

# Who is God?

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## Perceptions

Who is God? This question has been asked by many people. Different people have different perceptions. Some think of God as a tough taskmaster who demands perfection with a stick in His hands, always ready to punish. These are people who are afraid of God and always want to please him some how.

Some think of Him as a very "good god" who tolerates everything, and will not send anyone to hell. These people do whatever pleases them, because they think that God is too "good", that he could never send anyone to hell.

To some he is a business partner, they always try to do business deals with Him. They say "Lord you give me this and I will give you this" "If you make this happen I will do this for you". Many people have different ideas about who God is.

I have a friend who lost his father to cancer when he was very young. His mother, with great difficulty brought him up. This man was very bitter towards God. He was bitter towards God also because of all the natural calamities and wars that kill thousands each year. It is hard for him to believe a good and powerful God allowing such devastation and diseases to destroy so many in this world. His perception of God is that, He is some one who sits in heaven, looking down on the earth and watches the happenings with interest, but not interested in the personal lives of individuals. In other words, he told me that God may be powerful, holy and just, but He doesn't care enough to come down to help individuals in need.

Many people I have talked with, echo the same perception. If there is a God, why is evil so rampant in this world? If He is all powerful and so full of love why couldn't he just stop all the evil and put an end to all suffering and pain? How could a God so full of love and who is all powerful watch as thousands of innocent children die in wars, famine and many natural calamities. If God is really in control of all things and loves us all why couldn't He stop that disaster which killed my loved one? Why should I suffer from pain and disappointment? The list goes on....

These are the questions asked by many, especially when they face personal tragedies, disappointments and disasters. It doesn't matter what the perception is, the Bible is very clear about who God is. Only God's word can give us the correct understanding of who God is. Many people could not find answers to many questions in their lives, because they have an erroneous view of God. Instead of knowing God through God's word, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, they try to understand Him by mere perceptions and feelings.

Many people have their own view of who God is. And they get disappointed with God when He doesn't fit into their view and fails to do what they want Him to do. It is this disappointment which slowly turns into anger and bitterness towards Him. Many people are bitter towards God these days, even some believers.

When we get the right understanding of who God is, it will help us to know Him and love Him more and will also put many things in our life into perspective. It will also help us to understand many things in our lives we did not understand before. So, who is God? What does the Bible have to say?

## God is Love

The Bible, in I John 4:8 says "*God is Love*". No three words could better describe who God is. This is what the Bible says about God. It does not say that God has love, it says that God is Love. Which means the very essence of God is love. The very stuff He is made of is love.

Even though God is also holy, powerful and just, the one thing that dominates His character and

which can best describe Him is, Love. A better understanding of God's Love will help us understand God better. In Ephesians 3: 18 Paul wants us to understand God's love ("*May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand , as all God' people should, how wide, how long, how high, how deep his love really is*"). But in verse 19 he also says that we as humans can never fully understand His love ("*..though it is so great you will never fully understand it*").

Understanding God's Love is the key to understanding God. It is my humble prayer that the Holy Spirit will open the eyes of our hearts to understand who God is. Even though we cannot fully understand His Love, my prayer is that this message will help us understand what we need to know about His Love, however little it may be. I will explain four important characteristics of God's Love. These four aspects of God's Love will give us a glimpse into God's divine Love. What we are going to study here is just a drop in the ocean of God's Love. It is from creation to Christmas that we see the following four basic characteristics of love expressed fully.

**Love Shares**  
**Love Protects**  
**Love Frees**  
**Love Saves**

## God's Love

### Love Shares

*"Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life-the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky and all the livestock, wild animals and small animals "* (Genesis 1:26).

One of the most tender expressions of God's Love is the creation of people. God created people in His image as an expression of His Love. The reason for creating humans is because God as a being of love needs some one to share His love with. This is an attribute of love. A love being cannot stay alone, it needs some one to share its love. Love always brings forth something to celebrate and share. This is what is illustrated in marriage and childbirth. Two people who love each other come together and the child that comes out of that union is an expression of their love. A child is an expression of the love between a man and a woman. Two people who love each other bring forth a child to celebrate and share their love. This is how God intended marriage and childbirth to be, an expression of love. But now, it has been so twisted that many people do not understand God's original intention regarding marriage and childbirth!

