



On God

By

Mark McGee

Chapters

On Teaching About God	3
On God	13
On The Sovereignty of God	17
On The Holiness of God	24
On The Trinity	27

On Teaching About God

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” James 3:1

That Bible verse has bothered me for many years – as well it should. James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote a letter that hits followers of Christ hard, especially those who teach and lead. While that verse didn’t keep me from teaching the Bible, it has been a constant reminder of being careful about what I teach. Teachers will receive a “stricter judgment.”

That said, let me add that teachers who teach correctly also receive great reward. That reward includes pleasing God, being to the praise of His glory, and making disciples.

The Process

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20

Teaching is one aspect of the overarching process of **making disciples**. Jesus and Paul are two great examples for how the disciple-making process works.

“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. ”

Matthew 4:17-23

Note the process:

- Messenger – Jesus
- Message – Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand
- Method – Choose, Call, Challenge
- Motivation – Lead by example, Teach the truth

Notice the similar disciple-making process with Paul and Timothy:

“Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him.” Acts 16:1-3

“And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *is* the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, ‘Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” Acts 18:4-6

The result was Timothy’s becoming a disciple-maker.

“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” 1 Corinthians 4:17

Timothy played a vital role in Paul's ministry. He is mentioned many times in the Book of Acts and some of Paul's letters (e.g. 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Philemon). Notice the importance that correct doctrine (teaching) had in Paul's process with Timothy:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”

1 Timothy 1:1-7

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” 1 Timothy 1:18-20

“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Timothy 3:14-15

“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to

the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1 Timothy 4:6-16

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself.” 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

Paul ended his first letter to Timothy with a passionate and heart-felt challenge and a warning:

“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace *be* with you. Amen.” 1 Timothy 6:20-21

Paul wrote something similar in his second letter to Timothy:

“Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to

be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' 2 Timothy 2:14-19

The Doctrine

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” 2 Timothy 1:13-14

Many Christians believe we should be more progressive in our beliefs and practice. They regularly question me about why I emphasize words written by men who lived two-thousand years ago instead of embracing new ideas, new ways of thinking, new ways of practicing the Christian faith. My answer is quite simple: God commands that we believe, practice and teach what He revealed two-thousand years ago.

As Paul wrote Timothy – “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me.”

As Jesus told His disciples – “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” How long does God want us to teach people to observe all things that He commanded us? “even to the end of the age.”

The concept of progressive Christianity is a dangerous fallacy. It does not make disciples of Christ, it does not teach people to observe everything Jesus commanded, and it does not end well for those who believe it. But, you say, can't Christians be progressive? Absolutely! Here's how –

“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

If you want to truly be *progressive* in a way that God will bless and that your progress is evident to everyone:

- 1 Meditate on God's revealed Word
- 2 Give yourself entirely to them
- 3 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine that Jesus, Paul and the other apostles taught
- 4 Continue in them for the rest of your life
- 5 In doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you

That is another great reward of making disciples, teaching them to observe Christ's commands.

Teaching Notes

Something new that we're going to do beginning this year is share some *Teaching Notes* with you. Though I say "something new," many of the notes will be from more than 40 years ago. I recently found some of my teaching notes from the early-to-mid 1970's and thought it might be helpful to share them on the GraceLife Blog. One of the things I like to do from time to time is compare what I'm teaching now to what I was teaching decades ago. It goes back to what Paul wrote Timothy about holding fast "the pattern of sound words." As teachers of God's Word, are we holding fast to the pattern of sound words that Jesus and His apostles gave us? Are we

standing on solid ground when we open the Bible and teach the Gospel of Christ? Are we “progressing” in the right direction?

I hope and pray that this new series of **Teaching Notes** will be helpful to you in your service to the Lord.

On God

As I looked through those old teaching notes, I wondered if and how my thinking about God had changed through the years. I had come to Christian theism from atheism, so the reality of God's existence was the most exciting knowledge I had ever experienced.

What did I think about God in those early days of Christianity? What have I learned since then? What can I learn now from what I believed and taught then?

[These notes are from 40 years ago when I spoke to a group of pastors.]

