

# LET'S LEARN OF GOD

## Chapter 2

A short time ago, my family and I made a trip to Alaska by auto. On our way home, we followed the highway east toward Jasper, Alberta, Canada and then headed south along the Canadian Rockies. When we first saw the Rockies, they stood out with greater beauty and grandeur than even the Coast Range of Western British Columbia. Right away one of my boys wanted to stop to take pictures. I assured him that the closer we would get, the bigger the mountains would look in the picture. He took my advice. (After all, I was driving the car and didn't stop.)

As we approached the mountains, we felt very insignificant and small for they towered over us with their jagged beauty. I then stopped the car and encouraged my son to take some pictures. But to our disappointment, we were not able to capture the breath-taking grandeur around us. The picture did not convey the vastness of the mountains nor the finite insignificance we felt as we stood before them.

So it is with human words. They cannot begin to describe all that God is. As we dwell upon who God is and what He is like, human words fail. Only the Bible itself gives us an accurate concept of who God is and what He is like.

The truths of Scripture cannot be conveyed in a brief one-hour Bible study nor will they come by reading the Bible one time. A person could read, study and meditate upon the Scriptures throughout his life-time and not know all there is to know about God.

I want to deal briefly with the vast subject of the holiness of God in this study. It is my firm conviction that our opinion of God affects our conduct in life. Others agree. One archaeologist stated "it is inevitable that a low estimate of deity should produce a faulty idea of morality." (Unger) Another has stated, "A proper emphasis upon the holiness of God will give a man a sense of awe in the presence of an absolutely holy God." (Kerr) Yet another person has said, "The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God." (Tozier) Thus, I believe our concept of God is eroding the standards of our conduct within the church. Never have we had so many professing Christians as we have today. But it is very possible that the church has never had so many flesh-loving, pleasure-seeking Christians as it has today. This is due to the lack of our understanding of the holiness of God.

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All too often the new believer, filled with enthusiasm because of his new-found faith comes into the body of Christ only to be shown the wrong example by the lack of commitment on the part of the older Christian. Psychologists point out that new people in any group tend to accept what is called the "discipline of the group." If the group is very disciplined, so will the new member be; but if the group is careless in its attitudes, the new member will soon adopt the same attitudes.

If the older members have a reverence and awe for a holy God and manifest it by living separate from sin, the new believer will tend to conform to that standard. It is my prayer that you will grasp the truth that God is a holy God and will live in conformity to that belief.

Let me say, without qualification, that God is holy and all manifestations of Him are holy.

Everything we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy. Look up

### Reference Group Number 1

1. He is Holy
  - a. Leviticus 11:44-45 cf. 1 Peter 1:15
  - b. Isaiah 6:2 and 3; Revelation 4:8
  
2. His Name is holy
  - a. Psalms 111:9
  - b. Psalms 99:3 (read the whole Psalm)
  
3. He dwells in a holy place.
  - a. Isaiah 57:15
  - b. Psalms 68:35

As you can see from these passages, the concept of God being holy is found both in the Old and New Testaments.

Some of the Jewish scribes felt that the name of God was so holy it was necessary for them to change quills each time they wrote the name of the Lord in the Old Testament. In fact they even bathed themselves before writing the name. This was done before each usage; no matter how many

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times the term "Lord" was used in a single verse. We agree that this was carrying the idea of the sanctity of God's name too far; yet we find people today who have participated in sin the night before sitting at the communion table with little or no guilt. We find brothers in Christ seated in the same church who are bitter one against another. We find husbands and wives who have been quarreling; singing the praises of God from the same hymn book. Yet, each of these may be worshipping God without having confessed any sin on their part. Each seems to take refuge in the fact that it is the other person's fault, therefore, they need not confess their own sin.

My friend, this should not be. God abhors sin. There is a purity to His being. He is separate from sin. Our sin separates us from fellowship with Him. In Him is no darkness at all; and, if we are to have fellowship with Him, we must walk in the light as He is in the light.

Look up Reference Group Number 2

1. Walk in the light. 1 John 1:5-7
2. God is of purer eyes than to look upon sin Habakkuk 1:12-13
3. We are to be holy Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, 8  
1 Peter 1:15-16
4. God's holiness reveals our sinfulness Isaiah 6:5-7

A holy God demands a holy people. If we are to stay in a place of fellowship with Him, we must be separate from sin. In the Old Testament times, over and over God reminded the people they were to be a holy people because they worshipped and served a holy God. Isaiah, against whom there is not a single sin mention, said "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips..." He was made conscious of his sinfulness when he saw the Lord. In fact, his own sinfulness was the first thing that impressed him after he saw the Lord in His holiness. When he saw himself as God saw him, an angel came to remove his sin. He stated that the angel said, "Thy iniquity is taken away."

In the New Testament, the blood of Christ is the cleansing element for the sin of all people. If we want to stay in fellowship with Him, we must confess our sins. We shall deal with this thoroughly in our next study. However, let me say that if you have sin in your life of which you are conscious, confess it and you will be restored to a place of fellowship with God.

