The Pursuit Of God  
Session One / June 15, 2016

THE IMAGE PROBLEM

How much does the average professing Christian know about God? One of the ways to determine how much YOU know about Him is to take a watch with a second/sweep hand on it and see how long you could talk about God without repeating yourself. Use simple sentences and talk about WHO GOD IS, not WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR ME. Speak only about

✓ The nature of God
✓ The attributes of God
✓ The personality of God
✓ The decrees of God
✓ The essence of God
✓ The providence of God
✓ Etc.

How long could you speak? An hour? Ten minutes? The sad truth is the average believer would be finished in a couple minutes, not more.

Recently, the President of the South Baptist Theological Seminary warned that “many of today’s young people have reduced Christianity to a belief that God wants them “to do well, and to do right and to be happy.” While that certainly may be a subsidiary desire of the Creator, that reduced definition of Him leaves a whole lot to be desired.

Our concept of God leads to basically every action in our lives, the way we act (or react), our speech, our behavior at home, our missiology, our thoughts concerning worship and, in general, our lives basically lived.

As a person studies history it becomes clear that no nation has ever existed on a plane higher than its concept of God. (In our present culture which is spinning totally out of control, it is easily seen how our elimination of the Almighty from basically everything is the cause.) No religion is worthwhile that does not have a proper thought of God.

Theology (which means “the knowledge of God”) has been substituted by crazy emotions, unbiblical teachings about Him by media gurus, money-driven ministries, and the lack of training by many entering the pulpits.

So - when you think about God, what goes through your mind? That late and truly
outstanding spiritual mentor from the Christian and Missionary Alliance, A. W. Tozer, has written:

Without doubt the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God. A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God. It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these years is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY / CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS / A W TOZER / PAGE 10

In his letter to the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote how we humans have reduced God to the most common of concepts:

Romans 1:18-25 [The Message]
But God's angry displeasure erupts as acts of human mistrust and wrongdoing and lying accumulate, as people try to put a shroud over truth. [19] But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! [20] By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse. [21] What happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives. [22] They pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding life. [23] They traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in his hands for cheap figurines you can buy at any roadside stand. [24] So God said, in effect, "If that's what you want, that's what you get." It wasn't long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. [25] And all this because they traded the true God for a fake god, and worshiped the god they made instead of the God who made them—the God we bless, the God who blesses us. Oh, yes!

This is clearly seen in the American Indian totem pole (see picture on next page). These poles showed primarily animal figures or characters to resemble what the carver revered and/or worshiped. They often showed figures with strong abilities such as an owl (wise as an owl) or a fox (sly as a fox) or a bull (strong as a bull). Sometimes these totems became objects of worship demonstrating what Paul wrote in the above text.
Lest we hold the native Americans in derision, their actions have been demonstrated by just about every group of humans known to man. Paul wrote, "We have changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator. For this cause....God gave them up...." (Romans 1:25-27).

Every evil under the sun can be traced back to its origin with people with unsound doctrine or theology (which means "the knowledge of God). Comprehend, if you will, the inherent danger in churches who entertain faulty concepts of God. Their theological mix-up will doom precious souls into Hell itself. Until we see God, high and lifted up, as He truly is in time and eternity, the Gospel becomes diluted and useless, destroyed by our monstrous lack of pursuit of Him!

740 years before Christ, the great King in Jerusalem, Uzziah (also known as Azariah) died after 52 years on the throne. He goes down in history as one of the best of all the kings of Israel. So devastated was the great prophet Isaiah that he went to the Temple in Jerusalem to mourn his monarch’s passing. But, inside the Temple, time almost stopped as he encountered the Living God:

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. [2] Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called out to another and said,

"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory."

[4] And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. [5] Then I said,

"Woe is me, for I am ruined!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

[6] Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs. [7] And he touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven." [8] Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

What a far, far cry from the mindless and nebulous concepts of God so often foisted on
mankind today by spineless preachers, vapid music which has long since replaced the 
hymns of the Church, and alleged spiritual books about how to prosper!

WHAT IS IDOLATRY?

What was the sin for which God sent Israel into 70 years of Babylonian exile? It was 
'idolatry. Can any sin be more hateful to a jealous God than this? An idolater assumes 
that somehow God is something other than what or who He truly is. This is a 
monstrous evil!

Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only 
in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples were therefore 
free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are 
unworthy of Him!

