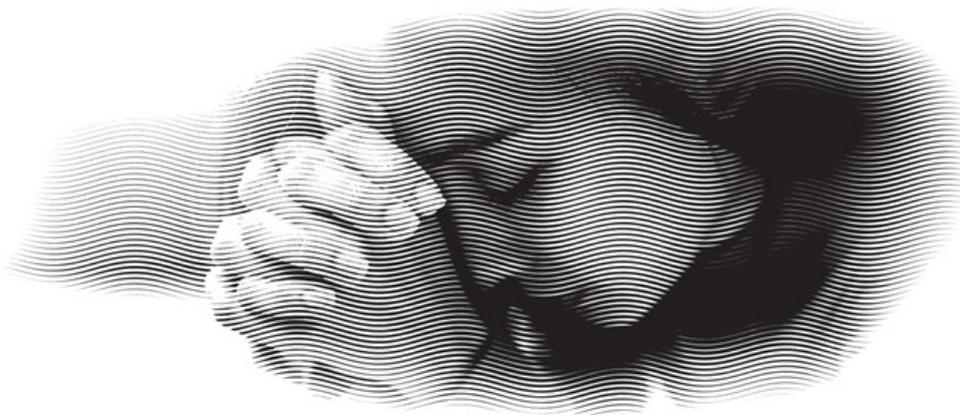


LESSON 2 *April 4–10

To Know God



Sabbath Afternoon

Read for This Week's Study: [Gen. 3:1–5](#), [Lev. 20:26](#), [1 Sam. 2:2](#), [1 John 4:7–19](#), [Gen. 1:1](#), [Gen. 2:7](#), [Matt. 1:23](#), [Matt. 28:20](#).

Memory Text: “‘And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’ ” ([John 17:3, NKJV](#)).

Having a clear understanding of God's character is foundational to having a strong relationship with Him. That is why, this week, we will look carefully at what the Bible says about the character of God, keeping in mind that it “is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. . . . The last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.

It seems impossible to describe God adequately, and so the most we can do is point to what the Bible says about Him. Although we will never know, especially now, everything there is to know about God's wonderful character, let's pray that as we learn more about Him, our understanding of and love for Him will deepen, so that, ultimately, we will want to grow closer to Him in order to reflect His love and character to others.

* *Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 11.*

A Clearer Picture of God

The Bible gives the truest, clearest, and most consistent picture of God. The entire Bible seeks to peel back the unseen veil between our visible world and the invisible; to show us where we've come from and where we're going; and, ultimately, to show us who is in control and what God is like.

From Genesis to Revelation, we read about the one true God, who makes Himself known to us through the Bible and through Jesus Christ, God incarnate. We can read about God's omnipotence (Job 1:12), His omniscience, His all-knowing nature (Isa. 46:9, 10), His justice (Isa. 30:18), His mercy (Deut. 7:9), His loving-kindness and patience with us (Rom. 2:4), His wisdom (1 Cor. 2:7), His grace (2 Cor. 12:9), His forgiveness (Matt. 6:14), His will for our lives (Jer. 29:11), His power to defeat death (John 11:25), His kingship (Ps. 47:8), His eternal nature (Deut. 33:27), and many other characteristics that give us abundant reasons to love and have an abiding relationship with Him. The more we know about God and what He is like, the more we will love Him and desire a close and abiding relationship with Him.

It was Lucifer who first doubted God's character. His doubts about who God is ultimately led to the greatest battle in the history of our universe. Ever since that time, "it is Satan's constant study to keep the minds of men occupied with those things which will prevent them from obtaining the knowledge of God."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740. Satan doesn't care what kind of picture of God we have (pantheism, polytheism, deism, etc.), as long as it's not an accurate one.

Read [Genesis 3:1–5](#). What was Satan's goal in his conversation with Eve? What lies did he tell Eve about God's character?

Ultimately, Satan's message to Eve was this: *God is keeping secrets from you. God does not want what is best for you. You can't trust Him.* Ellen White expands on this when she says, "From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character and to excite rebellion against His law."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 338.

