

Chapter 1



God Is

Opening Reflections

Living in Mississippi means being well-acquainted with hurricanes. So as Hurricane Katrina was about to make landfall in 2005, we, along with thousands of others in our state, began to make our usual preparations. But no one was prepared for the catastrophe that we experienced over the days that followed. Entire blocks, neighborhoods, antebellum homes and other monuments were completely swept away. Pictures do not begin to capture the breadth of the devastation.

A few weeks later, while we were still reeling from the storm, we had a guest from Jamaica visit our home. Katrina being a common topic, I asked him how often they had to rebuild his community because of tropical storm and hurricane damage. His answer surprised me.

“Never.”

“Why is that so?” I asked. His simple answer floored me!

“Because we build our structures to withstand the storms.”

He then went on to describe how the foundations were laid and how the walls were anchored securely so that their homes would withstand

these devastating winds. Granted, the concrete block walls reinforced with rebar securely fastened to thick foundations might not make the cover of a popular home and garden magazine, but in the end lives are saved, and homes are secure.

As we travel down to the hardest hit coastal areas years out from Katrina and view the still desolate regions, I've often wondered what it would have been like if the foundations had been solid and the walls securely anchored.

Starting Point

How would you complete this sentence: "God is _____"?

You may be thinking this is an odd place to start a book on nurturing and protecting who we are as God's daughters. I hope that by the end of this lesson it will make sense. You see, without a strong foundation, you simply can't build a strong building – one that will last through the storms ahead. The same is true for building strong relationships. You need to get the foundation in place before trying to build anything lasting on top of it.

Going back to the opening thought, you could have picked all kinds of words to describe who God is. Maybe you chose a word that describes His power, such as awesome, mighty or omnipotent (which means all-powerful). Or maybe you chose a word that describes His heart, such as loving, tender, compassionate or forgiving. You could have described His holiness with words like pure, righteous or just. Or perhaps you chose a word that describes one of His roles, such as Father, Creator or Judge. Although any of these, and a host of other words, accurately depict some part of who God is, one particular "God is" phrase found in the Bible is significant to this exploration.



Read About It

1 John 4:7-17

How did John complete this sentence: "God is _____"
(see vv. 8, 16)?

God is love. This is one of many ways that the Bible tells us who God is. Notice something important though. John didn't just say, "God loves us." Although, of course, He does. And he didn't just say, "God

is loving,” which, of course, is also true. What he did say, though, goes even deeper. God *is* love!

Think back to grade school English class. When you use the word “is” in a sentence with a noun on each side of it, what does that mean? It means the two nouns are the same, right? For instance, “Susan is a girl” means the same as “Susan equals girl.” The two are the same. This person is Susan, and this person is a girl.

“Okay,” you may be thinking, “why is this so important?”

Think about it a minute. Suppose I said to you, “Susan plays basketball.” What would that mean? You might say simply that she likes the game or maybe even that she is good at it. But suppose I said: “Wow! Susan *is* basketball!” You’d probably get a different idea.

Just the fact that we don’t often put words together like that would probably get your attention. But you would probably also get the idea that basketball is so much a part of Susan’s life that she has just *become* a part of the game itself. Do you hear the passion? She is completely immersed in the sport. She is the same as basketball. She *is* basketball!

Well, God *is* love. Love is so much a part of who He is that it *is* who He is. There is no part of Him that is not love. God equals love. And whom does He love? This all-love God chooses to love you and me.



Think About It

- How does it make you feel to think about God being all love?
- How does it make you feel to know that He is giving all of that love to you?

Depending on where you are in your life, you may have very different feelings about God’s love for you. For example, you may think of God’s love as a very wonderful place to rest, sort of like having a warm place to snuggle on a cold winter day. Or maybe it’s a little harder for you to find comfort in God’s love. Maybe you struggle with not feeling worthy or somehow not measuring up. Or maybe you see God as more of the lightning-bolt-from-the-sky-when-I-mess-up kind of God.

Regardless of where you are, though, we are assured of God’s love for us. So much comfort and assurance are found in what Romans 5:8 says: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were

yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God didn’t sit around waiting for us to “deserve” His love before He offered His love. Notice that He did all of this “while we were yet sinners.” Does that mean He is always happy with our choices? Of course not. But it does mean that He *always* loves. God is love.

Now, back to how this fits together in our study on purity. If God loves – in fact *is* love – then whatever He desires for us will always be out of pure love for us. He will never desire things just to be cruel or to take our fun away because that is not the way true love acts. So if God says something about how to live our lives, He is saying it out of love. He created us out of love. If He places a limit on our lives, He is placing the limit out of love. All that He does or says is guided by love.