God not only created humans, he also gave them all they needed to live a perfect life. When God created, it was a perfect world. There was no virus nor germ. The air was clean, water was pure and the atmosphere was clear. The animals were peaceful. There was no violence or killing. It was man, animals and nature in perfect harmony. This is the perfect world that God created and gave humans to live. God did not create anything harmful or evil.

The Bible says that He is a good God and all that comes out of Him is good. The first humans Adam and Eve didn't even have to water the plants, a river which ran through the garden watered the garden (Genesis 2: 10). All God asked of them was to enjoy life in a peaceful, harmonious atmosphere by ruling over all the other creatures.

God provided all their needs. He was their companion, friend and provider. This is the perfect life that God wanted to give to all of His children. Man, in harmony with nature and in communion with God. This is the heart of a loving God.

All He wanted in return was, that His children would love Him, obey Him and be in communion with Him. That was all He asked of them. The God of Love wants only the love of His children. This is the pure Love of God. Love that does not expect anything in return, but only love. There can be no purer love than that of God's Love towards His children. It is this Love that even made Him send His only son to die for us.

**This is who God really is. May be you have different perceptions about God. But let me tell you, this is who He really is. He is a God who loves His children and wants to give good things to them. He created us to love us and to have fellowship with us. He gave us all we needed to live a peaceful and harmonious life, because divine Love shares. God expressed His Love by creating us and sharing with us His image, His Love and a beautiful garden.**

### Love Protects

Love not only shares it also protects the one it loves. Parents always protect their children from harm because they love their children. Sometimes, the only way to protect a child from harm is to restrict the child from certain things. Because the child cannot understand the implications of certain action, the only way the child can be protected is by restriction.

It is the same with God, that is why the Lord told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge ("*You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" , Gen 2:17). God restricted Adam and Eve from eating from that tree, because He wanted to protect them from the consequences of eating the fruit. Many times when God restricts us from certain things we may think that God is blocking our move to something good. But only God knows the consequence of certain actions. His restrictions are not to deny us pleasure but to save us from pain and suffering.

To Adam and Eve the issue was just eating a fruit, but God knew that the issue was not that simple. Because God knew that if they ate the fruit, they would lose their fellowship with Him by disobeying Him. By losing their fellowship with God they would also lose the protection and the provision of God.

God knew that by disobeying, they would in effect give all authority and dominion of the world to Satan. He also knew, that without His protection, man was vulnerable to all the attacks of Satan. God wanted them to avoid all the pain and suffering, that is why He restricted them. He told them not to eat the fruit of that tree.

**May be you are angry with God because he did not give you "that" job you very much wanted... or did not take you to "that" place you always wanted to go ..or did not let you marry "that" person you wanted to marry!! The reason is, sometimes God protects us by restrictions, because only He could see the consequence of certain things which we can't see. His restriction is out of love, to protect. Because love always protects.**

### Love Frees

It is this aspect of Love that answers many questions about why all the evil is in this world. Love frees. Even though it restricts to protect, love never compels or forces. He can only restrict people who are subject to Him. When people, out of their own free will choose to rebel against Him and disobey Him, He just lets them, because love frees. That is why humans are created as free moral beings. The difference between free being and free moral being is this:

Free Being : You are free to choose what you do and there is no consequence for your actions.

Free Moral being :You are free to do what you choose, but your actions have consequences.

God created humans as free moral beings. Humans are free to choose and do what they choose. God did not create a bunch of robots. God does not want a bunch of people who come and worship Him like robots or like animals. He wants moral beings with the ability to voluntarily choose to obey and worship Him.

God wants the people He created to voluntarily come and worship Him, not out of compulsion. This is the freeing aspect of Love. God gave his children free will to choose what they want to do. It is the freeing aspect of love that brought a lot of pain. But at the same time, since God is Love, He could not behave any other way. Pure Love never forces anything on anyone, it frees.

God kept the tree there to let Adam and Eve choose for themselves. God wanted them to choose out

of their own free will, to eat or not to eat. God could have built a wall around that tree and could have physically prevented Adam and Eve from reaching that tree. But he intentionally let the tree accessible because He wanted to see which way Adam and Eve would choose to go. They were free to choose.

