



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

KNOWING GOD

God's Heart

What Is God Really Like?

The Short Answer

God's heart is holy, loving, just, merciful, faithful, and fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

Opening Memory Anchor

God's heart is holy, loving, just, merciful, faithful, and fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

Welcome

This guide is meant to send you back to Scripture This Companion is designed for guided self-study or small-group use. Part One provides an accessible foundation for understanding God's character and heart. Part Two moves into deeper questions about God's attributes, holiness and love, divine emotions, judgment, salvation, suffering, the Holy Spirit, and how God's people should reflect His character.

Foundational truth God's heart is holy, just, compassionate, merciful, faithful, and full of steadfast love - and Jesus shows us the Father perfectly.

How to use this study • Open and read the cited passages rather than relying only on the summaries. • Let Scripture define God rather than experiences, assumptions, culture, or human teachers. • Use the Memory Anchors to retain the central ideas. • Where faithful Christians disagree about a secondary theological question, hold tightly to what Scripture clearly says.

Part One

WHAT IS GOD REALLY LIKE? One of the most important questions anyone can ask is: What is God really like? People answer that question in many ways. Some imagine God as distant. Some picture Him mainly as angry. Some think of Him as a kindly grandfather who overlooks everything. Others build their picture of God primarily from experiences with parents, churches, religious leaders, suffering, or disappointment. But Christians do not have to guess what God is like. God has revealed Himself. Read Exodus 34:5-7. God describes Himself as compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with faithful love, forgiving sin - and also perfectly just. God is not loving instead of holy. He is not merciful instead of just. He is not patient because sin does not matter. The Bible reveals one God whose character is perfectly consistent.

Memory Anchor God's heart is holy, just, compassionate, merciful, faithful, and full of steadfast love - and Jesus shows us the Father perfectly.

1. WHAT DOES “GOD’S HEART” MEAN? Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. The Bible sometimes uses the word heart to describe the center of desires, purposes, thoughts, intentions, and affections. When this study speaks about God’s heart, it asks what God loves, desires, opposes, and has revealed about His character. This phrase does not mean God is merely a larger version of a human being whose emotions fluctuate unpredictably. The goal is to understand God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture.

2. CAN WE REALLY KNOW GOD? Read Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20; Hebrews 1:1-3. Yes - but only because God makes Himself known. Creation reveals a powerful Creator, and God has revealed much more through His Word and ultimately through His Son. Christianity is not humanity climbing upward and discovering God through enough intelligence or spirituality. It is God graciously making Himself known.

3. CAN WE UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING ABOUT GOD? Read Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36. No. God truly reveals Himself, but He does not reveal everything. Christians can know God genuinely without knowing Him exhaustively. Humility therefore belongs to theology. Sometimes the faithful answer is: Scripture tells us this much. Beyond that, we should be careful.

4. WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER? Read Exodus 3:13-15; Psalm 90:1-2. God simply is who He is. He is not becoming God, did not develop His character, and does not receive His goodness from a standard above Himself. God is eternal, self-existent, perfect, and unchanging in His character. Everything else exists because God gives it existence.

5. IS GOD HOLY? Read Isaiah 6:1-7; Revelation 4:8; 1 John 1:5.

Yes. God's holiness includes His absolute moral purity and His complete distinction from everything sinful and created. There is no evil, corruption, deceit, or moral darkness in Him. His love is holy love, His mercy is holy mercy, and His justice is holy justice.

6. IS GOD GOOD? Read Psalm 34:8; Psalm 119:68; Mark 10:17-18. Yes. God does not merely do good things; God is good. All true goodness ultimately finds its source and standard in Him. Christians can trust God's character even when they do not understand His circumstances or timing.

7. IS GOD LOVE? Read 1 John 4:7-10. Yes. Scripture says God is love. Love belongs to His character. Biblical love must be defined by God. God's love is truthful, holy, faithful, sacrificial, patient, generous, and morally serious. It never requires Him to approve what is evil.

8. DID GOD BEGIN LOVING WHEN HE CREATED PEOPLE? Read John 17:20-26. No. Before creation, the Father loved the Son. The eternal God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - did not create because He was lonely or incomplete. Creation flows from God's abundance, not His deficiency.

9. WHAT IS GOD'S COMPASSION? Read Psalm 103:8-14; Exodus 3:7-8; Matthew 9:35-38. Compassion means God is not indifferent toward human weakness, suffering, and need. Scripture repeatedly shows God seeing suffering and responding with compassion. Jesus likewise saw struggling people and had compassion on them. God sees, cares, and acts.

10. WHAT IS GOD'S MERCY? Read Ephesians 2:1-7. Mercy describes God withholding deserved judgment and showing compassion toward those in need. Human beings are not rescued because they deserve rescue;

God is rich in mercy. Mercy is not God pretending sin does not matter. The cross shows how seriously God takes both mercy and justice.

11. WHAT IS GRACE? Read Ephesians 2:8-9. Grace is God's undeserved favor and generosity. Salvation cannot be earned. Christians do not present God with a sufficiently good life and receive salvation as payment. Grace means the testimony is not 'Look what I achieved,' but 'Look what God has done.'

12. IS GOD PATIENT? Read Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4. Yes. God describes Himself as slow to anger. His anger is not impulsive, unstable, petty, or uncontrolled. God repeatedly gives people opportunities to repent. His patience should never be mistaken for approval.

