

Studies on the character and nature of God

Year C

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



Jesus is a Friend

“Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable?” (Proverbs 20:6).

God is that “truly reliable” friend who will never let us down.

He is that “real friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24)

He is a friend who “is always loyal” in any and all circumstances (Proverbs 17:17).

Jesus is “a real friend” to us and invites us into the place of intimate friendship with him. He says, “Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you,” (John 15:12-16).

You can’t choose who your brother is; but you can choose who your friend is. It is ever so extraordinary that the God over all creation has chosen us to be his friends!

An enemy seeks to find fault with you to tear you down; a friend always stands with you, to champion and support you. But ...

“God is for us” (Rom 8:31) – as only a true friend can be. His attitude toward us is never negative, cynical, critical, nor contrary towards us. He’s on our side, always seeking the best for us. He’s a true friend.

Because he is such a reliable friend, we should pay attention to his words.

“The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense” (Proverbs 27:9).

Even when God’s counsel is corrective it is done with our highest well-being in mind.

We are taught that, “Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy” (Proverbs 27:6). If this is true with human friends, how much more so with God! He never “wounds” us casually, but only brings correction with an intent to bless us and guide us into that which will give us “a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10).

We listen carefully to a friend; we converse easily with a friend. A friend is the one with whom we share our most intimate thoughts. We feel at ease. We are comfortable when talking with our friend. That’s what our relationship with God should be like. Talk to God about anything and everything – the good, the bad and the ugly.

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7).

Many incorrectly see God as our accuser – but that is the role taken up by the enemy, (Rev 12:10), not by God. On the contrary, God stands up for you against the enemy as you come into his presence.

The bridegroom and bride relationship should be the closest of friendships. Throughout the New Testament we have images of the church as the bride, Jesus the bridegroom speaking of the relationship depth and commitment God intends for us all.

There are multiple pictures of the bride prepared and beautifully dressed for her husband in the book of Revelation. (Rev.19:7; 21:2,9; 22:17)

Friendship is a two-way commitment that takes time and effort. Jesus makes plain that friendship with him entails obeying his command to love each other the way he loved us, (John 15:12).

Hating a brother is not an option if we are to have friendship with God, (1 John 4:20).

More Bible passages on Jesus as a friend:

- Jesus is a friend of children: “Let the little children come to Me.” Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:13-16
- Jesus showed friendship to the outcasts (Luke 17:11-19; Matthew 8:1-4)
- Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:9-13)
- The Good Samaritan moved out of his comfort zone in extending friendship (Luke 10:25-37)
- Jesus is our friend. He calls us by name (John 1:43; Matt. 4:18-22; John 10:14-15)
- Jesus helped his friends (John 11)
- We can talk to Jesus as a friend (Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-13)

Meditation/Memory:

John 15:14 (NLT)

You are my friends if you do what I command.

Proverbs 17:17 (NLT)

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.

John 15:12-14 (NLT)

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

John 15:13-15 (NLT)

There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

1 John 4:20 (NLT)

If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see.

Questions and Activities

1. What character qualities do you value in a friend?
2. Which of these character qualities does God show in his friendship towards us?
3. If we are to be friends with God, what is required of us?
4. When we are friends with God, he sometimes corrects us. Give an example of this.
5. Write a verse that shows the relationship of the bridegroom (Jesus) and the bride.
6. What is the greatest act of friendship that anyone can ever offer?

God is a Person

God has the attributes of a person – an infinite divine Person – capable of giving and receiving love. Those attributes include the capacities of intellect, emotions and will – capacities without which love and relationships are not possible. We have these capacities because God made us “in his own image” (Gen 1:26-27). He made us with love, to love both God and neighbor (Mat 22:37-40; Luke 10:27-28).

Because God is a person, he WANTS relationship with every human being and pursues this.

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. (Lamentations 3:22)

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. (John 15:9)

He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (1 Peter 3:9b)

God’s desire is for us to come into his presence, to KNOW him, not just know about him. Right from the beginning God’s intention has been for us to have face to face relationship with him. We see this in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world.

Jesus–Immanuel, means ‘God with us’. The Holy Spirit has been given to *be* with us.

God’s desire for relationship provides a powerful model for how we are to be in our relationships with one another.

Love each other in the same way I have loved you. (John 15:12a)

Forgiveness is foundational in relationship. God forgives us: (See Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9; Colossians 1:13-14.)

We must forgive others: (See Matthew 6:14-15,18:21-35; Mark 11:25; Colossians 3:13.)

The Bible gives us many practical guidelines for relating to others:

- Family relationships: marriage Eph.5:21-33; parent/child Eph.6:1-4; Deut.5:16;
- Relationships with one another: Proverbs 1:8; John 15:12-14; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7(Love); Ephesians 4:2-3; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:7,11-12; 1 Timothy 5:4.
- A father’s love and forgiveness: parable of the Lost Son Luke 15:11-24; love for Israel Hosea 11
- God’s desire for unity between brothers: Ps.133.

Because God is a person, he enables us to have a personal relationship with him. There is a difference between religion and relationship with God. Religion focuses on good works as the way to reach God. However, through faith in Jesus Christ, we can have a personal relationship with Him, and know him in a personal way. This makes the Christian faith different to any other faith in the world. Our actions then come out of our love for Him, and not out of a sense of duty to do certain things.

Meditation/Memory:

2 Corinthians 6:16c (NLT)

“I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

John 15:9 (NLT)

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

1 John 4:16

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Philippians 3:8-9 (NLT)

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NLT)

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT)

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Questions and Activities

1. What are some of the attributes of God that show that he is a person?
2. How is this different from other religions?
3. God wants us to KNOW him, not just about him. What does this mean?
4. Write a Bible verse that shows that God is FOR us and not against us.
5. God's relationship with us provides an example of how we should relate to others. Give an example.

God is our Father

Jesus calls God “Father” 189 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This may not seem unusual for those of us who have grown up in a Christian context where it is quite common to refer to God as Father. However, this form of address was anything but usual in the time of Jesus.

