-29 - Everyone who does what is right is of God.
Luke 11: 33-36 – to be spiritually healthy is to be in the "light"

Christians should be lights to the world:

Live as children of the light (Eph. 5:8-11)
Christians as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16)
Walk in the light (1 John 1:5-7)
The armour of light (Rom. 13:12)
Goodness, (living in the light), is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22; Deut. 6:18)

We are told to think on things that are true, noble, right and pure (Phil. 4:8-9)

Light is a symbol of God's work within us.

As the light of God's love is allowed to shine into our inner being, it changes on the inside. As God's light works on us and in us, the change and transformation is evident externally. The light of the knowledge of God shines in our faces. This is the external evidence of internal, spiritual growth.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

God is Light

The Old Testament talks about a supernatural light that glowed around religious objects or in natural things like clouds. This light represented God's presence. That supernatural glowing light is called "the glory of God."

God led his people through the desert with his own light:

"By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people," (Exodus 13:21-22).

When Moses came down from the mountain after receiving the Ten Commandments, his face shone with light, because he had been with God. (See Exodus 34:29-35)

Matthew 17 describes what is called the "transfiguration" of Jesus. This means He was suddenly covered in glory, the same light recorded in the Old Testament: "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. . . a bright cloud overshadowed them."

When this earth passes away, and there is a new heaven and earth – the new Jerusalem, there will be no sun or moon because God himself will be the light.

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. (Rev 21:23)

Memory/Meditation

John 8:12

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world."

1 Peter 2:9

He has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Thess 5:5

You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or darkness.

Matt. 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.

Questions and Activities

1. In the beginning, God created light first, because all life is dependent on light. Explain how spiritual life is dependent on God's light.
2. Give two examples from the Bible, explaining that light is a symbol of purity.
3. How can a Christian be a light in a dark place?
4. Jesus is the Light. What does this mean to you?
5. What should we do if we have fear of evil, or attacks from the powers of darkness?
6. What is the meaning of Isaiah 9:2,6 & 7
7. How did God show himself as light in the Old Testament?
8. How will God show himself as light in the new Jerusalem, (Revelation 21)?

God is Uncreated

In the beginning, God.... Genesis 1:1 These four words are the beginning of the Bible, the true story of God's interaction with mankind, but this is not the beginning of God's story. We are introduced to Him as having always existed, and then as Spirit The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. v.2

He is uncreated, without a body, and invisible; He has eternally existed in a perfect relationship of love and oneness with the other two persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Son.

So where did God come from? What is He made of? Jesus answered that question by saying "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

God is not made of the same "stuff" as His created world, and He does not have a beginning and an end like His creation. Our minds struggle to grasp something unlike our natural world, so God uses pictures of things we do experience:

The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit. (John 3:8) The word for Spirit is the same word as wind.

Another image used is "breath" – The breath of God, or His Spirit, has great power, He breathed life into Adam (Gen 2:7) and He breathed life into the dry bones (Ezekiel 37: 1-14).

For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Job 33:4

Jesus breathed on his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)

Knowing that God is uncreated has important application for our lives: just as God does not have a beginning, God does not have an end. We can trust that He will never change, He will never go away or change His mind about His love and His promises. Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. (James 1:17)

We can only be in one place, think one thought, speak to one person but God doesn't have those limitations! He can think, act, speak, love, listen to ALL of us at the same time, as though we are the only ones! I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! (Psalm 139:7)

We need to know that Spirit-stuff is just as real as physical-stuff! There are many stories and promises in God's Word showing that He is very real and active in our world!