13. IS GOD FAITHFUL? Read Deuteronomy 7:9; 2 Timothy 2:13; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2.

Completely. Human faithfulness can fluctuate; God's does not. He keeps His promises, remains true to His character, and does not lie. Christian hope rests ultimately on who God is, not on the believer's ability to control the future.

14. WHAT IS GOD'S "STEADFAST LOVE"? Read Psalm 136. The Old Testament repeatedly describes God with a Hebrew word often translated steadfast love, lovingkindness, faithful love, or covenant love. The word is commonly transliterated hesed. The emphasis includes loyal, committed, covenant faithfulness. God does not love His people with disposable love.

15. DOES GOD CARE ABOUT JUSTICE? Read Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 1:16-17; Micah 6:8. Deeply. God cares about truth, righteousness, fairness, oppression, violence, exploitation, and the treatment of vulnerable people. Christianity cannot reduce righteousness to private religious behavior while ignoring how people treat others. Biblical justice begins with God's standards.

16. DOES GOD HATE ANYTHING? Read Proverbs 6:16-19. Yes. Because God is good, He opposes evil. Scripture describes Him as opposing pride, deceit, murder, injustice, wickedness, idolatry, oppression, and other evil. Love that never opposes evil would not be morally good love. God's hatred of evil is connected to His goodness.

17. DOES GOD GET ANGRY? Read Romans 1:18; Psalm 7:11; Nahum 1:2-7. Yes. The Bible speaks repeatedly about God's anger or wrath toward sin. God's wrath is not equivalent to sinful human rage. God's anger is His holy opposition to evil. Scripture can say both that God is slow to anger and that He is just.

18. HOW CAN GOD BE LOVING AND ANGRY? Because love and moral anger are not opposites. The deeper the love for what is good, the stronger the opposition to what destroys it may become. God loves what is good; therefore God opposes evil. His wrath is not a defect in His love. In God, love and holiness are perfectly united.

19. DOES GOD FORGIVE? Read Psalm 103:8-12; Isaiah 55:6-7; Micah 7:18-19. Yes. God delights to show mercy to repentant sinners. Biblical forgiveness does not mean sin is imaginary; God forgives real guilt. How can a just God forgive guilty people? The answer leads directly to Jesus.

20. DOES GOD WANT PEOPLE TO REPENT? Read Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32; Acts 17:30-31. Yes. God calls sinners to turn from sin and live. Repentance is not making ourselves worthy of God; it is turning from rebellion toward the God who offers mercy. God's warnings themselves can be expressions of mercy: do not keep walking toward destruction; turn back.

21. DOES GOD PURSUE PEOPLE?

Read Genesis 3:8-9; Luke 19:10. Scripture repeatedly shows God taking the initiative. After Adam and Eve sin, God comes looking for them. God calls Abraham, rescues Israel, sends prophets, and seeks wandering people. The Gospel is not primarily humanity successfully searching for God. It is the story of God acting to rescue sinners.

22. WHAT DOES THE PRODIGAL SON TEACH ABOUT GOD'S HEART? Read Luke 15:11-32. The younger son rebels and returns expecting servant status. The father runs to him, embraces him, restores him, and celebrates. Jesus also includes the older brother, who is physically near the father but does not understand the father's heart. The father goes out toward both. Luke 15 shows a God who rejoices when the lost are found.

23. DOES GOD CARE ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE FAR FROM HIM? Read Jonah 4:9-11; Genesis 12:1-3. Yes. Jonah cared more about his plant than Nineveh; God cared about the city. God's concern extends beyond one nation, ethnicity, culture, or social group. From God's covenant with Abraham, His plan looked outward toward all families of the earth.

24. DOES GOD CARE ABOUT THE VULNERABLE? Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 1:17; James 1:27. Repeatedly. Scripture mentions widows, orphans, foreigners, the poor, oppressed people, and those without social power. God's people are commanded to reflect His character by caring about those who can easily be ignored or exploited.

25. DOES GOD SHOW FAVORITISM? Read Acts 10:34-35; James 2:1-9. No. God does not evaluate people according to wealth, status, appearance,

nationality, influence, or prestige. At the cross, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, religious and irreligious alike need grace. Every person stands dependent upon God.

26. IS GOD A FATHER? Read Matthew 6:9; John 20:17; Romans 8:14-17. Yes. Jesus teaches His disciples to know God as Father. God's fatherhood communicates relationship, authority, care, provision, discipline, and love. For Christians, this becomes especially personal through adoption. Believers are welcomed into God's family through Christ.

27. WHAT IF MY EARTHLY FATHER WAS NOT LOVING? Read Psalm 27:10. The language of God as Father may initially be difficult for someone whose earthly father was abusive, absent, neglectful, unpredictable, or emotionally distant. God should not be interpreted through the failures of human fathers. Human fatherhood is measured against God - not the other way around. Trust may take time to grow emotionally even when the truth is understood intellectually.

28. DOES GOD DISCIPLINE HIS CHILDREN? Read Hebrews 12:5-11; Romans 8:1. Yes. God's discipline is presented as an expression of fatherly love. Discipline is not identical to condemnation. God's correction aims toward holiness and maturity. A loving parent does not ignore everything that harms a child.

29. DOES GOD ENJOY PUNISHING PEOPLE? Read Ezekiel 33:11; Lamentations 3:31-33. Scripture does not portray God as cruelly delighting in suffering. He calls the wicked to turn and live. Judgment is real, and Scripture also reveals God's compassion. Christians should neither portray God as eager to hurt people nor erase biblical judgment because it is uncomfortable.

