

## LESSON 3

### ***Who is God? Who am I?***

So... all this belief – past, present, and future - is based on GOD. You may be wondering, *Who is this God? How is the Christian God similar to and/or different from the Muslim God or the Jewish God or the many Hindu gods? Besides all that, what does this God have to do with me?*

The truth is, we all have different ideas of God, some of which are good and right and true, and others that might not be. Even if we have the best intentions, we often paint the wrong picture of God and who God is in relationship to us. Rather than letting the Bible teach us about who God is, we make up our own ideas of who we think God is and what God is supposed to do. Can you relate to any of the following images of God?

God as **SHERIFF or JUDGE**: “I’m here to keep you in line. You’re not allowed to have any fun or make mistakes. You’re supposed to follow my laws and do what I tell you to do – no exceptions. I’ve got my eye on you. If you mess up, that’s it – you’re condemned!”

God as **TEDDY BEAR**: “Awww... I’m just here to make you feel ‘warm and fuzzy’! You could never do anything wrong in my eyes. It’s OK if you make mistakes and disobey me. I’ll still love you and snuggle up next to you.”

God as **VENDING MACHINE**: “What do you want? I’m here for you! You want forgiveness, here it is! You want a lot of money? Take it! You want an A on your test? Done! Just ask, push the button, and you’ll get just what you want.”

God as **DISTANT GRANDPARENT**: “I love you, but I’m far away from you. I created the world, but now all I really do is sit back and watch over it. I created you too, but I don’t take much interest in your life, and I don’t help you. My main job is just to send you “blessings” from afar and make sure you feel loved every once in a while.”

The truth is, God is so much more than the things listed above! Sure, God is loving and always with us, but God’s certainly not here to give us everything we want! And of course, there are things we should and should not do, but God’s main job is not to condemn us. Most importantly, God is anything but distant!! Our God is much more wonderful and complex than any of the simple descriptions above. As we look to the Bible and the history of the Church, we find a tricky, but awesome way to understand God.

**THE TRINITY** refers to the three different “Persons” of the Christian God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It might just be one of the most important beliefs the Christian faith has. Let’s take some time to find out about each “Person” of God so that we can understand God more.

## God the Father

“In the beginning God  
created the heavens  
and the earth.”

[GEN 1:1 - 2:4a]

God the Father goes by “God.” ☺ Though many times (even in this book!) we talk about God as “He,” God is neither male nor female. He is not black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Indian, or any other ethnicity. The best way to label God may just be what He (or She or It or whatever!) says in the Bible: “I am” (John 8:58). God just *is*. Christians believe God is *the Beginning* and *the End* (Revelation 1:8,17). God existed before anything else did, and God will exist forever because nothing can be in existence without Him.

In ancient times, people thought there were lots of gods. They believed these gods existed as forces of nature, so they worshipped the gods of fire, rain, and thunder. This means they never knew more about the gods than what the weather did. As you can imagine, then, these gods were really unpredictable and totally hard to relate to! The people tried to do everything right so that the gods wouldn't get mad and destroy them (like a tornado might). They feared their gods, rather than loving and trusting them.

The Hebrew people (the ancestors of today's Jewish and Christian people) saw God completely differently. They believed there was one God, and this God was sovereign (totally in charge of everything) and holy (set apart). God was huge, and the Hebrews were amazed by Him! As big as He was though, the Hebrews also believed that God was personal and interested in the lives of the people He created. God was God for the whole world but also for each person.

The Christian faith continues with the Hebrews' belief of God. We too worship one God, who is in charge of everything, perfect, and loving to His people. We also are amazed at how God can be as cool as He is. He created an entire *world* and then created people and loves them completely! Christians believe that God shows His love in an even greater way than just Creation, though. We believe that God came to earth as Jesus, His Son, who is the Messiah (Jewish people expected the Messiah, but they didn't think Jesus was him). God then sent Jesus to die on a cross so that our sins could also die and so that we could see the right way to live. Now, because God showed His love and forgiveness in this big way, we can live with God forever in heaven and be in a complete relationship with Him here on earth.

We'll probably never know (in this life!) all of what and who God is because God is so big, and we are so small. One of the fun things about being a Christian, though, is that we are always growing, so we can learn more and more about Him and what He is like every day!

## God the Son

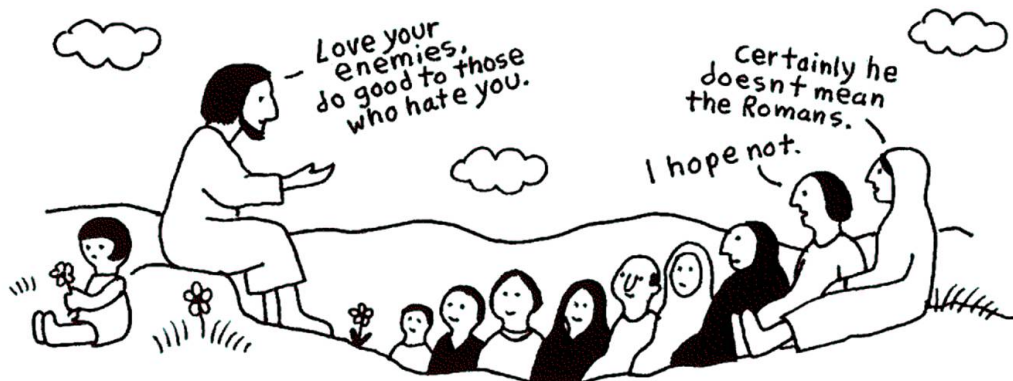
God the Son goes by "Jesus." Jesus was literally God here on the earth in human form. He was fully God, but he was also fully human. Jesus experienced all that we do here on earth today. He got tired (Mark 6:31); he was tempted (Matthew 4:1); he was emotional (Luke 19:41). He even *died*, and his death was really painful and sad (Matthew 27: 27-66). Jesus' life shows us that God wants to *be* with His people, and it serves as a model for our lives today.