The uncreated Spirit of God is called the "Rock" - the hardest substance around! David says The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. (Psalms 18:2a; 18:31; 19:14; 31:2-3; 61:2; 92:15; Isaiah 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 44:8)

The Spirit of the Lord came on people enabling them to do mighty things. (For example, Samson, in Judges 14:6,19; Saul, in 1 Sam 11:16; David, in 1Sa 16:13; Mary, in Luke 1:35)

The Spirit of God rested on Jesus. (Isaiah 11:2; Matt. 12:28; Lu 4:14; Acts 10:38)

The Spirit was poured out on believers and worked signs and miracles. (Acts 1:8; Joel 2:28-29; Romans 15:19)

We are all to keep our eyes on the spiritual things ... So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. 2 Cor 4:18 (NLT)

Memory/Meditation

Genesis 1:1-2 (NLT)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Romans 5:5b (NLT)

We know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Revelation 1:8 (NLT)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."

John 3:5-6, 8 (NLT)

Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. ... The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

Exodus 3:14,15b

"I AM WHO I AM This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations."

Psalms 139: 7-10 (NLT)

I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me and your strength will support me.

Questions and activities

1. How do we know that God existed before the creation of the world?
2. God is a Spirit. How is he different from us?
3. John 3:5-8 – To be born of water and the Spirit – what is water a symbol for in Ezekiel 36:25-27. How does this apply to being 'born again'?
4. Give examples in the Old Testament where God's Spirit upon people enabled them to do mighty things.
5. Give examples in the New Testament.

God is Joy

What is joy?

Most people define joy as a feeling of happiness when you are smiling and laughing a lot. And, they think that happiness comes from “good happenings.” Good happenings mean everything is going your way, turning out right. You have lots of money and are healthy and are very successful in work or school.

But what happens if things are not so good? Your family is stressed financially. You may be struggling in work or school. Your relationships are fraying. You or someone close to you is very sick. Can you really have joy then?

In the Bible, joy is a deep inner gladness regardless of circumstances going on around you. That means whether you are rich or poor, sick or healthy, successful or struggling, you can still have a feeling of gladness or pleasure deep down inside. Now, you may not feel like smiling on the outside, but you can still smile on the inside. Have you ever felt that way?

This kind of joy is supernatural. It is part of the character of God and comes to us only from a relationship with Him through knowing Jesus Christ.

Joy is expressed in the Creation.

The Bible also teaches that God finds great pleasure in His creation. At the end of each of the creation days, God said it was good. After day 6, He said it was very good. God wasn't only giving His approval but was also revealing His pleasure. The Father God has joy in what His hands have made, especially His creatures. That includes you. You are one of His creatures.

God is joyful when people return to him and find salvation.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, Jesus taught us that our Father God was like the father of the prodigal son when he returned home. The father acted with joy. He was happy to see his son, filled with love, running toward him, hugging and kissing him. He called for a great celebration. That's joy.

Read Luke 15:1-7. Who is rejoicing and when?

Read Luke 15:8-10. Who is rejoicing and when?

God has joy whenever anyone comes to Him to have his or her sins forgiven. The Bible describes lots of rejoicing in heaven at that time, (Luke 15:7, 10).

God gives us joy.

Joy is something that God has. But, it's also something that God gives. He is the source of joy, just as He is the source of love and grace as we have already studied. Jesus told His disciples they would have great joy coming from Him.

Jesus, who was God, had God's joy in Him. And, He promised to give His joy to His disciples so that it would be in them, also. Jesus didn't promise this to just those who knew Him when He was on earth. This joy is for us too.

The joy of the Lord is God's joy. He has it, and when He gives it to His people, it makes them strong. God's joy in us gives us the courage to face tough times. God's joy finds great pleasure in His creation and His creatures, especially people who trust in Him. His joy in us makes us strong.

God wants us to express joy in praising him. (Ps. 95:1-5; Ps. 100; Ps. 147:1 & 7; Ps. 66:1; Ps. 148; Ps. 149; Ps. 150)

We can give God joy.

Having God's joy in us, we should delight in the things that God delights in. We can ask ourselves: "what pleases God, what gives Him joy?" How would you answer that?