30. HOW DOES JESUS SHOW US GOD'S HEART? Read John 1:14-18; John 14:8-11; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:1-3. Jesus is not merely one more teacher telling us about God. He is the Son who perfectly reveals the Father. Look at Jesus: He welcomes children, touches the unclean, weeps, confronts hypocrisy, defends truth, forgives sinners, calls people to repentance, shows compassion, opposes exploitation, serves, suffers, and gives His life. Jesus does not soften an otherwise harsh God; He reveals the God who sent Him.

31. IS JESUS MORE LOVING THAN THE FATHER? Read John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20. No. The common picture of an angry Father and loving Jesus is not the biblical Gospel. The Father loved the world and sent the Son; the Son loved us and gave Himself. The cross is the saving work of the Triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit act in

perfect unity.

32. WHAT DOES THE CROSS REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S HEART? Read Romans 3:21-26; Romans 5:6-8. At the cross we see God's holiness - sin is serious; God's justice - evil is not ignored; God's love - God acts to rescue sinners; God's mercy - guilty people can be forgiven; and God's grace - salvation is given, not earned. The cross does not force Christians to choose between 'God is just' and 'God is loving.' At the cross, we see both.

33. WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION REVEAL? Read Acts 2:22-36; Romans 6:8-11. Jesus did not remain dead. The resurrection declares Christ's victory over death and confirms the Father's saving work through the Son. Christian hope rests not merely on the idea that God loves. It rests on what God has done in history: Jesus died, Jesus rose, and death will not win.

34. WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM HIS PEOPLE? Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:34-40; Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:10-17. Love God. Love others. Biblical obedience grows from relationship with God. God desires lives shaped by justice, mercy, humility, faithfulness, worship, and obedience. Religious performance without transformed character can deeply dishonor God.

35. WHAT KIND OF HEART DOES GOD WANT TO FORM IN US? Read Ephesians 4:31-5:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16. A heart increasingly like His. Because God is forgiving, His people forgive. Because God is compassionate, His people show compassion. Because God loves truth, His people become truthful. Because God cares about justice, His people should care about justice. Because God is generous, His people become generous. Because God is holy, His people pursue holiness. God does not form this character through human effort alone; the Holy Spirit works within believers, and God forms His people together as a community that reflects His heart. Part Two returns to both themes.

36. WHAT IF I DO NOT FEEL LOVED BY GOD?

Read Romans 5:6-8; Romans 8:31-39. Feelings matter, but feelings are not always reliable interpreters of reality. Guilt, grief, trauma, disappointment, unanswered prayer, loneliness, depression, spiritual dryness, or distorted teaching can affect how God's love feels. Christian assurance does not rest primarily on the intensity of a feeling. It rests on Christ. When emotions say 'God cannot love me,' the Gospel directs the believer toward the cross.

37. DOES GOD LOVE ME BECAUSE I AM GOOD? Read Romans 5:8. No. Christ died for sinners. God's grace does not wait until someone becomes impressive enough to deserve it. This protects Christians from pride and despair. The Gospel answers both: salvation is grace.

38. CAN ANYTHING SEPARATE CHRISTIANS FROM GOD'S LOVE? Read Romans 8:31-39. Paul names suffering, persecution, danger, spiritual powers, death, life, present circumstances, and future uncertainty, then expresses confidence in God's love revealed in Christ Jesus. That does not mean Christians will never suffer. It means suffering cannot ultimately defeat God's saving purpose.

39. WHAT SHOULD KNOWING GOD'S HEART PRODUCE IN US? Read 1 John 4:19-21. Not merely more information. Knowing God's love should produce love; His mercy, mercy; His forgiveness, forgiveness; His holiness, reverence; His justice, concern for righteousness; His patience, patience; His grace, humility. The proper response to knowing God is becoming increasingly shaped by what we know.

40. WHAT IS THE SIMPLEST WAY TO REMEMBER GOD'S HEART? Read Exodus 34:5-7; John 14:9; Romans 5:8; Revelation 21:1-5. Remember God's self-revelation to Moses. Then look to Jesus. Then look to the cross. Then look toward the future. The Bible's story reveals the same God: Creator, holy, just, compassionate, merciful, patient, faithful, loving, redeeming, restoring.

Part One Review Can Human Beings Define God However They Want? No. God Reveals Himself. Can We Know Everything About God? No. We Can Know Him Truly Without Knowing Him Exhaustively. Is God Holy, Good, Loving, Compassionate, Merciful, Patient, Faithful, And Just? Yes. Can God Be Loving And Angry At Evil? Yes. Holy Love Opposes What Is Evil And Destructive. Does God Forgive? Yes. Forgiveness Is Offered Through His Grace. Does God Care About People Far From Him And Vulnerable People? Yes. Is God Like Imperfect Earthly Fathers? No. God Defines Perfect Fatherhood. Does Jesus Reveal A Kinder God Than The Father? No. Jesus Perfectly Reveals The Father. What Does The Cross Reveal? God'S Holiness, Justice, Love, Mercy, And Grace. What Should Knowing God Produce? Worship, Trust, Repentance, Obedience, Humility, Love, Mercy, And Increasingly Christlike Character.

Want To Go Deeper?

