

JOURNEY 1

KNOWING
GOD

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The God of the universe reveals Himself in the pages of the Bible—and this seven-day Journey will help you discover who He is and why He created you.

Life Hope & Truth

GETTING STARTED

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNEY

Dear Reader,

You are about to embark on the first of four Journeys designed to guide you through some of the Bible's most valuable truths—truths about the God who created the universe, His plan for the human race and where you fit in it.

Over the next seven days, this first Journey will introduce you to seven incredible (but true!) facets of God's character. Each day's content will consist of the following:

- That day's reading.
- Recommended verses and chapters from the Bible relating to that day's subject.
- Supplemental material from Life, Hope & Truth for digging deeper into that day's subject.

We're thrilled that you've decided to take this Journey through the Word of God, and we're honored that you've chosen us to help guide you through it. Our goal is to bring you to the end of this Journey with a deeper understanding of who God is and why He created you.

Let's begin!

All the best,

Your friends at [LifeHope&Truth](https://LifeHopeandTruth.com)

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DAY 1

GOD THE SELF-EXISTING

There are a lot of reasons you're not dead right now.

Take the atmosphere, for instance. Earth's atmosphere has a delicate balance of oxygen and other gases, and the end result is that when you take in a big lungful of air, you don't suffocate and die. That would be less true, say, in outer space or underwater.

That's not all, of course. The fundamental laws of the universe (like gravity and the strong nuclear force) are precisely balanced in a way that keeps all of reality from collapsing on itself or unraveling like a ball of yarn. The telomeres on the end of your chromosomes are still long enough for your cells to divide and reproduce. Your brain and other vital organs are working in concert to perform all the myriad functions required to keep you alive.

The list goes on, and each additional point makes it more and more clear that our existence depends on an interminable host of variables, each delicately balanced and finely tuned. If just one of those variables stops working correctly, so do we.

God is different.

God doesn't require a certain atmosphere in order to exist. He doesn't depend on physical laws to provide Him with an environment He can live in. He doesn't age; He doesn't get sick or weak.

God depends on nothing.

Think about that for a minute:

Nothing.

There are no variables to tweak that would endanger God's existence. God simply *is*—no qualifiers, no exceptions, no dependencies. As Psalm 102:25-27 so beautifully phrases it, "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end."

DAY 1

GOD THE SELF-EXISTING

When God described Himself to His servant Moses, He revealed two of His names: “I AM WHO I AM” and “the LORD God” (Exodus 3:14-15). The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language, and in Hebrew both those names are heavily rooted in the word *hayah*—a word that simply means “to be.”

In other words, God is the God who is. He exists without the aid of anything or anyone. The universe itself can come and go, but God remains, unchanging, self-existing and eternal.

That’s good news for us. As fragile, temporary beings with limited life spans, it’s encouraging to know that our Maker has none of those limitations. We might be constrained by things like height and depth and width and time, but God isn’t. The God who rules the universe exists apart from the universe.

That’s not an easy thing to wrap our minds around. As human beings, we look at the world in terms of boundaries and limits. A thing is this and not that; it begins here and ends there. But God can’t be stuffed into a box. He is limitless; He is unbounded in time and space, existing “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2).

No qualifications. No exceptions. If we want to understand God, then we have to start here, with this most basic truth:

God *is*.

Then, and only then, can we move on to understanding *who* He is.

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- Psalm 90 [↗](#)
- Exodus 3 [↗](#)

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- Where Is God? [↗](#)

DAY 2

GOD THE UNLIMITED

The problem with being human—well, one of the problems, anyway—is that we tend to define things by their edges. If you were to show someone where Tanzania is on a map, you’d also be showing him or her where it *isn’t*. Like all countries, it has borders that dictate where it begins—and where it ends.

We do the same thing when we measure time. If you’re talking about the second Thursday of September 1874, you’re talking about a discrete chunk of 24 hours with clearly defined boundaries.

That’s just how we’re wired. We look at the world, and we see edges. Beginnings and endings. Stoppings and startings. Boundaries in time and space. And it’s a good thing too—life would be an absolute nightmare if we had no sense of time, no sense of where we began and ended, no way to comprehend the universe surrounding us. We *need* edges—and we need to be able to see them.

Unfortunately, that’s exactly what makes it so hard to wrap our minds around God—because God is a God without edges.

