



Make Plain, Jesus Ministries

Make Plain, Jesus Ministries'
CHRISTIAN STRENGTHENING CLASSES
The 200 Level

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Welcome to "Examining Your Christian Faith At A Deeper Level". This course is designed for those who want to begin their journey into drawing closer to the Lord by strengthening their understanding of the Word. Although this course consists of six sessions, it is intended to be the first in a series of courses that will take you a bit deeper in your understanding of the truths contained in the Bible. In fact, there are countless truths contained in the Bible that God wants us to understand but without digging deeper into studying the Bible, a person cannot grasp it.

Our goal in this six session series is to begin addressing the following:

Session 1: **How To Study The Bible**

Session 2: **What Does The Bible Say About God?**

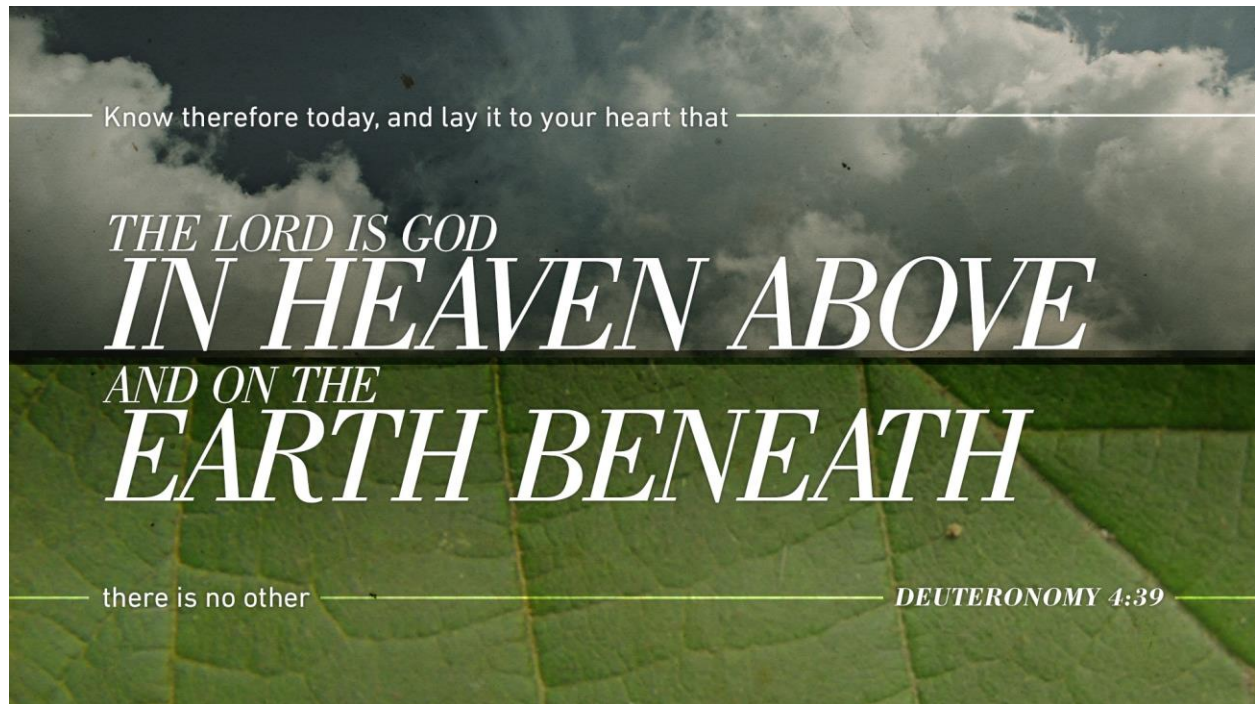
Sessions 3 and 4: **Was Jesus A Good Man, A Prophet or More?**

Session 5: **Who Is The Devil?**

Session 6: **What Is The Truth About Heaven and Hell?**

This course is open to anyone who is interested in participating. It will be held **via conference call** so anyone interested in signing up should go to the calendar of events on our church website (<http://www.makeplainjesus.org/calendar-events>). From there, you can sign up for the Christian Strengthening Class which begins on September 22, 2016. All those participating should sign-up by September 19, 2016. If you have further questions, please call our office at 410-846-0126.