[Ibid page 15]

It is believed by many that the Church today (all professing Bible-believing followers of 
Jesus) is in decline. If so, it is because our concept of God has fallen to new low levels 
of true comprehension of Him. When any believer’s concept of God falls, our real 
worship and moral standing collapse with it. A church will absolutely go into decline 
WHEN ITS HIGH OPINION OF GOD GOES INTO DECLINE.

A LOWER STANDARD

The way we worship in public, that is, our church services in general, certainly reflect our 
opinion of God. Having preached in hundreds of churches over the past sixty years, I 
must confess to being puzzled by the relatively low estate of what we consider proper 
before God. It seems that an “anything goes” standard has become commonly accepted 
across the board. Let me explain:

If somehow the Queen of England should appear at First Assembly next Sunday, I can 
assure you all of us - especially those of us on the platform in ministry responsibilities - 
would dress for the occasion. Whatever was our best apparel would be utilized for such 
an august occasion. However, when it’s “just” .... Jesus .... well, anything goes. We 
are blessed to have strong music here and those who minister thusly work long and hard 
for it. But, regretfully, I must report that such is not the case elsewhere. I see people 
slovenly slouch on to the platform and go through gyrations that would be more proper in 
a cheap bistro. After all, it’s just....church. It’s just....Jesus.

I address preaching and teaching as well. There are hours and hours of work, study,
writing soaked in prayer that go into any pulpit presentation. Every sermon is that “command” performance before the King. Yelling, screaming, pulpit-pounding and nonsensical utterances have no place in His Majesty’s service. Where is the dignity in representing the King of all Kings and Lord of all Lords?

While on the road years ago, I attended a Sunday school class in one of our churches. The teacher stood before us adults, hemmed and hawed a bit, then took out the teachers “quarterly” (teacher’s manual), opened it, looked at it a moment and then spoke these very words: “Well...I see here in the quarterly....that our lesson today is ....” In other words he hadn’t even looked at it during the week. And then we wonder why interest in church and Sunday school weaken.

Again, Tozer: The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him (and of her, the Church). In all our endeavors, this should hold first place. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past.

[Ibid] page 12

WHO IS GOD, ANYWAY?

Atheists claim that there is no God at all. For some of them, this conclusion is based on disappointments either in their own lives or what they have witnessed in the lives of professing Christians. They base their persistence that there is no God on inconsistencies they have seen in the Church or in individual believers.

Some atheists are quite dogmatic, vis-a-vis Madalyn Murray O’Hair. Their position is unstable and often arrogant. Many of these folks live unsatisfactory lives because they don’t know what lies on the other side of the grave. Our basic deep convictions demand there is a God which they deny.

Agnostics don’t come out-and-out to deny the existence of God; however they hold that all knowledge is relative and that we surely cannot “know” that He exists.

We Christians take a strong stand on the reality of God for many reasons.

• Basic intuition. Paul alludes to this in Romans 1:19-21: Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. [20] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly
seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: [21] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Anthropologists will tell you that belief in God is found among all people of primitive cultures. The late and truly great David Livingstone who gave his life in teaching Africans for Christ wrote: "The existence of God and of a future life is everywhere recognized in Africa."

- Scriptures, of course, teach that God is real and living. It is interesting that the Bible nowhere attempts to PROVE His existence as if it never occurred to the writers of it to prove or argue for His existence. This basic fact is always taken for granted.

- The cosmos is proof of God. Hebrews 3:4 For every house is built by some man; but he that built all things is God. Everything in the universe has "order." To assume that all that exists began with some "explosion" or "big bang" is beyond all credulity. Such happenstance - including the marvel which is your body - excludes all logic and probability.

- There are so many proofs of God but allow me to introduce one very close to my heart: HISTORY PROVES THERE IS A GOD. The brilliant theologian Henry Thiessen wrote: It has often been said that 'Waterloo was God!' How different would have been the fortunes of Europe if Napoleon had won instead of Wellington (British general). Surely no man of discernment can question the fact that the outcome of the recent world wars was also a manifestation of God in history.

