

The Doctrine Of God The Father

Genesis 1:1

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Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I propose to you that this is perhaps the greatest verse in the Bible.

We began this series with the doctrine of Scripture, because the Bible, God's Word, is the source and foundation for all that we believe and how we behave. If you are a Christian, everything you believe and every way you behave should be based on the authority of God's Word. And we discovered that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, that it is inerrant, that it is infallible, that it is trustworthy, that it is clear, that it is sufficient and we can build our lives on the solid rock of Scripture. That's so very important.

Now the natural progression, as we move from the doctrine of Scripture, is what the Scriptures, the Word of God, says about God Himself. Someone called the Bible "God's autobiography." Certainly we learn about God as He has revealed Himself to us in the Word of God. So we move to the Bible doctrine of God the Father. And today I want to speak in general terms about God as our Father.

There is no greater or more important knowledge for the believer than the knowledge of God Himself. Everything we are and everything we do, is based on our understanding of God, as He is revealed in His Word.

Let me give you some reasons why the knowledge of God is so important. Number one, it is the only way for a person to enter in to life eternal, John 17:3. The background to this verse is that Jesus was in the upper room with His disciples, and He prayed, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." So Jesus Christ, as God the Son, is praying to God the Father and saying to the Father, "Life eternal comes by knowing You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, who you have sent."

The second reason the knowledge of God is important is that knowing God enables us to know ourselves. In Isaiah 6, where we learn about the holiness of God, Isaiah saw a vision of God on the throne. His glory or train filled the temple, and all the angels cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" But Isaiah was actually filled with woe. He said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips....For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

In seeing God, we see ourselves. When we come to know who God is, then and only then can we understand ourselves. As far as understanding man—his nature, what he is, why he does what he does, about him being redeemed—it all starts with a knowledge of God. Everything in the Bible is theocentric, it's God-centered. So if we're going to study anthropology, we need to start with theology, or knowing God. God is the one who created man in His image and likeness.

Third, knowing God is important, because it's the only way to understand the world or the cosmos. Not only should we understand man, but we should understand cosmology, the creation, that was made by God, made for God and is sustained by God. It all points to God.

Many times people will argue for the existence of God with what's called "the cosmological argument"; that if there is a cosmos, there must be a creator, that God created all things. We see that in Genesis 1:1.

Fourth, it is only through a knowledge of God that the people of God can be strong and do great things for God. Daniel 11:32 says, "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." So a knowledge of God gives us strength and ability to live for God in a God-rejecting culture and world.

Knowing facts about God and knowing God personally are two different things. Knowing information about God versus studying the attributes of God or what can be attributed to God, as we're going to do, and having a personal relationship with God are two different things. So it's not enough just to fill our heads with theology or knowledge about God or the doctrine of God. We must have a relationship with this living God. And when we understand who God is, we understand that we can have a relationship with God.

There are only two main points I want to make. First, God can only be known by revelation. Revelation is a very broad and vast subject. And the reason that God can only be known by Him revealing Himself to us is because God is transcendent, above and beyond all that we are, know, see, feel and understand. And God can only be known by us through His revelation because He is infinite and we are finite. God is beyond us, He is limitless and we are limited by time, space and our own intellect.

Has God revealed Himself? Yes. There are two basic ways that God has revealed Himself. He has revealed Himself in what's called "general revelation"; that is, in creation. But He has also revealed Himself in "special revelation"; that is, in the Word of God, and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

First, God reveals Himself in "general revelation" or through creation. You might also say He revealed Himself in the cosmos. We have it here in Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning..."—that is, "when time started, when matter was created"—"...God..."—or "Elohim"—"...created the heavens and the earth." Then verse 3 says, "And God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light."

When God created, He created out of nothing. God had no existing material. God had no time, space or matter; He had nothing. He alone existed. He is eternal. And God speaks with what's called "fiat" or "divine ability to speak things into existence."

So the idea is that God, in His creation, reveals Himself. Genesis 1:1 reveals that there is a God.

There are seven things that are refuted by this one verse. First, Genesis 1:1 refutes atheism, because the universe was created by God. God does exist.

Second, this verse refutes pantheism, for God is transcendent over that which He created. God is not the flowers, He's not the sea or the sun. God is not a nature; He is transcendent to nature. God created it.

Third, Genesis 1:1 refutes polytheism, because one God created all things. Polytheism is shown in Mormonism; they believe in multiple gods. The average Mormon may not know that or would believe that, but they believe there are many gods or "lords men," and they teach what's called "the Adam-God doctrine." They believe the god they are accountable to today is Adam and that Adam became God. That's why they have their marriages sealed in the temple. That's why they would prefer to have multiple wives: to create their own world and their own planet. On and on the insanity goes. Many people don't understand that Mormonism is not Christianity, but they want people to think that. Mormonism is polytheistic. But there is only one God.