In the whole of the Old Testament, God is referred to as Father on only 19 occasions. Jesus refers to God as Father in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5-7) 17 times, and in John chapter 14, Jesus refers to God as Father many times.

In the New Testament, when praying or addressing the disciples, Jesus calls God ‘Father’ many times, but he never uses it when addressing the religious leaders. Instead, he uses the terms ‘Lord’ and ‘God’.

This was the reason: For the Pharisees, to address God in an intimate way by calling him ‘Father’, was detestable to them. Indeed, they considered it to be blasphemous and punishable by death (John 5:18).

Jesus’ choice of this word was a deliberate break with the traditional society of His day. He was not using the culturally acceptable way to refer to God. He wanted to show his disciples that God was a personal God, who is like a father to us.

John writes: See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don’t recognize that we are God’s children because they don’t know him. (John 3:1 NLT)

He loves, protects, cares for, and guides a family of redeemed sons and daughters who put their trust in Him. And He has eternally existed in a perfect relationship of love and oneness with the other two unique Persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand. (Isaiah 64:8)

For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:18)

When the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. (Galatians 4:4-7)

God is a compassionate, loving father to those in need.

(In Hebrew 'Compassion' means to love, love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate, have tender affection.)

The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. (Psalm 103:13)

God is a father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families. (Psalm 68:5-6a and Deut.10:18-19)

The Book of Hosea expresses the deep, compassionate love of the Father for his wayward child: Israel. (Hosea 11:1-8)

Jesus told stories to show how the Father is filled with joy when His children return to Him: The Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son. (Luke 15:4-7 and Luke 15:32)

As children we are to reflect His character – to be loving and compassionate

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. (Ephesians 5:1-2a)

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

By calling God his Father Jesus not suggesting that God is somehow more masculine than He is feminine. To view it as a narrow, sexist terminology is a major misunderstanding. Jesus uses the term Father to express to us a new possibility of relationship with God, who is the Supreme Person wanting to enter into friendship with us. This possibility is equally available to men and women, Jews and gentiles, slave and free. It transcends all gender distinctions, racial divisions and social stratus. The good news is that Jesus came to make it possible for his Father to become our Father. This intimacy is offered to all. To those who desire such a relationship the Spirit of God is given to them. "And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rom 8:15-16).

Meditation/Memory:

1 John 3:1a (NLT)

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

Ephesians 5:1-2a (NLT)

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.

Isaiah 64:8 (NLT)

And yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.

Psalm 103:13-14 (NLT)

The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NLT)

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

1 John 3:1-2 (NLT)

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

Psalm 68:5-6 (NLT)

Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NLT)

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

Questions and activities

1. When did Jesus refer to God as 'father'?
2. Why didn't he use this term for God when talking to the Pharisees?
3. What qualities of an ideal earthly father does God have?
4. Who are the three persons of the Trinity?
5. Explain Galatians 4:4-7 in your own words.
6. Find a verse from Hosea that shows God's compassion towards Israel.
7. What had they done wrong?
8. Choose either the story of the lost sheep or the lost son, and explain why the story is an example of God's compassion.
9. Explain how a Christian can show compassion.
10. What would you say to a person who says that the Bible is using sexist terminology by using the word 'father' and not 'mother' for God.

Write a response to "God is our Father". How does this affect your personal life? How does this knowledge strengthen your relationship with God?

God is Forgiving

Jesus showed us how to forgive. There is never an account where he would not grant forgiveness to someone who sought it. In his mercy he offers forgiveness to all who are willing to accept it.

He extended forgiveness to the sinful woman who washed His feet with her hair and her tears:

Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.” The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?” (Luke 7:47-50)

On the cross he said “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”. (Luke 23:34.)

Jesus taught about forgiveness. After teaching his disciples to pray, he said, “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins”. (Matt 6:14-15.)

Parables that teach about forgiveness:

- The parable of the unforgiving servant. (Matt 18:21-35)
- The story of the lost son. (Luke 15:11-24)

Paul also teaches that we are to extend to others the forgiveness we received from Jesus:

Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:13 See also Eph.4:31-32)

Unlike us, God is slow to anger.

He revealed himself to Moses as: “Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy:

I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. (Exodus 34:6)

He promises forgiveness to the repentant:

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Forgiving others

Extending forgiveness to those who have hurt us does not mean we are saying “What you did is OK”. It also doesn’t mean that we immediately forget what they did. It is a decision we make to not hold them accountable and to release them into God’s hands. We need to ask God to help us make this choice, to fill us with his love for the person and to heal our hearts.

“Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?’ ‘No, not seven times,’ Jesus replied, ‘but seventy times seven!’” (Matthew 18:21-22 NLT).

Forgiveness is rarely a one-time event. So how often do you have to keep releasing your right to get even? Until you stop feeling the hurt — then you’ll know you’ve forgiven that person.

God showed forgiveness over and over again to the Israelites:

Nehemiah 9:16-22 tells of Israel’s disobedience and sin, then says “you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love” (verse 17).

Psalms 107 tells how God forgave Israel over and over again.

See also Psalms 25:11; 86:5; 103:2-5,11-12; 130:3-4.

Forgiveness is at the core of the Gospel, made possible because Jesus became a man and died; without forgiveness we cannot be saved from death.

... because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and honor.” Yes, by God’s grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9b)

He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. (Ephesians 1:7)

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:9)

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

Meditation/Memory:

Psalm 86:5 (NLT)

O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help.

Ephesians 4:32b (NLT)

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Nehemiah 9:17 (NLT)

But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love.