From a human standpoint, that doesn’t make sense. And yet, again and again, that’s how the Bible describes God. It’s not that God doesn’t have a distinct likeness—quite the opposite, we’re told that the human race was made in His image (Genesis 1:26)—but it’s an unlimited spiritual form we can’t fully comprehend with our limited human minds. David asks, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” (Psalm 139:7). God Himself reminds us, “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me?” (Isaiah 66:1). God can be anywhere, at any time, without restriction or qualification.

And that’s not all. The early disciples referred to God as “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all” (Acts 1:24), and God confirms it: “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind” (Jeremiah 17:10). There is nowhere God cannot be, nothing past or present He cannot know and, just as important, nothing He is powerless to do. “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh,” He tells us. “Is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27). Jesus provides the answer: “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

We can't fit God into a box. He exists outside of time and space. He has no beginning; He will have no end. There is no corner of the universe He cannot reach; no action He is not powerful enough to perform. He is aware of everything at all times—from the number of hairs on your head to the most secret thoughts of your heart.

There are, however, certain boundaries God refuses to cross because of His perfect, righteous character. The Bible tells us that, among other things, God cannot—that is, *will* not—lie (Titus 1:2). But when it comes to us and the challenges we face, the simple fact remains: the God of the universe cannot be limited—not by anyone and not by anything.

Why is it so easy to forget that?

It's the edges. We're always looking for them—even with God; even when we know He has none. Some part of our mind tells us that those edges *must* exist, so we invent them. We tell ourselves all the reasons God can't help us, can't see us, can't get to us in time, can't make it work, can't fix it.

Sometimes those reasons are born of desperation. Sometimes they're born of doubt. Sometimes they're nothing more than half-baked excuses for doing what we want to do instead of what God wants us to do.

But those reasons are wrong.

When an angry mob moved in to seize Jesus, one of His disciples decided to take action. The disciple believed Jesus was the Son of God, but he also seemed to think the Son of God needed his help. He sprang forward, swinging his sword—only to earn a swift rebuke from Jesus. “Put your sword in its place. ... Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:52-53).

God doesn't need our help. We need *His*. God is the One with the perspective and wisdom and power to do what we cannot. There is no scenario where God is powerless to act.

There are, however, times God chooses not to act. Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers in the time frame or in the manner we'd like—but that doesn't mean He isn't listening. That doesn't mean He doesn't care. And it certainly doesn't mean He isn't capable.

There are a lot of reasons why God might not answer a prayer the way we'd like Him to. He might, for instance, be in the process of working out something better for us—something we can't see from our current perspective. We might be asking for something that's ultimately bad for us, even if we can't quite see that's the case.

Or it could be that our own life choices have distanced us from the God we're praying to. As Isaiah writes, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

In other words, when it comes to understanding when and why God chooses to act, the answers aren't always going to be as clear-cut as we might like. There's a lot of nuance involved, and it's not always going to make sense from our limited perspective. We don't know everything He knows; we can't see everything He sees—but there's a world of difference between believing that sometimes God *chooses* not to act and believing that He simply *can't*.

In the end, it comes down to faith.

Faith is difficult. Faith means accepting that God knows best, despite what we think we see. Faith means believing in something that doesn't make sense in our world of edges and boundaries. Faith means looking at the impossible and accepting that with God, it's not just possible—it's plausible.

Faith means trusting in a God without edges.

None of that comes naturally. It's a struggle, and *that's okay*. God understands. When a desperate father brought his son to be healed by Jesus Christ, the father begged, "'If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" (Mark 9:22-24).

Ofentimes, we're in the same position. We have faith, but we also doubt. We trust, but we look on with skepticism. We're locked in an internal struggle between what we believe in our hearts and what we see with our eyes, *and there's nothing wrong with asking God for clarity*.

That clarity starts when we begin to let go of the predefined edges we try to force onto God. Let go of what you believe God cannot accomplish. Wipe the slate clean and allow for a God without limits on what He can do, what He can know and where He can be.

DAY 2

GOD THE UNLIMITED

Once we're willing to part with those edges, we can finally begin to see God for who He is—and not for who we think He must be.

And that God, as we'll discover in the days to come, is truly incredible.

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- [Isaiah 40:10-31](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:18-31](#)
- [Luke 12:6-7](#)

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- [The Power and Greatness of God](#)

DAY 3

GOD THE SHEPHERD

There are few things more frustrating than arbitrary fences—boundaries and rules that don't seem to exist for any good reason. It's annoying to be told, "You can't do that," but it's downright infuriating when the only explanation offered is, "Because I said so."

