

SHEPHERD'S COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday ABF – January 20

“The Knowledge of the Holy”

by A.W. Tozer

CHAPTER 1

Why We Must Think Rightly About God

“...you thought I was altogether like you” (Psalm 50:21).

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:21).

1) Pastor Tozer states: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” What do you think about this statement? Do you believe this applies to yourself?

“...the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself...
the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God...”

2) In what ways has the Church been silent about God? Specifically, what attributes of God's character do people avoid talking about?

3) How important is it for the local church to be led by men who have an accurate, biblical view of God's character? Please briefly explain.

4) “Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God” (A.W. Tozer). Please review *Names of God* sheet.

“In [God] word and idea are indivisible.”

5) “That our idea of God corresponds as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us.” How do we attain this? What things prevent us from holding to a right view of God?

(Read Psalm 139:23-24.) For example: The Bible teaches that God is beautiful (Psalm 27:4; 29:2). If we find other things on Earth more alluring than God, do we then truly believe that God is the Supreme Beauty? Write down other examples that show why our doctrine (what we think we believe about God) does not always line up with the ways we live our lives.

7) Tozer writes: "A right conception of God...is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse." In what way does our knowledge of God (or lack of knowledge) impact our worship—both personal and corporate?

8) Why does a "decadent" view of God lead to "moral calamity" in the professing Believer? (Decadent: "Being in a state of decline or decay." *American Heritage Dictionary*) How do we prevent our view of God from declining or decaying? (Remember Adam & Eve!)

9) "Perverted notions about God soon rot the *religion* in which they appear" (emphasis added). This is a battle the Church has fought for 20 centuries! Please give some examples if you can. "So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it."

10) "We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God..." In light of this, what is God laying on your heart to do? Please read the attached article, *Counselor's Commentary: Parent as "god" and God as Parent*.

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been His counselor?"
"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?"
For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:33-36).

Counselor's Commentary: Parent as "god" and God as Parent

Isaiah 44 describes so vividly the woodsman cutting down a tree, using some of it for firewood, carving an idol out of the rest of it, and then promptly bowing to it and calling it "god." We do not do quite the same thing, but we have our own ways of creating gods in our minds who are quite different from the God Who truly is. For example, how often have you heard someone say, "I would like to think that God. . . ." The truth is, however, that liking to think something of God is very different from God being that way or acting in that manner. And what counts for reality and for eternity is not what ideas of God we concoct in our minds, but Who in fact God truly is. One can fall into the deep end of a pool and think he can breathe the water, that it will turn to air, but that is not reality. Belief does not create reality. And erroneous concepts of God do not change His nature, no matter how fondly or sincerely held.

Tozer pointed out in *The Knowledge of the Holy* the tremendous importance of God-image: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. . . . The gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any [person] is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that comprises the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God."

But what is a God-image? And how do we come by it? If we were given a doctrinal exam on the attributes of God, most of us would do reasonably well. But what about in the exam of life? How do we view God when we are in the middle of a raging storm in our lives? That's the "life test" of God-image. It is far more telling than paper and pencil exams. And how is it that we come to have this particular concept of God?

In large measure our God-image has been bequeathed to us; impressions from the various significant "God-people" in our childhood come together to form something of a collage, and that collection of significant God-impressions comes to be what we think of when we think about God. ("God-people" are those individuals we perceive to have a lot to do with God and who are important people in our lives - believing parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, Sunday School teachers, neighbors, etc.)

Children whose "God-people" are mostly warm and loving tend to perceive God to be warm and loving. And children whose "God-people" are mostly distant and harsh tend to perceive God to be distant and harsh. The common denominators of the "God-people" in their lives in large measure determine what children think God is like. It certainly behooves us adults to work hard at being the best God-imagers that we can be by God's grace, for little ones are watching and concluding what God is like by what they see in us.

It also behooves us, however, to take stock of our adult God-images. How is my image of God more like grandpa than like what Scripture says about God? How is it more like Mom than like what the Bible says about God? What little pieces of this "God-person" and that "God-person" from childhood have brought inaccuracy, imbalance, or distortion to my concept of God? It is important to take inventory, allowing God's Word to bring correction to distorted images of God left over from childhood.

Jesus told the woman at the well that God is seeking people to worship Him in spirit and in truth. How truthful regarding the Person of God is my worship? Do I worship a left-over God-image from my childhood? Do I worship some concoction that I merely fancy God to be like? Or do I allow the Scriptures to mold and refine my understanding of who God is? May He give each of us grace to discern His truth regarding His glorious Person.