Think about it this way: We all have people we love, and because of that love, we try to do what is right toward them all the time. But we are human, and that means we mess up – a lot! We slip up and do or say hurtful things – sometimes out of anger, selfishness or just weariness. God, however, is God. He always loves, all the time – and perfectly. So He does not make mistakes in demonstrating His love.



Think About It

- What are some examples of God’s love that you see in your life?
- Name some people you know who are good examples of the unselfish love that God offers. How do you see them demonstrating this love?

Let’s look at another “God is” statement.



Read About It

1 John 1:5-7

How was this sentence completed in verse 5: “God is _____”?



Think About It

What do light and darkness represent in these verses?

Add to the picture, then, that God is light. We know from nature that light and dark are opposites. In these verses, the same is true. Because God is light, there can be no darkness in Him at all (v. 5). If a room is *completely* filled with light, there cannot be even a shadow in the room. Likewise, if a room is *completely* dark, it is all the way dark. That means

no night lights, no flicker of light under the door – nothing. The end of 1 John 1 illustrates that light and dark can be compared to righteousness and sin. John also pointed this out in another passage.



Read About It

John 3:19-21



Think About It

- Who is the light in this passage (see vv. 16-18)?
- Where do you see examples in your life of this difference between darkness and light?

Jesus is the light here. Those who do evil (darkness) hate the light. Those who love the truth come to the light (v. 21). So clearly, evil and darkness go together while light and truth go together.



Think About It

- If we know God is light (truth), what can we learn about how He guides us?
- Have you ever been in a completely dark place? How did it feel to move around without being able to see anything? How did you feel once you got to a place where you had light? How does this experience relate to our walk with God in His light?
- Has there ever been a time in your life when God’s truth “lit the path” to a right decision for you? If so, how did it feel to have His guidance?

Knowing God is light (truth), we can step forward in full confidence onto the path that He shows us. We don’t have to fear what is lurking in the dark as long as we walk on God’s well-lit path.

Recap

We know, first, that God is love all the time, all the way. So what He does or says is always guided by His love for us. Second, we know God is also light. That means everything He does is always true and right. He will never lie to us or try to lead us down a path that isn’t right. He will always guide us to truth (light) out of love for us. Now, consider one more “God is” statement to finish the foundation.



Read About It

John 4:24

How was this sentence completed in this verse: “God is _____”?

This one was easy to find – right there in the first three words. But even though the word may have been easy to find, this is a tough idea to grasp. We – human, fleshly beings that we are – get very caught up in the tangibles of life; that is, what we can see, hear, touch, taste and feel. But God is not fleshly and physical like us; He is a spirit. And we, having been created in His image, have a spirit too – our souls.

The unique thing about God as a spirit and about our souls is that the two will continue on after the fleshly part of our bodies has crumbled in the ground. Why does that matter? God, as spirit, created us to also have a spirit (soul) that will carry on throughout eternity. It is the part of us that matters the most because it will last long after this human body is gone.

Here is how this fits: We all recognize that sometimes taking care of someone means doing what matters the most in the long run. For instance, when you were little, you may have asked your mom for a candy bar for breakfast. Chances are she said no. But why? It would have made you happy. Why would she say no to something that would make you happy? You know the answer: She was more interested in what would be best for you in the long run than what might make you happy for a minute.

That makes sense because that’s how true love acts. So if God – who is all love – tells you something, first of all, you know it will be guided by **love**. Second, you know it will be true (**light**). And third, you can know it will be guided by what is best for you in the long run (**spirit**), not by what might make you happy for a moment.



Think About It

- Think about a time when someone who loves you told you no because it was best for you in the long run. How did you feel about it in the moment? How did you feel about it after you realized it was for your good?
- How does it make you feel to think about God guiding you from the love, light and spirit perspectives?

Summing It Up

We have a God who **loves** us completely, who always functions from a position of truth (**light**), and who has our long-term best interest at heart (**spirit**). So when He guides us, we can stand confidently in the knowledge that where He is leading will always be the best path for us in every way. We may not always understand everything that He says. It may not make sense to us or be what everyone else is doing. But if our love-light-spirit God tells us something, we can be sure it is the right and best path for our lives.



Talk About It

1. How does thinking about these characteristics of God influence the way you view His commands?
2. Where do you see God's love, light and spirit reflected in the verse below?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

3. How can you demonstrate trust in God's love, light and spirit on a daily basis?



Pray About It

Dear Lord, we are so grateful that You are love, light and spirit. We pray that You will help us take hold of Your direction with complete confidence, knowing You will always guide us in the way that is best, right and guided by an immeasurable love for us. Thank You, Father.