Now, about Jesus: He grew up in Nazareth and became a carpenter. He worked until he was thirty years old and then began his ministry that we hear about in the Gospels (the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible). Lots of people loved Jesus' preaching, and they were inspired by his miracles. The number of his followers grew quickly. Jesus had 12 disciples who were his closest friends. They went with him as he traveled, preached, and healed.





As cool as Jesus was, he did a lot of things that some people did not approve of. He ate with sinners, spent time with people who had questionable reputations, and disagreed with some of the top religious leaders of his time. He shocked people with his stories and by what he thought and said. Not only that, but Jesus said he came as *God* and as *King*, yet he walked around with the poor and needy! Tons of people thought Jesus must be crazy!!

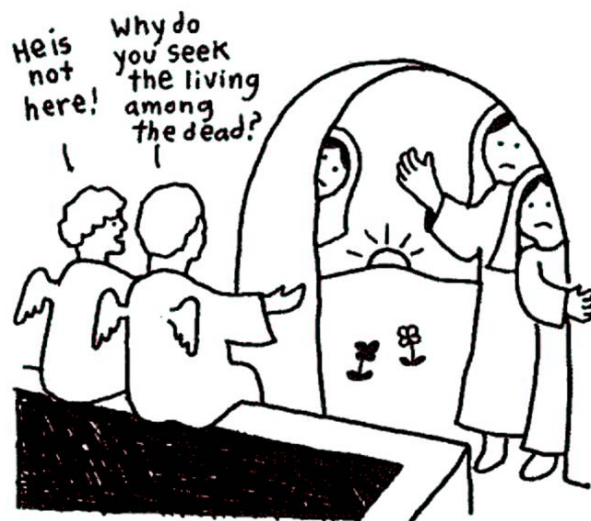


One of the main things that made Jesus unpopular was his preaching. He attacked some of the biggest religious leaders of the day and told them that “following the rules” wasn’t the most important part of religious faith. To truly know God, he said, they needed to *believe in him* (Jesus). This made the people so mad that they captured Jesus and killed him by hanging him on a cross.

As sad as it is, the story of Jesus’ death is one of the best in the Bible because it tells us that God loves us enough to forgive the many ways we fail Him. The story also shows us how to obey God, whatever the cost. Jesus was just like any human - he didn’t *want* to die. Jesus knew that it was in God’s plan for him to die, though, so he went to the cross because he loved God that much.



Thankfully, Jesus' story did not end in death. Three days after he was crucified, Jesus rose from the dead! The resurrection story shows us that God is stronger than sin and death. It also lets us enjoy life as Christians today. As we accept the love and forgiveness of Christ, our lives change through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we experience joy on a daily basis! Jesus' resurrection showed the people in the Bible that Jesus was God – their eyes were opened to a new perspective. In the same way, when we experience Jesus' resurrection in our hearts, we get a new perspective and see life in a whole new way!



## God the Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit goes by “Holy Spirit.” ☺ The early followers of Christ were filled with His Spirit after he died and rose from the dead. Because of this, they were able to be bold and tell everyone the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection. And as we’ve already learned, the Holy Spirit was what started the first church (remember, the Day of Pentecost?). The Holy Spirit is *literally* God here on earth, even though Jesus is no longer here with us. Once Jesus rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit was left to live in the heart of every believer.

Today, we can live lives as Christians because of the Holy Spirit. Just look at all the different ways it helps us! The Holy Spirit:

- helps us resist temptation and choose right over wrong (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- shows us how to be loving, kind, and patient (Galatians 5:22)
- guides us when we don’t know what to do (John 16:13)
- gives us peace (Romans 8:6)
- helps us respond to God on a daily basis (2 Timothy 1:7)
- frees us from guilt (2 Corinthians 3:17)

The Holy Spirit does all these things and more! It is our constant companion—God *in* us and *with* us!

**Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? If so, explain what it felt like or what you experienced in the space below.**

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After looking at God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are now ready to “correct” our images of God. God is not a mean judge or sheriff. God is not merely a teddy bear or vending machine. God is not distant. The Bible gives us tons of true and wonderful images of the God we worship - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Check them out!

### **God AS GOD:**

Deuteronomy 32:18	(Rock/Mother)
Psalms 23:1	(Shepherd)
Matthew 6:9	(Father)
John 4:8	(Love)
Exodus 3:13-14	("I Am")

### **God as JESUS CHRIST:**

Matthew 13:55	(Carpenter’s Son)
Matthew 16:16	(Son of the Living God)
John 1:38	(Rabbi, Teacher)
John 10: 11	(Good Shepherd)
Luke 2:11	(Savior, Christ (Messiah), The Lord)

**God as *HOLY SPIRIT*:**

John 14:26	(Counselor, Advocate, Helper, Teacher)
John 15:26	(Truth)
Acts 2:38	(Gift)
Romans 8:26	(Helps us in weakness)
Galatians 5:22	(Fruits of the Spirit)

**\* Go The Extra Mile!**

Read all of the Scriptures above and find what images of God mean the most to you at this point in your life. Memorize at least one of those Scriptures and as you pray to God this week, call Him by the name of that image. (Ex: Father God,...; Saving Jesus,...; Spirit of Truth,....., etc.)

