

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.8**

# The Bible tells us what God is like

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

## Last time

We thought about how we'll approach this study of God's Word. We thought about the incredible fact that God has spoken to us through the narrative of His Word. It is a factual, reliable record of His interactions with us as the human race. His voice speaking to the world, and to us, His children.

## Knowing the One who is telling the Story

Before jumping right into the Biblical narrative, we'll briefly consider what God - our Storyteller - is like. For us these things are a reminder of stuff we've no doubt been taught. It provides reference points for things that the Narrative is going to show us about Him. All of us have wondered about what God is like. God doesn't provide a list, a set of propositions, about Himself. People have come up with those "Doctrines of God" to systematise their understanding. But those things come out of His revelation, which is the record of the things He's done, said, thought, events in which He's played a part, His interaction with people, and their thoughts about Him. We should be gripped by the possibilities, excited by the journey.

## Unlike everything else, God just is

It's something of a paradox to have finite minds trying to understand the infinite. Time-bound beings trying to picture someone eternal. It doesn't fit with anything we've seen and experienced. God knows that, of course. He doesn't try to prove his eternity with logical proofs. In His Word, as our Storyteller, He just says that's the way it is. It's His true version of how things are, including who He is, and He just says that. That also means, that unlike everything and anyone else, He is not dependent. Not contingent - one of the arguments for the existence of God that goes back to Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. Everything and everyone is contingent on something or someone else - this would extend back endlessly...except that we always come to God. His existence is the great reality on which every other part of reality hangs. For us who know Him, that's solid rock under our feet. A sure place to stand and learn

more. Become more. Also good to remember that He doesn't need anything from us.

He delights in His children, loves to interact with us, is thrilled when we depend on Him, praise Him, but He doesn't need us. We, on the other hand, desperately need Him.

## **No limits in time or space**

So He's unlimited by the confines of time. We live at the point (the present) of the past becoming the future. He exists at all the points, all the moments...

Another thing to note about our Storyteller - He is Spirit. A word we use for describing a personal existence not contained within a physical body. So He's not tied to a given place. We can only speculate in a feeble way about what that means. And the implications for His understanding of how things tie together. To experience all events simultaneously is to understand them fully – what is cause, what is effect, how one thing relates to another. We see from a limited, narrow perspective... His perspective is limitless. It's not always a comfortable thought though, is it? – being unable to escape from God's presence – even for those who know Him well. Note: This reality of God being present everywhere in the universe simultaneously is quite different to pantheistic thinking that God is everything in the universe.

Our Storyteller is a real person who speaks to us as people. His voice resonates in our ears. We know Him. Yes, He's Spirit. Yes, eternal. Yes, limitless, but He knows us, and He speaks so that we can know Him.

## **The trinity**

Of course in our brief reminder of Who is speaking to us, we should remember that He is Three. The mystery that we call "the Trinity". God being One and yet Three. Something else we accept by faith, knowing that we come from a human viewpoint. But we know the Father, the Son and the Helper – the Spirit.

## **He is the Master of it all**

Finally, as we consider who He is, we should put into perspective the fact that this One is over everything. He knows everything, He's more powerful than anything or anyone. He made it. He made us. All the powerful beings. All the energy wrapped up in the universe. He owns it. It is His. In His Story, His Word, He calls himself things like "The Most High", "The Lord". He gets to say how things are, what's right, what's wrong. How things ultimately turn out. But He is not "out there" the detached Storyteller about the universe. Not the distant clock-maker who set things spinning on its own. He's invested, personally involved, fully engaged. That's the amazing thing, isn't it? This three-in-one Ruler over everything, who is everywhere, all the time and who always was, totally without need...He actually cares enough to tell us about Himself. He wants us: poor, frail, needy, disfigured, rebellious people to know Him, because He cares about us.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

*The Bible tells us what God is like*

1. Is the picture of God revealing Himself through history something that has been part of your experience?
2. In Sunday school, youth group, church etc. did you hear the Bible stories taught in a way that tied them together as one entire narrative – God’s Story?
3. Think of some people who are not believers that you know and describe their view of God. What are some of the major influences that have shaped this view?
4. What do the things said about God in this lesson mean for you in a day-to-day sense: that he is eternal, a spirit, not limited by time and space etc.?



## ACTIVITIES

*The Bible tells us what God is like*

1. Read at least the initial definitions (more if you like) of pantheism, deism, and theism.