Part Two - Intermediate Knowing That God Is Loving And Compassionate Is One Thing. But Scripture Also Raises Difficult Questions: Why Does A Loving God Judge? Why Are Some Old Testament Judgments So Severe? What Does It Mean That God Is

Jealous? Does God Experience Emotions Exactly As Humans Do? Why Does Scripture Sometimes Say God Regretted Something Or Changed His Mind If God Is Unchanging? Does God Love Everyone In Exactly The Same Way? Why Are All People Not Saved? How Do Sovereignty And Human Response Fit Together? Does Mercy Mean Everyone Will Eventually Be Saved? These Questions Deserve Careful Treatment. The Goal Is Not To Make God Fit Our Expectations. The Goal Is To Let Scripture Shape Our Understanding Of God.

Knowing God As He Has Revealed Himself

41. WHAT ARE GOD’S ATTRIBUTES? Theologians often use the word attributes to describe qualities Scripture reveals about God: holiness, love, goodness, justice, mercy, grace, faithfulness, wisdom, power, knowledge, presence, eternity, and immutability. The word is theological vocabulary that helps organize biblical teaching. God is not a collection of disconnected characteristics. His love does not compete with His justice, and His mercy does not overpower His holiness.

42. DOES GOD HAVE DIFFERENT “PARTS” OF HIS PERSONALITY? Not in the way humans often do. Historic Christian theology has often described this truth using the doctrine of divine simplicity: God is not assembled from separate pieces and does not depend upon anything more fundamental than Himself. You do not need to master divine simplicity to understand the rest of this study. The basic point is simple: God is always completely and consistently Himself.

43. DOES GOD CHANGE? Read Malachi 3:6; James 1:17. Scripture teaches that God does not change in His character or faithfulness. Theological language often calls this immutability. God does not become more loving, less holy, or improve or deteriorate. This does not mean God is inactive. God acts in history, responds to people, answers prayer, judges, rescues, enters covenant relationships, and in the incarnation the eternal Son truly takes human nature.

44. THEN WHY DOES THE BIBLE SAY GOD “REGRETTED” SOMETHING? Read Genesis 6:5-8; 1 Samuel 15:10-29. Genesis describes God grieving over human wickedness. First Samuel says God regretted making Saul king and, in the same chapter, says God is not a man who changes His mind as humans do. Biblical writers sometimes describe God's real response to changing human circumstances using ordinary relational language. Human sin truly grieves God and affects the way He relates to people; these passages do not require that God discovered unexpected information or made an ignorant mistake.

45. DOES PRAYER CHANGE GOD'S MIND? Read Exodus 32:7-14; Jonah 3:4-10. Scripture describes God responding to prayer and repentance. These passages should not be emptied of meaning: prayer matters, repentance matters, and God genuinely relates to people. Christians differ over exactly how divine foreknowledge, sovereignty, human response, and prayer fit together philosophically. The safest biblical conclusion is that God sovereignly chooses to make human prayer meaningful. Prayer is not informing an ignorant God or manipulating a reluctant God.

God'S Love, Holiness, And Justice

46. DOES GOD LOVE EVERYONE? Read John 3:16; Matthew 5:43-48; Acts 14:16-17; Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Ephesians 5:25-27. Scripture speaks broadly of God's love and goodness toward His creation and also of a particular covenant love for His people. Christians sometimes distinguish general benevolence from particular saving or covenant love. Different traditions organize these passages differently. What should remain clear is that God is not cruel toward His creation, commands love toward all people, the Gospel is genuinely proclaimed to all, and those united to Christ are described as God's beloved children.

47. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS JEALOUS? Read Exodus 34:12-16; Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Human jealousy is often sinful because it arises from insecurity, possessiveness, or envy. God's jealousy is different. God alone is God, and worship rightfully belongs to Him. The first commandment requires no other gods before Him. The Shema calls Israel to confess the LORD alone as God and love Him with the whole heart, soul, and strength. God's jealousy is the rightful insistence that the one true God alone receive the worship, loyalty, and love that belong to Him.

48. IS IT EGOTISTICAL FOR GOD TO DEMAND WORSHIP? Read Isaiah 42:8; Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Revelation 4:11. It would be wrong for a creature to demand ultimate worship. But God is not a creature. Exclusive worship belongs to God because He alone is God. If God directed humanity toward something else as the highest object of worship, He would direct people toward something less than the greatest reality. God's glory is not vanity; it is truth.

49. WHY DOES GOD JUDGE SIN? Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 2:5-11; Revelation 6:9-11. Because God is holy and just. A universe in which evil ultimately receives no judgment would not be morally superior. Victims throughout history have cried out for justice. Biblical judgment means evil does not receive the final word. Every hidden act, injustice, victim, and person matters. Judgment is frightening because

human beings are sinners, but the absence of judgment would not be good news either.

50. WHY ARE SOME OLD TESTAMENT JUDGMENTS SO SEVERE? Read Genesis 15:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:4-6; 2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 36; Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 28:18-20. This is one of the hardest questions many readers encounter. The flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, and the conquest of Canaan should not be brushed aside. Several truths should be held together: God is Creator and Judge; those receiving judgment are not portrayed as morally innocent societies arbitrarily attacked; God repeatedly delays judgment; Israel is not exempt from judgment; and these events occur within particular moments of redemptive history, not as standing permission for Christians to wage religious war. Some passages remain emotionally difficult. Faithfulness does not require pretending otherwise. Study each passage carefully and allow Scripture's entire revelation of God to inform interpretation.