What Does The Bible Say About God?



Who is God? What is He like? Where does He live? Does He care about me? What does He expect of me? All of these are questions that people have asked in the past and continue to ask today. In fact, you may have personally asked one or all of these questions. It's okay to ask because that means you want to learn more which means you are seeking Him! With a heart that seeks after Him, there is so much that you can accomplish and learn.

What God Is Not

We live in a world with many opinions. Opinions about how people dress, opinions about groups of people based on stereotypes. Opinions about what you can and should do with your life. The number of opinions are endless and now there are platforms where you can easily express those opinions. The question you should ask yourself is how to distinguish between opinion and truth.

When it comes to knowing who God is, it seems that everyone on the planet could tell you something different. In most cases, you may wonder how they came to their conclusion or definition! Nevertheless, they have arrived at their opinion. Some of the opinions regarding who God is include:

- A force
- Energy
- Some Being far away that doesn't care about individual people
- An accident
- He doesn't exist
- He is one of many gods
- He is a god with the characteristics of animals

As you can see, the descriptions vary widely. What you need to understand is God is not as unknowing, untouchable and distant as some would have you believe. He is not a thing nor is He some creation made with hands. Even if you don't understand God but you know He is there, you are in the right place to understand Him more. He has created the Bible as His revelation of Himself so that you can find Him and know Him.

GOD is and he may be known. These two affirmations form the foundation and inspiration of all true religion. The first is an affirmation of faith, the second of experience. Since the existence of God is not subject to scientific proof, it must be a postulate of faith; and since God transcends all his creation, he can be known only in his self-revelation. The Christian religion is distinctive in that it claims that God can be known as a personal God only in his self-revelation in the Scriptures. The Bible is written not to prove that God is, but to reveal him in his activities. For that reason, the biblical revelation of God is, in its nature, progressive, reaching its fullness in Jesus Christ his Son.

- *The New Bible Dictionary, Third Edition*

Questions:

1. Who do you say God is?
2. How have you heard others describe Him?
3. Where do you think He lives?

God's Characteristics

Since God chooses to reveal Himself through His word (Bible), it is important for us to peel back the covers and search the Bible to see what it says. We do this as our foundation because it is His revelation of Himself. He authored it as a love letter to all who would seek Him.