How is God's character misrepresented in our world? More important, how might you, at times, have misrepresented His character to others? If you have, what can you do to change with the Holy Spirit's help? How can you show God's love to the people around you?

MONDAY April 6

God Is Holy

Holiness is not a word that most people use very often in their everyday language, perhaps because there are so few holy things around us and about us. The Sabbath is a holy day in time, and God is, of course, holy. Apart from God, our everyday lives lack holiness.

If you do a study into the attributes most often associated with God's character, you'll discover that holiness is at the center of who God is. But what does that mean?

How do the following verses describe God: [Leviticus 20:26](#), [1 Samuel 2:2](#), [Isaiah 57:15](#), and [Ezekiel 38:23](#)?

When the Bible describes God as the epitome of holiness, it means that He is completely void of and completely separated from evil and sin. God is 100 percent good from beginning to end. In this sense, God's holiness is central to all His other attributes.

For example, God's love is a pure, holy love—a love that is completely free from all selfishness and egotistic motives. His omniscience (all-knowing) is holy omniscience, meaning it is free from evil intentions. Would we trust an omniscient God if He weren't holy? Of course not! We would be afraid of Him, and rightly so.

God's omnipotence (being all-powerful) is holy omnipotence. Imagine a God who is omnipotent but not holy. He could be a powerful, evil tyrant. Only God's holiness allows and enables us to really love Him, because He is good from beginning to end. This is why holiness is perhaps the most important characteristic to understand about God's character. Yet, perhaps, it is one of the most misunderstood, as well.

Think about Bible characters such as Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and John who came into God's presence. What was their first response? They removed their shoes, hid their faces, or fell down as though dead. As human beings, we are sinful and so unholy that we can't bear to stand in God's presence. Any human who looks at God's face will not live. Similarly, when Ellen G. White went into vision, she often cried "Glory . . . glory . . . glory" because it was the one word that seemed to most capture what she saw. And, of course, the four living creatures do not rest day or night without saying, " 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!' " ([Rev. 4:8, NKJV](#)).

Truly, God is pure holiness, and when we come to Him, we must see Him as such. How does knowing this inspire you? In what ways does this challenge you regarding your own character?

God Is Love

Love is perhaps the most common word used by Christians to describe God's character. This could be because of the identity statement about God in 1 John 4:8, which says, "God is love." John doesn't say, "God is loving," but rather, "God is love." Love is His character, the very essence of who He is.

For many people, their picture of God emerges from their human definition of love, which is always distorted and imperfect. Instead, our very definition of love should be shaped by who God is and what He reveals about Himself in His inspired Word.

What does [1 John 4:7-19](#) explain to us about love?

God's love is perfect, free, and deeply relational, as revealed in the repeated invitation to "abide" in Him in 1 John, because "we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16, NKJV). God is love, and He created us in His image (Gen. 1:27) to love and to desire love. In Hebrew, one major word for love is *hesed*. This describes God's covenant love for humanity, which encompasses traits of loyalty, protectiveness, steadfastness, and tenderness.

The ancient languages of Hebrew and Greek use many different names to refer to God, names whose meanings capture and shed light on different aspects of God's beautiful character. Here are just two examples: • *Adonai*: The Lord of all, who reigns forever, in reference to the covenant (Gen. 15:2, Judg. 6:15, Mal. 1:6, Ps. 97:5). • *Yahweh-Yireh*: The-Lord-Will-Provide ([Gen. 22:13, 14](#), NKJV).

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Ultimately, the greatest expression of God's love is revealed through the gift of His Son to this earth ([John 3:16](#)) who died for sinners ([Rom. 5:8](#)). God could have withheld this from humanity, yet because of His magnanimous, radical, supremely altruistic love, God sent Jesus to earth so that we might freely choose to respond to His love, revealed in His substitutionary death on our behalf. Not only did Jesus bridge the separation that sin has brought between us and God ([Isa. 59:1, 2](#)), He lived to show us God's perfect character of love ([John 14:9, Heb. 1:3](#)) and to draw all people to Himself ([John 12:32](#)).