51. IS THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ANGRIER THAN JESUS? Read Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 103; Jonah 4:2; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 23; Matthew 25:31-46. No. The Old Testament repeatedly reveals God as compassionate, gracious, patient, forgiving, and faithful. Jesus likewise speaks repeatedly about judgment, and Revelation presents the risen Christ as Judge.

Both Testaments reveal divine mercy and divine judgment. Jesus does not correct the Old Testament's mistaken portrait of God; He brings God's revelation to its climactic fulfillment.

52. DOES GOD'S LOVE CANCEL HIS WRATH? Read Romans 5:8-10. No. Nor does His wrath cancel His love. Romans 5 speaks about both: Christ saves people from wrath because God loves them. At the cross, God's holy opposition to sin and His saving love meet. Christians should resist creating a God who is easier to understand only because one side of biblical revelation has been removed.

53. WHY CAN'T GOD JUST FORGIVE EVERYONE WITHOUT THE CROSS? Read Romans 3:23-26. Because biblical forgiveness is not moral indifference. God does not call evil good. Paul presents the cross as demonstrating God's righteousness while God justifies sinners who trust Christ. The cross shows that forgiveness is free to the sinner but not trivial. Grace is costly. Christ bears sin. God remains just while justifying the ungodly.

Does God Really Have Emotions?

54. DOES GOD FEEL? Read Zephaniah 3:17; Hosea 11:1-9; Ephesians 4:30. Scripture speaks vividly about God's love, compassion, delight,

anger, grief, jealousy, and pleasure. Christians should not flatten these passages until they mean nothing. They reveal something real about God. But are God's emotional descriptions exactly equivalent to human emotional experience? That question requires care.

55. WHAT IS DIVINE IMPASSIBILITY? Historic Christian theology often used impassibility to protect the conviction that God cannot be involuntarily overwhelmed, manipulated, injured, emotionally destabilized, or changed by forces outside Himself. The term does not have to mean God is emotionless or cold. Classical theology has often meant that God's love and other affections are perfect and sovereign, not involuntary emotional reactions that control Him. The safe center is: God is not emotionally indifferent, and God is not emotionally unstable.

56. DOES GOD GRIEVE? Read Genesis 6:5-6; Ephesians 4:30. Scripture says yes. Sin matters personally to God. The language of divine grief prevents Christians from imagining God as detached from human rebellion. At the same time, God's grief does not mean evil unexpectedly overwhelms Him or destroys His blessedness.

57. DOES GOD DELIGHT IN PEOPLE? Read Zephaniah 3:17; Psalm 147:10-11. Yes. Scripture can describe God as rejoicing over His people and delighting in those who fear Him and hope in His steadfast love. That truth can be difficult for Christians who imagine God perpetually disappointed with them. For those in Christ, God is not a reluctant Father.

Mercy, Salvation, And The Hard Questions

58. IF GOD IS MERCIFUL, WILL EVERYONE EVENTUALLY BE SAVED? Read Matthew 25:31-46; John 3:16-18; Revelation 20:11-15. Scripture reveals extraordinary mercy, but it also repeatedly warns about final judgment. Universalism teaches, in various forms, that all people will ultimately be saved. The historic mainstream of Christianity has rejected universal salvation and affirmed the necessity of reconciliation to God through Christ. God's mercy should make Christians hopeful evangelists; it should not make them dismiss Jesus' warnings.

59. DOES GOD WANT EVERYONE TO BE SAVED? Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:23; Ephesians 1:3-12; Romans 9. Scripture speaks powerfully about God's saving desire and patience, and it also teaches divine election and sovereign purposes. Christian traditions do not answer every question identically. Hold firmly to what Scripture clearly teaches: God is genuinely merciful; commands all people to repent; the Gospel should be proclaimed freely; no sinner earns salvation; everyone who comes to Christ in faith is received; salvation is God's grace; and

God remains perfectly just.

60. WHY DOES GOD NOT SAVE EVERYONE? Read John 3:19-20; Romans 9:14-24; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. This reaches into Christianity's deepest debates. One emphasis is human rebellion and responsibility; another is God's sovereign freedom in mercy. Scripture teaches both divine sovereignty and genuine human accountability. Christians disagree about precisely how they relate. What Scripture does not permit is saying those who are saved were morally superior and deserved grace.

61. DOES GOD CHOOSE SOME PEOPLE BECAUSE HE LOVES THEM MORE? Read Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 11:33-36. This depends partly on what is meant by love. Scripture speaks of God's goodness toward all creation and also of His particular covenant love and saving purposes. Election should never produce arrogance. If salvation is grace, the proper response is gratitude, not superiority. Paul's extended discussion ultimately leads him to worship.

62. CAN SOMEONE BE TOO SINFUL FOR GOD'S MERCY? Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16. No sinner should conclude the Gospel is unavailable because their past is too terrible. Paul had persecuted Christians, yet became an example of Christ's extraordinary patience. This does not minimize evil or remove earthly consequences. It magnifies grace: Christ is a greater Savior than your sin.

63. DOES MERCY MEAN CONSEQUENCES DISAPPEAR? Read 2 Samuel 12. No. David was forgiven after serious sin, but consequences remained. Forgiveness restores relationship with God; it does not necessarily erase every earthly result of sin. A forgiven crime may still require legal consequences. A forgiven betrayal may still require rebuilding trust. Grace is not pretending consequences do not exist.