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Many believers want to overlook the demands of a holy God upon their daily lives. They will profess an allegiance to the Word of God and to their salvation in Christ but neglect the application of God's holiness in their every-day life. I want you as a young believer, to be impressed by the purity of God. He is a holy God--separate from sin. Walk before Him as His child; with a holy life--that is, a pure life.

Some time ago, a lady came into my study and, during the course of the conversation, began to tell me of her spiritual superiority above other Christians in our congregation. She stated quite clearly that a particular series of messages were all right for the average member of our church, but she had advanced far beyond that point in her own life and nothing in the series of messages was for her. This lady saw herself as a spiritual Christian far down the road to spiritual maturity. There was a certain arrogance in her attitude. Several years have now transpired since that time, and I have had opportunity to observe this lady and her relationship to others. She has become more and more withdrawn in her fellowship with the rest of the church. Her children have become rebellious and have stopped attending church anywhere. Her husband, who was once a man with a heart for God and for other people, has grown cold in his relationship to the people of the church.

When we think we are holy, then we are usually carnal and sinful. It is like being humble. When we think we have attained humility, we are proud. When we judge ourselves to be spiritual, we are usually carnal.

When Isaiah saw the Lord--even this man against whom there is no sin recorded-- stated "Woe is Me." the apostle Paul, when examining his own righteousness, exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am." These men knew the Lord and saw their own unworthiness, They knew something of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of themselves. There is a great emphasis today about being in a correct relationship to other people. We do want to conduct ourselves properly before other men. We need to be grateful for the benefits we receive from others. We need to allow others their right of freedom to walk before God as they are led of the Spirit of God. We need to love more than in word only but also in deed and truth. We need to honor one another in the body of Christ. But these areas of our life seem to be secondary to our relationship with God. To clarify this statement, let me say that inter-personal relationships are a result of a proper relationship to God.

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When one of the Pharisees who was a lawyer came to Jesus during His earthly ministry, he asked him, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus replied that the first great commandment is to "Love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, and with all they soul, and with all they mind," The second great commandment is to "love they neighbor as thyself." Note the order--first our relationship to God and then our relationship to man.

We have the same order in the ten commandments in the Old Testament,. Our relationship to God is first and then our relationship to man is second. The same is true in the Lord's model prayer for believers. First, we are to address God and then we are to deal with our relationship to others. Stop at this time and look up...

### Reference Group Number 3

- |                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. The young lawyer.            | Matthew 22:35-40 |
| 2. The law of the Old Testament | Exodus 20:1-17   |
| 3. The model prayer             | Matthew 6:9-13   |

Note in the model prayer of Matthew 6 that there are seven petitions; three are concerning God and four are concerning our relationship to men. Note particularly the first petition, "Hallowed by Thy Name." "Hallowed" means to sanctify, to revere, or to make and keep holy.

We cannot make God more holy by declaring His name to be holy, but when we pray after this fashion, we are rendering the adoration which is due Him. The glory of God's great Name should be the ultimate end of all believers. We should want to honor Him and magnify His name in every way we can. When we utter this prayer, not with idle words but deep heart conviction, we are desiring that God's great name be sanctified by us. We are then desirous to honor Him and bring Him glory in all situations and circumstances of our life. We honor God by our words and by our lives. They should be a reflection of the greatness and holiness of the God we serve.

Because God is the holy God he is, He preserves the order of His creation by the standard of His holiness. Therefore, He must judge sin. To preserve the order of His creation, God must destroy whatever would

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destroy the holiness of its order. When God rises to put away sin by an act of His judgment and wrath, it is a holy act of preservation. Someone has stated, "The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of the creation are inseparably united." (Tozier)

David, in the Old Testament, was hand-picked and anointed by God when he was a lad to be the king of God's chosen people, Israel. When the people's choice, King Saul was overthrown; David was elevated to that position. David moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem when all rebellion was put down. He then built the city of Jerusalem into a strong fortress. He worshipped the Lord Jehovah and under his leaders brought the worship of the Lord into its most celebrated position in Israel.

King David was truly a child of God and realized the authority of God in the affairs of man. He was also the sweet psalmist of Israel who wrote scores of the Psalms which are now in our Bibles. King David loved God and worshipped Him as the Lord of the universe. However, David fell into sin. He committed adultery with the wife of one of his soldiers while her husband had gone into battle.

This sin set some events in order which could not be reversed. David paid dearly for surrendering to the passions of his flesh. Because of his own failure in this area, he was not able to diligently teach his children of the consequences of this sin. Thus, Amnon, one of his sons, raped his half-sister, Tamar. Absalom, another son of David's, then killed Amnon. David refused to forgive Absalom of the latter crime. Upon the urging of Joab, David's commander-in-chief, David half-way forgave Absalom but Absalom rebelled against his father, David and drove him from Jerusalem. Later Absalom was killed by Joab. The bitter end of this struggle was seen as David ascended the steps into his royal chambers crying, "O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

David never lost his salvation because his sin. He did lose the fellowship he had with God. But David repented of his sin and was forgiven, but the harm had already been done to his family. The ultimate consequences were irreversible.

