

An Introduction to God

As Christians, our most basic religious belief is that God exists. By the capitalized word "God," we mean the God described in the Bible: a good and powerful spirit being who created all things, who cares about us, who cares about what we do, who is involved in our lives, and who offers us an eternity with his goodness.

Humans cannot understand God in totality, but we can have a solid beginning point for understanding who God is and what God is doing in our lives. Let's focus on the qualities of God that a new believer, for example, might find most helpful.



Creation of stars and planets, by Michelangelo, in the Sistine Chapel

His existence

Many people, even long-time believers, want proof of God's existence. But there is no way to "prove" God's existence so that everyone is convinced. It is probably better to talk in terms of evidence, rather than proof. The evidence gives us confidence that God exists and is the sort of being the Bible describes.

God "has not left himself without testimony," Paul told the pagans in Lystra ([Acts 14:17](#)). Well then, what is the evidence?

Creation. [Psalm 19:1](#) tells us, "The heavens declare the glory of God." [Romans 1:20](#) tells us, "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." Creation itself tells us something about God.

It is reasonable for us to believe that something caused the earth, sun and stars to be the way they are. Scientists say the universe began with a big bang, and it is reasonable for us to believe that something caused the bang. That something, we believe, was God.

Design. Creation shows signs of order, of laws of physics. If various properties of matter were different, then earth would not exist, or humans could not exist. If the size or orbit of earth were different, then conditions on this planet would not permit human life. Some people believe that this is a cosmic accident; others believe that the more reasonable explanation is that the solar system was designed by an intelligent Creator.

Life. Life is based on incredibly complex chemicals and reactions. Some people believe that life had an intelligent cause; others believe that it happened by chance. Some have faith that scientists will eventually demonstrate a non-god origin for life. But for many people, the existence of life is evidence of a Creator God.¹

Humans. Humans are self-conscious creatures who explore the universe, who ponder the meaning of life, who seek significance. Physical hunger suggests the existence of food; thirst suggests that there is something that can quench our thirst. Does our intellectual yearning for

purpose suggest that there is in fact a meaning to be found? Many people claim to have found meaning in relationship with God.

Morality. Is right and wrong a matter of opinion, of majority rule, or is there some supra-human authority that defines good and evil? If there is no God, then humans have no basis for proclaiming anything evil, no reason to condemn racism, genocide, torture or any atrocity. The existence of evil is therefore evidence that God exists. If there is no God, then there is no basis for authority except power. It is reasonable to believe in God.

Greatness

What sort of being is God? Bigger than we can imagine! If he created the universe, then he is bigger than the universe—and not limited by time, space or energy, for he existed before time, space, matter and energy did.

2 Timothy 1:9 mentions something God did "before the beginning of time." Time had a beginning, and God existed before that. He has a timeless existence that cannot be measured by years. He is eternal, of infinite age—and infinity plus several billion is still infinity. Mathematics is too limited to describe God's existence.

Since God created matter, he existed before matter, and he is not made of matter. He is spirit—but he is not "made of spirit." God is not made at all; he simply *is*, and he exists as spirit. He defines existence—he defines spirit and he defines matter.

God existed before matter did, and the dimensions and properties of matter do not apply to him. He cannot be measured in miles or kilowatts. Solomon acknowledged that even the highest heavens could not contain God ([1 Kings 8:27](#)). He fills heaven and earth ([Jeremiah 23:23](#)); he is everywhere, or omnipresent. There is no place in the universe where he does not exist.

How powerful is God? If God can cause a big bang, design solar systems, create the codes in DNA and manage all these levels of power, then he must be unlimited in power, or omnipotent. "With God all things are possible," [Luke 1:37](#) tells us. God can do whatever he wants to do.

God's creativity demonstrates an intelligence greater than we can understand. He controls the universe, constantly causing its continued existence ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). That means he must know what is happening throughout the universe; he is unlimited in intelligence—he is omniscient. He knows whatever he wants to know.

God defines right and wrong, and is by definition right, and he has the power to always do right. "God cannot be tempted with evil" ([James 1:13](#)). He is consistently and perfectly righteous ([Psalm 11:7](#)). His standards are right, his decisions are right, and he judges the world in righteousness, for he is, in his very nature, good and right.

In all these ways, God is so different from us that we have special words that we use only for God. Only God is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, eternal. We are matter; he is spirit. We are mortal; he is eternal. This great difference between us and God, this otherness, is called his *transcendence*. It means that he transcends us, is beyond us, is not like us.