When God'S Heart Is Hard To Understand

64. WHAT IF GOD DOES SOMETHING I DO NOT UNDERSTAND? Read Habakkuk 1:1-5; Habakkuk 3:17-19.

That experience is common throughout Scripture. Job does not receive a complete explanation; Habakkuk struggles with God's methods; Jeremiah asks difficult questions; the Psalms repeatedly cry 'Why?' Faith is not the absence of questions. Biblical faith brings questions to God and can say: I do not understand what God is doing, and I will continue to trust who God has revealed Himself to be.

65. IS IT WRONG TO QUESTION GOD? Read Psalm 13; Romans 9:20-21. Scripture contains faithful questions, and God is not threatened by honest lament. But Scripture also warns against putting God in the dock as though the creature possesses greater moral knowledge than the

Creator. There is a difference between 'God, help me understand' and 'God must be wrong because I would have done it differently.' Humility recognizes that human moral intuition matters but is finite and affected by sin.

66. WHAT IF A BIBLICAL PORTRAYAL OF GOD OFFENDS ME? Do not immediately suppress the reaction. Ask whether the passage is being interpreted correctly, whether context is understood, whether a teacher is misrepresenting God, whether a cultural assumption is being treated as unquestionably superior to Scripture, or whether the passage exposes something uncomfortable about sin. Do not defend a caricature of God that Scripture does not teach. But do not recreate God in our preferred image when Scripture challenges us.

67. WHY DOES GOD SOMETIMES SEEM SILENT? Read Psalm 22:1-5. Scripture contains seasons of waiting. Even faithful people may experience what feels like divine silence. Silence does not necessarily mean absence; delay does not necessarily mean rejection. Christians should avoid simplistic explanations for another person's suffering. Sometimes the most faithful response is presence, prayer, lament, and patience.

68. WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING IF HE IS COMPASSIONATE? Read Romans 8:18-25. The Bible does not answer every individual why. It does provide a larger framework: creation is fallen; human beings commit real evil; suffering is not always directly connected to a specific personal sin; God can work through suffering; God entered human suffering through Jesus; and God promises final restoration. Christianity points not to a God who watches pain from a safe distance, but to Jesus crucified - and then to Jesus risen.

69. DOES SUFFERING PROVE GOD DOES NOT LOVE SOMEONE? Read Romans 8:31-39. No. The cross destroys that conclusion. Jesus is the beloved Son, and Jesus suffers. Paul does not say God loves Christians so nothing painful will happen. He says suffering cannot separate them from God's love in Christ. God's love is not proven by a pain-free life; it is supremely revealed in Christ.

Jesus And The Heart Of The Father

70. CAN WE USE JESUS TO CORRECT OUR PICTURE OF GOD? Read Luke 24:25-27, 44-47. Yes - if understood correctly. Jesus corrects false human ideas about God because Jesus perfectly reveals God. But Jesus should not be used to correct Scripture as though the Old Testament got God wrong. Jesus affirmed the Scriptures, identified the God of Israel as His Father, fulfilled the biblical story, and is the climactic

revelation of the same God.

71. WHAT DO JESUS' TEARS REVEAL? Read John 11:32-44. Jesus knows He is about to raise Lazarus, yet He weeps. Knowing the final outcome does not make suffering meaningless. Jesus' tears reveal genuine compassion in the presence of death. Christian hope does not require emotional detachment. Christians can grieve deeply while believing resurrection is coming.

72. WHAT DOES JESUS' ANGER REVEAL? Read Mark 3:1-6; Matthew 21:12-13. Jesus was compassionate and also became angry. He is angered by hardened hearts and confronts corruption surrounding worship. Jesus destroys the idea that love means perpetual niceness or refusal to confront evil. Perfect love can be tender and can also confront.

73. WHAT DOES JESUS' TREATMENT OF SINNERS REVEAL? Read Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11; John 1:14. Jesus is remarkably welcoming toward people burdened by sin and shame, yet His mercy does not redefine sin as righteousness. He can forgive and call someone toward a changed life. Grace without truth becomes permission. Truth without grace can become cruelty. Jesus is full of grace and truth.

74. WHAT DOES GETHSEMANE REVEAL? Read Matthew 26:36-46; John 10:17-18. Jesus enters profound anguish as the cross approaches, yet submits to the Father. The cross is not conflict between an unwilling Son and a cruel Father. Jesus willingly lays down His life. The Father sends the Son in love; the Son gives Himself in love. The saving mission flows from the united purpose of God.

75. WHAT DOES THE CROSS SAY TO THE PERSON WHO WONDERES WHETHER GOD CARES? Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Look at Jesus. Christianity does not answer every mystery with a complete philosophical explanation. At its center stands an event: God the Son entered our world and experienced rejection, injustice, betrayal, pain, grief, and death. The Christian does not pray to a God unfamiliar with suffering. And because Jesus rose, suffering will not have the final word.

The Holy Spirit And God'S Heart

76. HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEAL AND APPLY GOD'S HEART? Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22-23; John 14:16-17, 26; John 16:7-15; Romans 8:14-17. God's heart is not revealed through the Father and Son while the Holy Spirit remains at the edges of the story. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the one true God. The

Spirit helps believers understand what God has graciously given, pours God's love into believers' hearts, and forms Christlike character. He convicts, teaches, guides, empowers, comforts, and assures God's people. Knowing God's heart is profoundly Trinitarian: the Father reveals His love; the Son perfectly shows us the Father; the Holy Spirit makes God's truth and love known within His people.