It's hard to be content with that. Children are infamous for their never-ending inquiries into the inner workings of the world. They want to know *why* things are the way they are, and they're deeply attuned to noticing when something smacks of injustice or unfairness.

They want a world that makes sense.

As we get older and the world stops being so new and confusing, we don't ask as many questions as we used to—but deep down, we still want a world that makes sense. We want rules that are fair and equitable and grounded in reason. Rules that exist "because someone said so" often feel like the exact opposite of what we're looking for: arbitrary, unwarranted, unreasonable.

The Bible can feel like that sometimes. It's filled with *dos* and *don'ts*—this is okay, that's wrong, do this, don't do that—but the explanations aren't always as accessible as we'd like them to be. At first glance, some of those *dos* and *don'ts* look like arbitrary hoops God expects us to jump through—and looking at them, we're forced to grapple with that ever-present question engrained so deeply in our nature:

"But *why*?"

Why did God settle on these particular rules? Why do they apply to everyone? Why didn't God design these rules to change and evolve with the cultural values of the day?

The answer—the most obvious, most succinct answer—is the exact answer we don't want to hear:

"Because God said so."

We might balk at it, but it's true. As the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, God has every right to make whatever rules He wants—regardless of why. The rules are the rules simply because God said so.

Thankfully, there's a lot more to the story—we just have to be willing to look for it.

On the verge of entering the Promised Land, Moses asked Israel, “What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

A couple of chapters later, Moses adds, “Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28).

God's rules are anything but arbitrary. Everything He commands, He commands *for a reason*—and not just any reason, but *for our good*. Because God created everything, He also understands how everything works—and He understands it on a level we can only begin to comprehend. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,” He tells us, “so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

Much as we might hate to admit it, you and I don't always know what's best. We don't have God's perspective. We can't look out over the whole of the universe and see the bigger picture like He does. And so when He gives us a command, it's because *He knows we need it*. He knows the boundaries we have to operate within if we want a life worth living—and so He sets them for us.

God is a shepherd.

Christ told His disciples, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ... And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:14, 16).

Those words are an echo of a passage from the Old Testament, where God promises, “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick. ... You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God” (Ezekiel 34:16, 31).

God cares a great deal about His sheep—about us. When we wander beyond the sheepfold—when we find ourselves trapped and overwhelmed in dangerous territory—He comes after us. He carries

us back when we're too broken or too sick to make the journey ourselves and then nurses us back to health.

God sets boundaries and establishes rules because *we need them*. He builds fences to protect us and keep us safe from the wolves and the robbers that lie beyond.

He doesn't stop us from crossing those fences, though. He won't prevent us from stepping beyond the boundaries and breaking the rules He gave for our good, and He won't stop us from reaping the consequences that come with that decision. If we're determined to live our lives outside of His fences, He won't force us to do otherwise. We'll always have our free will—just as God will always be a shepherd who cares for His flock.

We won't always immediately understand the reason for all of God's rules—but there *is* a reason. We're promised that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). We won't always have the clarity of mind to see how a particular boundary fits into the bigger picture—but we know that even when we can't see the bigger picture, God can.

Once we come to accept God as our all-knowing, loving shepherd, an incredible thing happens:

We begin to realize that, when it comes to reasons, “Because God said so” is the best one we could possibly hear.

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- [John 10:1-16](#)
- [Psalm 23](#)
- [Revelation 7:13-17](#)

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- [The Prodigal Son: A Parable With Overlooked Meaning](#)

DAY 4

GOD THE JEALOUS

In today's world, jealousy is rarely ever regarded in a positive light. It's usually seen as a mark of immaturity, of greed or lust, or a sign of unchecked emotions and undeveloped character. Jealous people tend to be skeptical and untrusting and unable to develop meaningful relationships. Maybe that's why it's such a shock to see God claim that title so willingly:

“For you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14).

A lot of people stop right there. The God of the Bible unabashedly proclaims Himself to be jealous. Why serve a God who's childish and proud of it? Why have anything to do with Him at all?

But stopping there is a mistake. Stopping there means failing to ask the important questions—questions like *why* does God call Himself jealous and what exactly does that jealousy entail?

Let's start with some context.

The verse we looked at a moment ago is actually a parenthetical in the middle of a much, much bigger statement. God was giving instructions to the people of Israel as they prepared to enter the land of Canaan—a country filled with wicked nations who worshipped their gods through acts of child sacrifice and ritual harlotry. Here's the (lengthy) context:

“Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods” (Exodus 34:11-16).

