

S Sovereign  
O Objective  
F Faithful  
T Trinity  
B Between  
A Approachable  
L Loyal  
L Love

Each week we will have a devotional on the “Nature and Character of GOD”

We can use the “softball” phrase as a way to remember these Characteristics... Hopefully it will help!

What comes to mind when we say that God is “Sovereign”? Any thoughts? Please Share what this means to YOU.

**Psalm 24** *A David psalm*

<sup>1</sup>GOD claims Earth and everything in it, God claims World and all who live on it. <sup>2</sup>He built it on Ocean foundations, laid it out on River girders.

<sup>3</sup>Who can climb Mount GOD? Who can scale the holy north-face?

<sup>4</sup>Only the clean-handed, only the pure-hearted; Men who won't cheat, women who won't seduce.

<sup>5</sup>GOD is at their side; with GOD's help they make it. <sup>6</sup>This, Jacob, is what happens to God--seekers, God--questers.

<sup>7</sup>Wake up, you sleepyhead city! Wake up, you sleepyhead people! King-Glory is ready to enter.

<sup>8</sup>Who is this King-Glory? GOD--- armed and battle-ready.

<sup>9</sup>Wake up, you sleepyhead city! Wake up, you sleepyhead people! King-Glory is ready to enter.

<sup>10</sup>Who is this King-Glory? GOD of the angel armies: He is King-Glory.

God is Sovereign as the Creator of all we see in the Heavens and the Earth. He created “intelligence”... no one knows where the incredible amount of “information” came from to allow DNA to work. He is Sovereign over TIME...using the nation of Israel over thousands of years to lead to the Christ, the promised Messiah, to rescue and save those who would call on His Name from Themselves. He even implanted into us a concept of Infinity...as He is infinite and Sovereign over ALL time. He is sovereign over all events, unchangeable and unchanging. THAT ought to settle in our souls that we can REST in Him. He is Sovereign in our lives. Nothing happens to us that is not allowed by Him and nothing takes Him by surprise, because He is in control of the events of our lives. Good thing, huh? That Someone is in control??

Week 1

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Each week we will have a devotional on the “Nature and Character of GOD”

Thinking of a word Describing a Characteristic of GOD that begins with the letter “O” brings to mind “Omniscient” (Knows all actual and possible things), or Omnipotent (All Powerful), or Omnipresent (God is Everywhere – not “in” everything, that is Pantheism).

But, what I would like to suggest today is that God is OBJECTIVE. Now, why would I say that? Why is that important? Well, I guess as a start, we could say that it means that God is not Subjective. He does NOT grade on a curve. To Him, everything is NOT relative. Of course, when someone says that “Everything is Relative, we should immediately ask “to What”? To say that “San Francisco is 50 miles” is meaningless! You need to say it is 50 miles “from” San Jose. If you tell me it takes 6 hours to get to my house, I don’t know when to expect you unless you tell me when you’re leaving. So time and distance must be measured relative to a reference point, or it has no “relative” meaning.

God established boundaries and points of reference for time and distance, and he did the same for our moral behavior. Even as young children some of the first words we hear are “it’s not FAIR”. Not fair relative to What? For some reason we feel strongly that there is a “right way” that we can compare behavior to. We instinctively know there is a way that things “ought” to be. The fact is that God establishes the reference points and boundaries for all that He Creates. His CREATION is a reflection of Him, and HE sets all standards. He created US and we somehow know instinctively that there objective standards must exist.

By nature therefore God is TRUTH. All meaning and purpose and reference and comparison can be measured relative to HIM and his reference point is sure for all areas of our lives. All Truth comes from Him, and everything can be evaluated relative to Him. Now, how has he revealed Himself as being Truth? Jesus said to Thomas in John 14:6 “I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life, and no one comes to the Father but through ME”. He did not say I “Know” the truth, but that I AM the TRUTH. Jesus is God’s “Objective Picture” to us to show us His Nature in a way that we can understand and relate to. And his Word, the Bible, is the other way he reveals his Nature to us by showing us His Perfect Standard, Our Sinful Nature, and The most amazing truth of all that He offers us a way into relationship with Him when we agree that Christ met that Standard, and offers Himself in payment for our Sins that so separates us from God. I’m sure Glad God is Objective about THAT!

Week 2

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This week our third devotional on the “Nature and Character of GOD” starts with the Letter “F”. One quality I thought of was that God is FAIR, but then, we already pretty much covered that last week when we said that God is OBJECTIVE. He not only judges “fairly” but he IS “fair” by his very nature, since all truth and every standard of natural and moral law is derived from HIM. Today we want to look at the fact that God is FAITHFUL. Now, I suppose each of you might say “of course God is Faithful... He “is” GOD after all”. And that seems to make sense. Now, to each of us that has actually taken the big risk of actually “trusting” GOD, even with the simple little faith we can muster, and have found him to really BE “Faithful”, the “fact” that he is Faithful takes on a whole new meaning.