1 John 1:8-9 (NLT)

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Ephesians 1:6-7 (NLT)

So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Psalms 103:2-3 (NLT)

Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

Questions and Activities

1. To be forgiven by Jesus, what is required of us?
2. Give an example from the New Testament where Jesus showed forgiveness.
3. What is the consequence of NOT forgiving others? (Matt 6:14-15.)
4. Who showed forgiveness in the parable of the lost son?
5. In Exodus 34:6 God tells us that he forgives iniquity, rebellion, and sin. What must a person do to receive this forgiveness? See 2 Chronicles 7:14.
6. If someone has hurt you and you have forgiven them, what would you do if they keep hurting you?
7. Give an example from the Old Testament where God forgave his people.
8. What does Jesus do for us in addition to forgiving our sins? (Psalm 103:2-3)
9. Explain the meaning of "forgiveness is at the core of the Gospel."

God is Our Righteousness

For the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy, (Rom 14:17).

God's perfect righteousness contrasts with our unrighteousness. The Scriptures affirm that "No one is righteous— not even one" (Romans 3:10), but "The LORD is righteous in everything he does" (Psalm 145:17). Indeed, God's righteousness "reaches to the highest heavens... Who can compare with you, O God?" (Psalm 71:19).

When we consider this aspect of God's character, we are confronted with our great need for his intervention in our life, a need which is met at the cross of Jesus. This Jesus is the one who "God presented ... as the sacrifice for sin. ... This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ... God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus." (Romans 3:25-26).

He is not only righteous; He is our RIGHTEOUSNESS! He makes us righteous. This name is His covenant commitment to make us innocent, faultless, right with Him, able to share His divine nature! (2 Peter 1:4)

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ, (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin, (1 Corinthians 1:30).

"I am the gate for the sheep. ... Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures, (John 10:7,9).

Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool, (Isaiah 1:18)

We are to be in right relationship firstly with God and then with others.

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need, (Matthew 6:33).

Memory/Meditation

Psalm 145:17 (NLT)

The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.

Romans 3:22-23 (NLT)

We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Jeremiah 23:5-6a (NLT)

“For the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. And this will be his name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’”

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (NLT)

So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Psalms 89:13-14

Powerful is your arm! Strong is your hand! Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.

Romans 1:16-17 (NLT)

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

Questions and activities

1. Look up the dictionary definition of righteousness.
2. Choose a Bible verse that tells us about God’s righteousness and write it.
3. How does God’s righteousness compare with the righteousness of the human race?
4. How can sinners be made righteous?
5. God is not only righteous, but he is OUR righteousness. What does this mean?
6. Jesus is the gate to the sheepfold. What is the sheepfold?
7. What is the key to being in right relationship with others?
8. What can we expect when we expect God’s righteousness in our lives? (Romans 4:17 and Matthew 6:33)

Read the parable: Matthew 22:1-14. Who is invited to the wedding banquet? The answer is...everyone who hears the Gospel. But not everyone accepts the invitation. Some think they don’t need to accept. They think they are good enough without Jesus. These people are ‘self-righteous’. They think they are righteous but they are not really righteous at all. The Bible tells us that no one is righteous on their own. We can only be made righteous by asking Jesus to be righteous for us. When we do this, we become his “chosen ones”.

Write a response to “God is our righteousness”.

How should we live as Christians? Can we do whatever we like and say that’s OK, because Jesus has covered my sin?

God is All-Present

Omnipresent: to say that God is omnipresent is to say that God is present everywhere.

When we say that God is omnipresent it means that ALL of God (not just part of him), is fully present in all places at all times at the same time. No place in the creation is absent from the presence of God and yet he is distinct from the creation which he has made and which he fully occupies. The “how” of this is beyond our finite capacity as humans to comprehend. We in contrast, can only be in one place at a time. We cannot become omnipresent.

The psalmist asks, “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.” (Psalm 139:7-10).

God asks “Am I a God who is only close at hand?” says the Lord. “No, I am far away at the same time. Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?” says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:23-24).

Because God is everywhere present, “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable” (Hebrews 4:13). Nothing we do is ever hidden from the presence of God.

This inescapable presence can be horrifying to the sinner when he realizes that what he has chosen to do in secret was in fact done in front of God. But to the redeemed, God’s omnipresence is a source of constant comfort and strength. As Jesus said, “be sure of this: I am with you always” (Mat 28:20), “... where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.” (Mat 18:20) and he promises us “another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth” (Joh 14:16-17).

There is no room for fear of being left alone or unseen by God. He is Immanuel, which means “God is with us” (Matthew 1:24), not only in the geographical sense, but also in the intimate, relational, personal-commitment sense. He will not abandon us; he will not forsake us. With great depth of feeling, God says, “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” (Isa 49:15-16)

God's presence is continuous throughout all of creation, though it may not be revealed in the same way at the same time to people everywhere. He may be manifestly present in one situation, while He may not reveal that He is present in another circumstance in some other area.

God is present in every aspect of the natural order of things, in every manner, time and place.

Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers. Who else knows the weight of the earth Isaiah 40:12

He displays his power in the whirlwind and the storm. The billowing clouds are the dust beneath his feet. (Nahum 1:3b)

The Lord is watching everywhere, keeping his eye on both the evil and the good. Prov 15:3

The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. (Hebrews 1:3a)

God is actively present in different ways in every event in history as guide of human affairs:

You destroyed them, (the kings of the earth), like the mighty ships of Tarshish, shattered by a powerful east wind. (Psalm 48:7)

King David says in Psalm 16:8 "I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me."

Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. (Daniel 5:5)

Meditation/Memory:

Jeremiah 23:24 (NLT)

Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" says the Lord.

Matthew 28:20b (NLT)

And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

23:23-24 (NLT)

Am I a God who is only close at hand?" says the Lord. "No, I am far away at the same time. Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" says the Lord. Jeremiah

John 14:16-17a (NLT)

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.

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.

Hebrews 4:12-13

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. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

Questions and activities

1. What is the meaning of omnipresent?
2. What does this mean for people who want to hide from God?
3. What does this mean for people who love God?
4. Give a Bible verse that tells us that God is in control of the weather.
5. Read the story of the writing on the wall from Daniel 5. How did God show his presence, and why did he do this?

Write a response to “God is All-Present”. How does it make you feel to know that God is with you all the time, sees everything you do, and know everything about you?