When you have His joy, then you should take pleasure or delight in those same things. When you have the joy of the Lord, you rejoice in justice. You find pleasure in God and knowing Him, not in personal and selfish pleasures. You also find delight in studying His Word the Bible, in doing what pleases Him, and in praising God.

Living for God gives us joy.

Some people think that when you are a Christian, you give up anything that gives you pleasure. That is not what the Bible says. It is not wrong for a Christian to have pleasure or to seek pleasure; it is only wrong to seek pleasure in the things that are selfish or against God's values. We can have joy, even in difficult times when we trust in God.

Paul and Silas sang praises in jail. They were joyful in a difficult situation, because they trusted God. (Acts 16:23-26)

Memory/Meditation

Nehemiah 8:10

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Gal. 5:22

The fruit of the spirit is love JOY and peace. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. ()

Phil. 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice!

Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.

John 15:10-11

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

1 Peter 1:8

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Questions and Activities

1. Describe the joy that God gives.
2. Choose three living things from the Creation – plants or animals – that give you joy. Explain why they give you joy.
3. Read John 15:10-11. What does Jesus want for those who trust in Him?
4. Read 1 Peter 1:8. How does Peter describe the joy God gives to us?
5. Read Nehemiah 8:10. What does God's joy do for us?
6. What is one thing that gives God great joy? See Luke 15:7
7. Why is praising God important?
8. How can praising God help us in difficult times?

God is a Lawgiver

Isaiah 33:22 is a passage which is often pointed to as foundational for Biblical thought regarding how political structures are to be organized for governance: *For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us.*

The three titles given here to God, (judge, lawgiver and king), describe the three divine governance roles.

The Hebrew word translated “lawgiver” is *chaqaaq*. It sounds like the action it describes. Imagine an ancient scribe with mallet and chisel in hand carving words into stone or clay tablets. The word literally means “to cut or hew, to inscribe, or engrave”. We read in at least 10 different places in the Bible that God himself inscribed the tablets handed to Moses on Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments: Exodus 24:10; 31:18; 34:1

Likewise, God says that in the time of the new covenant ““I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people, (Jeremiah 31:33). See also Matthew 22:37-39, Romans 13:10, Galatians 5:14.

The laws given by God to Moses were specifically for the people of Israel but these laws also teach God’s will and give principles that apply to all people. They also give us glimpses into the eternal nature of God, what he values, how he acts, what he knows to be right and wrong. The Jewish “Torah” is the first five books of our Bible. Scripture makes clear that the Old Testament Law was something to be obeyed, revered and treasured, (Psalms 1:2; 19:7; 119:18, 72, 165; Isaiah 42:21).

Paul writes that the law is holy, righteous and good, (Romans 7:12).

Jesus was brought up under the customs of the law, (Luke 2:27).

While the Old Testament law was given by God and to be valued, it was never intended to produce righteousness in us or to provide salvation. The law actually shows that none of us could ever fully keep its requirements, pointing to the need for a Savior.

For the law was given through Moses, but God’s unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ, (John 1:17) See also Romans 3:19-22a, 6:14 Galatians 2:16, 3:11, Hebrews 10:1, Acts 13:38-39.

The law was peoples’ guardian until Christ came; it protected them until they could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian, (Galatians 3:24-25).

The Old Testament law and prophets pointed to Jesus: Luke 24:44, John 1:45,15:25

Isaiah prophesies a future time when there will be no more war and people from many nations will stream to God’s temple saying, “Come, let us go ... to the house of Jacob’s God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” For the Lord’s teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem, (Isaiah 2:3; also Rev.21-22:5).

Meditation/Memory:

Psalm 119:72 (NLT)

Your instructions are more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver

Matthew 22:37-39 (NLT)

Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Psalm 1:1-3 (NLT)

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

Jeremiah 31:33 (NLT)

But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Psalm 19:7-8 (NLT)

The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NLT)

“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the Lord. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.”