Fourth, this verse refutes materialism, for matter had a beginning. Even scientists today say that it all started with "a big bang." What I want to know is, what "banged" the bang? Who lit the fuse? And what "banged"? Where did the bang come from?

Some say, "Well, you just believe that God always existed!" Yes, that's right. Either you believe that God always existed or that some form of matter existed; those are your only two options. You either believe that "God created the heavens and the earth" or that it just happened, that it just exploded. What exploded? How did it explode? Where did the explosion come from? We don't know.

So basically you have to accept both views by faith. But the knowledge of the model that best supports it by faith is that "God created the heavens and the earth."

Fifth, Genesis 1:1 refutes dualism, because God was alone when He created. There were no other gods, no other power, not good or evil. Not even the devil, Lucifer, was yet created at this time of Genesis 1:1.

Sixth, this verse also refutes humanism, because God—not man—is the ultimate reality. God is the center and the source of all reality. God does exist.

And seventh, this verse refutes evolutionism, because God created all things. He created them by "the word of His power." God didn't need any help, any assistance. When "He rested on the seventh day," it wasn't because He was tired; there is no limit to His power.

So this one verse, Genesis 1:1, refutes atheism, pantheism, polytheism, materialism, dualism, humanism and evolutionism. And on and on the list could go.

Thus, God has revealed Himself in general revelation, in creation, which is also referred to in Psalm 19:1-4, where it says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows

His handiwork, day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” Anyone can look up into the sky, see the stars and know that there is a creator.

But God has also revealed Himself by “special revelation,” in several ways. I will focus on two of those ways. First, He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, and second, He has revealed Himself in the Bible. You might also argue for the existence of God by man’s conscience. But God especially and specifically revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who is God manifested in the flesh, and also in the Bible, which is the written Word of God. Jesus is the Living Word through whom God speaks, and the Bible is God’s written Word.

In John 1:18, it says, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” No one has seen God because God is invisible, He is spirit. “The only begotten Son” or in the Greek it says, “The only begotten God...has declared Him.” The word “declare” is “exegesis” or means “to explain, to pull out.” Jesus Christ explains God the Father.

When Jesus was in the upper room, in John 14, He said that He was going to the Father’s house, referring to heaven. And Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Then Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Jesus is not the Father, but He reveals the Father. Jesus Christ is an explanation of who God is. In Hebrews 1:1-2, God has spoken through His Son. “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”

And how do we know about Jesus, other than in the Bible? No matter where we find Jesus, it all comes back to the Bible. Without the Bible, we have no clear understanding of who God is, who we are or about the cosmos. God’s Word is inerrant and infallible, so we can rest our lives on it. God’s word is God’s autobiographical revelation. Psalms 19:7-11 is referring to “the law of the Lord” as a revelation of God. So you have creation speaking of God’s glory, and you also have the Word of God revealing the Person of God.

My second main point is what the Bible reveals about God. This is not exhaustive, but I am going to give you eleven attributes of God, which I think are primary attributes. Theologians like to call God’s attributes “perfections,” because all of God’s attributes are perfect because God is perfect. They are all transcendent, so they are all unknowable to man’s mind, unless God condescends to reveal them. And God has revealed them to us in the Bible.

How can we know if there is a God? The Bible. How can we know what God is like? The Bible. How can we know who Jesus is? The Bible. How can we know if there is a heaven and

a hell? The Bible. There are so many things we learn through the Scriptures.

Number one, the Bible reveals that God is a personal God. Where do you start when you talk about the nature and attributes of God? The Bible reveals to us that God, who in the beginning “created the heavens and the earth,” is the true and living God. God is not a force, nor does the Bible teach pantheism, but God is transcendent and separate from creation. He is a personal being.

We need to remember, in light of this, that there is only one, true God. There are not many gods. Christianity is monotheistic. But the one God is manifested in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Not three gods but one God in three Persons.

John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” So you have the Word, who is eternal, referring to the Second Person of the Godhead, Christ, “with God,” who is God the Father. In the Greek it would literally say they are “face to face.” And the Word, who is eternal and is personal—face to face with the Father—is God, or God was the Word. It’s so very important.

The Triune God is described in Deuteronomy 6:4, which says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one!” 1 Timothy 2:5 says, “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 8:4 and 6 says, “There is no other God but one....There is one God.” There is only one God in three Persons.