Could a few of you share one experience in “your” life where you have risked and trusted God and he has proven his Faithfulness to YOU????

Now, the amazing thing about God’s Faithfulness, is not only that He “acts” faithfully, but that He is BY NATURE Faithful. That means, He cannot ever “not” be Faithful. He is NOT like us, where He has to “try” to keep his promises, or worry that He may NOT be able to Protect, or to Provide, or to do what is best for us. He is, by his very Nature, Faithful. And because He is an Infinite God, He is Infinitely Faithful. In HIS plan for Us and for His Creation, we will find that His Faithfulness is absolute and complete. Now, what does that have to do with US?

We are painfully aware that we miss the mark when it comes to being “Faithful”, but His Word in Galations 5:22 reminds us that “Faithfulness” is one of the Fruit of the Spirit, and that as we yield to His Spirit day by day, HE will give us the power to be Faithful – to keep our commitments, to be loyal in our Love, and daily more hungry to keep his commandments. Once we yield our lives to Him and let Jesus change us, we begin to understand how amazing God’s Faithfulness is and as Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”. He was Faithful to us before we ever knew Him, and we can be Faithful only because He is Faithful right now!  
In 1400 BC Moses wrote "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His Lovingkindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments. This is still true TODAY!

Week 3

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Well, thinking about a characteristic of our Almighty God that starts with the letter “T” was not as difficult as I thought it would be. I have some ideas.... Let’s see if YOU do.

Are there any descriptions of God that YOU can come up with off the top of your heads with no warning that start with the letter “T”? ☺

Well.... I thought of Truthful, Triumphant, Tender, Transcendent (preeminent or supreme), Totally Awesome... but kept coming back to the fact that our God exists as a TRINITY. That is, He is Tri-une or THREE IN ONE. Basically this means that within the Unity of the Godhead, there are three Eternal and Co-equal Persons.

Now, I “know” that this is one of the hardest concepts to wrap our minds around, of course, because we are just “One-in-One” and cannot conceive in our wildest imaginations how God could be a Three-in-One and so “unlike” us. But, of course, that begs the argument, because we certainly do not have a problem agreeing that God is NOT like us, but exactly HOW He is NOT like us is what is so difficult to grasp. For surely the Trinity is a Mystery. God is Unique in ways we cannot ever understand.

Now.. let me ask you a question... WHY is the Tri-Unity of God so incredibly important? Why does every major religion... Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jehova’s Witnesses, Mormonism etc. and every cult so vehemently deny that God exists as a Trinity? Well, one reason is that it is clearly taught in the Bible, and so to accept this truth one must accept that the Bible is the Authoritative word of God. And... that means we must accept every part of the Bible, not just the parts we like or agree with. So... does the Bible teach that Jesus is God and that the Holy Spirit is God? YES! In John 6:27 we read that the “Father” is equal to God. In John 10:30 Jesus said that “He and the Father are ONE”. A Unity! And in Acts 5: 3,4 Ananias lies to the Holy Spirit and is shown to have lied to God. Thus in Matt 28:19 we are to make Disciples and Baptize in the name of the “Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”

But I think we can gain added insight if we ask “What if there were NO Trinity?” Now the focus becomes clearer, for if there is no Trinity, Jesus is NOT GOD, and we do not need a Savior, for we can Save Ourselves. Isn’t this the whole message of every other religion and Cult? Furthermore, if Jesus is not God, He cannot Save us, since He cannot satisfy the requirements of a Just and Holy God for a PERFECT sacrifice for our sins. If Jesus is Not God, His claim to Be God is a LIE and He is a Liar! The Good News of the Gospel becomes just another story.

If the Holy Spirit is not God, and Equal to God, then He is completely unable to transform our lives and and to make us a “New Creation”. And He therefore cannot enable us to exercise the wonderful Gifts (Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Self-Control) available to us, to empower us to live the NEW LIFE we have received, and to build up the Church that Christ purchased with His own blood. Now I understand why Satan’s first attack is to deny the Trinity. To deny it is to make the Christian Faith just like all other pathways that ultimately lead to death. Only the Tri-Une God can offer NEW LIFE now and Forever!

Week 4

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Coming up with a characteristic of God that starts with the letter “B” has proven to be quite difficult. So, here goes my weary attempt! I have thought of Bold, Beautiful, Bigger and Better, Brave... and my wife reminded me that Jesus came as a BABY.

Can any of you think of any other characteristics of God that start with the letter “B”?