Other ancient cultures believed in gods and goddesses who fought with one another, who acted selfishly, who could not be trusted. But the Bible reveals a God who is in complete control, who needs nothing from anyone, who therefore acts only to help others. He is perfectly consistent, his

5 facts to know about God

1. God is omnipotent—able to do whatever he wants. He is the Almighty.
2. God is immortal, constant in character, always reliable. He is the Eternal.
3. God is omnipresent—unlimited by space and time. He is always near.
4. God is omniscient—knowing all truth and all wisdom. Father knows best.
5. God is consistently good, never selfish. God is love.

behavior is perfectly righteous and completely trustworthy. This is what the Bible means when it says that God is holy: morally perfect.

This makes life much simpler. People do not have to try to please 10 or 20 different gods; there is only one. The Creator of all is still the Ruler of all, and he will be the Judge of all. Our past, our present and our future are all determined by the one God, the All-knowing, All-powerful, Eternal One.

Goodness

If all we knew about God is that he had incredible power over us, we might obey him out of fear, with bent knee and resentful heart. But God has revealed to us another aspect of his nature: The incredibly great God is also incredibly gentle and good.

One of Jesus' disciples asked him, "Show us the Father" ([John 14:8](#)). He wanted to know what God was like. He knew the stories of the burning bush, the pillar of cloud and fire at Mt. Sinai, the science-fiction throne that Ezekiel saw, and the whisper that Elijah heard ([Exodus 3:4](#); [13:21](#); 1 Kings 19:12; Ezekiel 1). God can appear in all these ways, but what is he really like? Where should we look?

Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" ([John 14:9](#)). If we want to know what God is like, we need to look at Jesus. We can learn a bit about God from nature; we can learn more from the way he revealed himself in the Old Testament, but we learn the most from the way that God has revealed himself in Jesus.

Jesus shows us what God is like. Jesus is called Immanuel, which means God with us ([Matthew 1:23](#)). He lived without sin, without selfishness. He is a person of compassion. He has feelings of love and joy, disappointment and anger. He cares about individuals. He calls for righteousness, and he forgives sin. He served others, even in his suffering and death.

God is like that. He described himself to Moses in this way: "The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished" ([Exodus 34:6-7](#)).

The God who is above all creation is also free to work within creation. This is his *immanence*, his being with us. Although God is larger than the universe and everywhere within the universe, he is with believers in a way that he is not with unbelievers. The enormous God is always close to us. He is near and far at the same time ([Jeremiah 23:23](#)).

In Jesus, he entered human history, space and time. He worked in human flesh, showing us what life ought to be like in the flesh, and showing us that God wants more for our lives than merely flesh. We are offered eternal life, life beyond the physical limits we know now. We are offered spirit life, as the Spirit of God himself comes into us to live in us and make us children of God ([Romans 8:11](#); [1 John 3:2](#)). God continues to be with us, working in space and time to help us.

From our *Statement of Beliefs*:

God, by the testimony of Scripture, is one divine Being in three eternal, co-essential, yet distinct Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The One God may be known only in the Three and the Three may be known only as the one true God, good, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and immutable in his covenant love for humanity. He is Creator of heaven and earth, Sustainer of the universe, and Author of human salvation. Though transcendent, God freely and in divine love, grace and goodness involves himself with humanity directly and personally in Jesus Christ, that humanity, by the Spirit, might share in his eternal life as his children.

([Mark 12:29](#); [Matthew 28:19](#); [John 14:9](#); [1 John 4:8](#); [Romans 5:8](#); [Titus 2:11](#); [Hebrews 1:2-3](#); 1 Peter 1:2; [Galatians 3:26](#))

The great and powerful God is also the gentle and gracious God; the perfectly righteous Judge is also the merciful and patient Savior. The God who is angry at sin also provides salvation from sin. He is mighty in mercy, great in gentleness. This is what we should expect from a Being who can create the codes in DNA, the colors in a rainbow and the delicate wisps on dandelion seeds. We would not exist at all, except for the fact that God is kind and gentle.

God describes his relationship to us in several ways. In one analogy, he is a father and we are his children. In another, he is the husband and all believers together are his wife. Or he is a king and we are his subjects. He is a shepherd and we are the sheep. In all these analogies, God puts himself in a situation of responsibility to protect and provide for the needs of his people.

God knows how tiny we are. He knows he could obliterate us in the snap of a finger, in the slightest miscalculation of cosmic forces. But in Jesus, God shows us how much he loves us, how much he cares for us. Jesus was humble, willing even to suffer, if it would help us. He knows the kind of pain we go through, because he has felt it. He knows the pain that evil causes, and he accepted it, showing us that we can trust God.