And how do we know that God is a person? Number one, God grieves, Genesis 6:6. “And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” Number two, God hates, Proverbs 6:16. “These six things the Lord hates....” Number three, God speaks, Genesis 1:3. “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” Number four, God hears, Psalm 94:9. “He who planted the ear, shall He not hear?” Number five, God loves, 1 John 4:8. “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

When I say that God speaks and God hears, that doesn’t mean that God has a mouth and ears. Where the Bible says that God sees, that doesn’t mean that God has eyes, because God is a spirit, John 4:24. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The Bible also says in Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”

This is why the Incarnation, God becoming a man in Christ, is so marvelous. No one has ever seen God, but God became seen in the Incarnation, in Jesus Christ. That which was with the Father was manifested to us, “and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

So God is invisible. He doesn’t have a mouth or hands or feet. But the Bible uses these terms, because it’s easier for us to understand God. These descriptive words are called “anthropomorphic” terms. They are human terms described of God, so we can know that God sees, hears, speaks, feels and God loves us. God loves us but “God is not a man, that He

should lie,” Numbers 23:19.

Number six, we also know that God is a person because God wills, 2 Peter 3:9. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Number seven, God is wise, Proverbs 3:19. “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens.” And in Romans 16:27, it says, “to God, alone wise.”

And number eight, last but not the least, we know that God is a person, because man is made in the image and likeness of God, Genesis 1:26-27. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

So man can reason, can think, can communicate and can feel. Much of what is humankind is actually the glory of God. But we are not divine; we will never be God. Mankind is in a fallen state with a sinful nature. Yet man still bears the image of His creator. Human beings are unique; they are made in the image and likeness of God.

Number two, the Bible reveals that God is an eternal God. Not only is God personal, and we can have a personal relationship with Him, but He is eternal. Because God is eternal, that means that He is self-existent; no one created Him, and He didn’t need anyone. It also implies that He is immutable; He doesn’t change, Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. Psalm 90:2 says, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” And 2 Peter 3:8 says, “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” So God is eternal.

And God being eternal means that God will never cease to exist. Time magazine had a cover article back in the late ‘60s saying God is Dead. If God is God, God cannot die. God doesn’t get old like us. God doesn’t get decrepit like us. God doesn’t get senile like us. God never gets weak like us. And God will never change; He’s immutable. He is the eternal, unchanging God.

That also means that our salvation is eternal. John Newton wrote in Amazing Grace,

“When we’ve been there 10,000 years,

Bright shining as the sun,

We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise

Than when we first begun.”

So when we go to heaven, we’re going to be in immortal, eternal bodies with an immortal,

eternal, immutable God forever. We're not going to find out after six billion years in heaven that God has died. He is "from everlasting to everlasting." Time begins in God and time comes to an end in God. When we get to heaven, time will be no more. How amazing that is.

Number three, the Bible reveals that He is a sovereign God. A lot of people don't like this. They rebel against this. They shake their fist at God. They want to tell God what He can and can't do. But God sits on the throne and takes orders from no one. The word "sovereign" means "chief, highest or supreme."

When Jehoshaphat prayed, in 2 Chronicles 20:6, he said, "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations?" Psalm 135:6 says, "Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth."

I don't have any problems with that; God can do whatever He wants at any time. I'm not going to shake my fist at God and say, "God, it's not fair!" God does what He wants, because He is sovereign. He is often called the "Almighty God."

Number four, the Bible reveals that God is omniscient. In Psalm 139, we're going to see the background for these attributes of God. We see God's omniscience in verses 1-6. "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off." In the Hebrew, that says, "You understand my thoughts in their origin." Another way of saying that is, "You know what I think before I think it."

Verse 3, "You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it."

Verses 1-6 are basically saying, "Lord, the fact that You know me intimately and thoroughly is more than I can understand."

I want you to notice six things about these six verses. Number one, God knows what I do, verse 2. "You know my sitting down and my rising up." The words "sitting down" means "my bad times," and "rising up" conveys "the good times." So He knows when I'm down and when I'm up.

Number two, He knows what I think, verse 2. That's pretty scary sometimes. "You understand my thought afar off. You understand my thoughts in their origin." He knows what you're thinking right this minute.

Do you ever think about what you think about? Do you ever wonder why you think about what you think about? Let's think about that. "Where did that come from? Why did I think that? That's a bizarre thought." God knows what we think, even before we think it. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account," Hebrews 4:13. God knows our thoughts. That is an awesome thing.