Introduction

I am a personal believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son. I rebelled against the claims of a real and living God until May 10, 1971, at which time the Holy Spirit completed His work of drawing me to Jesus Christ. I bowed before Him in repentance and asked a loving Heavenly Father to forgive me and give me eternal life as a gift freely bestowed and in no way earned or deserved. Being a faithful God, Jesus saved me, has kept me saved, and will keep me saved until the day I am presented into eternity by His hand of mercy.

It is a great privilege and honor to serve this Living God through the ministry of overseeing and shepherding of His flock. It is my constant prayer that I will please Him in all I do and say.

There are especially two portions of God's Word that say so well what I believe and feel about the ministry:

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:10-11

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” Colossians 1:28-29

God

The idea of a personal God has permeated all societies and cultures. Many have been monotheistic (one God), while others have been polytheistic (many gods). It wasn't until modern times that major societies would accept

the idea of atheism (no God). Christian theology believes in one God known completely through three personalities (the Trinity).

The first four words of the Bible are - “In the beginning God.” No time is spent in the Scriptures to prove the existence of God. The simple statement is that He always existed and in the beginning of time and space He created the heavens and the earth.

The word for God in the Hebrew Old Testament is *Elohim*. Its form is plural but the construction is uniformly singular. Every use of the name God in Genesis 1 is *Elohim*. However, in Genesis 2 where God creates man, we are introduced to *Yehovah Elohim* (Lord God). God is not only the creator of man, but also his Lord!

The many variations of the name for God in the Bible teach us that He is the Rock (*Cur*), the Holy One (*Kadosh*), the Almighty (*Shadday*), the Mighty One (*Abhir*), the Most High (*Elyon*), Mighty (*Gibbor*), the God of sight — that sees (*El Roi*), Righteous (*Caddik*), Jealous (*Kanna*), the Lord of Hosts (*Cebha*), Jehovah will see it (*Yehovah yireh*), Jehovah is my banner (*Yehovah nicciy*), Jehovah is our righteousness (*Yehovah tsidqenuw*), Jehovah is peace (*Yehovah shalowm*), Jehovah is there (*Yehovah shammath*) and many others. From these names we derive much insight into the nature and attributes of God.

Everything we need to know about God is revealed to us in the Scriptures. God is eternal (Isaiah 57:15), Alive (Joshua 3:10), Spirit (John 4:24), One (Deuteronomy 6:4), Personal (John 17:1-3), Infinite (1 Kings 8:27), All-Powerful (Jeremiah 32:17, 32), Everywhere Present (Psalm 139:7-12), All-Knowing (1 John 3:20), Wise (Acts 15:18), Good (Psalm 145:9), Hater of sin (Psalm 5:5), Holy (Revelation 4:8), Impartial (1 Peter 1:17), Just (Psalm 89:14), Long-suffering (Exodus 34:6-7), Love (1 John 4:8, 16), Merciful (Lamentations 3:22-23) and Truth (Psalm 117:2).

We are highly privileged among men to call this Great and Mighty God our personal Heavenly Father!!

On The Sovereignty of God

We know what we know about God because He revealed Himself to us. We find His revelation in His Word, the Bible. God reveals Himself to be the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all life within the universe.

“Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.” Deuteronomy 4:39

God also reveals Himself as our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in trouble. Even if the earth is removed, and mountains are carried into the middle of the sea, and waters roar and are troubled, and mountains shake with the swelling, we will not fear. Why? Because we know God is in complete control.

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

- God is Solitary
- God is Supreme
- God is Sovereign

His Solitariness

Before the beginning there was God. God existed alone from eternity. God was perfectly pleased to dwell within Himself ... Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. That He did create was simply for His pleasure and manifest glory.

Romans 11:34-35 – “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”

Isaiah 40:15-18, 22-23 – “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? ... It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.”

“Such a One is to be revered, worshipped, adored. He is solitary in His majesty, unique in His excellency, peerless in His perfections. He sustains all, but is Himself independent of all. He gives to all and is enriched by none.” A.W. Pink, *The Solitariness of God*

His Supremacy

Romans 1:20 – “ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

“The ‘god’ of this twentieth century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The ‘god’ who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday School, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is the figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside of the pale of Christendom form ‘gods’ out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a ‘god’ out of their own carnal mind. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. a ‘god’ whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated,

possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits naught but contempt.” A.W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 – “Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.”

2 Chronicles 20:6 – “And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?”

Job 23:13 – “But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.”