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There is an order with God. Because He has created this universe and its order, certain effects will follow their cause. David failed God and violated the order of God; thus the subsequent effects in the life of David.

The wrath of God is something which is not mentioned much today, but evil is a moral sickness which brings the judgment of God. His treatment of His creatures conforms to the purity of His Being.

God is a just God acting on the basis of His holiness. He will judge sin. Justice is the manifestation or expression of His holiness. Sin is in violation of the natural order of the universe. If sin was left to run its course, it would destroy the universe itself. But God has destined that sin ultimately will be destroyed, All who practice sin will be judged by Him.

God's judgment is devoid of passion or caprice. There is not a selfish anger of God. Sin inflicts penalties because of the nature of God. There is a determined attitude of God against sin. God does not heatedly and in passion suddenly become intolerant of sin and thus judge it. His wrath is revealed with a determinant calm.

Look up these verses which tell you about the wrath of God against sin.

### Reference Group Number 4

a. God will render to every man according to his deeds.

Romans 2:1-11

b. Vengeance belongs to God.

Hebrews 10:3-31

c. Day of judgment coming.

11 Peter 3:3-12

Our attitude toward sin should be to live a life of holiness and godliness as Peter suggests in his letter to believers. God does not look lightly upon sin. Therefore, God will bring pressure to bear upon the believer to conform him to the image of God.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, we learn that God chastens us or disciplines us so that we might be partakers of His holiness. In this passage of Scripture, the correction we receive from our earthly fathers is compared to the correction we receive from our heavenly Father. We listened to our

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earthly fathers and tried to please them when we were corrected. So we should try to please our heavenly Father in every thing that we do. If there is something we have done for which He has disciplined us and we know it was from God, then we should submit to Him and obey Him in the future.

There is no discipline which is pleasant during the time we are receiving it, but this is a family mark. If your father or mother spanked you when you were small, I doubt if you thanked them at the time. But now, as you reflect as an adult, you may even rejoice that they cared for you enough to paddle you when you were in the wrong.

If you are a parent, you realize you punish your child because you love him and want him to do what is right--not because you want to hurt him and show hatred toward him. So it is with God. He disciplines us because He loves us and wants us to be a partaker of His holiness. He wants us to manifest out of our lives the fruits of righteousness. Therefore, when discipline comes upon you as a direct result of something you did which was wrong; rejoice! It is a manifestation of God's love for you.

There may be times, however, when you and I may have difficulties which are not related to any wrong doing we have done. These difficulties may come upon us to prevent us from going our own way and doing something wrong.

When I was a teen-age boy, on several occasions my father would not permit me to have the car to go to some event I felt was very important. I hadn't done anything wrong. In fact, one day, I planted an entire field of berries and Dad still did not let me have the car to do what I wanted to do. As I reflect upon the circumstance, I see now that my father did what was best for me.

This is preventive discipline. God may bring difficulty into our lives to head us off from doing something that would harm our life or Christian witness. Once again, believer; rejoice! He is wanting us to walk before Him in holiness.

There is a third reason for God's discipline and that is to make us wholly dependent upon Him. The apostle Paul, that great missionary of the book of Acts who founded scores of churches and wrote so many books in the New Testament, had an affliction in the flesh. We do not know what it



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was. It may have been partial blindness or sore eyes, but we know that Paul prayed three different times for the Lord to take it away. Yet each time, the Lord assured Paul that His grace would be sufficient for him. God wanted Paul to be dependent upon Him in this area of life and was able to keep Paul there because of the weakness.

God may cause you to have a weakness--a bad arm, or leg, or blindness. Don't fight against Him for it. Thank Him for it. You'll find that you'll grow in your Christian experience if you do.

Now let us take time to do a self-check to see what you have learned in this study.

#### SELF CHECK

1. From what source will we find out what God is like: -

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Our opinion of God will affect our \_\_\_\_\_ of life.

3. A holy God demands a \_\_\_\_\_ people.

4. The closer we draw to Christ, the more \_\_\_\_\_ we see ourselves to be.

5. (under line the correct answer)

We are to get our lives first of all

(a) into a right relationship to God, then with our fellow man, or

(b) into a right relationship with our fellow man and then with God.

6. There is a determined attitude of God against \_\_\_\_\_.

7. When God disciplines us, He does so because He \_\_\_\_\_ us.

8. God disciplines us because He wants us to be a partake of His \_\_\_\_\_.

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(Ask your facilitator for the answers to the Self-Check)

I trust that this small glimpse of what God is like will cause you to dig into the truths of God's Word and learn what God is like.

Let's pray now for God's direction in your life:

"Heavenly Father, thank you for who you are and what you are. Thank you that you desire to change us into your holiness. May our lives reflect to others that we have been with You. Thank you for this study in Your Word. We praise You in Jesus' Name. Amen."