Number three, God knows where I go, verse 3. “You comprehend my path...”—which is daytime—“...and my lying down,” which is nighttime. If you’re old, it happens during the day too; you lie down. You “are acquainted with all my ways.”

Number four, God knows what I say, verse 4. “For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.” God knows every word that you utter and why you say what you say.

Number five, God knows what I need, verse 5. I like that. “You have hedged me behind...”—which is my past—“...and before...”—which is my future—“...and laid Your hand upon me,” which is my present.

Number six, God is transcendent, verse 6. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.”

The background for these six verses is that God knows everything; He is omniscient. He never learns anything new. He never discovers. He’s never taught or instructed. He’s never given more information. And sometimes when we pray, we give God the scoop about the situation. God wants to hear from us, but He’s not writing it down. “Oh, I didn’t know that!” “Did you know what they did, Lord?” Yes, He knows.

I’ve met people who think they’re omniscient. The person who really knows a lot knows that he doesn’t know much. But people who think they know everything know very little.

And I find comfort in knowing that He knows. He knows our every weakness. He knows our every need. “He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” And I rest in that. When I understand who God is, that God knows everything, it brings security to me.

It also brings sensitivity when God warns me about a sin. I know that God is smarter than I am. As a father and grandfather, I often wish my kids would just say, “Father, thou art wise. Wilt thou tell us what to do?” My dad used to say, “I’m not stupid; I wasn’t born yesterday.” Now I’m saying it.

And God wasn’t born yesterday. God’s not stupid. He knows. So you can rest in God’s wisdom. And when God warns you about sin, such as sexual immorality, you should listen to Him. “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” You should listen to Him, because God is smarter than you are. When the wise, omniscient God gives us instructions, the moral laws of God, we should take His counsel. With God, I also find comfort in my circumstances. This is also sobering, because one day we will stand before this all-knowing God and give an account of our lives to him. How important that is.

Psalms 147:4 says, “He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.” The Living Bible translates this, “He counts the stars and calls them all by name.” Think about that. He has infinite knowledge.

Number five, the Bible reveals that God is omnipresent. That means that God is everywhere present all the time and completely. There is not a part of God in some places sometimes. There is no such thing as a “God-forsaken place.” God’s presence is “omni” or “all” present.

Then continuing in Psalm 139 with verse 7, it says, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” Notice these two rhetorical questions. The psalmist knows he can’t escape God, because He is omnipresent, He is everywhere.

The psalmist then gives the answers to his questions. Verse 8, “If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell...”—which in the Hebrew is “Sheol,” which could be “the grave” or “death”—“...behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand...”—this is human language to describe God, who doesn’t have a hand—“...shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day...”—I like that—“...the darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

God doesn’t say, “Turn the lights on; I can’t see!” We have flashlights for the dark, but God doesn’t need the light. Light and darkness make no difference to Him.

So whether it’s space and wherever I go, verse 8; or speed, “the wings of the morning,” verse 9; or darkness and light, verses 11-12, it doesn’t matter to God. God is omnipresent.

Sometimes when I’ve had to travel great distances in an airplane and flying at 30,000 feet over the North Pole and across the Atlantic, I may look out the window and see the vastness of God’s creation, and I think, God, you’re with me right here. Isn’t that a blessing to know that wherever you go, God is?

“The wings of the morning” is a Hebrew figure of speech about traveling at the speed of light. And if I go to the uttermost ends of the earth, there’s God. If I go in the other direction and die, there’s God; I can’t escape Him. Jonah tried to escape God and got swallowed by a whale. You can’t run from God. You can’t get on a ship to Tarshish and get away from the presence of God.

I heard the story of a little boy who was told about Jonah and the whale. His Sunday school teacher asked him, “What does this story teach you?” He said, “It teaches us that people make whales sick.” The whale vomited Jonah.

You can’t hide from God, because God is everywhere present. We cannot escape Him. In Psalm 23:4, David said, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...You are with me.” He will never leave you or forsake you. Nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” Romans 8:39.

Number six, the Bible tells us that God is omnipotent. That means that God is all-powerful. There is no limit to God’s power. That certainly comes into play in Genesis 1:1, where it says, “God created...”—the Hebrew word is “bara”—“...the heavens and the earth” out of nothing. It

was by His divine power. He just spoke them into existence. That's a marvelous truth.

We see his divine power in Psalm 139:13-18. I like this. The psalmist says, "For You formed my inward parts." This talks about God's power to create a human being. "You covered me..."—or "protected me"—"...in my mother's womb." And we wonder if abortion is the murder of a human being?! Read these verses. Is that a person in the womb? Yes. God protected me in my mother's womb.

