

## **2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

(Transcript of message preached by Pastor Rick Minett on March 13, 2005 at Grace Community Church)

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*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you"* (Proverbs 9:10-11).

A.W. Tozer, in his classic book, "The Knowledge of the Holy," writes: "The gravest question before the church is always God Himself. And the most important fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he, deep in his heart, conceives God to be like" What do you conceive God to be like? There's no greater question that one can be asked, because the answer to that question will govern everything else in that person's life. Do you want to truly know God? With that being said, I want you to consider these truths.

### **Our Greatest Goal Is To Know Him**

What goals have you established for your life? Some people envision being a successful business person, politician, athlete, or even President. And all of these are great aspirations. However, they pall in comparison to our pursuit of knowing God. There is no greater goal in life than this goal. Solomon makes that very clear in Proverbs 9. Essentially he says, "A man never even starts being wise until he knows God. And understanding doesn't begin until he first has some understanding of the Holy One. Jesus said it this way in John 17:3, *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God."*

I spent my adolescent years growing up in a large inner city housing project. It had its drawbacks; it was dirty, dangerous, and depressing. But I must admit that there were some positives among the negatives. One was that there was never a shortage of other children to play games with because this housing project was literally filled with hundreds of kids my age. So during those hot summer nights in Cincinnati it would not be uncommon to find 20 or 30 kids playing "Hide-N-Seek." The objective is to hide in such a way that you can't be found. I think there are some folks who believe it's that way with God. As if He placed us here at "home base" and had us close our eyes and count to 20, and when we opened our eyes—He was gone! And even though the greatest pursuit of life is knowing God, many believe that's impossible because God knows "all the great hiding places." Nothing could be further from the truth.

In preparation for his final days on this planet, King David called his beloved son, Solomon, to his room to share with him his final thoughts and words of wisdom. 1 Chronicles 28 records part of that conversation and in verse 9, David says, *"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you."* God's not hiding from us. To the contrary, His greatest purpose is to reveal Himself to us so that we might know Him!

Let me give you a perfect example from the book of Ezekiel. This great Old Testament prophet begins this book by saying, *"...the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God."* And he concludes this book with these words, *"The Lord is there."* Ezekiel begins with God in 1:1 and ends with God in 48:35—and everything in between is an emphasis on the character of God. In this single book, the book of Ezekiel, fifty-eight times the Lord does something to reveal His character to us and then He says, *"And they shall know that I am the Lord."* Does that sound like someone who is trying to hide from us? Does that sound like someone who refuses to reveal His character, His attributes, or His nature from us? Of course not! The bottom line is this: If we seek Him we will find Him, because that is God's highest purpose for mankind!

### **Creation Helps Us To Know God**

One of the greatest statements about God in the Bible was penned by Moses in the book of Psalm. Most people don't think of Moses as a contributor to the Psalms, but he wrote as many as 10 of them. And in Psalm 90:2, he states, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."* That single verse provides us with three great doctrinal statements about God. It tells us that God is the only God, the Eternal God, and the Creator God. This world helps us in our pursuit of knowing God. For instance, consider the evidence of completion and aesthetics. Evolutionists want us to believe that this collided with that and "hocus-pocus" it all fell together, but that's absurd. Because there is a "design" in the world, there must be a "designer!" Everywhere we look we see the beauty of creation and because there is beauty and truth in the universe there must be a "standard" on which beauty and truth are based.

And what about the evidence of righteousness and need? The fact that we know in our hearts that some things are right and some things are wrong unquestionably suggests the necessity of an absolute standard. So often I feel like the little girl in Sunday School who was asked to quote Psalm 23. She stood to her feet and said, "Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd and that's all I want" and she sat down. He must exist or I wouldn't need Him or want Him so badly.

The Bible says, *"The fool has said in his heart, there is no God"* (Psalm 14:1). And one of the reasons that is such a foolish statement is because all of nature shouts to us that God exists. As Paul says in Romans 1:20-21, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are*

*without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

### Knowing God Involves Faith

Hebrews 11:6 says, *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* And then that great 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews goes on to tell us remarkable stories about people like Noah and Abraham and Moses and a host of others. And their stories all begin this way, *"By faith..."* Knowing God, believing in God, following God—takes faith.

