



*Lesson 1*

## **OUR AWESOME GOD**

# A STUDY OF GOD—WHY?

Dwight L. Moody told the story of a man who was asked by his ten-year-old son, “Daddy, why don’t you ever go to church with us?” “I don’t need to go to church, son,” his father replied. “My faith is established.” Later that same day the man drove his horses out of the barn and hitched them to the buggy. As he and his son drove out of the yard, the horses became stuck in a mud hole. The man tried in vain to get them out of this mud hole, whereupon the boy observed, “They’re not going anywhere, Daddy! I believe they’re established!” An established person is a person who is not going anywhere, and I suspect that some of us have been “stuck in the mud” in our relationship with God, and we do not seem to be going anywhere.

### **Opening Prayer**

Our Lord God, as we begin this Bible study, some of us have to confess that we’ve been “established” in our spiritual lives and we’re not growing the way we could. The Bible says that You are an awesome God. It says that You own us by the act of creation and redemption. We are going to spend eternity with You. We, however, are vulnerable because of Satan, the world, and our own sinful flesh. We have the opportunity for growth. At this window of opportunity, please bless this Bible study for us. Our Savior God, our hearts are open to Your instruction. Hear us for the sake of Jesus who urges us to search the Scriptures. Amen.

### **Because He Is Awesome**

Recently a powerful telescope recorded the birth of a new star. The photo reveals a cloud of gas 170,000 light years away. If you could travel at the speed of light, 186,000 miles a second or six trillion miles in a year, it would take you 170,000 years to arrive at the cloud. So this would be a journey of 102,000,000,000,000,000 (102 quintillion) miles! Some folks

estimate that there are at least 10 billion galaxies in the universe containing billions of stars. Our God is an awesome God!

Awesome. Inspiring awe. “Awe yir’ah. . . . Described theologically as *mysterium tremendum*, awe is a biblical posture in the presence of God” (*The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, page 358). Also described as reverential fear and dread mingled with great respect and veneration.

For those of you who are married, can you really say that your spouse is someone who inspires you with “reverential fear and dread mingled with great respect and veneration”? You get the point.

Today people talk about movies, cars, food, and other things and say, “That’s awesome!” Today we seem to be too impressed with ourselves and things around us. Many of us have lost the joy of thinking of God as awesome, and some may even have a false sense of security.

True or False: My thoughts are usually consistent with what my God is really like.

1. Underline the five things your God says of Himself in Deuteronomy 10:17, “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.”

What do these words tell us about God? \_\_\_\_\_

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“The purpose is to emphasize God’s uniqueness, His absolute sovereignty, and His supremacy over all other powers in the universe. God of gods and Lord of lords, strong Hebrew superlatives” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 400).

2. Read Psalm 89:6-7. What is the answer to the two questions in verse 6? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do the angels fear God greatly? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Isaiah 51:12-13a, “I, even I, am He who **comforts** you (*in contrast to the fear in the next sentence*). Who are you that you **fear** mortal men (*Not ‘Why are you afraid?’ but ‘Who are you that you are afraid?’ The emptiness of man is shown here compared to the all-sufficiency of God*), the sons of men, who are but grass, that you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction?”

What is the significance of the pronoun “I” used twice in the first three words? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why is it folly to fear mortal men and forget the LORD? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Today we sometimes do what Israel did. Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Read Exodus 15:1-6

Who sang the words of this song? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did they sing the song? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What was the effect of “right hand of the LORD” according to verse 6? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe the mood or tone of the song? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Because He Owns Us

“Own—belonging to oneself or itself—usually used following a possessive case or possessive adjective” (*Merriam-Webster*). Another reason to learn more about God is because of divine ownership.

#### 1. God owns us by the act of creation

Genesis 1:26-27, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’ . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

What do the pronouns “us” and “our” tell us? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 1:16-17, “For by Christ **all things** were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things** were created by Him and for Him. He is before **all things**, and in Him **all things** hold together.”

“All things” is emphasized four times. What could possibly be excluded by those two words? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did Christ create you for? \_\_\_\_\_ Why is that important? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 8:6, “There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”

Two truths:

1. God wanted to create \_\_\_\_\_
2. God wanted to create me for \_\_\_\_\_ What does this say

about God? \_\_\_\_\_ What does this  
say about me? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. God owns us by the act of redemption

1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a, “You are not your own; you were bought with a price.”

This terminology comes from the slave market. In that day slaves were traded and purchased. Who owns you for a second reason? \_\_\_\_\_ Who owned you before the purchase? \_\_\_\_\_ What was the purchase price? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 43:1, “But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine.’”

He is your awesome God! He claims divine ownership by saying—

- “I have \_\_\_\_\_ you.”
- “I have \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “You \_\_\_\_\_.”