Questions and activities

1. Explain God’s role as a judge. Who and what does he judge?
2. Describe the event of Moses receiving 10 Commandments for Moses.
3. How did people of the Old Testament receive salvation?
4. When Jesus came to earth, how did he change this?
5. Does our salvation through Christ mean that the 10 Commandments are no longer relevant? Explain.

Write a response to “God is a Law Giver”. What is the role of obedience? How do we know what displeases God? Why is the heart important? See Psalm 119:11

God Our Healer

God can heal the body, mind, will, emotions, spirit. His desire is to restore wholeness to His creation. This includes both man and the created world, (Romans 8:19-22).

There are many miracles of healing in the New Testament. For example,
The man born blind, (John 9)
The woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, (Mark 5)
The man who was lowered through the roof to reach Jesus, (Mark 2)
The healing of the sick servant, (Luke 7)

Jesus was motivated by compassion as he healed, noticing those in need:

When two blind men follow calling out for healing ... Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. (Matt.20:34)

Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:14)

A man with leprosy begged "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said. Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed. (Mark 1:40-42)

When Jesus saw her [crippled woman], he called her over and said, "Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!" Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. (Luke 13:12-13)

Pain, sickness and death are a consequence of the fall. (Gen 2:16-17; 3:16-19).

These were never a part of God's original plan, but because of sin, "all creation was subjected to God's curse" (Rom 8:20). But to counter the consequences of our sin, God enacted a plan of redemption which culminated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. His righteous sacrifice broke the power of the curse and made a way to restore God's purposes: "he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed" (Isa 53:5).

God has always desired health for us. He declares his intent, "I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span" (Exodus 23:25-26).

He affirms, "I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26).

It is God who "forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:3-4).

Jesus's sacrifice on the cross makes all of this possible. Because of him all people who at one time lived alienated from God can look forward to healing in the present and a future in which "God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will

be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever” (Rev 7:17; 21:3-4).

God’s ministry of healing is physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, relational, social. It is seen wherever the consequences of sin – both personal and corporate – are overcome and God’s original intent is restored. God not only wants to heal individuals, but also “to heal the nations” (Rev 22:2).

Forgiveness of sin is linked with healing:

When the paralytic was lowered through the roof in front of him Jesus looked at the whole man. He saw his need for forgiveness and addressed this before healing him physically. (Mark 2:1-12)

At the pool of Bethesda Jesus healed a man who had been a paralytic for 38 years. Later Jesus says to him: ““Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you” (John 5:2-14.)

This is rather blunt and right to the heart - advice that all of us need to heed. Again, the implication is that healing, forgiveness and sin are tied together.

Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones. (Proverbs 3:7-8)

There are many testimonies of people being healed physically after they confess and repent of sin. For example, bitterness causes stress in the body, releasing toxins that can lead to illness, physical healing has happened when people choose to forgive.

Solomon, writer of Proverbs, knew there was a link between the heart and physical well-being:

A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body; jealousy is like cancer in the bones. (Prov 14:30)

A cheerful look brings joy to the heart; good news makes for good health. (Prov 15:30)

Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body. (Prov 16:24)

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength. (Prov 17:22)

It is clear in the Gospels that not only did Jesus heal, he told his followers to go and heal the sick in his name.

Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. (Matthew 10:1 and Luke 9:2, 10:9)

I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. (John 14:12)

Peter and John were imprisoned for healing a crippled man in Jesus’ name. After they were released, they and other believers prayed ... “Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:30)

The story of the crippled man healed continues on through imprisonment, release, prayer for healing, miracles, a building being shaken! (Acts 3:2 - 4:31)

Many evil spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. (Acts 8:7; also Acts 5:16, 14:9, 28:8)

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Meditation/Memory:

Exodus 15:26 (NLT)

I am the Lord who heals you.

Matthew 15:30 (NLT)

A vast crowd brought to him people who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn't speak, and many others. They laid them before Jesus, and he healed them all.