I had a lengthy visit with an elderly gentleman one day and I asked him about as plainly as a person can be asked if he was ready for eternity. I said, "My friend, do you believe in God?" He affirmed that he did. I said, "Do you believe in heaven and hell?" He hesitated for a moment and I said, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came to this earth to give His life in order that we can shun hell and make heaven our home?" And he responded by saying, "Preacher, some of the things you say I'm in agreement with, but some of the things you say are really hard for my mind to comprehend." And I looked him straight in the eyes and said, "I know what you mean; that's why we need faith."

I've been preaching for over 30 years; have a college degree and a Master's of Divinity degree; I've studied the Bible all my life and I will be the first to admit that there are lots of things about God that I don't understand. I just accept them "by faith" because the Bible says they are true. For instance, by faith I believe the very first words of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning God..."* The Bible never tries to "prove" the existence of God. It simply begins with a statement of fact and we either accept it "by faith" or we reject it. As it's been said, "As Christians, we believe in one big miracle, God, and everything else makes sense. An atheist denies God and has to have a miracle for everything else."

There are lots of things I don't understand. I don't understand how God always was; I just accept it by faith. In the beginning, God was! I don't know that I totally understand how God is a "person"—yet He is not confined to a human body the way that we are. God is not an "it" or a "thing." The Bible clearly defines Him as a person, using personal titles to describe Him such as: "Father, Shepherd, Friend, Counselor..." Furthermore, God thinks and acts and feels and speaks; all characteristics of personhood. I don't know that I totally understand how God is a person unconfined to a human body, so I accept it by faith. I don't know that I completely understand how God is also a spirit, but the Bible clearly states over and over that He is, so I accept it by faith. And I don't know that I completely understand how God can be one—and yet three—all at the same time, so I need faith here again.

Years ago I worked in a men's clothing store in Lakeland, Florida with some of the nicest young men one would ever meet; most of them were Mormons. But just because one is a nice person doesn't make his or her theology correct. Mormons are just one example of those who claim there are multitudes of gods and that new gods are being formed all the time. But that's absolutely contrary to scripture. The Bible teaches over and over, in both the Old and New Testament, that there is only one God; eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To be honest with you, nothing causes my brain to fry more than trying to figure out the concept of the Trinity; that 1+1+1=1. We can use analogies like an egg: You have the shell, the white and the yoke, yet it's all one. But I'm not sure if these analogies help us or just confuse the issue more. When it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity, I have to exercise my faith. If I trust purely in my intellect, I'm in trouble; but what my mind can't comprehend intellectually, the heart can accept through faith.

The Bible is very clear about the Trinity. Matter of fact, the first four words in the Bible introduces us to the concept of the Trinity. Again, Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning God..."* And the Hebrew word used for God is "elohim." And anytime there is an "im" ending on a Hebrew word its plural. It's like an "s" in English. So the verse actually says, *"In the beginning Gods..."* And yet it's a singular concept of God seen in a plural way.

We see the Trinity in Matthew 3 when Jesus is being baptized. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and the Father said, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* Three persons present—yet one. The benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14 says, *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."* Three, yet one. And probably the clearest reference is Genesis 1:26 when God says, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* He's not referring to angels, is He? Then who is He referring to? He's referring to the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Augustine was walking down an ocean shoreline years ago thinking about God. There were so many things about God that perplexed him. As he thought about those things, he saw a little boy running into the water with a sea shell, filling it with water and then running back to the shore and pouring it in a hole he had made in the sand. When Augustine asked the little lad what he was doing, the boy replied, "Oh, I am trying to put the ocean in the hole." And God spoke to Augustine's heart and told him that was what Augustine was trying to do. He was trying to put the ocean in a hole by attempting to fit into his "finite" mind things that are "infinite."

Do I understand it all? Not me! But that's okay. Frankly, there are many things about God that I don't understand. That God can be omnipresent—at all places at all times—blows me away. Moreover, I don't understand the love of God. That God could love me the way that He does doesn't make any sense to me. I'm just glad that He does and I accept it by faith because the Bible tells me that there is nothing that can separate me from His love.

Tozer was right. "The gravest question before the church is always God Himself. And the most important fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he, deep in his heart, conceives God to be like."

I've never been one to go out camping in the wilderness like some of you have done. But I do know that if you ever get lost or if you lose your bearings, if you find the North Star and focus on it you'll be able to find your way. The same is true relative to God. In the midst of the uncertainties of life, if we focus on God, all else will find its rightful place. If we get God in His rightful place, everything else

will find its rightful place. And that's critically important because we are living in a day and hour in which man has been virtually deified and God has been nearly humanized, even though man was made in the image of God and not the other way around. Never forget that He and He alone is God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.