

**Prayer of Thanksgiving:** That God is graceful and giving to everyone. “**44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**” (Mt 5:44-45 ESV)

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

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**ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2019 (Please note some changes for Saint John)**

Times of worship services: Moncton – 10:30 AM every Sunday.

**Time of services** in Saint John – 2:30 PM September 8 and 29, which is the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month.

**Communion-** on the second and fifth Sunday of the month in Saint John and on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Moncton.

Address: Moncton—70 King St. —Sage building;

Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**The next Discipleship groups** will be on Wednesday September 11 and 25 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vautour – 7:30 p.m. We will study 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter.

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**Please pray for the many Christians living in Eritrea**

Source(s): World Watch Monitor Date: 29 August 2019 (from <https://www.vomcanada.com/er-2019-08-29.htm>)



A market in Keren, Eritrea.  
Photo: Flickr / David Stanley (c)

A recent wave of raids against Christians has taken place, with at least 150 arrested in the past two months. On June 23rd, 70 members of the Faith Mission Church of Christ in Keren were arrested (see [this report](#)). The believers were taken to the Ashufera prison which, according to reports, consists of a series of tunnels in a remote area outside of the city. Prisoners there are forced to dig more tunnels when additional space is needed. Also in Keren, six Christian government employees were taken to court on August 16th where the judge ordered them to renounce their faith. All six refused, saying they would not "negotiate their faith." Two days later, 80 more Christians were detained by security

officials in Godayef, an area near the Asmara airport. Those detained had been taken to a police station where they were still being held at last report.

**Please pray for those who are in the path of hurricane Dorian.**

Monthly GCI prayer guide is now posted in Featured Articles on our [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) website.

Should you have forgotten the password to enter "For members only" on the [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) website, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Vautour.

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**HOW GOD REVEALS HIMSELF**

**(From <https://www.gci.org/articles/how-god-reveals-himself/>)**

Imagine, for a moment, that you are God. You created all things — including human beings. You made humans in your own image (**Genesis 1:26-27**) and you want them to relate to you in a special way. Wouldn't you tell those humans about yourself? Wouldn't you tell them what you expect of them? Wouldn't you tell them how to come into the relationship you want to share with them?

People who believe that God is unknowable assume that God, for some reason, hides himself from his

creation. But God does reveal himself, through his creation, in history, in the pages of the Bible, and through his Son, Jesus Christ. Let's look at what God shows us about himself.

### **Creation reveals God**

Many people have looked at the cosmos and concluded from it that God exists, that God holds all power and that God works in order and harmony. **Romans 1:20** tells us, **"Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made."**

Looking at God's fabulous heavens made King David marvel that God even notices humans, who seem so insignificant next to God: **"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:3-4).**

The patriarch Job questioned God. In reply, God described many of his marvels — and thus revealed his limitless authority and wisdom. Job was humbled by the exchange. You can read God's "speech" in chapters 38–41 of the book of Job. Job realized: **"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted... Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:2-3, 5).**

### **God's purpose for humanity**

What did God intend when he made all things and gave us life? Paul explained to the Athenians: From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. **"For in him we live and move and have our being."** As some of your own poets have said, **"We are his offspring."** (**Acts 17:26-28**).

Or, simply, as John wrote, **"We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).**

### **History reveals God**

Skeptics ask, "If God is real, why doesn't he show himself to the world?"

This question assumes that God hasn't already shown himself to humanity. However, the Bible says that this assumption is not correct. From the time of the first family on, God has often communicated with human beings. But they, for the most part, have wanted nothing to do with God!

The story of Adam and Eve describes humanity's typical reaction. God created these people and spoke to them. But they disobeyed him, and then hid from him. "The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (**Genesis 3:8**).

Disobedience separates us from God, makes us afraid of God, makes us want distance between us and God. The Bible is full of examples of how God reached out to sinning humans — but they rejected him. The book of Isaiah puts it this way: **"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).** It is not that God is actually unable to hear, but that this is the person's perception.

