

## **What Is God Like?**

Our society today calls into question the foundations of Christian faith. Unfortunately, the starting point for these discussions is often human reason alone. In elevating reason as the only basis of evaluation, we see mankind's attempt to be the measure of all. Again, and again we hear this confirmed in discussions with phrases such as, "My God is like this," and "I think this way about God." Many imagine God to be the creation of human wishful thinking. Others say that they believe differently from what Christian faith teaches.

No human ability or knowledge brings us to know God. We, in ourselves, lack the means of thought, feeling or will required to come to God because He himself has made known His essence and will. He does this through His wondrous works, His mastery of the world, His Word, and above all through His Son Jesus Christ, who proclaims His Father: The God of grace, comfort and hope. With Him is abundant forgiveness.

The Bible records God's proclamation and is the highest guide for Christian faith and life. Pantheistic views, or the idea that God exists in multiple versions, broadly influence our time. For this reason, we must emphasize that God, in His essence, is the single living personal God. He reveals himself and His will as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In saving mankind, the Triune God acts as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. In His love, God gave His Son to suffer and die as ransom for our sins. Jesus' death and resurrection are the foundation of His kingdom's gospel.

Christian doctrine teaches that our Savior's work continues as the work of the Holy Spirit in His congregation, whose duty is to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. The gospel of God's kingdom conveys the forgiveness of sins to us for the birth of faith, as well as the care of faith. The Word of Scripture depicts God's work in the world, in the history of humankind and in the lives of individuals. With the help of different descriptions, Holy Writings reveal God's relationship to His children. He is our shield, our rock and our fortress.

There are many different depictions and definitions of God in the Bible. He is the Spirit, who alone is eternal—the first and the last. He is the omnipotent, righteous and holy God, who doesn't allow himself to be blasphemed. As Paul admonishes, "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). For this reason, we pray that our nations would come to hold His name as holy. But above all, God is gracious, good and loving. The fundamental view of the Bible is that God is living. Life emerges from His creation work. We receive everything from our Creator, who upholds all. Scripture abundantly speaks to us of God's care and providence, and everything depends on His blessing.

But we err when we think God's blessing leads only to success, and that everything should go well in life because He blesses us. In His incomprehensible wisdom, our Heavenly Father allows His children to experience trials so that they would come to value personal faith much more than perishable gold. Difficult times try our faith. But Christians are not left without His care even amid failures, trials and difficulties. We can be called God's child even amid life's adversities. This is our most important

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matter. Life's deepest joy is to be near God and live as His child in communion with Him. Remember, our Heavenly Father holds each of us in His hand, and one day will raise all His children into everlasting glory with Him.

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