When God created Adam and Eve they knew only good, they knew no evil. But the fruit from the tree would give them knowledge of both good and evil (Genesis 2:17).

The options were :

1. Obey God and not eat from the tree and choose to live a life of obedience, knowing only good, under the protection and the provision of God.

2. Disobey God and eat from it and live an independent and complicated life, knowing both good and evil, without God's provision or protection.

As we know, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Even though the Serpent enticed Eve to eat, it was Eve's choice to eat the fruit. The same way, even though Eve enticed Adam to eat, finally it was Adam's choice to eat. They both chose out of their own free will to eat from that forbidden tree.

**Whenever we do something wrong, we always look for somebody to blame. But always understand this, people may lure you or entice you to do a certain thing, but when you do it, it is you who finally choose to do it out of your own free will. Sometimes we get angry and do something foolish, and then blame others with phrases like, "she made me angry" or "he made me angry". Again, no one can make you angry, they may do something that could make you angry, but it is you who choose to be angry. You are responsible for your actions.**

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, it resulted in the following:

- The communion between God and man broke and there came a division. Sin brought that division.
- Humans came out of the provision and protection of God and had to work to eat and became vulnerable to all evil.
- Humans gave dominion of the world that God gave them, to Satan and his forces.

All evil, diseases and disasters came into the world, introduced by Satan.

God gave such a perfect world to humans and we gave it to Satan. The result is all the evil we see now. It was man's disobedience which brought all the evil into the world, not God. God is good, all the time. He cannot change. He was good when He created the world, He is still good and He will continue to be good. He never changes.

The disobedience brought men out of the provision and protection of God, but not out of the love of God. He still loves us. Even though Adam and Eve disobeyed God, God still loved them and made clothes for them and gave them (*"And the Lord God made clothing from animal skin for Adam and his wife"* Genesis 3:21). This is the tender Love of God. His love toward humans never changed.

Adam and Eve's disobedience must have broken God's heart. He created humans out of love, gave all they needed and loved them with all His heart, without expecting anything, but their love. But instead of loving Him, they began to love themselves. Instead of obeying God, they began to obey their own instincts. Instead of believing His word they believed, the words of Satan.

**This is the tragedy brought about by the freeing aspect of God's love. God gave them a free will to choose. The tragedy is, that humans chose a life independent of God. They in effect told God, "God, we can run our own lives, we can provide for ourselves and we don't need you". God never forces himself on anyone. When we tell Him that we do not need Him, He will quietly walk away. But life without God is a tragedy. It doesn't matter what you have, if God is not in your life, it is a tragedy.**

**This is the tragedy we see and hear in the news everyday. The wars, the earthquakes, the floods that kill so many. The famine on one part of the world at the same time people literally eating their lives off in the other part. Murder, lack of ethics, lack of morality and all the**

**associated things came into the world. This tragedy is not brought about by God, rather they are the result of humans rejecting God. We not only rejected God, but gave Satan all control of this world. Now the world is in his control. By observing the things that happen around the world, it is obvious that he is in control!!**

### **Love Saves**

Even though men went away from God, the divine Love of God did let him go for long, because Love saves. He devised a plan to save humans and bring them back into communion with him. That plan involved sending His only son into this world. God, sending His son Jesus to save us is another expression of His pure love for humans (John 3:16). God was willing to do that, because Love saves. His son left all that was heavenly and came down into this world to be born as a human. Because the justice of God demands that only another human can restore that which was broken by a human. Jesus restored all that Adam lost.

Sin and death came into the world through Adam but holy and eternal life was brought to us by Jesus Christ, the son of God (I Corinthians 15:21). Obedience of one human, Jesus, resulted in restoring what the disobedience of another human lost. That is why the gospel is called a good news. Good news to people who are lost and away from God.

God has provided us a way to come back to Him through Jesus. Even though we went away from Him by disobeying Him, He still chose to save us. It was our sin that was responsible for all the evil coming into the world. That is why it pains me when people blame God for the evil, pain and diseases in this world. God did not let the evil come into the world, it was the natural consequence of our sin that has brought all the evil. Instead, God has provided us a way through which we can be saved from all the evil and live a victorious life.