### Because We Are Vulnerable

All of us are very vulnerable. Samson, the mightiest man that ever lived, lost all his strength and his life because he trusted a woman rather than God. Giant Goliath, ten times mightier than little David, lost his life to a little boy because he trusted his physique, and the boy trusted God. King Nebuchadnezzar, mighty King of Babylon, lost his entire Empire simply because he trusted his own might. They were all vulnerable—and so are we.

Pollster George Gallup, Jr. has long referred to America as a “nation of Biblical illiterates.” The Barna Research Group says that nearly half of “born-again” Christians deny the existence of

the Holy Spirit and Satan. Another survey revealed that barely half of Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians believe in the devil, but 56 percent of Lutherans and 49 percent of Methodists believe in UFOs.

While nearly three-fourths of all Americans believe in hell, hardly any believe it to be their likely destination. One survey found that only 18% of all Christians said they read the Bible each day. Former Secretary of Education, William Bennett, says, “We have become the kind of society that civilized countries used to send missionaries to.”

God-shrinkers have been at work in western culture, scaling down the Holy One to the measure of the human mind and experience. Shut out of His creation by seventeenth-century deism, silenced, as a matter of method by eighteenth-century rationalism (Immanuel Kant) and scaled down to the dimension of our religious experiences by nineteenth-century romanticism (Friedrich Schleiermacher), the living God who creates and rules and intrudes in the flow of history to rescue and speak was seriously diminished in the understanding of “modern” people. The God of the Bible became an embarrassment, a primitive tribal deity in need of radical updating by humankind come of age (*The Beauty of God’s Holiness*, p. 33, by Thomas L. Trevethan).

### 1. Non-religious people

- Atheist—“A disbelief in the existence of deity. That doctrine that there is no deity.” *Merriam-Webster*
- Agnostic—“A person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable.” *Merriam-Webster*
- General Unbelief—“Incredulity or skepticism especially in matters of religious faith.” *Merriam-Webster*

“Unbelief is nothing but the blasphemy of considering God a liar” (*What Luther Says*, p. 1400, by Martin Luther).

Frederick Copelson said, “An atheist is one who believes he has absolute knowledge that there is no one who has absolute knowledge.”

The fourth verse of William Henley’s “Invictus” illustrates the defiance of man by nature (written before his execution in 1903):

It matters not how straight the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate.  
I am the captain of my soul.

Romans 1:19-20, “. . . since what may be known about God is \_\_\_\_\_ to them, because God has made it \_\_\_\_\_ to them. For since the creation of the world God’s \_\_\_\_\_ qualities—His \_\_\_\_\_ power and \_\_\_\_\_ nature—have been \_\_\_\_\_ seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are \_\_\_\_\_ excuse.” We call this the natural knowledge of God.

Psalm 14:1a, “The **fool** says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” This is not a compliment from God. Give a brief definition of a “fool.” \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this age (*parallel in John 12:31 and 16:11*) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Here \_\_\_\_\_ is called a \_\_\_\_\_ in this world who \_\_\_\_\_ the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. “Religious” people

Today we have “decaffeinated” Christians who have a decaffeinated God. Today we have “domesticated” Christians who have a domesticated God. “My God would not send people to hell!” “My God would not allow the suffering we have.” “My God is a God of love.”

The concept of God by many religious people today is that He is simply a higher power, a cosmic force, and a loving grandfather who is especially fond of America.

New Ager Shirley MacLaine goes even further by saying, “Each is its own god. You must not worship anyone or anything other than self. For you are god. To love self is to love god” (*Dancing in the Light*, p. 385, Shirley MacLaine).

After the baptism of his baby brother in church, little Johnny sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally the boy replied, “That minister said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!”

There is now a “De-Baptism” ceremony at some atheist conventions. Over 250 people have gone through the ceremony for those who were baptized or once believed in religion as a child but now reject it. One woman said, “It’s very beneficial. It was a chance to laugh at the ridiculous things I believed as a child. I feel much better.”

“My departure from the Faith was like a conversion on the road to Damascus. My return was slow, hesitant, doubting. So it will always be; but I know I shall never make the same mistake again.” — A. N. Wilson, *biographer of C. S. Lewis and Jesus, on returning to Christianity after 20 years as an ardent atheist.*

Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

“Fear” from the Hebrew *yirah* meaning reverence. How does one get a “reverence” of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
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How does one get “understanding”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Peter 3:17, “Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, **be on your guard** (*a continuing process*) so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”

We have a tendency to think too highly of ourselves and of who we are:

- “Wow, isn’t it great that I’m so right and they’re so wrong?”
- “Why can’t all Christians be like me—nice and gentle and peaceful and so loving?”
- “I may sin a little, but I would never do what that person has done!”
- “It sure would be nice if everyone were just like me!”
- “God, I try to follow my religion as best I can!”
- **Ad infinitum** (*Latin for going on and on*) **ad nauseam** (*Latin for continuing to the point of nausea*).