God has plans for us, for he has made us to be like himself ([Genesis 1:27](#)). He invites us to become more like himself—in goodness, not in power. In Jesus, God gives us an example to follow: an example of humility, selfless service, love and compassion, faith and hope. "God is love," John wrote ([1 John 4:8](#)). God demonstrated his love by sending Jesus to die for our sins, so barriers between us and God might be removed, so we might live with him in eternal joy. God's love is not wishful thinking—it is action that helps us in our deepest need. We learn more about God from the crucifixion of Jesus than from his resurrection. Jesus shows us that God is willing to suffer pain, even pain caused by the people who are being helped. His love invites us, encourages us. He does not force us to do his will.

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God's love for us, shown most clearly in Jesus Christ, is our example: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" ([1 John 4:10-11](#)). If we live in love, then eternal life will be a joy not only for us but also for those who live with us.

If we follow Jesus in life, we will also follow him in death, and then in resurrection. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us and give us life eternal ([Romans 8:11](#)). But if we do not learn to love, then we will not enjoy everlasting life. So God is teaching us to love, at a pace we can follow, giving us a perfect example, changing our hearts by the Holy Spirit working in us. The Power who controls the nuclear furnaces of the sun is working gently in our hearts, wooing us, winning our affection, winning our allegiance.

God gives us meaning in life, direction for life, hope for life eternal. We can trust him, even when we suffer for doing good. God's goodness is backed up by his power; his love is guided by his

wisdom. He has all the forces of the universe at his control, and he is using them for our benefit. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him" ([Romans 8:28](#)).

For further reading

Now that you've had an introduction to God, wouldn't you like to know him better? We get to know God in several ways: through nature, through our experience with the Holy Spirit, through the Scriptures, through spiritual disciplines and through the words of other believers.

To learn more about God, read the Bible, especially the New Testament. Try a modern translation such as *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson, or *The New Living Translation*, published by Tyndale. For evidence of God's existence, we recommend the following (easiest listed first):

- Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe*
- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*
- Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*
- C. Stephen Evans, *Why Believe?*
- James Sire, *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?*
- William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*
- C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*
- Alister McGrath, *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths*

For discussions of the attributes of God:

- Max Anders, *God: Knowing Our Creator*
- Paul Little, *Know What You Believe*, chapter 2
- Gilbert Bilezekian, *Christianity 101*, chapter 2
- J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*
- Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, chapters 8-15
- Donald G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty*

¹Footnote on creation: The diversity of life is a separate question. Some people accept the theory of evolution; others reject it. Some people believe that the evolutionary theory describes the way that God produced biological diversity; others believe that God worked in some other way. The controversies about evolution are too complex to be resolved here; we simply note that they do not affect the question of how life originated in the first place. We should also note that few people have studied evolution well enough to make their own conclusions about it; for the most part, they simply

Response

How do we respond to a God so great and gentle, so terrible and tender? We respond with worship: awe at his glory, praise for his works, reverence for his holiness, respect for his power, repentance in the presence of his perfection, obedience in the authority found in his truth and wisdom.

accept the word of "experts." That includes opponents as well as supporters of evolution. For further study, see *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, edited by J.P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds (Zondervan, 1999).

To his mercy, we respond with thankfulness; to his grace, with our allegiance; to his goodness, with our love. We admire him, we adore him, we give ourselves to him even as we wish we had more to give. Just as he has shown his love for us, we let him change us so that we love the people around us. We use all that we have, all that we are, all that he gives us, to serve others, just as Jesus did.

This is the God we pray to, knowing that he hears every word, that he knows every thought, that he knows what we need, that he cares about our feelings, that he wants to live with us forever, that he has the power to fulfill every request, and that he has the wisdom not to.

God has proven himself faithful in Jesus Christ. God exists to serve, not to be selfish. His power is always used in love. Our God is supreme in power, and supreme in love. We can trust him in absolutely everything.

Written by Michael Morrison

Multiple choice Questions for Discipleship 101 part 1

Please choose the answer that is the most accurate from the options in the box on the right. Then circle it. You will find ALL the answers in the article provided

Question 1

As Christians our most basic religious beliefs are that:

- a. God exists
- b. We are gods
- c. We can understand everything about God
- d. We are immortal
- e. God is powerful, loving and involved in our lives

| Answer |
|--------------|
| 1. a b c |
| 2. c d e |
| 3. b c |
| 4. a e |
| 5. a b c d e |

Question 2

What do Christians use as evidence that God exists?

- a. Nothing
- b. Creation, design and life
- c. Creation TV and electricity
- d. Human self-awareness and morality
- e. Knowledge of right and wrong

| |
|----------|
| 1. a |
| 2. a c e |
| 3. c e |
| 4. b d e |
| 5. d e |

Question 3

Which of these is correct?

