

# Beyond Belief

## God - Fact or Fiction?

### SETTING THE STAGE

As you search for God, make sure that you are not creating your own definition of God first and then "finding" only the facts that support your definition.

You must allow God to define Himself and then look for the fulfillment of that definition.

Your self-defined God is no different than an image that one might make from stone or wood. You have no more than an idol.

You must allow God to be "God".

You are invited to follow this study of biblical examples of people's search for God. Watch closely to see how God presents Himself!

You want to watch for how God presents Himself.

### CONNECTING WITH THE SUBJECT

You can find what you are looking for: (Jeremiah 29:13)

*"When you come looking for me, you'll find me.*

*"Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else," (Msg)*

(Psalm 119:2; Psalm 119:10; Psalm 119:58; Luke 11:9-10; )

1. What would happen if God tried to reveal Himself to you and you really did not have any desire to know about Him?  
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2. When you are consumed with the desire to make money, have pleasure, and self-gratification, would you recognize God if he walked along the road with you?  
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3. When you are stubborn and determined to have your own way, would you hear God if He tried to advise you in a better direction for your life?  
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4. What are some of the things that are hindering you from seeking God "more than any thing else"?  
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### Our purpose

*We exist to*

**Glorify God**

By

*Reaching people for Christ and  
Helping believers grow to be like Him  
(Matthew 28:19-20)*

## HELPS

### Ephesians 2:1-10 (Msg)

It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. [2] You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. [3] We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. [4] Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, [5] he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! [6] Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

[7] Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. [8] Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! [9] We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! [10] No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

### Matthew 5:7 (NIV)

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

### Matthew 18:33-35 (NIV)

Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? [34] In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

[35] "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

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5. What changes should you make in the focus of your life?

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6. At what level does your heart desire to know God?

- \_\_\_\_\_ some  
\_\_\_\_\_ more than in the past  
\_\_\_\_\_ "more than anything else"
- 

## Monday:

### Moses' Struggle To Know God: (Exodus 33:18 - Exodus 34:7)

(Exodus 34:6-7)

"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, [7] maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.'" (NIV)

1. What was Moses' request from God? (Exodus 33:18)

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2. If you had asked God to show you His Glory, what response and action would you have desired from Him?

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3. God wants His people to be like Him. Why do you think God showed Moses His character rather than His power or majesty?

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4. Based on what God showed Moses about His glory, how do you think we can best show glory to God? (Exodus 34:6-7)

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(Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:5; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8-13; Psalm 111:4; Psalm 112:4; Psalm 116:5; Psalm 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Romans 2:4)

a. Mercy: (Ephesians 2:1-10)

1). Before one comes to Christ for God's "mercy", how is man's miserable condition described? (Ephesians 1:1-3)

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2). What has God done in Christ to show "mercy" to you? (Ephesians 2:4-10)

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3). The object of "mercy" is misery. Do you know an individual who is miserable because he or she does not know about God's mercy?

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4) How can you glorify God in your relationship with this person? (Matthew 5:7; Matthew 18:33-35).

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## Tuesday:

b. Grace: (2 Corinthians 12:6-10)

1). What was the last project where you thought you had more than enough know-how to handle the job, but learned later that you needed much more than you could muster from within?

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## HELPS

### 2 Corinthians 12:6-10 (Msg)

*If I had a mind to brag a little, I could probably do it without looking ridiculous, and I'd still be speaking plain truth all the way. But I'll spare you. I don't want anyone imagining me as anything other than the fool you'd encounter if you saw me on the street or heard me talk.*

*[7] Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! [8] At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, [9] and then he told me,*

*"My grace is enough; it's all you need.*

*My strength comes into its own in your weakness."*

*Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. [10] Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.*

### Psalms 51:1-5 (Msg)

*A David psalm, after he was confronted by Nathan about the affair with Bathsheba.*

*Generous in love God, give grace! Huge in mercy—wipe out my bad record. [2] Scrub away my guilt, soak out my sins in your laundry. [3] I know how bad I've been; my sins are staring me down. [4] You're the One I've violated, and you've seen it all, seen the full extent of my evil.*

*You have all the facts before you; whatever you decide about me is fair. [5] I've been out of step with you for a long time, in the wrong since before I was born. What you're after is truth from the inside out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.*

*[7] Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out clean, scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life. [8] Tune me in to foot-tapping songs, set these once-broken bones to dancing. [9] Don't look too close for blemishes, give me a clean bill of health. [10] God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.*