Noah, "a preacher of righteousness" (**2 Peter 2:5**), warned his world about God's coming judgment. But they didn't listen — and they perished in the Flood. God destroyed sinful Sodom and Gomorrah in a fiery display (**Genesis 19:28**). But this supernatural rebuke did not convince anyone to change their ways.

Most of the Old Testament traces how God worked with the nation of Israel. But Israel often did not want to hear God. **"Do not have God speak to us,"** they said (**Exodus 20:19**). God also intervened in the affairs of great powers such as Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon and Persia. But the effects were short-lived. Many of God's servants met awful deaths at the hands of those to whom they brought God's message. People rejected the messengers of God because they did not like the message. They did not like what God was saying through his servants, because they did not like God.

**Hebrews 1:1-2** tells us, **"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at**

**many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”** Jesus Christ came into the world to preach the gospel of salvation and the kingdom of God. The result? **“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him” (John 1:10).** They killed him.

Jesus, as God in the flesh, was expressing God’s loving concern for his people when he cried: **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37).**

God has revealed himself in many different ways, but most people have not wanted to see even the little part that they did.

### **The Bible record**

The Bible reveals God in these ways:

- The Bible contains statements God makes about who and what he is.
- In **Exodus 3:14**, God revealed his name to Moses: **“I am who I am.”** God’s name reveals that God is self-existent, self-perpetuating life. The other names of God, found throughout the Bible, offer additional insight into who and what God is.
- **“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God... There is no god apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me” (Isaiah 45:5, 21).**
- In **Isaiah 55:8**, God tells us, **“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.”** God exists and acts on a higher plane than we humans do. We cannot understand all that he is, or all that he does.
- Jesus Christ described himself as the “I am” who lived before Abraham (**verse 58**). He was God in the flesh. He called himself **“the light of the world” (John 8:12)**, **“the gate” to eternal life (John 10:9)**, **“the good shepherd” (verse 11)**, and **“the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).**

What a person does reveals much about what he or she is. In the same way, biblical statements about God’s acts reveal him more fully to us.

- **“I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,”** God says in **Isaiah 44:24**. God made all that is. And God rules what he made.
- God also declares what he will do in the future: **“I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please” (Isaiah 46:9-10).**
- God loves the world, and sent his Son for the salvation of the world. **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).** Through Jesus, God is bringing children into his family. **“He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Revelation 21:7).**

The Bible records the words of humans who describe what God is:

- God has always interacted with people he chose to carry out his will. Many of those inspired servants left us, in the Bible, details about what God is like. **“The Lord our God, the Lord is one,”** said Moses (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). God is one. The Bible proclaims monotheism, that there is only one God. (This concept will be taken up in more detail in chapter 3.)
- Among the psalmist’s many statements about God is this one: **“For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?” (Psalm 18:31).** God alone deserves worship, and he strengthens those who worship him. The Psalms are full of insight about who and what God is.

Among the most comforting of Bible verses is **1 John 4:16**, **“God is love.”** A vital insight into God’s love and his will for humanity is found in **2 Peter 3:9**: **“The Lord is...not wanting anyone to perish, but**

**everyone to come to repentance.” What is God’s greatest desire for us, his creation, his children?** That we be saved. And God’s word does not return to him empty — it will accomplish what he sends it to do (**Isaiah 55:11**). Knowing that God intends to save us, and that he is perfectly able to do so, should give us great hope.

The Bible records the words of humans who describe what God has done and is doing:

- God, as a loving Creator, formed humans in his own image and gave them dominion over the earth (**Genesis 1:26**).

Here’s how God felt when he saw the earth corrupted by the evil that humans had chosen to do: **“The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain” (Genesis 6:6)**. God responded to the wickedness of the world by sending the Flood to start civilization over through Noah and his family (**Genesis 7:23**).

Centuries after the Flood, God called the patriarch Abraham and established with him a covenant through which **“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1-3)** — a reference to Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham.

When he formed the nation of Israel, God supernaturally brought them through the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian army: **“The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea” (Exodus 15:1)**.