- a. God is omnipotent = He is almighty
- b. God is immortal = He has always lived
- c. God is omnipresent = He split himself into pieces so that he can be everywhere
- d. Omniscient = God is see-through
- e. God is good

| |
|------------|
| 1. a b e |
| 2. a b c d |
| 3. c d |
| 4. e |
| 5. a b c |

Question 4:

Look up this scripture: Romans 1:20. This verse says/suggests that..

- a. This scripture proves that God exists
- b. Creation provides some evidence for God's existence
- c. That God is: Creator; Invisible; Eternal; divine
- d. That people should be able to see God
- e. If people try to make an excuse for not seeing God
- then they are not human

| |
|--------------|
| 1. a e |
| 2. a b c |
| 3. a d |
| 4. a b c d e |
| 5. b c d |

Question 5

What do we know about God?

- a. God is bigger than we can imagine, but smaller than the universe

| |
|----------|
| 1. c |
| 2. a c e |
| 3. c d |
| 4. b e |
| 5. d |

- b. God is limited by time – he had a beginning
- c. God is not limited by time and has no beginning or end
- d. God is made of spirit
- e. God is restricted by the same dimensions as humans

Question 6

Look up this scripture: Luke 1:37. Which of these statements is true?

- a. God can do what he likes
- b. God is unlimited in intelligence
- c. God is unlimited in power
- d. God has the power to always do what is right
- e. He judges the world in righteousness

- | |
|--------------|
| 1. a e |
| 2. c d e |
| 3. b c d e |
| 4. a b |
| 5. a b c d e |

Question 7

What does TRANSCENDENT mean?

- a. God and humans are the same
- b. God is not like us
- c. God needs us to do good works for him
- d. God doesn't need anything from us
- e. God is SO different from us that he cannot understand us

- | |
|----------|
| 1. c |
| 2. a e |
| 3. a c e |
| 4. b d |
| 5. b d e |

Question 8

We need to obey God because....

- a. We are scared of him
- b. He is gentle and good
- c. We respect him
- d. We need to bend our knees and try hard not to be resentful
- e. If we don't he will just force us

- | |
|--------------|
| 1. b |
| 2. b c |
| 3. a e |
| 4. a d e |
| 5. a b c d e |

Question 9

Where should we look to find the **CLEAREST** image of the Father?

- a. The burning bush
- b. The pillar of cloud and fire
- c. At the life and actions of Jesus
- d. Encyclopaedias
- e. Nature

- | |
|--------------|
| 1. a b |
| 2. c |
| 3. d |
| 4. a b c d e |
| 5. a b e |

Question 10

Jesus is called Immanuel, which means?

- a. Lord of lords
- b. Ancient of Days
- c. Sustainer of the universe
- d. Author of salvation
- e. God with us

- | |
|------|
| 1. a |
| 2. b |
| 3. c |
| 4. d |
| 5. e |

Question 11

When Jesus entered human history, he showed God to be

- a. Gentle and gracious
- b. Perfectly righteous
- c. Merciless and impatient
- d. Unkind and judgemental
- e. Angry at sin

- | |
|----------|
| 1. a c e |
| 2. a b e |
| 3. c d e |
| 4. c d |
| 5. none |

Question 12

God describes his relationship with us in several ways. Which of these are true?

- a. Master and slave
- b. Father and children
- c. Coach and player
- d. King and subjects
- e. Shepherd and sheep

- | |
|----------|
| 1. a d |
| 2. b c |
| 3. b d e |
| 4. a c |
| 5. a c d |

Question 13

Why did Jesus have to suffer?

- a. Because it would help us to know he loves us
- b. Because God had to take his anger out on someone
- c. Because Pontius Pilate had more power than the Jews
- d. Because Jesus' suffering helps us to trust God
- e. Because he sinned and needed to be punished

- | |
|----------|
| 1. b e |
| 2. b c e |
| 3. a b |
| 4. d e |
| 5. a d |

Question 14

In Jesus God gives us an example to follow. So we should be...

- a. Humble

- | |
|----------|
| 1. c e |
| 2. b e |
| 3. a c e |
| 4. b d |
| 5. a c d |

- b. Selfish
- c. Loving
- d. Faithful
- e. Hopeless

Question 15

Now that we have learned more about who God is, we should respond in worship.

Worship is:

- a. Allowing him to change us
- b. Being thankful for his mercy
- c. Trusting him in everything
- d. Only talking to God when you have a problem
- e. Only loving people when they are nice

- | |
|----------|
| 1. a b |
| 2. e |
| 3. d e |
| 4. a b c |
| 5. b d e |