God'S Heart From Genesis To Revelation

77. CAN WE TRACE GOD'S HEART THROUGH THE WHOLE BIBLE?

Yes. The Bible is not a collection of disconnected stories about changing versions of God.

CREATION - Genesis 1-2: God creates a good world and humanity in His image; humanity receives stewardship.

REBELLION - Genesis 3: humanity rejects God.

PURSUIT - Genesis 3: God seeks fallen humanity and promises evil will not win.

COVENANT - Genesis 12: God calls Abraham with blessing for all nations.

RESCUE - Exodus: God hears and delivers.

REVELATION - Exodus 34: God declares His compassionate, gracious, patient, faithful, forgiving, and just character.

PATIENT FAITHFULNESS: God warns, disciplines, forgives, restores, and keeps covenant.

PROMISE: the prophets promise King, Servant, Shepherd, new covenant, forgiveness, and restoration. JESUS: the Son reveals the Father and seeks the lost. CROSS: holiness, justice, mercy, grace, and love meet in Christ.

RESURRECTION: Jesus defeats death.

THE HOLY SPIRIT - Acts: the risen Christ pours out the Spirit.

MISSION: the Gospel goes toward the nations.

RESTORATION - Revelation 21-22: God dwells with His people and defeats death, mourning, crying, and pain.

78. WHAT DOES REVELATION SHOW ABOUT GOD'S HEART? Read Revelation 21:1-5; Revelation 22:1-5. Revelation includes severe judgment and breathtaking restoration. God dwells with His people, wipes away tears, ends death, mourning, crying, and pain; the curse is gone and God's servants see His face. The biblical story ends not with evil tolerated forever but with evil defeated and creation restored. God's justice and love move toward the same destination: a world made right.

Living In Response To God'S Heart

79. HOW SHOULD GOD'S HOLINESS CHANGE US? Read 1 Peter 1:13-16. Knowing a holy God should produce reverence and a desire for holiness. Grace does not make holiness irrelevant; grace brings sinners into relationship with the Holy One.

80. HOW SHOULD GOD'S MERCY CHANGE US? Read Luke 6:35-36. Those who receive mercy should become merciful. Christians should be among the people most aware that they live by grace. That should make them less self-righteous - not more.

81. HOW SHOULD GOD'S FORGIVENESS CHANGE US? Read Ephesians 4:31-32. Forgiven people are called to forgive. This does not mean pretending abuse did not happen, abandoning appropriate boundaries, preventing justice, or instantly restoring broken trust. Biblical forgiveness and wise boundaries can coexist. Christians should resist cultivating vengeance and bitterness.

82. HOW SHOULD GOD'S JUSTICE CHANGE US? Read Isaiah 1:16-17; Micah 6:8. God's people should care about truth, fairness, protection of vulnerable people, honest dealings, and opposition to exploitation. Christian concern for justice should be shaped by Scripture rather than partisan loyalty. No political movement, ideology, nation, or party perfectly represents God's kingdom. Disciples belong first to Jesus.

83. HOW SHOULD GOD'S PATIENCE CHANGE US?

Read Colossians 3:12-13. God's patience toward us should make us more patient toward others. That does not mean refusing necessary correction; it means remembering how slowly we ourselves sometimes learn. Mature Christians should become increasingly difficult to provoke into sinful anger and increasingly willing to extend grace.

84. HOW SHOULD GOD'S FAITHFULNESS CHANGE US? Read Hebrews 10:23. God's faithfulness gives believers reason to persevere. Promises rest upon the character of the One who made them. When circumstances are unstable, emotions fluctuate, or the future is uncertain: God remains faithful.

85. HOW SHOULD GOD'S LOVE CHANGE US? Read 1 John 4:7-12, 19. Christians love because God first loved them. The Gospel turns love outward toward family, neighbors, church members, strangers, enemies, vulnerable people, people who cannot repay us, and people different from us. Knowing God's heart should gradually reshape whom and how we love.

86. HOW SHOULD GOD'S HEART SHAPE THE CHURCH? Read John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:1-6. God is not merely transforming isolated individuals; He is forming a people. Jesus said the love His disciples

show one another should identify them as His followers. A healthy Christian community should increasingly reflect the character of the God it worships: holiness, truth, mercy, care for the vulnerable, generosity, reconciliation, hospitality, justice, resistance to exploitation and abuse, unity, and love. No church reflects God's heart perfectly. But together, Christians are called to display something true about the God they worship.

87. WHAT IF MY PICTURE OF GOD HAS BEEN WRONG? Then allow Scripture to correct it. God may have seemed like an angry taskmaster, permissive grandfather, distant deity, political symbol, or reflection of an abusive authority figure. Bring those pictures into the light and ask: Does this picture match the God revealed through Scripture and perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ? Some false pictures need to be dismantled slowly. Keep returning to Scripture. Keep looking at Jesus.

88. WHAT IS THE FINAL INVITATION OF THIS STUDY? Read Jeremiah 9:23-24; Proverbs 3:5-6; John 14:6. Know God - not merely facts about God. Trust Him. Come to Him through Christ. Walk with Him. Depend upon His Spirit. Reflect His character. Join His people in showing His heart to the world. Keep discovering throughout a lifetime that the God revealed in Scripture is greater than the small versions of Him human beings create.