Well another thought has been rattling around in my brain that I keep coming back to. That is the fact that I find God to be a God who is “BETWEEN”. So, this of course begs the question... Between What?

In Matthew 11 when Jesus first sent his disciples out into the cities to proclaim the “Kingdom of God” he reminded them that those who reject Him will be worse off than Sodom and Gomorrah in the “Day of Judgment”. He clearly taught that Judgment by a Righteous God was very real and very true. Acts 17:31 says that “God has fixed a day when he will Judge the world through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished PROOF to all men by raising Him from the dead”. This was at the very heart of Jesus message. As I studied the parables I was gripped by how strongly Jesus taught this truth. There was no way to escape it! In the parable of the wheat and tares, the righteous and the unrighteous grow together until the end when the Son of Man, Jesus, will send His angels to separate them and cast the unrighteous into the furnace of Fire. This was not then, and is not now, a very popular message.

Jesus words divided. He stood then and He stands now BETWEEN those who follow Him and those who Reject Him. But these hard words are also words of immense comfort, for he not only stands as Judge, but he offers Himself as the only Saviour who can bridge that huge Gap BETWEEN us and God. He is the “Hidden Treasure” that one sells all he has to acquire.

In John 3:16 we know that Jesus was sent by His Loving Father to come rescue us and come BETWEEN the two options open to us to either Perish or have Eternal Life. Praise God Jesus is able to do that for us!

In Matt 17:22 when Jesus said that the “Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men where they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day” it is clear He knew exactly what was going to happen, and that only by going to the Cross could He come BETWEEN us and our Sin!

Only He could achieve that marvelous Victory and rescue us. Jesus literally stands BETWEEN Heaven and Hell and says “Come to Me all You who are Weary and Heavy Laden and I will give you Rest”. And now, as 1Tim 2:5 says, “there is One Mediator BETWEEN God and men... the man Christ Jesus.” He is seated at the Right hand of God to intercede for us and to present Himself on our behalf, so we can boldly approach the Throne of God with confidence. I am so glad I do not have to approach God’s Throne of Judgment without trusting in the sacrifice that Jesus made for me! He’s my Mediator, and I sure hope He is Yours as well!

Week 5

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## DEVOTIONAL ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD

Well, today we want to learn about our Wonderful God and find a characteristic that starts with the letter “A”. Now, the problem is that there are SO many attributes of God that start with the letter “A” that it was hard to narrow it down.

I thought of these: Almighty, Absolute, Able, Abundant, Amazing, Awesome, Alpha and Omega, Ancient of Days.....

Can any of you think of any others?

Well, the one that captured my imagination is the fact that our God is APPROACHABLE! Now, if you have read the Old Testament, you might say “But recall how frightened Israel was when Moses approached God to receive the LAW at Mount Sinai and feared for their lives”. In Exodus 19:17 we read “and Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently”. And in Leviticus 16:1 it reads “The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the presence of the LORD” - ignoring the clear guidelines that God had set for Worship and for Atonement. What kept them from Approaching God? Their Disobedience and Hard Hearts! And, their failure to see His Holiness as part of His Character of Love. Unless He is a HOLY God, His Love cannot cure our Hard Hearts! It was their SIN that Separated them from God.

Jesus opened the door.. no he BROKE it down.. that Separating Wall between us and God. It is Still our Sin that separates us from God! Because of Jesus’ final sacrifice, we can NOW approach God and come before His Holiness fully accepted. God is so Approachable! He is NOT the one who moves away when we sin, it is we who move away! HE may seem so very far away. Others may say it is because He doesn’t care, and is aloof, and disinterested in us! But He is not as far away as we Believe Him to be, but is as Close as we will Trust Him to Be. Hebrews 4:14 reminds us that “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

So... What needs do YOU have today? Are you discouraged? Are you afraid? Are you Hurt or Frustrated or just plain Tired of tackling LIFE on your own and convinced that GOD is nowhere to be found?

Well, His LOVE for YOU has NO LIMITS, and it has NO BOUNDS! It will never cease, never go away, and Best of all... He is as Approachable as you will Let Him Be! Isn’t that Wonderful?

Week 6

## DEVOTIONAL ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD

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Today I would like to discuss a characteristic of GOD that we don't hear much about anymore... and it is all about the fact that God is LOYAL. Now, I don't know if you ever thought about that, but it is one of the most fundamental characteristics that God has revealed to us. It is a part of his creation, and something that we value very highly. Have you ever thought why? Why is it that we value Loyalty so highly? If we really evolved from mere particles and chemicals, added lots of time and pure chance, and only the fittest survived, how is it that we even consider a trait like Loyalty to be of such value? Could it be that we did not evolve, but that the God who created us in His image is Himself a Loyal God? When we see loyalty of true friends, or the loyalty that sacrifices no matter the cost, do you ever wonder why it makes us stop and watch in amazement?

