

Your life reflects your God

Before reading on, mark off points in this checklist which describe what you think God is like:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creator of the universe | <input type="checkbox"/> Force for good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abstract concept | <input type="checkbox"/> Has a purpose for this planet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature itself | <input type="checkbox"/> Has given humanity a message |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Idea invented by human beings to explain their world | <input type="checkbox"/> Has power without limit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Power behind life and the universe | <input type="checkbox"/> Infinite, eternal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loving Father | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Morally perfect | <input type="checkbox"/> Active in individual lives and world events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No distinct moral qualities | <input type="checkbox"/> Rewards people who respond to Him with an active faith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harsh, punitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource in times of distress or major decisions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair and just | <input type="checkbox"/> Gives everyone life after death regardless of their beliefs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Source of absolute truth | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All-knowing | |

Ideas have consequences

Your ideas about God affect the way you live your life as well as your attitude towards the future.

Let's say you view God as an abstraction with no moral qualities or involvement with this world. As a result, you might set your own standards for living based on what seems right to you. You may feel that political action— not God— offers the solution to major world problems like war, suffering, and injustice.

You will have a completely different perspective if you believe God is an active, loving Creator, morally perfect, who has left a message for humanity. You will turn to His word for guidance, confident that He has a purpose for this earth and you as an individual.

Your view of God thus has personal implications.

Do you believe God is the source of absolute truth? Then you probably place a high priority on your own honesty and the truthfulness of others.

Do you think of God as a benevolent Father who will give everyone some kind of better life after death? If so, this could imply you place little importance on finding out from the Bible how God wants you to live your life.

How did you learn about God?

Your concept of God has likely grown and developed throughout your life. It will certainly deepen if you sincerely seek to know Him.

Go back to your checklist description. On what is your present concept of God based?

Does it come from your own background, experience and observations? Is it the result of your acceptance of a particular philosophy or religion? Or have you gone directly to the Bible to discover how God has revealed Himself to humanity?

The first fact— God exists

The Bible takes as self-evident the fact that God exists. Creation itself is evidence of an eternal, all-powerful Creator far superior to human beings. States the apostle Paul,

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities— his eternal power and divine nature— have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Romans 1, verse 20

God is the Creator, the Great Designer, the source of life. He is the infinite power and intelligence behind this whole universe and all the wonders of nature.

One true God

Most people believe there is a God. But you will find many different ideas about God. To many God is an unknown; to some even unknowable; to others an impersonal concept or presence; to still others a real Being with a definite character.

In certain parts of the world such as Africa and India a variety of gods and goddesses are worshipped in the form of images and other representations. Such was the case in Bible times.

In about 50 AD the apostle Paul brought the gospel of Christ to Greece. The ancient Greeks had a host of gods and goddesses— Zeus, Poseidon, Mars, and Aphrodite to name a few. Athens was named for its patron goddess Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

The lives of the Greeks reflected their understanding of the gods. They got drunk to the glory of their god of wine. They had temple prostitutes to help them worship their goddess of love.

When Paul went to Athens, monuments of every known god and goddess filled the area of the great temple to Athena. Just to make sure they hadn't forgotten a god, the Athenians had an altar to the Unknown God.

Paul chose to talk to them about their Unknown God.

Your life reflects your God

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.”

Acts 17, verse 24

Paul was telling them that the very God they did not know was in fact the Creator of the universe, the only true God! All their gods and myths were just human inventions.

The apostle recognized that his audience had some right ideas about God, however. He quoted to them from their own poets:

“ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ “

Acts 17, verse 28

Paul went on to explain that God has a purpose for this world. He will intervene to judge it through a man who rose from the dead, namely Jesus Christ.

“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

Acts 17, verse 31

To the Athenians, such an idea was completely foreign. Their gods had no ultimate purpose, no standards against which people would be judged.

The unseen God

The gods of the Greeks were not like Paul’s God.

Their monuments were all around, to be seen, touched and worshipped. But the gods themselves were not real. Their lives, their standards and their values merely reflected those of the people who had invented them.

To believe Paul’s God meant drastic personal changes. A different way of thinking. New standards to live by. Hope beyond one’s immediate life.

Paul later wrote to the Greeks in Corinth:

“We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

2 Corinthians 4, verse 18

God is not known by His physical features. Nor can the physical senses discover Him. Rather, He is known by His eternal power, His purpose and His character. To worship Him involves a commitment of heart and mind.

The man who saw God’s glory

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years on their way from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. The Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy contain the account of their wanderings.

During this time their leader was Moses. God was with the Israelites in visible, miraculous ways— from the dramatic opening of the Red Sea to the manna they received for daily food.

Mount Sinai was the first major stop for the Israelites after their escape from Egypt. They encamped there for almost two years. During this time, Moses received the Ten Commandments and the law from God.

But Moses sought to know more about God, to know Him as a person. He wanted to understand the mind and purpose behind the commandments.

That is why he asked to see the “glory” of the LORD.

“Then Moses said, ‘Now show me your glory.’ And the LORD said, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you.’ “

Exodus 33, verses 18 and 19

God’s glory, sometimes referred to as His “name”— is His goodness.

Moses stood behind a rock while the LORD passed by, only to see, as the Bible says, His “back”.

What did Moses see?

“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. 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, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.’ “

Exodus 34, verses 5 to 7

God revealed to Moses the meaning of His name by describing His moral qualities.

What Moses “saw” was God’s character, not by physical sight but by spiritual insight. He came to understand what God is like and what He wants His followers to be like— loving, merciful, faithful, patient, forgiving, and just.

What impact did this revelation have on Moses?

The incident took place near the start of the Israelites’ forty year journey. To lead a wandering tribe of some two million, Moses needed inner strength and direction as well as an awareness of God’s presence.

This vision provided just that. At the same time it gave Moses a perfect standard, a guide to help him rule according to God’s principles.

Manifesting the glory of the LORD

The glory of the LORD comprises the moral qualities of a perfect character. But mercy, love, patience and the other qualities of God can only be truly understood in real life, when they take form in the personality of a human being.

The one person who completely expressed God’s glory in his life was Jesus Christ. Jesus alone exemplified what is meant by God’s glory; his life was a perfect reflection of his Father’s

Your life reflects your God

mind and character:

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.”

Hebrews 1, verse 3

The Bible record of the life of Jesus helps you understand how the glory of God can be reflected in a human life. This, in turn, helps you see how to reflect His glory in your own life.

Paul recognized Jesus as the example he tried to follow and urged all believers to do the same.

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11, verse 1

Moses, Paul and you

You can be sure God was very real to Moses and Paul. They understood His character, purpose and involvement with humanity. They know Him in a personal one-to-one relationship. Despite difficult situations, trials and personal weaknesses, they tried to manifest the ideal of His glory in their lives.

Like them, your understanding of the glory of the LORD can give you an ideal, a character model, a standard for right values and attitudes. You can develop a true understanding of God’s character and purpose by studying His message in the Bible, with special attention to the life and teachings of Jesus.

The more you learn about God, the more aware you become of His reality. And your life changes as you begin to reflect in some small measure His glory.

Recap

God will have more and more impact on your life as you seek to understand His character and purpose revealed in the Bible.

Your belief in God and faith in His promises should manifest itself in your life through your attitudes, priorities and values.

Recommended Bible Readings

Paul in Athens: Acts 17, verses 16 to 34.

God reveals His glory to Moses: Exodus 33, verse 12 to Exodus 34, verse 17.

God’s invitation: Isaiah 55.
Love— the Bible description: 1 Corinthians 13.

Living to the glory of God: Ephesians 3, verses 14 to 21.