The Israelites broke their agreement with God and gave themselves over to violence and injustice. Thus God allowed the nation to be attacked by foreign powers and, eventually, to be carried out of the Promised Land into slavery (**Ezekiel 22:23-31; 36:15-21**). Yet the merciful God promised to send into the world a Redeemer who would establish an everlasting covenant of righteousness with all those, Israelite or otherwise, who would turn to him in faith and repent of their sins (**Isaiah 59:20-21**).

In due time God sent into the world his Son, Jesus Christ. He proclaimed, **“My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40)**. God assured, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13)**.

Today, God empowers his church to preach the gospel of the **kingdom “in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matthew 24:14)**. On the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God sent the Holy Spirit to unite the church as Christ’s Body and to empower the preaching of the gospel, the good news of what God is doing (**Acts 2:1-4**).

The Bible is a book about God and humanity’s relationship to him. Its rich message invites us to a lifetime of study to learn more about God, including what he is, what he has done, what he does, and what he plans to do.

But we know only in part. We are unable to know all there is of God, but we are able to understand what he has revealed to us. The Bible shows us that God is:

- self-existing
- not restricted by time
- unbounded by place
- unlimited in power
- unlimited in knowledge
- transcendent (having his existence beyond the physical universe) immanent (involved with the universe)

God wants to make his home with us. When God does, our questions will begin to be more fully answered.

### **What is God?**

Suppose you are in a class in which a professor is trying to give the class a better understanding of God. She asks the students to close their eyes, relax and imagine God in their minds. “Think about what he must look like, what his throne would be like, how he would sound and what would be going on around him.”

The students sit in their chairs, eyes shut, for a long time, each dreaming up a picture of God. "How are you doing?" the professor says. "Can you see God? Each of you by now must have some image. But do you know what?" – and then the professor shocks the class by exclaiming, "That's not God!"

"No!" the professor declares to the class. "That's not God! You cannot contain God in your mind! No human can have a full grasp of God, because God is God, and human beings are only physical, finite creatures! No image, no picture can do him justice."

Why is it hard to describe who and what God is? Because, as physical beings, our knowledge comes to us by way of our five senses – and human languages are designed in accordance with this knowledge. Our words, our grammar, our way of thinking, are all based on the physical world. But God is supernatural, eternal. He is infinite. He is invisible. We can still speak meaningfully about God, even though we are limited by our physical senses, but our words can never convey all that God is. We are limited in our languages.

### **What is "the image of God"?**

**Genesis 1:26** quotes God as saying, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over...all the creatures." **Verse 27** tells us God followed through on his intent: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." **Genesis 5:1** adds, "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God."

How are we to understand what God means when he tells us we are made in his image and likeness? God's creation of humans in his image and likeness, recorded in **Genesis 1:26-27**, may be linked with the dominion God gave humans over the earth. In a sense, we act for God on earth when we exercise responsible lordship over the creation. "The context suggests that humanity is the image of God in the dominion it exercises over the rest of creation," notes *Harper's Bible Commentary* on **Genesis 1:3-31** (Harper & Row, 1988, page 87).

The book *ABC's of the Bible* adds:

*Before undertaking his supreme creation, God announced his intention to make man in his image and likeness. The Hebrew word for "image" usually refers to a statue (often used in the Old Testament for pagan idols), while a different word for "likeness" suggests a physical resemblance. Later generations interpreted the terms more generally, however. They thought of themselves as resembling God not in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense by possessing... intelligence, and the capacity to make moral distinctions" (Reader's Digest Association, 1991, page 16).*

Insight into the image of God can also be gained from a consideration of the distinction between the material body and the immaterial spirit within humanity's own constitution. The *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* states: *Recent discussions have focused on the unity and integrity of man. Thus it is man as a physical-spiritual unity who is in the image of God as Spirit. This explains why the same words can be used both of God and man. God sees and hears as men do, but men do so in a way appropriate to their constitution as physical-spiritual creatures (with ears and mouth) and God in a way appropriate to his nature as spiritual and uncreated.* (article "Image of God," Baker Book House, 1988, page 1018)

The image to which humans ultimately must conform is that of Jesus Christ. **Romans 8:29** tells us God desires that we "be conformed to the likeness of his Son"—Jesus Christ. *ABC's of the Bible* states, "The New Testament added to the notion that man was created in the image of God by proposing that Jesus was the sole embodiment of divine perfection" (page 16).