FINAL REVIEW What is the safest starting point for understanding God? What God has revealed about Himself in Scripture. Can Christians know God completely? No. We can know Him truly without knowing Him exhaustively. Does God's love mean He approves everything? No. His love is holy.

Does God change in His character? No. Why does Scripture sometimes describe God as regretting or relenting? It uses genuine relational language for God's responses within history without requiring us to conclude that His character changes or that He discovers unexpected information. Does prayer matter? Yes. God sovereignly chooses to make prayer genuinely meaningful. What does God's jealousy mean? God rightfully requires the exclusive worship, loyalty, and love that belong to the one true God. Why does God judge? Because He is holy and just and evil matters. Does the Old Testament reveal a harsher God than Jesus? No. Both Testaments reveal God's mercy and judgment. What does the cross reveal? God's holiness, justice, love, mercy, and grace. How does the Holy Spirit reveal and apply God's heart? The Spirit helps believers know God's truth, pours God's love into their hearts, and forms Christlike character within them. Does God's mercy mean everyone will automatically be saved? No. Scripture combines extraordinary mercy with serious warnings about final judgment. Does suffering prove God does not love someone? No. The cross itself disproves that conclusion. How should God's heart shape the church? God's people should increasingly reflect His holiness, truth, mercy, justice, generosity, reconciliation, hospitality, unity, and love together. Where is the biblical story heading? Toward the defeat of evil, resurrection, restored creation, and God dwelling with His people forever.

Where Can I Learn More?

BEGIN WITH GOD'S SELF-REVELATION • Exodus 3 - God reveals His name. • Exodus 20:1-6 - God alone is worthy of worship. • Exodus 34:5-7 - God declares His character. • Deuteronomy 6:4-5 - The Shema: love the one true God wholeheartedly. • Psalm 103 - God's compassion and faithful love. • Psalm 136 - God's enduring steadfast love. • Isaiah 40 - God's greatness and care. • Hosea 11 - God's covenant love and compassion. • Jonah 4 - God's compassion beyond Israel. • Luke 15 - God's joy over the lost being found. • John 1 - Jesus reveals God. • John 14-17 - Jesus reveals the Father and the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit. • Romans 3-5 - God's righteousness, grace, justification, and love at the cross. • Romans 8 - God's love, purpose, the work of the Holy Spirit, and faithfulness toward His people.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 - The Spirit helps believers know what God has graciously revealed. • Galatians 5:22-23 - The Spirit forms Christlike character in God's people. • 1 John 4 - God is love. • Revelation 21-22 - God's final restoration and dwelling with His people.

RELATED 3NAILS STUDIES For subjects touched on here in greater depth, see related studies on God; God's Son; The Holy Spirit; Salvation; Grace; Forgiveness; Prayer and Access to God; Spiritual Growth and Sanctification; Becoming a Lifelong Disciple; and Has Everyone Heard? The Gospel, the Nations and the Unreached. Where a related study has not yet been completed, use the Scripture references in this study as the primary guide rather than waiting for a future resource.

SCRIPTURE AND QUOTATION NOTE Scripture is the final authority for this study. This study intentionally emphasizes Scripture references and concise explanation rather than reproducing large amounts of Bible text. Readers are encouraged to open a complete Bible and read every cited passage in context. Where biblical wording is summarized or paraphrased, it should not be treated as a verbatim Bible quotation. Short quotations may be included where exact wording materially helps explain the subject. Where translation choices affect interpretation, compare several reliable Bible translations and, where useful, responsible Hebrew or Greek resources. Terms such as attributes, immutability, divine simplicity, impassibility, and other theological vocabulary can help Christians summarize biblical teaching. These terms do not carry authority independently of Scripture and should always be tested by the biblical texts they are intended to describe. No theological system, church tradition, denomination, council, commentary, pastor, teacher, author, ministry, AI tool, or 3Nails study carries the authority of Scripture. Helpful theology should lead Christians back to God's Word and ultimately to Jesus Christ.

FINAL REFLECTION Moses once asked God to show him His glory. Read Exodus 33:18-34:8. God responded by proclaiming His name and character: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with faithful love, forgiving, and just. Centuries later, Philip asked Jesus to show the disciples the Father. Read John 14:8-11. Jesus pointed Philip to Himself. The God Moses longed to know had not changed. The God revealed throughout Israel's story had come near in the Son. Then Jesus went to the cross. God's holiness did not disappear. His justice did not disappear. His mercy did not disappear. His love did not disappear. They met in the saving work of Christ. God has not left His people to follow Him through human strength alone. Read Romans 5:5. The Holy Spirit pours God's love into believers' hearts. He teaches, convicts, comforts, empowers, assures, and produces within God's people the kind of character that reflects the God they are learning to know. God is forming not merely isolated believers but a people who together

display His character to the world. And the story is not finished. Read Revelation 21:1-5. One day God will dwell with His people. He will wipe away their tears. Death, mourning, and pain will be gone. Everything sin has broken will finally be made right. Until then, Christians keep returning to the same question: WHAT IS GOD REALLY LIKE? And Scripture keeps directing us toward the same answer: look at what He has revealed; look at His faithfulness through the biblical story; look at the cross; look at the empty tomb; look at the Spirit at work among His people; look at Jesus.

Final Memory Anchor God'S Heart Is Holy, Just, Compassionate, Merciful, Faithful, And Full Of Steadfast Love - And

Jesus Shows Us The Father Perfectly.