God is All-Knowing

The word 'omniscient' means that God knows everything! But God is not a merely a gigantic source of data and information. He is not a mechanized computer system. He is a person and as such he has all the capacities of an extraordinary intellect. God thinks, imagines, plans, reasons, analyzes and remembers. In other words, God's intellect is dynamic.

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

Thoughts are much more than just data. God thinks! "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11).

Because God thinks and plans, we can enter into a dialogue with God through prayer.

"I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one. So now I will pour out my fury on them..." (Ezekiel 22:30-31a)

In this passage, God wanted to interact with an intercessor so that his plans of judgment could be changed to plans of mercy. How tragic that God did not find anyone to dialogue with him on behalf of the nation.

With great passion, God reaches out to a wayward people, "O my people, what have I done to you? What have I done to make you tired of me? Answer me!" (Mic 6:3). God was urging them... as He urges us... "Turn to me. Speak to me. Come and dialogue with me! I want to be intimate with you. I want to relate to you. Please respond!" The people did not respond then.

Everywhere in creation there is evidence of God's intelligence. He has chosen to give us revelation about himself in the things he has made. (Romans 1:20). Take note of the complexity of DNA, and the mathematical Fibonacci sequence of patterns, which are evident in the creation. This sequence of numbers is responsible for the existence of the spiral shell, flower petals, the musical scale and much more. It was discovered by an Italian mathematician, Fibonacci. See:

<https://www.mathsisfun.com/numbers/fibonacci-sequence.html> and

<https://beaconmedia.com.au/bm/images/docs/God%20and%20mathematics.pdf> and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=085KSyQVb-U>

What is the difference between human intelligence and God's intelligence?

The intelligence of the intelligent will disappear. (Isaiah 29:14)

No one can measure the depths of his understanding. (Isaiah 40:12-28)

Human pride will be humbled, and human arrogance will be brought down. (Isaiah 2:17)

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! (Romans 11: 33-36)

The Lord has intimate knowledge of US. (Psalm 139).

God is not a machine that we have available to use when we want to, that we can turn God on and off at our convenience. Perhaps we have not been aware that God is genuinely a person, with thoughts and concerns, who is pursuing us, wanting to engage with us, longing to reason with us and enter into a dialogue with us. Let us see him for who he is, and today enter into his presence in awe.

Memory/Meditation

Isaiah 40:28b (NLT)

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

Luke 2:52 (NLT)

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NLT)

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Romans 11: 33-36 (NLT)

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

Isaiah 40:28 (NLT)

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

Questions and activities

1. What is the meaning of 'omniscient'?
2. Because God thinks and plans, we can enter into a dialogue with him through prayer. How is this different to the gods of other faiths?
3. Research the Fibonacci sequence of numbers in mathematics. What is the Golden ratio?
4. What is the difference between human intelligence and God's intelligence?

God is Just

Our idea of 'just' is based on our behaving according to what is morally right and fair. Justice is the quality of being fair and reasonable.

Justice is an attribute of love. A loving person will be just. Justice requires that the due penalty of a crime be paid. In most circumstances the application of justice runs exactly counter to the application of mercy. Only through the cross of Christ are both justice and mercy perfectly blended. Only through the cross is sin paid for while at the same time the sinner is forgiven. This amazing combination of justice and mercy is celebrated by Paul in this passage:

For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus. Rom 3:25-26.

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! Deut.32:4 (Moses' Song, repeated in Rev. 15:3)

For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does. He loves whatever is just and good; Psalm 33:4-5a (Also Psalm 11:7, 99:4)

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for him! (Isaiah 30:18)

For I, the Lord, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. (Isaiah 61:8a)

But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who demonstrates unflinching love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. (Jeremiah 9:24)

To understand God's justice, we must understand his impartiality.

God shows no favoritism (Matthew 22:16; Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; 1Pe 1:17). God corrects those who do show favoritism. (Mal 2:9).

The Old Testament states, "It is wrong to show favoritism" (Prov.24:23).

Similarly, in the New Testament we read, "I solemnly command you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the highest angels to obey these instructions without taking sides or showing favoritism to anyone." (1Tim 5:21)

God's total impartiality assures us of his integrity and fairness of his every decision.

The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings (Psalm 145:17 NRSV).

This means that he will never give anyone less than deserve (although he longs to give everyone better than they deserve).

You see the conduct of all people, and you give them what they deserve. (Jeremiah.32:19b)

No one will ever be able to accuse God of being dealt with unjustly; God's impartiality will stand forever unchallenged.

God cares about justice for the poor and oppressed, wanting his people to fight for justice.

The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. (Psalm 103:6)

But I know the Lord will help those they persecute; he will give justice to the poor. (Psalm 140:12)

Judge fairly, and show mercy and kindness to one another. Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. And do not scheme against each other. (Zechariah 7: 9-10)

God expects his people to decide justly as He does.

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. (Deut.16:19; Leviticus 19:15, Isaiah 33:15-17)

Always use honest weights and measures, so that you may enjoy a long life in the land the Lord your God is giving you. (Deut. 25:15)

Proverbs are to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair. (Prov. 1:3)

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Jesus speaking against injustice: "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things." (Matthew 23:23)

Memory/Meditation:

Deuteronomy 32:4 (NLT)

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!

Psalms 89:14 (NLT)

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.

Rev.15:3-4 (NLT)

Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed.

Micah 6:8 (NLT)

No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Jeremiah 9:24 (NLT)

But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!

Romans3:25-26 (NLT)

For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Questions and activities

1. What is the meaning of justice?
2. Choose and write a Bible verse that shows that God is just.
3. What does 'impartial mean?
4. Choose and write a Bible verse that shows God's impartiality.
5. If God is impartial, what would he say to us about favoritism?
6. Give an example in this world, where people are, or have been, treated unjustly. (Think about people under Communist governments.)
7. What should the Christian response be to helping the poor, in cases where poverty is no fault of their own, but brought about by injustice? (Think about people who are victims of war.)
8. God wants Christians to stand up for those who are treated unjustly. Give an example of how we could do this. (Think about people who have fewer privileges based on of their race, beliefs, their disability or their lack of voice - as in the case of the unborn.)
9. Who did Jesus rebuke for acting unjustly?