The first thought I had of the concept of loyalty was...well I have to admit it... it was my dog. Her loyalty was unquestioning. When I called her, she always came, and she would do "ANYTHING" to please me and make me happy. It didn't matter what the cost, because the cost didn't matter. A bit more mature observation might be a friend that is really there when you need them, not just when it is convenient for them, or a spouse who makes a commitment and demonstrates it through hard times. For true Loyalty, again, the "Cost" doesn't matter.

So, I would like to ask a question. What does "Loyalty" mean to YOU? Can any of you give me an example or a personal illustration?

Now. HOW does God show His Loyalty? Well, it is based on the fact that God makes promises, or Covenants, and KEEPS them. They are NOT based on OUR performance, but on His Character. Throughout the history of Israel, God made covenants with them. His first one was with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, where if Abraham would go in faith to a new country that God would show him, then God would Bless him and his family, and he would be a blessing to all nations to come. This promise was made around 1450 BC, and God kept His word. God made a covenant with Noah, a promise to never flood the entire world again. The Rainbow is the sign of this covenant. And God made a binding agreement, a covenant, with David in 2 Sam 7:16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever". And finally, when we could not keep these covenants because our Sin prevented us from keeping the guidelines that God had set, God sent His Son Jesus, a descendant of David, to fulfill all of the requirements of His covenant. The center of the Gospel story is God's act of covenant faithfulness through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the cross and resurrection, God is setting the world right. He Himself is fulfilling His own covenant. This New Covenant is described in 2 Cor 5:17 - "What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!" This New Life is the ultimate fulfillment of God's New Covenant, based on His Love for us in Jesus, and the sacrifice He made for us. We can now grow in our relationship with God, and understand His Heart when He says... in Hosea 6:6.. "For I delight in Loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings". Isn't it wonderful to be able to know God because He is so Loyal to us?

Week 7

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## DEVOTIONAL ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD

OKAY... So of course we could not go on discussing the wonderful Characteristics of GOD without talking about his Marvelous, Overwhelming, and Unbelievable LOVE. If you saw the movie "Passion", your understanding and appreciation for God's Love for us will have been forever changed. There is absolutely no way to describe it in words. We use the term LOVE all the time, as in "I love Ice Cream", or "I Love my Dawg". Of course we say with as much depth as we can muster that we "Love" our wife, or husband or best friend. But our love is not like God's Love, because we love as much for what the other person gives to us, as for what we give to them. As much as we try, our love is "conditional" and it so often depends on how we "Feel". God loves because HE IS LOVE. All love comes from HIM and we share it because He created us to be able to share it in a limited way with each other and with HIM. His love, like His nature, is Infinite, and knows no limits. It does not change... ever... and it is never less and never more.

I have been so looking forward to this devotional, because from the very beginning, when I say the two "L's" in the work "Softball", I thought of my very favorite word in the Bible. That word comes out of the Old Testament book of Hosea written around 700BC. Hosea was one of God's Prophets to Israel, trying desperately to convince Israel to turn away from worshipping the horrible gods of the Canaanites and return to worshipping Jehovah God, the God of their fathers... of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. To illustrate their Unfaithfulness, and God's wonderful FAITHFULLNESS, God had Hosea marry a woman who would be continually unfaithful to him, seeking other lovers and running to them every chance she had. God demonstrated through Hosea's continued Faithfulness to her, how God would be Faithful to Israel if they would return to Him. In Hosea Ch 2 God speaks to Israel through Hosea saying that he will draw her to him, and tenderly speak to her with compassion and in verse 19 God says to Israel....

"I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as LORD".

The word used here for "Unfailing Love" is the Hebrew word "HESED". I love this word. It means a LOYAL LOVE, one that is a steadfast love that endures in the face of trials, suffering, and barriers - no matter the cost, because the cost does not matter. Remember last week when we learned about how LOYAL God is and how he showed his loyalty to Israel through the many covenants he made with them?

This word "Hesed" is used over 250 times in the Bible to stand for Gods unfailing, compassionate, certain love. It stresses God's "Faithful" love for his unfaithful people, and we all fall into that category. So this story is not only about Hosea and Gomer, and his willingness to love her even though she pursued other lovers, but it is also about us, as we are also unfaithful, and in desperate need of a GOD who will love us with a LOYAL LOVE.

What a beautiful picture illustrated in the life of a humble servant prophet Hosea. That God would use his life as an illustration to Israel, and then to ME as well to teach me about His Unfailing LOVE, is truly amazing. But, even more amazing, is that God's love for me will never stop and His pursuit of me will never stop until we are lovers. That is the true meaning of this story, and it is totally TRUE!

Week 8

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