

How Big Is Your God Part 8

Steve Berger November 6, 2016

Review

- **Self-Existent/Self-Sufficient** — I AM, LORD, most used, 6521 times, reminds us of His BIGNESS, lives in everlasting now, Uncaused Cause of all, Non-Origin of every origin, Un-created Essence
- **Transcendent** — Above and Beyond in every way — His ways are past searching out, finite human minds can't comprehend His Transcendence, He's infinitely beyond us
- **Eternal** — no beginning or end, foreverness of God, never a time when God wasn't, outside man's time and space continuum. Think as far back or forward as you can, God is beyond that
- **Sovereign** — does His own will — according to His own good pleasure, He rules and reigns! Needs no one's permission or affirmation
- **Omnipotent** — All-powerful — there is no power apart from Him, never depleted, nothing is hard, upholds everything by word of His power, God shares power to the weak
- **Omniscient** — All-knowing — nothing God doesn't know, can't learn anything, understanding is infinite
- **Omni-Present — Ever-present** — there is nowhere God isn't, simultaneously penetrates everything and contains everything. **Manifest Presence** — His Personal revealed Presence within His Omni-Presence

Amazingly— in God's Bigness, He makes Himself small enough for us to personally experience Him

Further clarity into His Nature

• Exodus 34:6-8

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

- merciful — compassionate, action to help with hurts, you must receive it.
- gracious — to show favor, to accept (favor is not earned)
- longsuffering — patient
- abounding goodness and truth — abounds in kindness and faithfulness/stability.

- keeps mercy for thousands — keeps (largeness, great extent, long continuance) kindness for thousands — undiminishing
- forgives iniquity, transgression and sin — forgives, lifted up and taken away through Christ, as far as the east is from the west, never to be remembered
- doesn't clear the guilty — guilty are rejecters of His loving kindness.

Application— *when Moses sees God for Who He is, he worships, quickly!*

Question— *“Is your God Big enough to Worship Passionately, Love Intimately, Trust Confidently, Obey Faithfully, Proclaim Fearlessly?” If not, there are adjustments to be made, because the True and Living God is worthy of all that.*

In the book “Your God Is Too Small,” ¹ J.B. Phillips describes false gods that people can embrace, even without knowing it. It's time to expose them and bring adjustment to our spiritual lives — because how we see God determines how we live our lives!

So IMPORTANT— *in all of these examples, there is just enough truth in them to solicit our adherence, but **not enough** to justify us excluding the rest of Who God Is*

WARNING — **let's make sure we aren't adhering to these small Gods...**

Projected Image God...

...when we project our small image of God as His totality

- making God only what I value most and relate to best, making God NOT what I value least and can relate to least

When I only want and emphasize those parts of God that are meaningful to me, that diminishes God and makes Him much smaller than He is!

- examples: Love God, Worship God, Supernatural God, Holy God, Social Justice God...

Anytime we diminish God by making Him only what we want Him to be, we seriously limit our own experience with Him, and project an incomplete image of Him to others

IMPORTANT— *whatever your Projected Image is, balance it with the fullness of God's character and redemptive plan*

Second-Hand God...

...for some, too much of their spiritual knowledge is second-hand observation and not first-hand experience

¹ J.B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small*. (Touchstone, New York, NY, 2004)

- we live our lives off other people's experience, not our own. Children off parents, spouses off each other's, students off their teachers, etc.
- because second-hand observations can be faulty and biased — we can end up with a God quite different from the Real One
- Second-Hand God is way too small, because you aren't experiencing Him yourself!

God in His Bigness desires everyone to personally taste and see that He is good. His attributes of love and mercy, grace and patience, goodness and truth, forgiveness and power... all are to be experienced personally, not a diminished second-hand observation!

Parental Hangover God...

