

# The Wholeness Of God

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*How do you imagine God? Your answer makes an immense difference!*

Most people agree that for salvation a Christian needs more than just a theoretical knowledge of God. Over the course of our lives, we increase our knowledge of Him through life's varied experiences. We also come to greater understanding by studying God's word. In both areas we can be snared by a major problem that traps many religious people in this world: emphasizing one of His attributes at the expense of others.

God is not one dimensional. Though we should study each of His attributes and think on them separately, we should not separate them from the complete personality that God is. Why? It distorts the model we are to imitate and grow into, and it can radically alter our expectations of what He will do. If He doesn't do what we expect, we're liable to become grieved because God "let us down."

For instance, the Bible emphasizes that God is merciful and full of grace. We should be thankful that He is! But we should not allow that to overshadow the fact that He is also just. If we do, His mercy can become a justification for failure to overcome besetting sins. Neither God's mercy nor justice can be separated from all that He is. Both are harmoniously applied to each situation and person He judges.

The same can be said of His compassion. Some see God as so compassionate that He disregards the causes of horrible problems and circumstances. If God acted in this manner, flaws with painful results would go uncorrected.

Still others construe God's sovereignty so that it greatly diminishes His goodness and portrays Him as rigid and inflexible. This person lives a guilt-ridden, fearful and discouraged life, thinking that he will never please Him.

Probably the most familiar of God's attributes is found in John's statement in I John 4:8: "God is love." John states a fact, not a definition of God's essential nature. If he had declared that love is what God is, we would be forced to conclude that God is what love is. Literally, if God is love, then literally, love is God, and we are obliged to worship love as the only true God. This would mean God and love are identical. Fortunately, the Bible reveals God is a multidimensional personality. If we eliminate the idea of God's complex personality, denying outright all His attributes save one, the remaining attribute becomes God, a very subtle form of idolatry. This is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's wholeness is an important subject because some have become enslaved to words. Instead, we must give greater weight to meanings. The Bible speaks of God as love and light, and that Christ is "the way, the truth and the life." We understand the words in the same sense as when we say of a man, "He is kindness itself." Of course, we do not suggest that kindness and the man are identical, and no one misunderstands our intention.

The words "God is love" mean that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God, but it is not all of God. He has many other attributes. He is self-existent, eternal, holy, merciful, full of grace, immutable, just, omnipotent, omniscient and many more things besides. Because God is immutable, He always acts as God, and because He is a whole and perfect personality, He never suspends one of His attributes to exercise another.

God never acts out of caprice, whimsy, irritation or resentment. He always acts in light of all the facts. David declares, "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9, New King James Version unless otherwise noted).

Psalm 105:5,7 says:

Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth. . . . He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth.

The beauty, harmony, balance and providence evident throughout the earth are witnesses of the wisdom, unity, harmony, and yes, the love in which He always acts.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God asserts:

Thus says the LORD, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches: but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD . . . .' (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

How important is it to know God? "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). As used here, eternal life is knowing God! He implies an intimate relationship with God that matures over a lifetime. Each party knows each other well, as familiarly as marriage partners. Thus Hosea observes, "Then shall we know, if we follow on [in the path of obedience] to know the LORD " (Hosea 6:3, KJV).

We admire good qualities in others and wish we had them. But we realize that the same people who have these good qualities lack others. Our God, though, has every good quality to the ultimate degree, and every attribute works in perfect and faithful harmony.

Studying God in His wholeness should teach us humility, caution in speech and action and a deep reverence of Him. Too often God's superiority overwhelms us when we compare it to our own state. Though we are imperfect and limited in this life, we should not undervalue our current level of growth. Don't allow God's incomparable perfection to derail your progress. Growth in godly character and personality is our calling—we are to be like Him!

Human life is a beginning: God made us in His image and is transforming us into the image of His Son. This process requires our cooperation in striving to "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:10). This is His will. And in bringing us to His perfection, He reveals His whole nature so we can know it and allow Him to reproduce it in us.