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

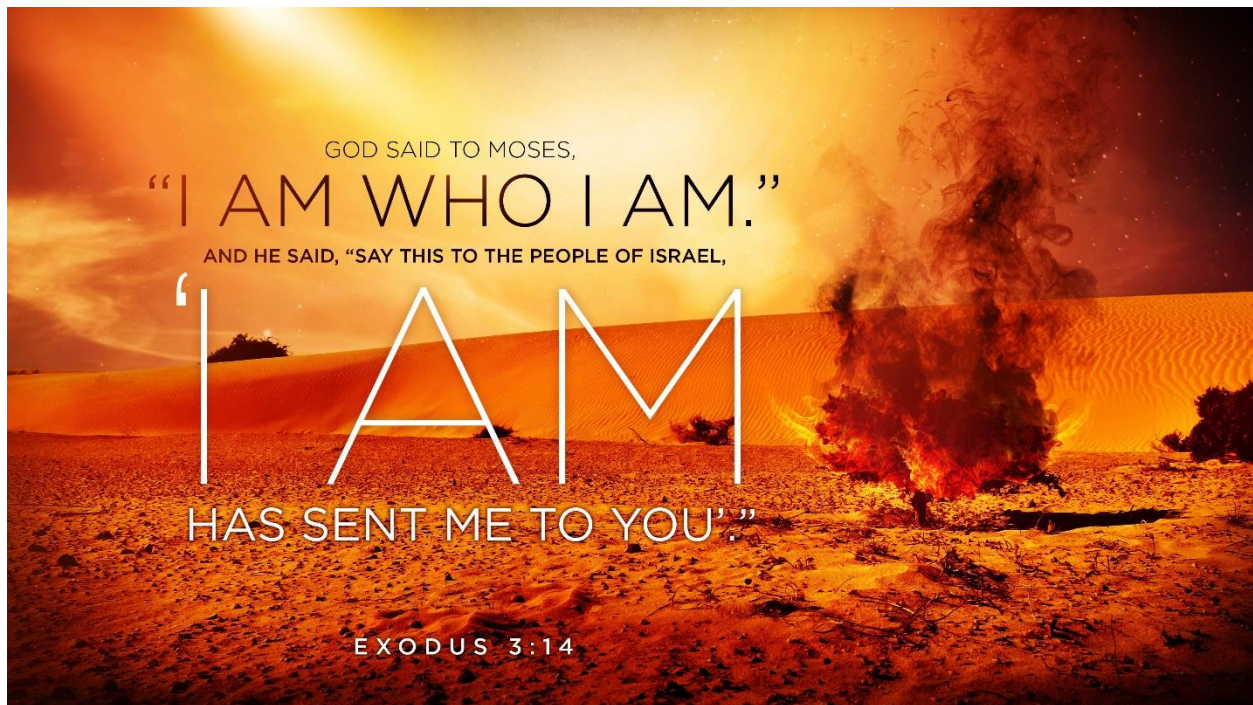
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Apostle Paul wanted Timothy, his spiritual son, to understand this same concept. As Timothy was fulfilling his call to be a Pastor, Paul wanted him to know that he was not to pastor based on religion or ritual but in the power of knowing that the word of God is God-breathed. Therefore, it is designed to instruct us regarding all things pertaining to life. Most importantly, it reveals to us the character of God inclusive of His heart's desire for mankind.

So, let's look at some of His characteristics revealed in the Bible:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

1. **God is Self-existent** – the first verse tells us that He already existed before anything was created. His existence did not and does not depend on anything we do. We must understand that before creation, He already had everything He needed. It was through His sovereign will that creation came forth. Therefore, you cannot describe God as a thing, an element or any other created thing. This is the lesson Moses had to learn when he approached the burning bush.



2. **God is Self-sufficient** – since God is self-existent, that means He is self-sufficient. In other words, He was no need for sleep. He has no need for food or any other thing that we as mankind need.

For every beast of the forest is Mine,
And the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the mountains,
And the wild beasts of the field are Mine.

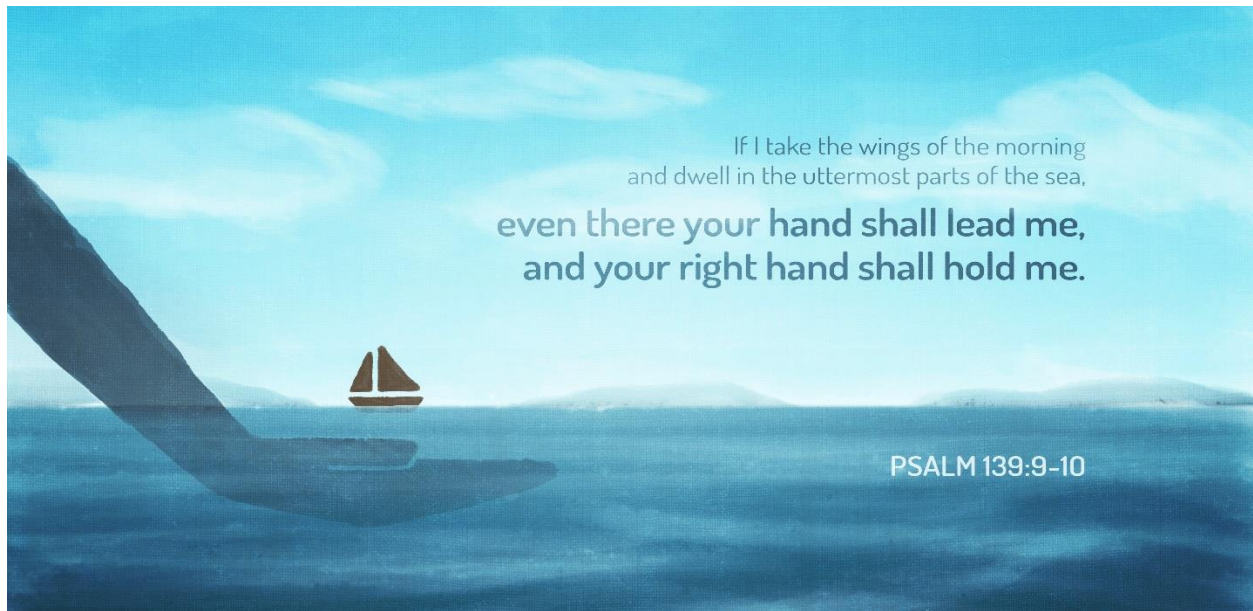
“If I were hungry, I would not tell you;
For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.