Many of God's names capture His holiness and love at their core. Read [1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#) (NKJV), and in every case, replace the word "love" with "God." How does this expand your understanding of God's character? If you were to place your name where it says "love," how well would that fit you?

WEDNESDAY April 8

God in Creation

You probably know from memory the first words in the Bible: “In the beginning God.” In Hebrew, the word for God here is Elohim. Although this word can be used when talking about false “gods,” when it refers to the one true God, it describes an almighty, all-powerful Creator in connection with the whole of creation; the transcendent God who is beyond our understanding but in control of everything. He is so powerful that when He speaks, something is created just from His voice.

But in the next chapter, Genesis 2, there appears a different name for God: Yahweh. This name connects to Elohim (*Yahweh Elohim*), the same all-powerful, almighty God; but the name Yahweh is the more personal name of the one true God, often used to emphasize that God is the covenant God, in loving relation with His created people.

Compare the descriptions of God in [Genesis 1:1](#) and [Genesis 2:7](#). What do you notice?

In [Genesis 2:7](#), we can imagine God kneeling to form the first human being out of the ground with His own hands. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” This is a God who gets close—so close that He breathes into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life. This name, Yahweh, presents a more intimate picture of God, but Moses uses both names in the first two chapters of the Bible to describe these two characteristics of God to us.

How astonishing! We see here God’s transcendence to us as Elohim, and His immanence, His closeness to us, as Yahweh. How good for us to think of both of these aspects of God’s character: His overall control of everything and His nearness to us. As Paul said to the Athenians on Mars Hill: “ ‘He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being’ ” (Acts 17:27, 28, NKJV).

It’s important that we continue to seek a clear, balanced picture of God based on what the Bible tells us about God’s character in order to grow in a relationship with Him. This is why it’s important to read all parts of the Bible rather than focusing on only one portion. Truly, the more we learn about the character of God, the more we will learn to love Him.

Read as Elihu describes some of God’s attributes in [Job 36:24–33](#) and [Job 37](#). Then read God’s declaration of His omnipotence in [Job 38](#) and [Job 39](#). What do these passages reveal to us about God?

THURSDAY April 9

Immanuel, God With Us

If you were looking to share with a non-Christian a description from the Bible about God's character, where would you turn?

The best answer, of course, would be to Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus not only reflects God but reveals God. There are many Bible passages that explain this, but the one that does so most simply is John 14:9. Here, Jesus says, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (NKJV). In order to know more about what God the Father is like, we should look to Jesus—His words, His actions, His manner, and His great love toward humanity as displayed in His death and resurrection.

The love and care of the Father is most clearly expressed in His Son, Jesus. The beauty of the Bible is that God has given us four rich perspectives on the life of Jesus so that we can have a fuller picture of who He is. In Matthew (written by a Jew, for Jews), we see Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah who fulfilled what was promised. In Mark, we see Jesus living an active life of service and sacrifice. He was always thinking of others and always responsive to the will of His Father. In Luke, we can read about how Jesus felt, with His humanity and compassion, and we can read this account to have assurance that what we read is true (Luke 1:3, 4). In John, we see the incarnate Son of God and are invited to believe that Jesus is who He says He is, so that our spiritual lives can be revived. Although all four Gospels explore the same ground, "they do not represent things in just the same style. Each writer has an experience of his own, and this diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds."—Ellen G. White, Manuscript 105, 1900. Which Gospel have you read most recently?

In [Matthew 1:23](#), a specific name is given to Jesus. Why is this so significant in understanding God's character? Read [Matthew 28:20](#), focusing on the last part of the verse. Compare these two verses. What do you notice?

Paul prays "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will." Paul describes knowing God's will as "wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9, NKJV). Wisdom comes, first of all, by trusting God fully, being willing to do His will (John 7:17), and not leaning on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5). But the question often arises, "What is God's will for me in this situation?" There are four main sources from which we may learn God's will as we seek it prayerfully:

We've touched only the surface of this huge topic, the character of God. God is greater and more incredible than we can fathom, and we will forever be learning about Him into eternity.