God is Humble

Matthew 20:20-23; 26

The mother of James and John, (two of Jesus disciples), came to Jesus with her sons, and kneeling down, asked a favour of him:

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." (She was talking about heaven).

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus replied. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" (Jesus was referring to his suffering.)

Jesus said, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave."

What does it mean to be great in God's kingdom?... a singer? a preacher?... a youth leader?... a helper of the poor? To God, all these jobs have equal importance. God regards us as great when we work for him without feeling that we are more important than someone else. A test of greatness is our willingness to do the unrecognized jobs.

Jesus, although a King, was a servant. He was born in a stable, lived without luxury and gave of himself without reward. He washed the disciples' feet, served at the last supper and died without reputation. As a follower, Jesus wants us to put others first and self last. For those who do, he will reward with eternal riches.

Jesus, the humble servant:

- Jesus was born in humble circumstances (Luke 2)
- Jesus, the Son of God demonstrated His Father's meekness and humility by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. (Matthew 21:1-11)
- Jesus was baptized by John – an act of humility (Matt. 3:13-17).

Jesus allowed the Jews to honour Him as king, and obeyed God His Father, knowing that He was in reality riding to His death on a cross. He knew that He must die in order to rise again and demonstrate His power over sin and death.

Jesus has a meek and humble spirit. He taught His disciples this by example and in parables. Read the parable of the marriage feast: "Come up higher, friend." (Luke 14:10)

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:5) Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth". The Biblical meaning of meek is gentleness of spirit, or humility. Paul told us "to live a life worthy of the calling that we have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:1-2).

Victory over the world is gained by having a meek and humble spirit:

Proverbs 25:6-7 - He who tries to honour himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be honoured.

Jesus taught that humility is being willing to be known for who you really are.

That means our lives are completely open before God and men. Humility is not wearing a mask, and not trying to pretend to be something we are not. Humility is accepting ourselves for who we are, and seeing ourselves as God sees us.

Humility is therefore NOT putting yourself down. It's NOT trying to make yourself look better in front of others. It's simply being thankful to God for the way he made you.

Jesus' teaching on humility:

Matthew 18:3; Luke 9:17; "Be as little children."

The rich man and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)

Don't make yourself important (Luke 14:7-11)

A servant of all (Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45)

The Cost of Following Jesus

As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head." (Luke 9:57 – 58)

Meditation/ Memory

Mark 10:43

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.

Luke 13:30 (NLT)

Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then.

Matthew 23:11-12 (NLT)

The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Proverbs 25:6-7

He who tries to honour himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be honoured.

1 Peter 5:5-6 NLT

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.

Philippians 2:11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ who being in very nature, God, did not consider equality with God, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross

Questions and Activities

1. What did the mother of James and John want for her two sons?
2. Why could Jesus not grant her this request?
3. If we want to be first in God's kingdom, what should we do?
4. Give two examples of how Jesus showed humility while on earth.
5. In the story of Jesus and the children, what lesson was Jesus teaching the disciples?
6. Putting yourself down in front of others are not showing humility. Why not?
7. What is the opposite to humility?
8. Give an example of proud behaviour.

God is a Warrior

God is referred to as a warrior many times in the scriptures, and always the victor.

The Lord is a warrior; Yahweh is his name, (Exodus 15:3).

The Lord your God is going ahead of you. He will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt, (Deut 1:30. Also Exo 14:14, 1Chr 20:17, 32:7-8, Isa 42:13, Jer 20:1, Zep 3:17)

The Lord will march forth like a mighty hero; he will come out like a warrior, full of fury. He will shout his battle cry and crush all his enemies, (Isaiah 42:13).

In your majesty, ride out to victory, defending truth, humility, and justice. Go forth to perform awe-inspiring deeds! (Psalm 45:4)

But the LORD stands beside me like a great warrior. Before him my persecutors will stumble. They cannot defeat me. They will fail and be thoroughly humiliated, (Jeremiah 20:11).

In the Old Testament God regularly fought for His people, winning impossible battles (Gideon and Hezekiah), sending hornets (Exodus 23:28), hail (Exodus 9), confusion (Joshua 10:10). Usually, the people just had to show up to the battle, trust God, do whatever He asked them to do, then they would see victory.

In Jesus ministry on earth, he overcame Satan by offering LIFE. He healed, freed and raised people from the dead.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full, (John 10:10).

Jesus is a victorious conqueror over the enemy and death, enabling us to live in victory.

Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world, (John 16:33).

“Death has been swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ... But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Corinthians 15:55,57.) See also Hosea 13:14, Romans 8:35-37, Isaiah 25:8.

Jesus will return as a warrior king, His eyes like blazing fire, with crowns on his head and his word like a sharp sword. He will be riding a white horse, ready for battle, with all the armies of heaven following him, unstoppable and unable to be defeated! (Rev 19:11-16) This return will not be a secret event, it will be the most amazing, incredible, powerful, overwhelming, startling, remarkable, astonishing, marvelous, wonderful and astounding event in human history!

On the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you, (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war, (Rev 19:11).

The enemy

Paul identifies the enemy as evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, mighty powers in this dark world, ... evil spirits in the heavenly places, (Ephesians 6:12).

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, (1 Peter 5:8)

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8b)

His people are warriors.

These days we may not fight physical battles but we all fight and wrestle against temptations, the flesh, the world and unseen forces of darkness.

Ephesians 6:14-18 describes the armor – the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of readiness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation. The weapons are the sword of His word and prayer. God gives us these to fight in the battles.

Keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls, (2 Peter 1:11b).

God wants us to recognize our need to rely on HIM as the One who fights for us.

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil, (Ephesians 6:10-11).