3. **God is Eternal** – if you look at the first verse carefully, you will notice another amazing truth. The “beginning” came from God which means God initiated time. Before the “beginning”, there was only eternity and after time ends, there will only be eternity. He has always existed and always will exist.

Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and
the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You
are God.

- Psalm 90:2

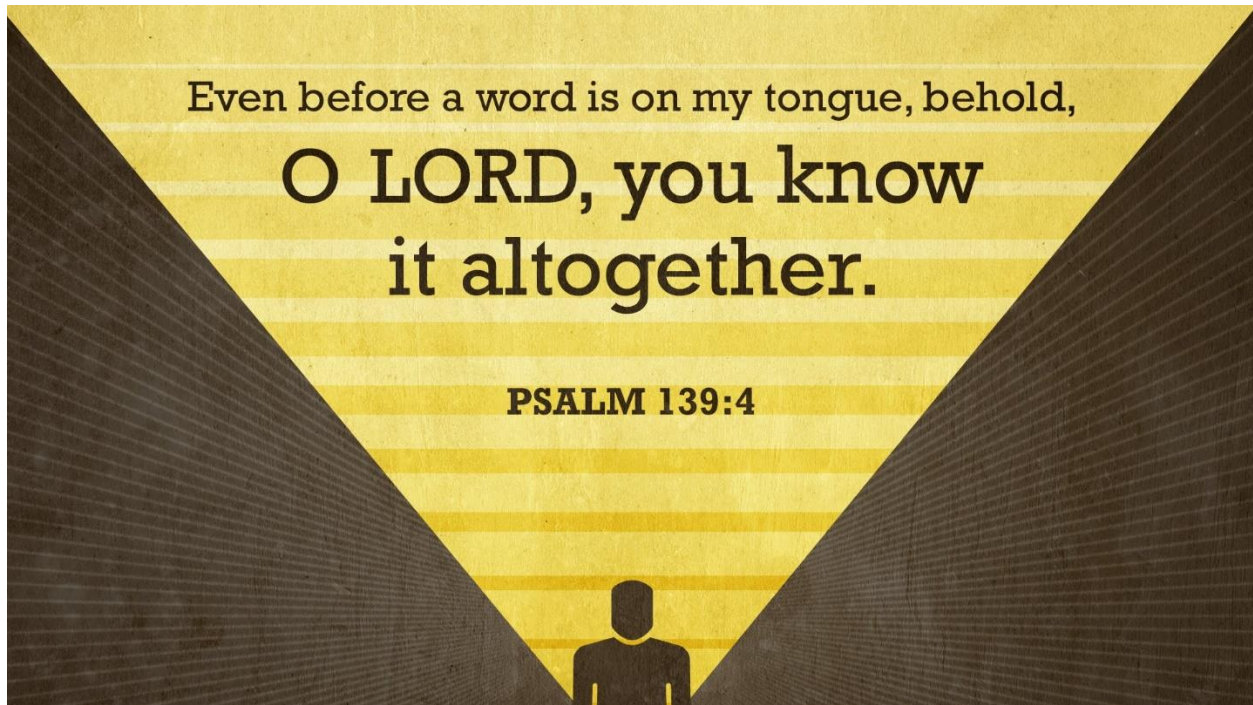
4. **God is Omnipresent** – the great thing about God is there is no place you can be where He is not there. This characteristic of being omnipresent means he is everywhere at the same time. It can be a difficult concept to understand because we are physical beings which means we can only be in one place at a time. Fortunately, God does not have that limitation. For that reason, we can say that He can handle the small things we all face in addition to the “big” things. This should be comforting to know!