1 Corinthians 10:12, “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”

The Corinthians prided themselves on their “secure spiritual condition.” Which two words in this verse are most important for them and us? \_\_\_\_\_

### Because of Uncertain Times

Bob Tasler (Pastor Emeritus) observes: “What a mixed-up world we live in! Politicians confuse us, the economy scares us, a rapidly changing culture challenges us, and immortality threatens us. The wheels of society seem to be falling off—so what can we do?”

A more thorough study of God is of great consequence because of the uncertain times we live in.

- We do not know what our health will be like tomorrow.
- We do not know if we will have a job tomorrow.
- We do not know what will happen to our savings tomorrow or if we will even have any savings.

- We do not know if the stock market will drop 600 points tomorrow.
- We do not know if terrorists will attack our country tomorrow.

David spent much of his life in fear because of very real enemies. However, now, an older man in the Lord, he confesses, “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1. You may want to read the entire 27<sup>th</sup> chapter for more encouragement.) What is the answer to both questions in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus here speaks to His disciples about the grief they will face: John 16:33, “I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. **In this world you will have trouble.** But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

James 4:13-15, “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ <sup>14</sup>Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup>Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

True or False: When saying, “If it is the Lord’s will” we can mean that we hope that His will is in accordance with our will. Defend your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Does our thinking in this area need some adjustment? \_\_\_\_\_

Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:21b-22, “They returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. ‘We must **go through many hardships** to enter the kingdom of God,’ they said.”

What do some TV preachers say about hardships? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Because We're Going to Spend Eternity with Him

True or False: Eternity is a very, very long time to spend in heaven or in hell.

They say “Diamonds are forever!” Not really, but eternity IS forever. In algebra there is a word called infinity. If you multiplied a number by itself and kept on doing so, eventually the number would be so great it would lose all meaning. Now, have you ever wondered what it's going to be like to spend eternity with God? That's a long time. And with God?

There was a little girl whose home was near a cemetery. She had to follow a path through the cemetery to get to the store, but she never seemed to be afraid when she returned and had to go through the cemetery after dark. Someone asked, “Aren't you afraid?” She replied, “Oh, no, I'm not afraid, because my home is on the other side.” Yes, yes indeed!

1 Corinthians 13:12, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror (*this is an enigma—something hard to understand or explain*); then we shall see face to face. Now I (*personally*) know in part; then I shall know fully (*an intensive knowing*), even as I am fully known.”

What will this “knowing” be like? “A knowing which penetrates completely. . . . We shall know God directly and completely in the highest degree in which this is possible for His children” (*Interpretation of First Corinthians*, pp. 570-571, by R. C. H. Lenski).

Revelation 3:12, “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem.”

Which words describe the eternal factor of living in the city of God? \_\_\_\_\_

A study of God—why? Because we're going to live with Him in

His house forever!

**Because of the Importance for Growth...**

. . . or “*what might have been.*” What do you think is meant by “what might have been”? \_\_\_\_\_

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“A low view of God almost universally is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. With the loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and the consciousness of the divine presence. . . . If we would bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more nearly as He is” (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, by A. W. Tozer).

Some Christians seem to be very “close to God.” Why do you suppose this happens to some believers and not others? \_\_\_\_\_

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Colossians 1:9-10, “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to **fill you with the knowledge** of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, **growing in the knowledge** of God.”

What are some of the benefits of this “knowledge”? \_\_\_\_\_

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Exodus 33:13, “If You are pleased with me, teach me Your ways so I may know You and continue to find favor with You.”

Moses had been in God’s presence for 40 days. He came down from the mountain and continued his incredible relationship

with God. Verse 11 says, “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.” What is amazing is that after all this, Moses wanted more. He wanted to know God even better. He had talked with God face to face and yet he thirsts for more. Hence, the more you know God the more you \_\_\_\_\_

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2 Peter 3:18, “But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.**”

What kind of a God do you want? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does the word “grow” suggest to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What is the goal of this continuing process? \_\_\_\_\_

There are many reasons for longing for a deeper relationship with God. This chapter suggests these six reasons (*briefly consider them in your closing prayer*)—

- Because He Is Awesome
- Because He Owns Us
- Because We Are Vulnerable
- Because of Uncertain Times
- Because We’re Going to Spend Eternity with Him
- Because of the Importance for Growth

### **Closing Prayer**