The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you. But the Lord watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love. ... We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield, (Psalm 33:16-18, 20 and also Psalm 9:9; 28:7; 35:1-3; 37:39-40; 62:6).

In the Old Testament God's people were commanded to war against and destroy peoples and nations who would not accept God's truth, living evil, harmful lives. However, in the New Testament God's people are instructed to fight the ideas, rather than the persons.

God's people use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons. There are many false beliefs in the world that can deceive people. We need to ask God for the gift of discernment and battle against false beliefs. "We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ", (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Memory/Meditation verses

Psalm 33:20 (NLT)

We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.

Exodus 15:2-3 (NLT)

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him—my father's God, and I will exalt him! The Lord is a warrior; Yahweh is his name!

Ephesians 6:10-11 (NLT)

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Revelation 19:11-12a (NLT)

Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NLT)

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

Questions and activities

1. What is a 'victor'?
2. Give two examples from the Old Testament where God caused his people to be victorious in battle.
3. How did Jesus overcome the works of Satan when he was on earth?
4. What does Jesus give us victory over?
5. In the description of Jesus returning as king in Rev 19:11-16, which images stand out to you as being powerful and victorious?
6. How does the Bible describe the devil?
7. What kinds of battles do people mainly fight today?
8. How does the armour of God help us to fight against the enemy? List the parts of the armour and what they are for. Now list the weapons and what they are used for.
9. Give some examples of 'worldly desires' in 2 Peter 1:11, that might give ground to the enemy having influence in our life.

God is Great and Mighty

The God of the Bible is both infinite and personal. False gods of other faiths are not. God is so big that, as Solomon prayed, “even the highest heavens cannot contain you” (1Ki 8:27) and yet so personal that “the high and lofty one who lives in eternity” also lives “with those whose spirits are contrite and humble” (Isa 57:15).

Infinite means without limitation of any kind. Personal means having the essential qualities of a personal being – intellect, will, emotions – which give the capacity to form meaningful relationships; to give and receive love. Because we are created in God’s image, we can show certain personal attributes that God has, because he has given them to us. (Gen 1:26-27). These are attributes such as love, joy, peace and wisdom. But there are some attributes that we do not have. We cannot perform miracles in our own strength. We do not live outside of time. In this we are not like God because we are created, and God is not. Also, we have many limitations as his creatures.

We do not have an adequate vocabulary to describe God’s infiniteness. “Great” is one word that points us in the right direction along with huge, mighty, awesome, glorious, enormous, wonderful, incomparable, extraordinary. When we celebrate the great infinite God, we celebrate that he is in a class by himself. There is no one else like him.

Passages in which God’s greatness is exalted include:

Ex.18:11; Deut. 7:21; 10:17-18, 21; 1 Chron.16:25; 2 Chron.2:5; Neh 1:5-6; 8:6; 9:32-33; Ps.48:1; 71:19; 77:13-15; 86:10; 95:3; 96:4; 135:5; Jer.32:17-20; Dan.9:4.

For a reminder of how great our God is, go outside on a clear night, look up, and start counting! Then remember he put each star in place and has named every single one of the trillions of the stars in the heavens! God inhabits eternity (Isaiah. 57:15), measures the universe by the span of His hand (Isaiah 40:12), and spoke it all into existence! (Gen. 1:14-19) How Great is our God?

God’s greatness is described as unfathomable, unmeasurable, uncontainable (2 Chron.2:5-6; Job 5:9; 9:10; 37:5; Psalm 145:3) Yet we are also told “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3 He does want to reveal His greatness to us. (Eph.1:17-21, Deut 3:24)

In the Old Testament God is called “the great and awesome God...” Neh.1:5, 9:32, Daniel 9:4, “great King” Ps.47:2;48:2; 95:3; Mal 1:14; Matt.5:35

John gives us a picture of the greatness of God among the nations in Revelation 15:2-4.

Much is said about God’s GREAT love and mercy.

Psalm 17:7 Show the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes.

Also Numbers 14:19; Psalm 69:13; 89:1; 106:44-46; 107:43; Lam. 3:22; Neh.9:5; Eph.2:4-5

Memory/Meditation

Psalm 145:3-4 (NLT)

Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness.

Psalm 95:2b-4

Let us sing psalms of praise to him. For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all gods. He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains. (NLT)

Psalm 77:13-14 (NLT)

O God, your ways are holy. Is there any god as mighty as you? You are the God of great wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations.

Psalm 86:8-10 (NLT)

No pagan god is like you, O Lord. None can do what you do! All the nations you made will come and bow before you, Lord; they will praise your holy name. For you are great and perform wonderful deeds. You alone are God.

Psalm 95:1-7 (NLT)

Come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him.

For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all gods. He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains. The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.

Psalm 96:4-6 (NLT)

Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the Lord made the heavens! Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.

1 Chron.16:23-25 (NLT)

Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods.

Psalm 96:1-6 (NLT)

Sing a new song to the Lord! Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Sing to the Lord; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols,

but the Lord made the heavens! Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.

1 Chronicles 16:23-29 (NLT)

All you people of the earth, sing to the Lord. Day after day tell about how he saves us. Tell the nations about his glory. Tell all people about the wonderful things he has done. The Lord is great. He is really worthy of praise. People should have respect for him as the greatest God of all. All of the gods of the nations are like their statues. They can't do anything. But the Lord made the heavens. Glory and majesty are all around him. Strength and joy can be seen in the place where he lives. Praise the Lord, all you nations. Praise the Lord for his glory and strength. Praise the Lord for the glory that belongs to him.

Questions and activities

1. God is infinite. What does this mean?
2. God is personal. What does this mean to you?
3. How does the true God of the Bible compare to false gods?
4. Because we are created in God's image, we can show certain attributes of his character. Which aspects are these?
5. Which attributes of God's nature can we never have?
6. Choose and write six words that describe God's greatness.
7. Today we often use the word 'awesome'. What does it mean when the Bible calls God an awesome God?
8. Choose and write a Bible verse about God's great love.

Write a response to "God is great".