God deserves our praise for who He is and what He has done and is doing in our lives. Take some time now to offer up a prayer of praise to God for who He is. Be specific about what the Bible tells you about God. (For example, "Thank You, God, for being _____, as You tell me in _____.")

FRIDAY April 10

Further Thought: God calls His people to represent His character, but to do this, we need to know Him for ourselves. The best way to see Him clearly, despite our sinful human eyes that too often misunderstand His holy and perfect ways, is through searching His Word, the Bible.

“All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it. Yet as we study the Bible and meditate upon the life of Christ and the plan of redemption, these great themes will open to our understanding more and more.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. As you consider the attributes of God that you've studied this week, which one has most impacted your understanding of God?**
- 2. What other attributes of God could you study to deepen and strengthen your relationship with Him?**
- 3. With a family member or friend, read or listen to *Steps to Christ*, chapter 1, and discuss it together. What new insights about God's character and Jesus has this chapter made you think about?**
- 4. Many people have a distorted picture of God, which Jesus came to correct. What can you do to share a clear, accurate picture of God's character to those in your sphere of influence?**
- 5. Consider again what you learned on Monday's reading. Although we're clearly sinful and not holy, the Bible also makes some clear statements about God's people living holy lives. Read [1 Peter 1:13-16](#), [Romans 6:22](#), and [Hebrews 12:14](#). God is holy and invites us to be holy. But what does it really mean to live a holy life?**

Summary: From the beginning of Creation, God has desired to be in a close relationship with us. Although our understanding of His character is the target of Satan's attacks, God reveals Himself to us most clearly through His Word and through the life of His Son, Jesus. Ultimately, having a clear, beautiful picture of God is essential if we want to deepen our relationship with Him.

Refusing to Fly on Sabbath

Seventh-day Adventist entrepreneur Kasereka Maghulu Kavatsi built a business empire in the Democratic Republic of Congo that included farming, fishing, clothing, and a cargo airline called Kavatsi Airlines.

At one point, Kavatsi Airlines leased a Boeing 707 jet from a partner in Kenya. It was a complicated agreement involving the Kenyan partner leasing the plane from a Dubai company, and the Dubai company in turn leasing the plane from the owner in Britain. Under the lease terms, Kavatsi Airlines was to share its profits with the entities in Kenya, Dubai, and Britain.

The cargo transports went smoothly until bad weather canceled a flight on a Friday. The Kenyan partner insisted that the flight take off on Saturday, but Kasereka refused. “There is no way that I can fly on Sabbath,” he said.

The partner called Dubai. “We gave this man our jet, and he doesn’t want to fly on Saturday,” he said. “Try to convince him. This is a business matter.”

The Dubai company appealed to Kasereka, but he wouldn’t waver. So, the Dubai company contacted the British owner, a white man who knew Swahili. He called Kasereka and asked, “Why aren’t you flying today?”

“I’m a Seventh-day Adventist,” Kasereka said.

“Is that a church?”

“Yes, it’s a church.”

Then the owner contacted other people who had leased aircraft to Kavatsi Airlines and asked about Kasereka. They described him as a good man.

“This is a matter of faith,” they said. “The Sabbath is related to his faith.”

The owner instructed his partners in Dubai and Kenya to back off.

“It’s a matter of faith, so leave him alone,” he said.

During the four-month lease, Kasereka flew the jet every day of the week except on Sabbath. Then he returned the aircraft.

A year later, the British owner made a phone call to Kasereka. “I’d like to meet you face-to-face,” he said. “I want to come to your house and see where you live.”

The man flew to the Democratic Republic of Congo and stayed in Kasereka’s guesthouse. “I came here with a purpose,” he said. “I wanted to know if I would find a man still holding onto the faith that made him refuse to fly on Saturdays.”

Then he dropped a bombshell.

“I have never made such a big profit as I did during those four months that we worked together,” he said. “Because of your faith, I’m giving you a small aircraft for free.” He presented Kasereka with an 18-seat private jet.

Kasereka was humbled and amazed.

“I am just serving the Lord,” he replied.



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