And just like that, some answers begin to emerge. God's jealousy has nothing to do with some childish inferiority complex. He doesn't need people worshipping Him in order to maintain His own sense of self-worth. He explains instead that if the Israelites failed to destroy the altars and idols of Canaan's false gods, they would be tempted to *accept* those false gods—integrating them into their lives, worshipping them and adopting the same horrific customs as the nations around them. It's why God later warned, "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods" (Deuteronomy 12:31).

Unfortunately, that's exactly what happened. Israel ignored God's warning, pursued the false gods of Canaan and, over the course of several centuries, eventually became just as corrupt as the Canaanites God had driven out before them (2 Kings 21:10-13).

Of course, the pagan gods of old are largely relics in our modern world. Chemosh, Dagon and Molech don't have the followings they used to, and Balder and Hermes are simply passé. So are we still at risk of repeating Israel's mistake? Is there any reason for God to remain a jealous God?

Yes. A huge, resounding yes.

Human beings are remarkably versatile creatures. We have the capacity to worship far more than the carved and chiseled statuettes of ancient history. Today we can worship at the altar of any number of modern false gods—money, possessions, friends, family, even ourselves—and in the pursuit of these gods, we can cause ourselves all manner of unnecessary pain.

Here's the key to understanding God's jealousy: When we put something else on an equal level with God, God doesn't suffer.

We do.

Take money, for instance. The Bible warns, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). Money isn't the problem—but loving it is. When God isn't first in our lives, we begin finding reasons to step outside the boundaries of His perfect way of life. And when we're willing to do that, we open the door to all sorts of bad decisions—decisions that can hurt us and those around us.

So yes, God is jealous. He will not suffer a rival—because He knows how much damage that would do to *us*. Christ warned, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24).

As the self-existing God, our Creator doesn’t need anything from us. God doesn’t *need* us to put Him first in our lives—on the contrary, *we* need to put God first in our lives. Serving a false god will leave us empty and pierced through with many sorrows, and that’s not what the true God wants for us. He wants what’s *best* for us—and because of that, He is a jealous God.

And for that, we should be thankful.

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- Deuteronomy 6:10-25 [↗](#)
- 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 [↗](#)
- Exodus 20:1-6 [↗](#)

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- Jealous God? What Does That Mean? [↗](#)

DAY 5

GOD THE MERCIFUL

For the past four days, we've been exploring some of the core characteristics that define God. So far, we've painted a picture of a God who exists of His own volition, who has no limitations, who cares deeply about us, who defines the boundaries we need to get the most out of life, and who doesn't want to see us chasing after things that will only hurt us.

But there's a problem.

You're going to mess up. It's not a possibility; it's an inescapable fact. You are going to do something wrong. You're going to step outside one of those boundaries; you're going to break a rule; you're going to chase after a false god.

It might be an honest mistake, it might be a lapse in judgment, it might be your human nature getting the better of you—but it doesn't change the fact that at some point in the future, *you are going to fail to do what God expects of you.*

What happens then?

There are consequences, first of all. There's no getting around that. God set rules in place “for your good” (Deuteronomy 10:13), so it stands to reason that breaking those rules would have the opposite effect. The more we break those rules, the more they negatively impact our lives and the lives of those around us.

It gets worse, though. The Bible tells us that “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4) and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), which means that to break God's law—that is, to sin—is to forfeit our lives. We're going to talk more extensively about sin in our next Journey, “The Problem of Evil,” but for now, the most pressing question for us to answer is: *What can we do to make it right?*

And the answer is: nothing.

There is nothing you and I can do to undo a sin. We can't cancel it out with extra righteousness, and we can't cover it up and pretend it never happened. Sin is not a problem we're capable of fixing.

Thankfully, our merciful God is more than capable.

In ancient mythology, a merciful god was an odd concept. Ancient religions may have believed in a compassionate god or two, sure—but offend them or wrong them and they were liable to bring heaven and earth crashing down in a vengeful display of wrath. They were *gods*, after all—supreme, ineffable deities with unimaginable power. How else could they possibly respond to the trespasses of the lowly human race?

And yet when the Bible describes God—the true God, the Master of the universe—we get an entirely different picture: “You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness” (Nehemiah 9:17).