How does your understanding of God's greatness help you in your personal life?

God Our Teacher

It is very clear throughout scripture that God's desire is to teach us His ways, so that we can walk with Him. In Job 36:22 we are told God is all-powerful. Who is a teacher like him?

The various words used for 'teach' mean to instruct, train, disciple, give understanding, explain. Teaching is far more than giving a lecture. It includes helping the person to understand something through discussion and example.

As a model teacher, God is a question-asker. Question-asking is good for it develops thinking skills and helps us to solve problems. God asks 75 questions in the book of Job. Jesus asks 315 questions in the four Gospels.

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)

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow." (Isaiah 48:17)

God taught all generations and involved parents in the teaching process.

You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength,.. (Psalm 8:1)

O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood, and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do. (Psalm 71:16)

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

Repeat them [God's commands] again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. (Deut 6:7)

He commanded our ancestors to teach them [God's instructions] to their children, so the next generation might know them—even the children not yet born—and they in turn will teach their own children. So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. (Psalm 78:5-7; also v.1-4)

In the Gospels we encounter Jesus as the Teacher. More than 60 times we are told that Jesus taught or is a teacher. In Luke 19:47-8 we read that he taught in the temple every day with people eager to listen to his words. He taught on the side of a road, at the temple, in houses, on a mountain, in a boat, in synagogues and out in fields. He used teaching methods that helped people understand God's ways, yet knew that it took revelation for his listeners to grasp what he was saying. (Mat 16:17)

Jesus taught truth, using the phrase "I tell you the truth" over 60 times in the Gospels. John writes that "the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17 NIV)

Even Pharisees acknowledged "[You] truly teach the way of God." (Mark 12:14b).

Jesus taught with wisdom and understanding that caused astonishment (Mat 13:54, 22:33). He taught with authority and with power confirming that the words that flowed from him came from God (Mar 1:22,27), even saying that if men obeyed his teaching they would be set free. (John 8:31-32)

The Holy Spirit is also involved in the ministry of teaching. Jesus says that “the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you” (John 14:26), and promises when believers are brought to trial, “the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said.” (Luke 12:12)

The Holy Spirit helps us discern what is TRUTH and what is a lie.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. (John 16:13a)

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (1Tim 4:1).

Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. (Matthew 7:15 NLT)

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the things of God:

The Holy Spirit led Philip to a man who was reading Isaiah 53 and didn't understand it - Philip was able to bring understanding of Jesus. (Read the whole story Acts 8:26-39.)

God longs for us to be teachable. He lovingly using both difficult circumstances and the consequences of disobedience to teach us.

The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.” (Psalm 32:8)

Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more. (Prov 9:8)

Meditation/Memory:

Job 36:22 (NLT)

God is all-powerful. Who is a teacher like him?

Psalms 32:8 (NLT)

The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.”

Isaiah 54:13

I will teach all your children, and they will enjoy great peace.

John 8:31-32 (NLT)

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” John

Psalm 86:11 (NLT)

Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you.

Psalm 119:65-8 (NLT)

I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge. I used to wander off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word. You are good and do only good; teach me your decrees.

John 14:25,26 (NLT)

I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

Questions and Activities

1. Make a list of the qualities you would want to have in a good teacher.
2. How do you like to be taught: lectures, discussion, pictures, stories?
3. Why is asking questions a good way of teaching?
4. Think of ways in which Jesus taught the people. Why were the parables an excellent example of a way to teach?
5. What does God say about the way in which children should be taught?
6. In Acts 8:26-29, what was the role of the Holy Spirit in the Ethiopian man’s conversion to Christ?
7. In Matthew 7:15 Jesus spoke about wolves in sheep’s clothing, coming to deceive his followers. What is the best way to know whether something is true, or a lie?
8. What does it mean to be ‘teachable’?
9. God sometimes teaches us life lessons when we go astray. Which parable is an example of this? (Luke 15:11-32). How did the son learn the hard way?

God is with us

(God is incarnate: He came to us in human form.)

God became flesh, God took on a human nature and became a man in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So the Word became human and made his home among us. (John 1:14a)

It was prophesied in the Old Testament that a Saviour would come to live with us, his name being 'Immanuel', which means "God with us."

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, [for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. 17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. (Colossians 1:15-16)

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)

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. (Colossians 2:9)

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them". (2 Corinthians 5:19)

The gospel of John begins with the "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; see also v.3-4,14)

Psalms 33:6 says God's Word created the universe, and in Psalm 107:20, God "sent out his word and healed...". Just as we reveal ourselves to others through what we say, so God reveals himself to his creation through his eternal word. God showed us himself by the Word that was made flesh and lived among us. Jesus, the one who was called "the Word" said "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!" (See John 14:1-11)

John 1:14 speaks about how Christ made his home among us. In the Old Testament God's presence was in a tent-tabernacle now in Jesus, God was living in a human 'tent'!

Perhaps one of the most amazing passages which shows the self-sacrificing cost of the incarnation is where Paul speaks of Jesus: "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human

form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8).

In what ways was Jesus fully human?

- the all-powerful God became a baby, totally dependent on his young, teen-age mother.
- the all-present God became like all other human beings, limited to a body.
- the all-knowing God had to learn a language like every other human child.

At the same time, Jesus was fully God.

Jesus gave up his position in Heaven, choosing to become a servant, and to live with us on earth. Instead of demanding that we serve him, he did all he could to serve us.

Jesus' servant-hearted example is to be imitated by his followers.

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." (Phil 2:5).

During the first 300 or so years of Christianity there was much debate over Jesus being both fully man and fully God. The issue was addressed by a group of church leaders called the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD who stated "for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man". (Nicene Creed)

Christians believe in Christ's bodily resurrection. Indeed, Paul declares that this is the cornerstone of our faith (1Co 15:12-19). But a bodily resurrection means that Jesus still has a body - an amazing resurrected one, but a body none the less.