John 14:12 (NLT)

I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

James 5:16 (NLT)

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

Luke 4:18-19 (NLT)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. (from Isaiah 61:1-2)

Psalms 103:2

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.

Revelation 21:3-4 (NLT)

Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.

Questions and Activities

1. Choose one of Jesus' healing miracles from the New Testament. Who was healed? What condition was the person healed from? Did Jesus speak to the person? If so, what did he say? What miracle took place? How did this happen?
2. Give an example of a miracle that shows that Jesus had compassion on the person that he healed. What does compassion mean?
3. Why is there sin and suffering in the world?
4. Jesus dies for our sins upon the cross. What is the other great gift he has given us through the cross? (Psalm 103:3-4 and Isaiah 53:5).
5. In the case of the paralyzed man who came to Jesus through the roof, what two things did Jesus do for the man? (Mark 2:1-12)
6. Quote a verse from the Bible that shows us that sickness can be a result of a problem in our spirit.
7. Give an example of a healing that took place when the disciples prayed in Jesus' name.
8. Who performed this miracle? ... the disciples themselves, or Jesus working through them?
9. Quote a Bible verse that shows that God's healing is not just for Bible times, but also for today.
10. What does Revelation tell us about the end to all pain and sickness?

God is Peace

Peace is an attitude of heart and mind, irrespective of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Peace is the result of a strong faith and trust in God.

Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7 NLT).

Psalms 23 and Psalm 91 are two of many examples in scripture of this inner peace.

Galatians 5:22 - Peace is the fruit of the fruit of the Spirit. If we have all the other fruits of the Spirit operating in our lives: love, joy, patience, truth, goodness, faithfulness, kindness, gentleness and self-control, then we have peace within our inner spirits. Peace is the gift of God to His children.

John 14:27; John 16:33 - Jesus *gives* His peace to us; we don't have to work for it.

Jesus is our peace.

Jesus has given us peace with God. We were once enemies with God because of our sin, but Jesus took our sins upon himself and offered forgiveness to all who want to receive it.

Romans 5:1. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Also read Ephesians 2:12-13.

Peace is a characteristic of secure people. Christians are secure because:

we know who we are— (children of God)

we know why we are here— (to live for God)

we know where we are going— (following Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life)

we know who is looking after us and caring for us - Jesus

People with peace in their hearts will be peacemakers with others.

Old Testament blessing

The priests of the Old Testament prayed this blessing: "May the LORD bless you and protect you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace." (Num 6:24-26).

Jesus spoke peace over his disciples and Paul uses the greeting grace and peace in all his letters to the churches.

Verses that promise us peace:

"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe" Psalm 4:8.

"The Lord gives his people strength. The Lord blesses them with peace" Psalm 29:11.

"Great is the LORD, who delights in blessing his servant with peace!" Psalm 35:27b

“For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then, my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing[peace] will never be broken,” says the LORD, who has mercy on you”. (Isaiah 54:10; also Num 25:12; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26; Mal 2:5).

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! (Isaiah 26:3)

“I will teach all your children, and they will enjoy great peace” (Isaiah 54:13).

Jesus the prince of peace

Jesus, the Messiah, is spoken of prophetically as the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). He comes as the One who would guide feet into the ways of peace (Luke 1:79), making the way for us to have peace with God and speaks blessings of peace.

I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid. (John 14:27; also John 16:33)

Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. (John 20:19)

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20; also Romans 5:1)

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. (2 Thess.3:16)

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

“For the kingdom of God is ... a matter of ... living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

Meditation/Memory:

Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!

Those who love your instructions have great peace and do not stumble. Psalm 119:165 (NLT)

John 14:27 (NLT)

I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.

John 16:33 (NLT)

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

Romans 5:1-2 (NLT)

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

Colossians 3:15

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Numbers 6:24-26 (NIV)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Philippians. 4:6-7 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NLT)

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity.