Continuing in verse 14, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." So we were created. "Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame..."—or "my substance, my bones, my unformed body"—"...was not hidden from You when I was made in secret." These are "Hebrewisms" or figures of speech for a child developing in the womb. "...and skillfully wrought..."—we get our word "embroidered" from that—"...in the lowest parts of the earth." God knit me and embroidered me in my mother's womb.

Verse 16, "Your eyes..."—God doesn't have eyes, but we know he sees—"...saw my substance..."—or "my unformed body"—"...being yet unformed" or "unperfect." Unformed, yes; but not unhuman. "And in Your book they all..."—or "all my members"—"...were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." All my days have been written by God before any came to be.

Verse 17, "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!" I believe this is God thinking of us and not us thinking of Him. "How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You." So we go to sleep at night, and God stays awake and watches over us. God thinks about us.

So this is describing the omnipotent power of God to create in the womb. What a marvelous miracle of God! God is all powerful.

For the believer, it also means that God has the power to create us, to sustain us and to keep us, John 10:27-30. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." The Father and Jesus are one in essence. They are both divine. So God has the power to create us, to sustain us and to keep us.

Number seven, the Bible describes God as holy. Verses 19-24 say, "Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men. For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies." This is what is known as "righteous indignation."

Now here is his prayer, verse 23. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me..."—anything that is unholy—"...

and lead me in the way everlasting,” which is the way of holiness. So God is holy. God says in the Bible, “Be holy for I am holy.” That means that God is separate from sinners. There is nothing sinful or evil in God; He is perfectly righteous, pure and just.

Number eight, the Bible reveals that God is loving. 1 John 4:8 says, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” Oh, the love of God!

Number nine, God is merciful. Exodus 34:6-7 says, “The Lord...the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” God does not give us what we deserve.

Have you ever thought about the mercy of God? There is no reason why God should show us mercy. The reason lies in God Himself, who is a merciful God. It also means that God is compassionate. I would rather be judged by God than by people, because God is a lot more merciful than people. God is so kind. People are so cruel. He's compassionate and full of tender mercy. And every morning when I wake up, if I've exhausted His mercy the day before, they are “new every morning.” God does not give us what we deserve. The God of the Bible, the God of Genesis 1:1 who created the heavens and the earth, the God who is our Father in heaven, is merciful. He forgives our sins.

Number ten, God is gracious. Psalm 116:5 says, “Gracious is the Lord.” Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “By grace you have been saved.”

So God is merciful—He doesn't give us what we deserve, and God is gracious—He gives us what we don't deserve, which is eternal life or salvation.

Number eleven, God is our Father in heaven. He is our Father God. Some people say, “I didn't have a good father on earth.” God is nothing like that. He is kind, merciful, gracious, loving and compassionate. If you are a Christian, only Christians can say that God is their Father. God is the creator of all mankind, but He is the Father only of those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and are born again by the Spirit into the family of God. You then become His child, and He becomes your Father. So the Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. You can't say that God is your Father unless you've been born again through faith in Jesus Christ.

But when Jesus came, He said, “When you pray, ‘Our Father...’” Jesus used the word “Abba” for “Father.” It would be like saying, “Our Daddy, Our Papa.” It was a word used in the Hebrew when an infant first utters the word “Dada” or “Papa.” And it is only in Christianity that God is declared to be our Father. It's not even found in Judaism. In Judaism He is the Father of the nation but not the father of individuals. So to the Jew, it would be blasphemy to call God our “Abba.” Yet Jesus did that. Every time Jesus prayed, except when He was on the Cross and said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” He used the word “Abba.” And He instructed us to do the same.

The first line in the Apostles' Creed is, “I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven

and earth.” The implications are staggering: God created us, God sustains us and God is our Father.

In Matthew 6, Jesus was talking about God “our Father.” It means you don’t have to worry about what you’re going to eat or drink or what you’re going to wear. Sometimes when you get up in the morning, you stand in your closet and look around and say, “What am I going to wear?! O God, help me.” Those are the things the heathen worry about. Jesus said, “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him,” verse 8.

He said to the disciples, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these,” verses 28-29. Right now the California poppies are in bloom along the freeway. But you better go look at them today, because tomorrow they’ll be gone. They won’t last.

And Christians should be bird watchers. He said in Matthew 10:29 and 31, “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will....You are of more value than many sparrows.”

So God loves you and provides for you. He feeds you, clothes you and takes care of you. The Bible says in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

So you don’t have to worry. You have a Father who is all powerful, all present, all knowing, eternal, merciful, kind, loving and gracious. He’s your Father in heaven.