The resurrected Jesus says to his surprised disciples, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have". (Luke 24:39 NASB)

When he ascends to heaven in bodily form, angels declare, "... someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!" (Acts 1:11)

As Stephen is dying a martyr's death, he cries out, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!" (Acts 7:56)

Three decades after the resurrection, Paul wrote – in the present tense, "For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity —the man Christ Jesus". (1Timothy 2:5)

In Revelation, John never describes the Father or the Spirit in any bodily language, but he does describe the resurrected Jesus with many bodily metaphors:

- "someone like the Son of Man" (Rev 1:13-16; 14:14)
- "a Lamb" (Rev 5:6,8,12-14; 6:1,3,5,7,9,12,16; 7:9-10,14,17; 8:1; 12:11; 13:8,11)
- "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5)
- a warrior "named Faithful and True ... King of all kings and Lord of all lords ... riding the white horse" (Rev 19:11-16,21).

When Jesus chose to take on bodily form, (incarnation), he made a choice to maintain his bodily form eternally, in order to guarantee for us eternal salvation.

What did Jesus bodily form look like after the resurrection?

We know that He had a body of flesh and bone. Jesus told the disciples, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

We also know that Jesus ate food. Imagine the surprise of the disciples when the risen Lord appeared to them and then said, “Have you any food here?” They gave Jesus a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb, and He ate it (see Luke 24:41–43).

His resurrected body also could be touched and felt. When the women were returning from the empty tomb, “Behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him” (Matthew 28:9).

Then, when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the Upper Room, He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing” (John 20:27).

This tells us that in His resurrected body, Jesus still wore the marks of the crucifixion. And He will wear those marks, even in eternity (see Zechariah 12:10).

Because Jesus chose to take on bodily form, and chose death and resurrection for our sake, God has “elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”. (Philippians 2:9)

Memory/Meditation

John 1:14 (NLT)

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.

Colossians 1:15 (NLT)

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.

Philippians 2:6-7 (NLT)

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

Colossians 1:15,19-20a (NLT)

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself.

Hebrews 1:3 (NLT)

The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

Colossians 2:8-9 (NLT)

"Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.

Questions and activities

1. What did Jesus experience as a human being, while he was on earth?
2. What aspects show that he was at the same time, God?
3. Give evidence from Colossians that Jesus existed before the creation, and in fact played a part in the creation of the world.
4. How does Jesus' willingness to come to earth in human form show great humility?
5. Why did Jesus come to earth in human form?
6. Give evidence from Revelation that we will see Jesus in bodily form when he returns.
7. Describe Jesus in bodily form after the resurrection.
8. What would you say to someone who says that Jesus was just a good man, or even a prophet, whose *only* purpose was to set an example of how to live.
9. What place of honour does Jesus have in heaven?

God is Eternal

God is infinite. He has no beginning and no end. He has always lived and he will always live. In Genesis 1:1, when the Bible says “in the beginning”, it refers to the beginning of the universe. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were already present. God has always been present. There is no one else like him.

Because God is eternal, He did not need to be created. In fact, because He is eternal, God could not have been created, since it is not possible to create something that already exists.

Before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God. (Psalm 90:2b NLT)

God is called “Eternal God”, “Rock eternal” and “Everlasting God” throughout the Bible.

Abraham worshiped the Lord, the Eternal God. (Genesis 21:33b)

Revelation came ...by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him. (Romans 16:26b NIV)

Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock. (Isaiah 26:4)

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. (Isaiah 40:28; See also Psalm 90:1-2 and Nehemiah 9:5)

Things about God that are FOREVER:

- His words and law:
All your just regulations will stand forever. (Psalm 119:160b; See also Psalm 119:89)
- His love, faithfulness:
(Psalm 117:2; Psalm 118; Psalm 136; Psalm 146:6)
- His righteousness and power:
(Psalm 111:3; Romans 1:20)
- His name:
Your name, O Lord, endures forever; your fame, O Lord, is known to every generation. (Psalm 135:13)
- His ways and plans:
(Habakkuk 3:6; Ps 33:11)

He is the Eternal King of an eternal kingdom:

See Jeremiah 10:10; Daniel 4:3,34; 1 Timothy 1:17

Jesus always has been and always will be:

Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. (John 17:5)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
(Revelation 22:13)

Both Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers make clear that Jesus rules an eternal kingdom: Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:14

But to the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever," (Hebrews 1:8)

God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:11)

The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven:
"The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

As God's children we are promised everlasting life with Him:

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^[a] or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matt 19:29)

...everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:15-16)

...so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21)

We are to fix our eyes on what is eternal:

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18)

Meditation/Memory:

Deuteronomy 33:27a (NLT)

The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you.

Isaiah 40:28 (NLT)

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary.

Isaiah 26:3-4 (NLT)

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.

Psalms 90:1-2 (NLT)

Lord, through all the generations you have been our home! Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God.

Revelation 22:13 (NLT)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

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 my Father's hand.

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NLT)

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.

Isaiah 60:19-20 (NLT)

No longer will you need the sun to shine by day, nor the moon to give its light by night, for the Lord your God will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set; your moon will not go down. For the Lord will be your everlasting light. Your days of mourning will come to an end.

John 12:24-25 (NLT)

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.

Daniel 4:3 (NLT)

How great are his signs, how powerful his wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations.

Psalm 93:2 (NLT)

Your throne, O Lord, has stood from time immemorial. You yourself are from the everlasting past.

1 Timothy 1:17 (NLT)

All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

Questions and Activities:

1. What is the meaning of 'infinite'?
2. Write a Bible verse that shows that God has always been there.
3. Some rocks are very hard and do not break down. If the world was going to last forever, then they would always be there. This is why God is called a Rock. Choose and write a Bible verse that tells us that God is a Rock.
4. Make a list of the things about God that are forever.
5. Who will be the ruler of the Eternal Kingdom?
6. How can we have eternal life?
7. What will it be like in the Eternal Kingdom? (Isaiah 60:19-20)
8. What should we do if we are burdened by the troubles of this life? (2 Cor 4:18)