Micah asks, “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18). Joel speaks of God as “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm” (Joel 2:13). And Peter affirms that God is “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Incredible. *Beyond* incredible. Not only does God forgive sin, but He is *ready* to pardon. He is eager to forgive us, not wanting anyone to perish. He will not endure sin forever, but He is patient—more patient than we understand, and more merciful than we deserve, especially when we consider the cost of that mercy.

Paul explains, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8). Again, we’ll discuss it more in the next Journey, but wiping our sins away came at a steep price—the life of the Son of God, who came and died in our stead.

We don’t deserve that kind of mercy. We couldn’t possibly deserve it—and yet God extends it to us all the same. He is God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in kindness.

But why? In the words of King David, “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” (Psalm 8:4). As great and as powerful as God is, what is the human race even doing on His radar? Why did He bother creating us at all?

The answer to that question is foundational to your very reason for existing and is quite possibly the most important piece of information you will ever possess.

It's time to meet God, the family.

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- [Psalm 86](#)
- [Luke 6:27-36](#)
- [Psalm 8](#)

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- [For His Mercy Endures Forever:
A Reason for Thanksgiving](#)

DAY 6

GOD THE FAMILY

The first chapter of the Bible contains a particularly confusing statement:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26).

Us? Our? Who is God talking to in this verse? In the very next sentence, we read that God “created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (verse 27).

This is perplexing. First God is talking to someone who shares His image, who also has the ability to create life—and in the very next verse, we see a singular God creating the human race. Every indication seems to suggest that God was talking to ... another God?

But that’s impossible. How often in the Bible does God remind us, “There is no other God besides Me” (Isaiah 45:21)? There must be another explanation. And yet, as we dig deeper into Scripture, we’ll discover the incredible truth: There *is* no other explanation. God was, quite literally, talking to another being whom He also called God.

God, it turns out, is a family—and, most importantly, a family you have the opportunity to call your own.

In his Gospel account, John provides some clarification for the first chapter of Genesis. He writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

Now we’re getting somewhere. The Word that John writes about existed *with* God while also *being* God. That’s a confusing sentence to wrap our heads around, but it’ll start to make more sense as we move forward. We’re told later on that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), revealing that this Word—this being who was with God and who *was* God—came to the earth as Jesus Christ.

In time, Christ's disciples came to understand that truth, acknowledging, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Jesus replied, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (verse 17).

Slowly, a picture begins to emerge. The Bible reveals two beings, both of them God. One of them carries the title of Father; the other carries the title of Son. Collectively, They form the God family—and the deeper we dig, the more we discover about that family.

Paul tells us that he bows his knees "to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-15). Paul's remark about the "whole" family hints at one of the greatest truths of the entire Bible:

The family of God is growing.

It's why you're here. It's why all of us are here. God is building a family, and *He wants to make you part of it.*

John tells us, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:1-3, emphasis added).

Those who faithfully follow and obey God are *going to be like Him*. That's incredible. That's unbelievable. That defies imagination!

But what does it mean exactly?

The God family is a tightly knit group, and not just because there are only two members at the moment. Christ told us, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30) and later prayed to God on behalf of all those who would one day come to believe in Him, "that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:22-23).

Those verses tell us that the God family is united in purpose and thought and action. They are on the same page, no matter the issue. Those verses also tell us that becoming part of the God family requires the same thing from us, which doesn't come naturally at all. After all, "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

But that’s the thing: We don’t have to remain “natural men.” God gives us the opportunity to change. To grow. To receive His Spirit and begin the process of becoming something so much more than we could ever be on our own. The apostle Paul described the end of that process to his fellow believers, writing, “We shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. ... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

There’s so much more to talk about here—and we will talk about it in our third Journey, “The Plan of God”—but for now, the important truth to focus on is that God, the immortal, unlimited, all-powerful, self-existing One, is in fact a family.

A family that is growing.

A family that you can be part of.

At the head of that family is God the Father—the very God we’ve been learning about for the past six days. At His right hand is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has existed alongside the Father for all eternity as the Word.

What’s more, because Jesus and the Father are so in sync with each other, Jesus explains, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him” (John 14:7). Knowing one member of the God family means we know *all* its members—because They both operate with the same mind, the same character.

But there’s still one last trait we need to explore before this Journey comes to end—the most misunderstood (and most important) trait of all:

Tomorrow, we’re going to talk about God, the loving.

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- [John 17](#)
- [Matthew 12:46-50](#)
- [Ephesians 3:14-21](#)

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- [Relationship With God](#)

DAY 7

GOD THE LOVING

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for *God is love*” (1 John 4:7-8, emphasis added).