We are unique among earth's creatures in that God endowed us with rationality, free choice and moral responsibility. By creating us in his own image, God has given us the incomparable capacity to have a personal relationship with him.

### **Spiritual realities, human language**

God shows us facets of himself throughout creation. He has intervened many times in history. The Bible tells us much about him. He even manifested himself in various ways to various people in the Bible. Still, since God is spirit, his fullness cannot be seen or heard or touched or smelled. The Bible gives us truths about God by using words that physical beings in their physical realm can grasp. But those words are not capable of completely defining God.

The Bible describes God as a rock and a fortress (**Psalm 8:2**), as a stronghold and a shield (**Psalm 144:2**) and as a consuming fire (**Hebrews 12:29**). We realize that God is not any of these physical things in a literal sense. But these metaphors, based on what we as humans can observe and understand, reveal important truths about God. The Bible even attributes human form to God, revealing aspects of his character and his relationship with humans.

This is called anthropomorphism “(From Greek *anthropos*, ‘human,’ *morphe*, ‘form’) the attribution of a human quality to God, such as ‘eyes,’ ‘hands,’ or ‘arms’” ( *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 13).

Biblical passages describe God with:

- a body (**Phil. 3:21**)
- a head and hair (Rev. 1:14)
- a face (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:23; Rev. 1:16)
- eyes and ears (Deut. 11:12; Ps. 34:15; Rev. 1:14),
- a nose and nostrils (Gen. 8:21; Ex. 15:8)
- a mouth (Matt. 4:4; Rev. 1:16)
- lips (Job 11:5)
- a voice (Ps. 68:33; Rev. 1:15)
- a tongue and breath (Isa. 30:27-28)
- arms, hands and fingers (Ps. 44:2-3; 89:13; Heb. 1:3; 2 Chron. 18:18; Ex. 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3; Rev. 1:16)
- shoulders (Isa. 9:6)
- a chest (Rev. 1:13)
- a back (Ex. 33:23)
- a waist (Ezek. 1:27)
- and feet (Ps. 18:9; Rev. 1:15)

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## Deep Well

**“A person’s thoughts are like water in a deep well, but someone with insight can draw them out” (Proverbs 20:5, GNT).**

Have you ever considered the effect that a well-used bucket could have on your relationships?

The proverb above describes our purposes and motives as water in a deep well. Many of our deepest thoughts are rarely shared with others, yet they are often the driving force behind who we are and how we behave. Reasons for this lack of sharing can be many: natural reticence, lack of trust, past hurts, the belief that no one cares anyway or sheer lack of opportunity. Like the water, the deepest parts of us are not freely available, but thankfully this proverb has a second part.

In response to the metaphor of a deep well, the proverb offers hope. “But someone with insight can draw them out.” This implies that like drawing water from a well we need to take our bucket and deftly and gently drink from the depths of another person. Practically, it requires a skilled combination of time, listening and good questions, so that we can more fully understand and appreciate those with whom we rub shoulders.

God seats us in Christian community because we need to both hear and be heard by other human beings, but the benefits of understanding and applying this proverb are not just for Christians.

How many misunderstandings could be avoided if we took the time to explore, ask questions and listen to others before forming an opinion? How many deep, lasting and healing friendships could be forged if we all took the time to truly consider one another? What would be the impact on the relationships with our children if we drew out their deepest thoughts with consideration and skill?

**Prayer: Father, thank you for your continual and ongoing teaching. Give us the wisdom to come alongside and take the time to really love and know those whom you have brought into our lives. Amen.**

By Gill Khoury, Pastor Red Hill, South Africa

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