Questions and Activities

1. What does *inner* peace mean?
2. What does Psalm 91 mean to you?
3. Write a verse that shows that Jesus *gives* us peace, (John 14:27 or John 16:33)
4. What does it mean to have peace with God? (Romans 5:1 and Ephesians 2:12-13)
5. Why does a person with faith in Jesus feel secure?
6. What can we do in times of great distress? (Choose a Bible verse that would help you in such a time.)
7. In Matthew 5:9, Jesus said "Blessed are the peace makers." How we can we be a peace maker in this world?
8. Having peace doesn't always mean lack of trouble. Read John 16:33. How can we have peace, despite trouble in this world?

God is Faithful

I am the Lord I change not (Malachi 3:6).

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

God is faithful in that He never changes. His truth is constant.
God wants us to be faithful and never depart from His truth.

God is faithful to His word. He keeps every promise he makes, (Prov. 30:5).

God gave the rainbow as a sign of His promise to us, (Gen. 9:8-17.)

God kept His promise to Abraham, (Gen. 15, 17 & 18).

God was faithful to Elijah when Elijah challenged his enemies: Which is the true God – God of Israel or Baal? (1 Kings 18)

God's truth doesn't change.

Our response to God's faithfulness is in our commitment to truth, which should not waver.
God wants us to obey the truth.

We are told be honest in word and character, (Prov. 20:23; Prov. 21:22)

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were faithful to God's truth, (Dan. 3)

The first of the Ten Commandments is "Worship no other god but me." (Ex. 20)

We are encouraged to be faithful to the Lord

God asks Christians to "Live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called you", (Ephesians 4:1 GNB)

So fear the Lord and serve him whole-heartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. (Joshua 24:14)

For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. (Hebrews 3:14)

Passages that show unfaithfulness or dishonesty:

The golden calf (Exodus 32)

The dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)

The word 'faithful' is used today to refer to someone who is loyal, constant, and steadfast. The Bible definition is similar: reliable, trustworthy, stable, firm and sure.

God's faithfulness means "He is totally trustworthy to keep His promises and to be completely true to all of who He is."

Faithfulness is an attribute of love.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). The God who has chosen to love, has always done so and will always do so. His character is totally reliable and inalterable. We can trust him because he has proven himself trustworthy time and time again by his constant faithfulness to his character.

The Bible repeatedly proclaims God to be faithful, steadfastly loyal, in all he does, FOREVER.

God says about himself: "Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness, (Exodus 34:6).

Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands, (Deuteronomy 7:9. See also Psalms 100:5; 119:90)

He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands, (Psalm 25:9-10).

Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds, (Psalm 36:5; See also Psalm 57:10)

For he loves us with unfailing love; the Lord's faithfulness endures forever, (Psalm 117:2; See also Psalm 146:5-6)

He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, (1Corinthians 1:9; See also 1Thes 5:23)

God remains faithful whatever our circumstances and choices are.

Sing a new song of praise to him, play skillfully on the harp, and sing with joy. For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does, (Psalm 33:3-4).

God was faithful to provide for the Israelites even when they were faithless, (Deut 2:7). God's faithfulness to his promises is a constant theme throughout the Bible.

Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created, (Psalm 119:89-90).

All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy. They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity, (Psalm 111:7-8.)

But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one, (2 Thess 3:3)

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise, (Hebrews 10:23).

I will never leave you or forsake you, (Joshua 1:5)

Meditation / Memory

Psalm 36:5 (NLT)

Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

Exodus 34:6 (NLT)

The Lord always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does. Psalm 145:13b (NLT)
Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Lamentations 3: 22-23 (NLT)

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

Deuteronomy 7:9 (NLT)

Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands.

Psalm 89:1-2 (NLT)

I will sing of the Lord's unfailing love forever! Young and old will hear of your faithfulness. Your unfailing love will last forever. Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.

Lamentations 3: 22-25 (NLT)

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.