Love isn’t just a character trait of God; it’s His essence. It’s who He is. Until we understand love—really, truly understand it—we can never hope to understand God.

Unfortunately, that’s a harder task than it sounds. Love is a word that has been misused and misunderstood for hundreds (if not thousands) of years. Ask 100 different people to define love, and you’ll likely get 100 different answers. To some, love is a nebulous, indescribable feeling. To others, it’s a force we can’t control—something we can fall into and out of, something that ebbs and flows of its own accord. Still others have trouble distinguishing between love, lust and infatuation.

The Bible paints a much clearer picture of love. Love, it says, “suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Those verses are important—but equally important are the words *not* in those verses.

We don’t read that love accepts all things.

We don’t read that love approves of all things.

We don’t read that love embraces all things.

Love has standards. It rejoices in the truth—and truth requires a distinction between right and wrong. It doesn’t think evil—but it knows what evil is, and it knows to avoid it. It will not rejoice in iniquity, because it knows that nothing good comes from iniquity.

Most importantly, *love never fails*. It endures. When everything else is collapsing, when the world we know is falling to pieces, love soldiers on unflinchingly and without hesitation.

God is love. Not the kind of love dreamed up by Hollywood scriptwriters, and not the kind of love crooned about on the radio. God is a love deeper and more profound than anything that could ever be manufactured in the mind of man.

The Greek word for “love” in 1 Corinthians 13 (as well as in many other important scriptures) is *agape*. In the New Testament, *agape* is a word frequently used to describe the love of God, intended to give us insight into how God loves us and how we are supposed to love others.

John wrote, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). Jesus explained, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10). To love—to show *agape*—requires *action*. God’s love is not nebulous. It’s not something that simply exists in some vague, intangible sense. It’s real, it’s active, and it never fails.

If you could see the end result of any action before you ever took it, would that change the way you live? If you could peer into the future and understand exactly how any given choice would affect you and the people you love, would you be more cautious about the decisions you make?

Almost definitely.

Seeing the end of the road before setting foot on the path would change everything. It would change what we do and why we do it. We’d make better decisions, lead happier lives and reap all the benefits that come with that kind of foresight.

Knowing that, why are we so quick to reject God when He offers us that exact gift?

God loves us. He wants the absolute best for us. His Son came and died for us so that we could have a place in His family. He is a merciful, all-knowing, all-powerful God with our best interests at heart, desiring to shepherd us through the confusing maze of life and into an incredible future.

But because He loves us, He’s not going to force that on us. He’s going to let us make our own decisions. He’s going to let us reap the consequences of poor choices. The Bible—His Word, preserved for us—contains all the warnings and instructions we need to live the best possible life.

There's nothing stopping us from deciding we know better and blazing our own trail—but do you honestly believe you can find a better route through life than the one charted for us by the God of the universe?

For the past seven days, you've been getting to know that very God—a God who is self-existing and unlimited, who shepherds us jealously and mercifully, who comprises a loving family that you were created to join. You've started digging into the Word of God and come away with a clearer picture of your Creator, and now you have a decision to make.

Will you keep on digging?

This Journey might have only lasted seven days, but building a relationship with God is a journey that lasts a lifetime. Every day is an opportunity to know and be known by the God who loves you, who has a plan for you and who has the power and foresight to bring it all to pass.

But it's your choice. When God calls, you don't have to answer. You can let the journey end here—let it all be nothing more than head knowledge and never act on it. That's your prerogative—and it would be your loss.

Because if you keep moving forward—if you keep seeking after the truth and keep making it part of your life—you're going to find so much more than knowledge. You're going to find meaning. You're going to find purpose. And because of that, you're going to find fulfillment and direction and a richness and depth to life that doesn't exist anywhere else.

In the back of your mind, though, there's probably a nagging question:

If God really is all these things—if He really is all-powerful, if He really does love and care for us—then why is the world the way it is? Why does He allow evil to exist? Why do so few people seem to know and understand Him?

To answer these questions, we'll have to set out on a second Journey—one in which we'll turn to the pages of the Bible to tackle the “Problem of Evil.”

FURTHER READING

Scriptures

- [1 John 4:7-21](#)
- [Deuteronomy 30:15-20](#)
- [Romans 5:6-11](#)

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- [God Is Love](#)

WHAT NEXT?

Continue your studies with **“Journey 2: The Problem of Evil,”** available from the Life, Hope & Truth Learning Center.