...seeing God through the lens of your own imperfect parents

- more to this topic than we can do justice this morning

**Some struggle to see God the Father past their own experience with their earthly father and/or mother...
it's not psycho-babble — it's just true**

- parents, authority figures who abuse and damage children do harm to that child's ability to see God as loving, good, kind, tender, faithful, generous, etc.
- concepts of God are angry, harsh, distant, accusatory, untrustworthy, etc.
- one may come to Christ and know something is off, can't quite pinpoint it, Parental Hangover God is at work

Parental Hangover God is a miserably small replacement for the Eternal Father of Mercies

***IMPORTANT**— imperfect parents aren't an excuse or license to live a hampered spiritual life, we must see for ourselves Who our Heavenly Father really is, and begin to renew our minds with that truth*

Resident Policeman God...

...voice of conscience that makes you feel guilty and unhappy before, during and after any wrongdoing... constant Ah! Ah! Ah!

- it's the nagging inner voice of a spiritual taskmaster, policeman always following you... speeding, brakes, blinkers, tags, seatbelt, insurance card... guilty paranoia

“...it is extremely unlikely that we shall ever be moved to worship, love, and serve a nagging inner voice that at worst spoils our pleasure and at best keeps us rather negatively on the path of virtue.” ² J.B. Phillips

- conscience has its place, but is far from infallible, it can be corrupted through upbringing, culture, propaganda, etc.
- what you're hearing or feeling doesn't guarantee it's God, we must ask if the voice lines up with the heart and character of God — He's no Resident Policeman, He's much more of a Caring Friend

Grand Old Man God...

...Big Man Upstairs, outdated, old school, Original Godster!

- He's to be treated with some reverence and respect, He's been around a long time, I've heard some crazy stories of times past, but... better kept in chair in corner
- G.O.M.G. isn't relevant in these modern times. Times have changed
- **Sadly**- the church has contributed to the G.O.M.G. by representing Him in old fashioned, outdated ways — clergy robes, old English prayers, lifeless sermons and songs. Its generational dirge paying respect to the G.O.M.G.
- **Listen**- the church has to be culturally relevant WITHOUT being spiritually compromising. The message is sacred, not the method! Jesus Movement is one example

**God is much bigger than G.O.M.G.,
He is relevant, He is available, He is Powerful,
He offers everyone the solution to their greatest current need,
love, life, salvation, acceptance, meaning, purpose, and power.**

Meek and Mild God...

...of all the epithets applied to Christ, this one seems the least appropriate

- although Jesus is meek, meaning humble, in today's vernacular meek and mild produces images of a God who is weak, uncertain, even apologetic
- a non-entity, of a placid temperament, uninspired, and uninspiring

TRUTH —Nothing could be further from the truth regarding Jesus!

- He courageously and frequently rebuked the religious leaders of His day... calling them derogatory names, sons of the devil, sons of hell, hypocrites, fools, whitewashed tombs, to name a few
- Jesus was so far from being a non-entity that He was regarded as a public danger by the authorities
- made a whip, turned over tables, threw money changers out of Temple

² ibid

DANGERS — of Meek and Mild God

- produces a concept of God that is only wooly and sentimental. G.O.M.G.
- gives us permission to be weak, fearful in the name of meek and mild
- gives us permission to be passive and not courageous

Closing thoughts

**There will be a download of spiritual courage
as we behold the Great I Am in all His fullness.
We need it for the days we're living in.**

***Our Response—** wherever our God has been too small, we must recognize and repent,
ask for revelation about the fullness of His character.*

Discussion Questions

1. God had performed many awe-inspiring miracles through Moses. But even though Moses had been so very involved with God, he yearned to know God even more personally. How does that challenge you in your pursuit of God?
2. What part of God are tempted to project above other attributes in your life? What do you need to do to achieve a balance?
3. Are there times in your life when you have lived off other's experiences of God? How did you make the transition to a first-hand relationship?
4. What concept of God have you struggled with because an experience with an earthly authority figure?
5. How can you tell the difference between the nagging inner voice of a spiritual taskmaster/policeman, and the voice of the Holy Spirit?
6. How many of your personal friends still know only the Grand Old Man God? How can you help them learn that God is much bigger, relevant, available, and powerful?
7. What is the danger to ourselves of seeing — and the danger to others of projecting Jesus as "meek and mild"?