Job 42:2 – “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.”

Psalm 115:3 – “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

Proverbs 21:1 – “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

Ephesians 1:11 – “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

His Sovereignty

Daniel 4:35 – “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

Isaiah 46:10-11 – “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

Deuteronomy 4:39 – “Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.”

Psalm 29:10 – “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.”

Psalm 47:2 – “For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.”

Psalm 83:18 – “That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.”

Psalm 93:1-5 – “The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.”

Psalm 135:6 – “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

Matthew 6:13 – “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

1 Timothy 1:17 – “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Revelations 19:11-16 – “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King Of Kings, And Lord Of Lords.”

“We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, that God is a law unto Himself, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any.” A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*

On The Holiness of God

God's name is found thousands of times in the Bible – as well it should be. The Bible reveals what God wants us to know about Him and what He is doing in Heaven and on earth.

In a previous *Teaching Note* we saw that God is Solitary, Supreme and Sovereign. We also know from Scripture that God is Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Immutable, Love, Good, Righteous, Just, and Merciful.

God created a host of beings called “angels” who serve Him in Heaven. They sing this song to God – “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:3) God also created beasts full of eyes before and behind who stand before God in Heaven and say – “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

The Holiness of God is a powerful theme, both in Heaven and on earth.

What do we mean by “the holiness of God?”

One eminent theologian wrote – “By the holiness of God we mean that He is absolutely separate from and exalted above all His creatures, and that

He is equally separate from moral evil and sin. In the first sense His holiness is not really an attribute that is coordinate with the other attributes, but is rather coextensive with them all. It denotes the perfection of God in all that He is. In the second sense it is viewed as the eternal conformity of His being and His will. In God we have purity of being before purity of willing. God does not will the good because it is good, nor is the good good because God wills it; else there would be a good above God or the good would be arbitrary and changeable. Instead God's will is the expression of His nature, which is holy."

Revelation 15:4 – "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

1 John 1:5 – "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Exodus 15:11 – "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Psalm 30:4 – "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

Psalm 98:1 – “O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.”

Psalm 103:1 – “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

Psalm 145:17 – “The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”

Psalm 99:5 – “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.”

1 Peter 1:16 – “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

“This is the prime way of honouring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services of Him, as when we aspire to a conversing with Him with unstained spirits, and live to Him in living like Him.” Stephen Charnock

- God is Holy (*hagios*)
- We are saints (*hagios*)
- We are sanctified (*haziazō*)

On The Trinity

While other religions believe that God is holy (e.g. Judaism, Islam), the Christian belief about God is different than all other religions on earth. We look now at the **Trinity** – a belief exclusive to Christianity.

- Genesis 1 introduces us to a Creating God. He made everything that was made.
- According to verses 26-27 – *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... So God created man in his own image.”*
- Here the Scriptures introduce to us a plural God who is one. God creates man in Their image and His image.

Matthew 28:19 teaches us that the Three Members of the Godhead (the Trinity) are:

- 1 The Father
- 2 The Son
- 3 The Holy Spirit

They are also placed in a position of being equal to each other in other Scriptures (e.g. Galatians 4:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

The Holy Spirit is called God in Acts 5:3-4 and was actively involved in creation as God (Genesis 1:2).

- Isaiah speaks of a future time when God would honor Galilee of the Gentiles by giving a male child to the people of Israel who be called “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:1-6)
- The Apostle John claimed that Jesus was God the Son (John 1:1-18).
- The Apostle Matthew records the baptism of Jesus and says that God the Spirit descended upon Him and God the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)
- The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus was the image of the invisible God and the Creator of all things (Colossians 1:15-17).
- Paul told the Philippians that Jesus was in His very nature God and totally equal to God (Philippians 2:6).
- The Apostle Thomas called Jesus “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).
- The Apostle Peter believed Jesus to be “the Son of the living God” (John 6:69).
- The demons believed Jesus was the “Son of the most high God” (Mark 5:7).
- God the Father called Jesus “O God” (Hebrews 1:8).
- Jesus claimed to be God, the “I am” (John 8:58).

Understanding the Trinity is an important part of comprehending how God has worked and is working in the lives of people.

[Thank you for reading these teaching notes from 40 years ago. My prayer is they will be a blessing to you and your ministry.]