**“WOULD YOU BELIEVE"**

**#1A: “God the Father**

**is Who He said He is.”**

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pastor spots a lad next door, straining on tiptoes to reach the doorbell. Moved with empathy, the reverend hurries to the boy’s side, rings the bell for him, then asks, “Now what, little buddy?” The kid replies, “NOW WE RUN!!!!”

God opened His door for us by having some forty men over 1,500 years write the Bible (Hebrews 1:1-4, 4:12). Over 25,000 early manuscripts of the New Testament exist. Of Homer’s *Iliad,* “second best preserved literary work of all antiquity,” we have 643 copies. And NONE of Shakespeare’s thirty-seven plays from the 1600’s!

The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ’s earthly life, or by men who interviewed eyewitnesses. This and countless archaeological finds corroborate the Bible. God also spoke through creation, His Son Jesus, and His followers (Romans 1:19-20).

No man has seen God the Father (Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16). But Jesus said, “If you have seen Me, you have seen My Father” (John 14:9). No words can define the Father; we learn who He is from Jesus who said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. Nobody gets to my Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

In *The Nature of God* Graham Cooke says, “God doesn’t need to be explained … He needs people to shout out who He really is …” Many simply do not know. In *The God Delusion* atheist Richard Dawkins says, “Science has now emancipated us from the notion that there must be a Creator-Maker.” Jesus called out the religious leaders of His day for not opening up the Scriptures to the people, and for not seeking salvation therein themselves (Luke 11:52).

J.I. Packer writes in *Knowing God,* “The world becomes a strange, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business for those who do not know about God.” Cooke adds, “Our image of God will drive every single part of our life …”

In *Believing God* Beth Moore offers this watershed “pledge of faith:”

1. God is who He says He is.
2. I am who God says I am.
3. God will do what He says He will do.
4. With Jesus, I can face anything.
5. God’s Word is active and alive in me.

**“Let’s Start At The Very Beginning”**

David wrote to God, “In the beginning You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish, but … your years will never end” (Psalm 102:25-26).

Although He has no beginning, we find God for the first time in the first verse of the Bible. This pre-existent “King of kings and Lord of lords” “makes something out of nothing” and “brings life out of death” (Romans 4:17). **Let’s read Genesis 1:1-27 (p.1, NIV)**

“Trinity” is not in the Bible, but God-in-three-Persons is clear: “… in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). “God said, ‘Let ***us*** make man in ***our*** image’” (Genesis 1:24). “… the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). All are related: “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:3); “Jesus, the Son of God” (John 5:20)

**“Abba, You Can Light My Fire”**

To discover who God really is, we listen now to Him in His fireside chat with Moses. **Let’s read Exodus 3:1-22 (p. 43, NIV).**

**DISCUSS: What can we learn from this about who God is?**

This burning bush scene tells us much about God’s identity:

• God can get your attention, knows your name and invites you to trust Him in light of His never-failing faithfulness. God the Father is invisible, yet offers you faith to know He exists. He identifies your chief enemy, Satan. God rescues us from slavery to sin.

• He has a one-of-a-kind mission for you which He has thoroughly equipped you to accomplish (Ephesians 2:10). He’ll never leave you and will help you to boldly represent Him. He will accomplish His purposes for, in and through you (Philippians 2:13).

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, aka the Torah, explore God’s character: He is • *always near* and approachable, • *supernatural*, • the *Savior* • a *promise keeper*.

God declares, “I am the Lord” (Genesis 15:7); “I am God Almighty” (Genesis 17:1-2); “I am a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14); “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior” (Isaiah 43:10b-11; Hebrews 11:6); “I am Alpha (first) and Omega (last) who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).

In his farewell to the Israelites who after forty years of wandering are set to enter the Promised Land, Moses reveals more of who God is. **Let’s read Deuteronomy 4:1-9, 32-40 (p. 133, NIV).**

DISCUSS: Describe a time in your life when God tried to get you attention, and how you responded.

**“Take This, Job, And Love It”**

For centuries people have turned to Job in times of wrenching loss. This prominent, godly, innocent man, is decked by one calamity after another in a case study of how God uses suffering to produce His character in us. **Let’s read Job 1:1-12 (p. 374, NIV).**

In one day this prosperous, influential role model loses 1,000 oxen, 500 donkeys, most of his servants, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, his home and his ten children. And, oh yes, Job breaks out in boils.

Vigorously challenging God’s justice, Job is met with God’s imponderable questions and realizes that suffering is a tool God uses to draw us to Himself (Job 30:20-23). **Let’s wrap up this timeless story, reading Job 42:1-6 (p, 400, NIV).**

DISCUSS: How has yours or others’ suffering shaped your view of God?”

**Time permitting, let’s read Isaiah 40:1-8, 17-31 (p. 539 NIV).**

We’ve just scratched the surface of who God the Father says He is – this One who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent.

When you know God’s character, you’ll distinguish His voice from imposters (John 10:4-5). Cooke adds, “He is unchanging and consistent. … the same yesterday, today and forever; we can be confident of who He is for us.”

**“Getting To Know You”**

God knows you, but do you know Him? Would you believe that you can ring His doorbell right now? You could simply tell Him:

“God, I really want to know You. I now surrender to You, the one and only God. I believe Your Son Jesus died in my place for all my sin. I humbly accept Your forgiveness and give You my life. Thank You for pursuing, hearing, loving and pardoning me. I’m Yours!”

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**“God has several names which allows us to form a better understanding of Him who made us.” Michael Wells**

• *Elohim* (God’s power over all, God Almighty Lord God, Genesis 1:1, 2:4 and 49:24, Psalm 59:5)

• *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*, salvation, Genesis 2:4)

• *YHWH, Yahweh, Jehovah* – The only proper name for God, I am that I am (Exodus 3:14, Deuteronomy 6:4)

• *El-Elyon* (“The Lord Most High,” utterly holy, infinitely powerful and perfect, Genesis 14:17-20)

• *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty,” Genesis 17:1)

• *Jehovah-Jireh* (power to meet our needs, the Lord will provide - Genesis 22:13-14)

• *Jehovah-Rapha* (power to heal and help, the Lord who heals - Exodus 15:26)

• *Jehovah-Nissi* (our Banner surrounding us in battle, the Lord our Banner - Exodus 17:15)

• *Jehovah-Maccaddeshem* (“The Lord our Sanctifier” who transforms us to serve and worship Him, Exodus 31:13)

• *Jehovah-Shalom* (“The Lord is Peace,” our only source of peace, Judges 6:24)

• *Jehovah-Rohi* (“The Lord my Shepherd” leads and guides, Psalm 23:1)

• *Jehovah-Sabaoth* (“The Lord of hosts” i.e., armies, protects us, Isaiah 6:1-3)

• *El-Olam* (“The everlasting God” will never die, Isaiah 40\_28-31)

• *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* (“The Lord our righteousness” is truth and justice, Jeremiah 23:6)

• *Jehovah-Shamma* (“The Lord who is present” is always near, Ezekiel 48:35)

• *Adonai* (“Lord” – He is over all, used in place of YHWH, Genesis 15:12, Malachi 1:6)

• *Yahweh Kaddesh* The Lord who Sanctifies, makes holy – Leviticus 20:8

•*Yahweh Shalom* – The Lord our Peace – Judges 6:24