LECTURES IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY / THIESSEN / EERDMAN PUBL. / PAGE 33

- ISRAEL is yet another vital proof of God. In a time in bygone centuries when the beliefs of the world’s population had sunk into the despair of polytheism and pantheism, along came Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants came to know God as a personal, infinite, holy and self-revealing God as the very Creator or all that exists. Further - they understood that they and all mankind were created in the image of God. They knew that the sinful nature of fallen man had brought death and condemnation to them and some kind of atonement was needed. How did they know such things? THEY WERE THE REVELATION OF GOD, Who communicated to us through Moses' laws, the sacrificial system and then the tabernacle in the wilderness and the holy temple in Jerusalem. Further, small and seeming insignificant, God has brought Israel through the millennia of time to still
exist long after the giants of Babylon, Greece, Rome and other empires have ceased to exist - just as He promised He would to Abraham.

- My conscience - and yours - reveals God's reality. There is within us a sense of right and wrong. A critic might scoff, "Well, man's conscience is self-imposed, a product of our own minds." Such cannot be for how many times have we humans attempted to rid ourselves of that inner voice. My conscience is the reflection of God in my very soul!

We could go on throughout the evening, citing reasons for our belief in God - miracles we have witnessed, fulfillment of the hundreds of prophecies in scripture, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (the miracle of the incarnation - that is, God becoming a mortal), and the scriptures themselves.

**DEFINITION OF GOD:** The Creator of all that exists. The ruler of the universes. The One Who rules in the hearts of those Who seek Him. The moral law that binds us in hope of a future, both here and in eternity. The heavenly Father. The prime mover of everything.

How inept and inadequate is that definition! How does one define Him Who was, is and always will be? How can our minds, shackled with the chains of "time" conceive of eternal realities? We can make some progress, however, when we learn what God has disclosed about Himself. In His word, He has declared certain things to be true of Himself (that is the definition of attributes). We will use this study to look into those things. We will also discuss in this series:

- The nature of God
- The unity and trinity of God
- The decrees of God
- The works of God

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**

*Once again - the attributes of God are those things that are true of Him. It is whatever might be accurate ascribed to God.* An attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself.

How many attributes does He possess? Charles Wesley wrote: *Glad thine attributes confess, Glorious all - and numberless!*

7
How can we begin to describe God? Such a thing is impossible, of course, but in our pursuit of Him we must start somewhere.

1. GOD IS SPIRIT. John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. That is the witness of His Son.

- While very real in every sense of the word, God is not composed of those materials we consider physical. Jesus told His disciples following His resurrection: Luke 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

Yet—we read in Scripture that God has bodily parts: Hands—Isaiah 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;
Feet—Psalm 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:
Eyes—1 Kings 8:29 That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day,
Ears—Neh. 1:6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night,

Those are just a few of the biblical references to those body parts which we know in our own bodies; however, they are symbolic representations to help us understand God a bit better and to learn of His power and abilities.

2. GOD IS INVISIBLE. There is a rather amazing and revealing verse in the Torah which speaks about the Israelites after God appeared to them in Horeb: Deut. 4:15-19 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: [16] Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, [17] The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, [18] The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: [19] And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

Look well on the warning to Moses in Exodus 33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see
my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

Paul referred to God as “the invisible God” in Romans 1:20. He wrote that no man has seen Him or can see Him: 1 Tim. 6:16 *Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

But, does not the Bible say that men saw God? Genesis 32:30 *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* R. A. Torrey responded in one of his books: *A man may see the reflection of his face in a glass and it would be true for the man to say, ‘I saw my face,’ and also ‘I never saw my face.’*

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES / TORREY / FLEMING REVELL PUBL / P. 15

So men in Scripture saw the reflection of God’s glory. But to behold Him in reality awaits our resurrected bodies in eternity.


God is not only alive, but HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE - plant, animal, human, spiritual and eternal. He is alive whereas the idols of the heathen are dead. Psalm 115:3-9 *But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* [4] Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. [5] They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: [6] They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: [7] They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. [8] They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. [9] O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help and their shield.

4. GOD IS A PERSON. He is not some impersonal spirit, or as the Star Wars film proclaimed, “May the force be with you.”

God has:

- Intellect Gen. 18:19
- Sensibility Gen. 6:6
- A will (or volition) Gen. 3:15 John 6:38

He is characterized as

- Speaking Gen. 1:3
• Seeing Gen. 11:5
• Hearing Ps. 94:9
• Showing anger  Deut. 1:37
• Being jealous  Ex. 20:5
• Compassionate  Ps. 111:4

There are so many more fascinating facets to God’s existence and nature which we will pick up again next week in our PURSUIT OF GOD.