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- 2). Have you ever encountered a project that was so overwhelming, you were too afraid to even begin? Did you later wish you had tried?  
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- 3). Before Paul had the experience recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:6-10, how do you think he saw his own ability to "get the job done"?  
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- 4). What new element did God introduce into Paul's life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5). How did God's grace change how Paul looked at his role in accomplishing tasks?  
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- 6). By depending on God's all sufficient grace, how can you change your view of your abilities to accomplish tasks at home, work, church and in general?  
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- 7). When you depend on God's all sufficient grace, you lower your stress level and proclaim what to others about God?  
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- 8). Are you ready to allow God's grace to be sufficient in all areas of your life and proclaim the strength of God to all who watch you?  
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### Wednesday:

- c. Compassion: (Psalm 51:1-17) (See Helps for printed Scripture)
  - 1). What sinful thing has David done that has prompted him to seek God's compassion?  
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  - 2). What is David's attitude toward the sin of adultery, of which he is guilty? (Psalm 51:3)  
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  - 3). David has hurt many people with his selfish act of adultery, but for whom is he expressing great concern in this psalm? (Psalm 51:4)  
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  - 4). What did David know would not appropriate "compassion" from God? (Psalm 51:16)  
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  - 5). Because David was brokenhearted over what he had done and never wanted to turn that way again, what response was he expecting from God? (Psalm 51:6-12)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - 6). Does your heartbreak from sin come from more than just the fact that you "were caught"? Does your broken heart take you to the depth that you never want to do that sinful act again? If the answer to both of these questions is "Yes", what response can you expect from God? (Psalm 51:6-12)  
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  - 7). What outward evidence will others see in you that you have experienced the "compassion of God" (Psalm 51:13-17)  
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## HELPS

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### Psalm 51:11-17 (Msg)

*Don't throw me out with the trash, or fail to breathe holiness in me.*

*[12] Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in my sails! [13] Give me a job teaching rebels your ways so the lost can find their way home.*

*[14] Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation God, and I'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways.*

*[15] Unbutton my lip, dear God;*

*I'll let loose with your praise. [16] Going through the motions doesn't please you, a flawless performance is nothing to you. [17] I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives*

*ready for love don't for a moment escape God's notice.*

### Hebrews 6:18 (Msg)

*"God can't break his word. And because his word cannot change, the promise is likewise unchangeable.*

*We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go."*

### 1 Peter 4:19 (Msg)

*"So if you find life difficult because you're doing what God said, take it in stride. Trust him. He knows what he's doing, and he'll keep on doing it."*

### Exodus 34:7 (NIV)

*"maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."*

### John 1:12 (NIV)

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—*

### Romans 6:23 (Msg)

*Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master.*

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (Msg)

*Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! [9] We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!*

## Thursday:

### d. Faithfulness:

#### 1). What God starts He is faithful to finish.

##### 1 Corinthians 1:9 (Msg)

*"God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that."*

#### a). Was it you or God who took the first step in your right relationship with God? (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 6:18 "Helps"; 1 John 4:19)

#### b). God is faithful! He not only took the first step toward you, but He will also remain faithful to complete and keep what He has started with you. How does this make you feel? (1 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 12:2)

#### 2). Where is God when life gets heavy and seems too heavy to keep going? Is He still "faithful"? (1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 4:19 "Helps")

##### 1 Corinthians 10:13 (Msg)

*"No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it."*

#### 3). After asking Jesus into your life, to be the Lord of your life, you still make mistakes by saying and doing things you know are sinful. How does God's "faithfulness" play into this picture?

##### 1 John 1:9 (Msg)

*"On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing."*

## Friday:

### e. Justice: Exodus 34:7 (NIV) (See "Helps" for printed text)

(Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:2-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Hebrews 10:26-31)

#### 1). Why is it important that you not ignore the "mercy", "grace", "compassion", and "faithfulness" of God?

#### 2). Your rebellion toward God becomes a classroom to teach rebellion toward God to whom? (Exodus 34:7 b)

#### 3). Behavioral patterns of the parents are most likely repeated by whom?

#### 4). What has God done for you in Christ to make it possible for you to be forgiven for sin and not have to experience the "punishment" for sin? Romans 5:8 (Msg)

*"But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him."*

God, I believe that you are and that you sent Jesus to die for my sins. I want Him to come into my heart, forgive my sin, and become the Lord of my life. Thank you for saving me from my sin and giving me your eternal life. I pray this in Jesus Name. Amen (John 1:12; Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9 "Helps")

If you ever had any question as to the existence of God you should know now that the answer is "yes", because He now lives in you.