**Since we went away from Him by rejecting and disobeying Him, we can come back to him only by obeying and accepting His Son, Jesus. This is called salvation. We are saved if we confess that we disobeyed God and ask Him to restore us back to fellowship with Him by accepting and acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. When we accept Him, He cleanses us from all sins, heals our heart and gives us the strength to overcome all the evil in this world. He helps us live a life filled with love, peace, joy and victory.**

**Again, the choice is yours. If you chooses to accept Jesus, He will come and change you. But He never forces anyone. The choice is yours. If you do not know Jesus or have accepted Him as your Lord, I urge you to do so. Because, in this world full of evil, only He can give you all you need to live a life of peace and joy.**

### **Conclusion**

Many have asked me the following questions:

- Why doesn't Jesus just remove Satan completely now and remove all the evil from the world?
- Why diseases, pain and evil still exist?

Why even people who come to Jesus still sometimes suffer from diseases?

The answer is as follows :

Yes, Satan and his associates will be removed completely from this earth. God will establish His Kingdom on this earth and God will restore completely all that was lost in the garden. The final restoration of all things will happen (*For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through the prophets Acts 3: 21*). When the final restoration happens, He will remove all the pain and diseases completely. Satan will not be there to deceive. But it will happen in His own time. We want it all to happen now. But God will do it, and He will do it in His time. His time is always the perfect time. Ephesians 1:10 says *"And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ - everything in heaven and on earth."*

The answer to the next two questions is this :

Every action has a consequence. The sin, diseases, disasters and many things in the world we see is the culmination and consequence of thousands of years of sin and abuse. Let me give you an example of one such action. What we call development today is actually one step forward in one area and two steps backward in another.

For example, the invention of motor car was a step forward in the area of transportation, but it was two steps backward in preserving a clean environment. Years of smoke from engines have polluted the air and the atmosphere so much that it affects the health of many people. We have polluted our air, water and the atmosphere. It is the same with all developments. All human developments always result in creating imbalances in nature. The abuse of nature, environment and the human body is the cause for all the diseases in the world. Diseases were not sent by God. They are a result of man's abuse of many things over a long period of time.

The degradation we see are not sent by God, but invented and infused into our lives by men. This is the consequence of our past actions. God is not responsible for this, but we are!! He only wants to save us from all these.

At the same time, we cannot understand why a particular person suffers from a particular disease. We cannot fully understand why a tragedy strikes a particular person or a family. It may be due to various reasons. It is beyond our comprehension. It is impossible to understand why some who have cancer get healed and some die. Why some one on a wheel chair gets healed in a meeting and the other don't. Why some blind get healed and many still remain blind. It is impossible for our human mind to understand all these.

But God's word says that no matter what we go through, God will give us the strength to go through and overcome, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In John 16:33 Jesus says *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world"*. Though we may suffer for some time, God will ultimately bring us out of our suffering. Romans 8:18 says *"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later"*. This is our hope. It is this hope that gives us strength.

Not only that, He will bring something good even out of the suffering and the pain. Paul says in Romans 8: 28 *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them"*. When we have Jesus with us, He will make all things to work together for good, even our suffering. Many people who have suffered, have said that the suffering molded them and taught them many things that good times never taught.

Finally, the reason why He lets us fight all the evil in this world is that because we are called to reign with Him. The purpose of God in creating humans is to reign with Him. But we lost it to Satan. Again, when God restores us back, we will once again reign with Him and this time it will be forever.

God wants strong people who fight and overcome Satan to reign with Him. It is by fighting and winning a believer is strengthened. I Peter 1:7 says *"These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure"*. God is looking for people who are strong in faith and would obey Him and serve Him despite all the attractions of the world. Our lives here on earth is a time of testing and trials, so that on the judgment day God will determine who is worthy to reign with Him and who is not. *To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, I will give authority over all the nations"* (Rev. 2 : 26).

Remember, the life on this earth is for a short time only. The Apostle Paul talks about the future glory, we as Christians hope for, in Romans 8:18-30. When we enter that glory, we will live forever with God, that is the life we need to look for. We are called to live as foreigners here on earth (I Peter 1:17). Because our home is not here. This world is not our home. We will go there soon and we will live with Jesus forever. The life on this earth is just a prelude. Real life for believers starts after this life. We all wait anxiously for that life with a new body, a life with no pain and suffering.

*"And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us." (Romans 8: 23).*

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