Questions and Activity

1. What is the meaning of faithfulness?
2. How does God show his faithfulness to us?
3. How does the sign of the rainbow after the Great Flood show God's faithfulness?
4. Give two examples or people in the Bible who showed faithfulness to God.
5. What does the first commandment (of the Ten Commandments) tell us about faithfulness to God? (Exodus 20)
6. Give an example of someone in the Bible who was not faithful.
7. What do you think is the worst act of unfaithfulness to God?
8. Because God is faithful, he can be trusted. Give a Bible verse that shows that the Bible can be trusted.
9. How does God's faithfulness help us when we are going through difficult times?

God is a Judge

God's justice system is completely fair, although quite different to what most people think. God doesn't make a list of the sins a person has committed, with a rating next to each sin. He doesn't weigh up how good or bad each person has been. Instead, he judges us according to our acceptance of his truth. The requirement for entering heaven is perfection - but Jesus is the only person who has never sinned! Does that mean that no one can enter heaven? No. God has made a way. He allows us to accept the righteousness of Jesus. For those who have heard the gospel but refused to accept the gift of eternal life, he judges. On the great day of judgment, there will not only be punishment for those who have rejected, but rewards for the followers.

God always judges righteously and justly. He makes no mistakes, takes no bribes and always makes fair decisions. Everything God does is just and fair.

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. (Deut 32:4).

"The LORD is known for his justice ... the LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness. The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed" (Psalm 9:16)

Isaiah prophesied that the promised Messiah "will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked. He will wear righteousness like a belt and truth like an undergarment... He will rule with mercy and truth. He will always do what is just and be eager to do what is right" (Isaiah 11:4-5; 16:5).

Today "Judge" is the title given to a public official appointed to decide cases in a court of law, but also used for officials and those who make decisions in competitions. Moses appointed judges to help settle disputes (Ex.18:25,26) and judges had authority in Israel between the time of Joshua and the Kings. (See the book of Judges.) To judge has the idea of giving a decision or verdict.

God is clearly the ultimate judge, bringing judgement on the wicked throughout the Old Testament. (He did this in the Garden of Eden, the Great Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and judgement on the Pharaoh and the Egyptians.)

I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! (Exodus 12:12b)

Then let the heavens proclaim his justice, for God himself will be the judge. (Psalm 50:6)

Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,.. He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. (Psalm 105:5,7)

God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

God has appointed Jesus as the righteous, end-time judge. (Rev 20:11-15 and Rev 11:15-18)

For the Lord is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness. (Ps 98:9; See also Ps 7:11, Ps 9:8; 72:2; 75:2; 99:4; 96:10,13)

Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42b)

For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. (2 Co 5:10)

And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. (2 Tim 4:8)

He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. (Isaiah 11:4a)

“Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just.” Rev 16:7b

Because He is a righteous judge God exhorts his people, especially those with a role of judge, to decide righteously and justly.

You must never twist justice or show partiality. Never accept a bribe, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and corrupt the decisions of the godly. Let true justice prevail, so you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Deut 16:19-20)

(See also Deut 1:16-17, Leviticus 19:15, Is 33:15-17; Pro 31:9; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Rev 20:4; Proverbs 2:7-9)

Meditation/Memory:

Ps 98:9 (NLT)

For the Lord is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness.

Romans 2:16

And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone’s secret life.

Psalms 9:7-8 (NLT)

But the Lord reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NLT)

For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

Psalms 96:11-13 (NLT)

Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice! Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy! Let the trees of the forest rustle with

praise before the Lord, for he is coming! He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with his truth.

Acts 17:30b-31 (NLT)

...he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.

Questions and Activities

1. In order to get into Heaven, God does not judge us according to how many bad things we have done. How does he judge us?
2. What is the role of a judge?
3. Give an example in the Old Testament where God judged sin.
4. What is meant by 'the last judgement'?
5. Who will be the judge then?
6. Who will be judged?
7. God expects his people to make righteous judgements. Give an example of a judgement that you could make in everyday life.
8. How will God treat leaders who have made bad judgements?