5. **God is Omnipotent** – How can God be God without being all powerful? Just think about it for a moment. He is the One who spoke and creation came into being. He is the One who designed creatures large and small. Additionally, He created the enormous galaxies which contain countless stars. In order to do that, He must be all powerful. The word omnipotent not only means all powerful but it means preeminent. He is the first and besides Him there is no other. The scripture below depicts a scene in heaven when all of heaven rejoices and celebrates the display of His omnipotent character.



6. **God is Omniscient** – when depending on God in your life, you should celebrate that God is omniscient, which means all-knowing. He knows what is in our hearts and minds but still loves us. God knows the challenges we will encounter before they present themselves. He is the One who declares the end from the beginning. That is why He can come to our rescue immediately because He already knows what is trying to confront us and how to resolve the situation.



7. **God is Faithful** – more than we know, God is faithful in every situation. Our challenge is understanding why His response is always the best response. He will always do what He says He will do. Moses wanted the children of Israel to understand God's faithfulness in the following scripture. Today, we also need to grasp that same truth. Your emotions can betray you but His faithfulness is from everlasting to everlasting.

"Therefore know that the LORD your God,
He is God, the faithful God who keeps
covenant and mercy for a thousand
generations with those who love Him and
keep His commandments;

- Deut. 7:9

8. **God Is One** – This is an important concept. There are many religions that worship numerous gods. The Bible tells us there is only one God. Not multiple. He expects us to come to Him alone. Through Isaiah, He wanted everyone to understand His uniqueness. Everything else is an idol or an imagination.

"Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
'I am the First and I am the Last;
Besides Me there is no God.
And who can proclaim as I do?
Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,
Since I appointed the ancient people.
And the things that are coming and shall come,
Let them show these to them.
Do not fear, nor be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You are My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed there is no other Rock;
I know not one.' "

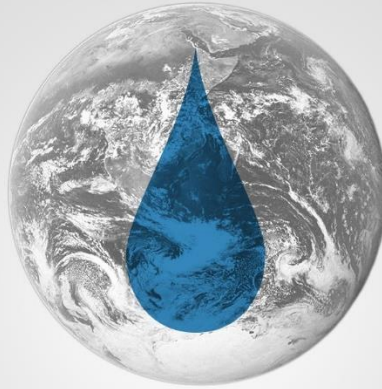
- Is. 44:6-8

9. **God Is Holy** – it is amazing how beautiful and perfect He is. Holiness denotes perfection which we apply to God. He is perfect in every way. Therefore, when we come to Him, we should respect and revere Him.

Since it is written,
"You shall be -----> **HOLY**
for I am -----> **HOLY.**"

- 1 Peter 1:16

10. **God Is A Trinity** – God is one but exists in perfect harmony with the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is a challenging concept to understand at times but He is ONE. We'll discuss this more in the following classes.



Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

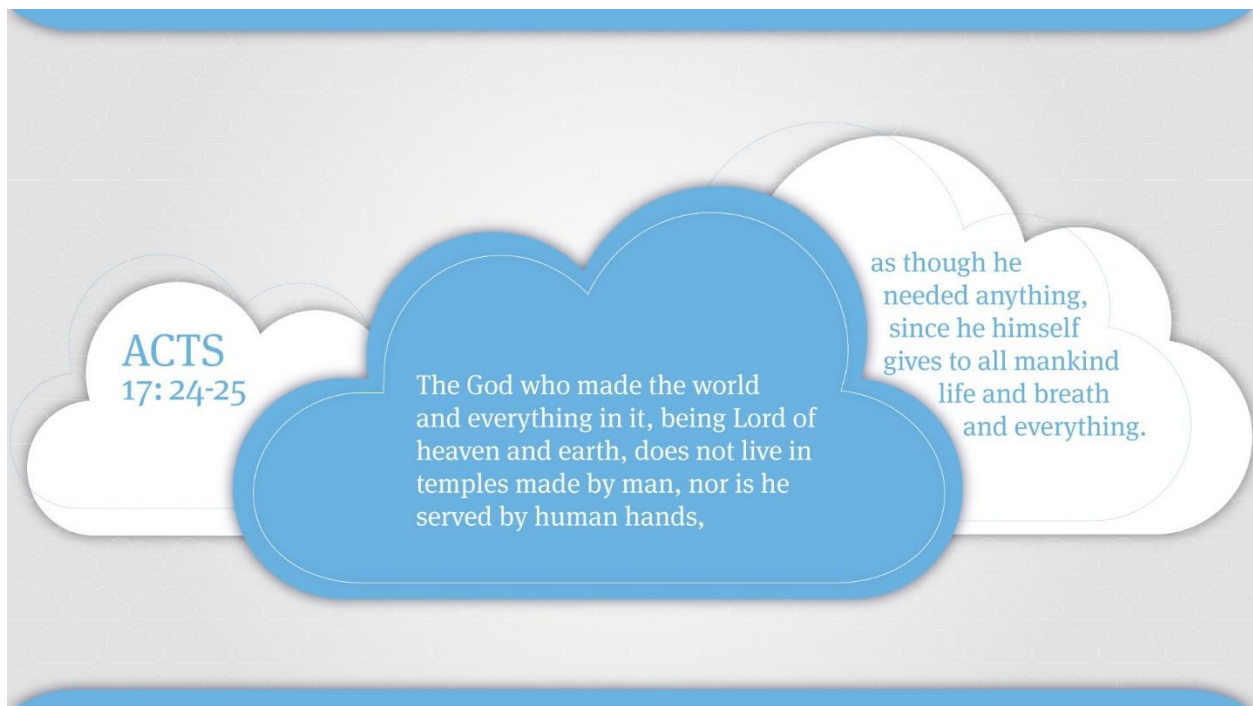
MATTHEW 28:19

Questions:

1. What word describes God's power?
2. Is God limited by distance? Why or why not?
3. What did you learn about the first verse of Genesis?
4. Was Genesis 1:1 the beginning?
5. How did God describe Himself to Moses?

Our Father

All of the above mentioned characteristics are true regarding God. Obviously, we did not include every characteristic since there would not be enough time to discuss it all. But there is one characteristic that we did not mention. We felt it deserved its own section. This characteristic is relational and lets us know who we are in relation to Him. **God is our Father.** The term "Father" depicts a direct, deeply rooted, family relationship. It is also important to note that a father knows his children, spends time with his children and provides for his children. In a much greater way, God willingly performs His role as Father. For those of you who may wonder, He is NOT an absentee Father. We told you earlier that He is everywhere, hears every conversation and hears everyone one of your heartbeats. God even knows how many hairs are on your head! As a good Father, His love for you is endless! He provides everything for life. Nothing is too difficult for Him and it is His pleasure to provide for you.



Conclusion

This session has covered a great amount of information. Please read everything again and meditate on what you read as well as what was discussed. It is not sufficient to just know about God but to KNOW God. Lessons like this help you increase your

understanding as well as your faith. Stay diligent and make time to attend the next session.

Questions:

1. Did you realize God is the Father of all?
2. Do you have a good earthly fatherly example? No matter how good that example is, God is much better.
3. Did you know the Bible has numerous names attributed to God that describe His character? What are some of the names?