

DISCOVERY WORKSHEET 3: KNOWING GOD

AGREE (A) OR DISAGREE (D) and talk about your answers with a partner.

1. ____ There is only one God, but man emanations of him—Allah, Buddha, Jehovah, Jesus... Everyone ultimately worships the same God.
2. ____ The concept of *Trinity* is not mentioned in the Bible; it was invented by the early church.
3. ____ One can learn many things about God just from observing natural creation—which explains why people feel “close to God” when they are out in nature.
4. ____ Every human being has a conscience, testifying to right and wrong.
5. ____ The Bible sometimes shows the Lord as an angry God and sometimes shows him as a loving God.
6. ____ No one can be quite sure if the Bible is God’s Word, because the “canon” of 66 books was decided by a group of men. Besides, human beings wrote it.
7. ____ There are many spiritual truths that the Bible doesn’t address, so we need to go beyond the Bible to find more sources of truth.
8. ____ You can’t really know what the Bible means because it all depends on human interpretation.
9. ____ Church confessions (like the Apostles’ Creed) are not binding on our faith because they are man-made documents.

BIBLE CHALLENGE

1. READ Genesis 1-2 (the opening pages of the Bible) and remind yourself what happened on each day of creation:

DAY 1:

DAY 5:

DAY 2:

DAY 6:

DAY 3:

DAY 7:

DAY 4:

2. Memorize John 17:3, ***“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”***

3. What specifically was special about the creation of humans? Explore the “image of God” in the attached commentary from The People’s Bible: Genesis (NPH: Milwaukee)

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

The stage was now set for the climax of God's creative activity. God said: "Let us make man." Long before we humans ever thought about God, he was thinking about us and making plans for us to share life with him, to live with him as members of his family.

God approached the creation of this highest creature in a manner different from any other of his creative activity. Here he gave no simple creative order: "Let there be!" Before creating the first human, God engaged in solemn deliberation. The reader will note the plurals (Let us make...in our image...in our likeness"). The New Testament makes it clear that the three persons of the Holy Trinity were all active in the work of creation. In writing the creation account Moses consistently used language which would be in complete harmony with the information God would subsequently reveal to us about the plurality of persons in the Godhead.

God stated clearly what his purpose was in designing this highest creature. He was to exercise rule over the rest of the creation, "over all the earth." This divine program for the human race makes it clear that God's human creatures were not just another species of animal. Mankind - male and female - is clearly distinguished from the animals, set apart for a function different from the one the Creator assigned to these lower creatures. Mankind was to manage the earth for God. All of earth's resources were placed under his jurisdiction. When God blessed the human race (Genesis 1:28) he ordered it to subdue the earth, to rule over it.

The fall into sin has greatly modified this dominion over God's creation. The created world is no longer completely subordinate to fallen mankind. Animals attack and kill him; water drowns him; and finally earth covers him. But God's authorization "Subdue the earth and rule over it!" has never been revoked. "So God created man in his image." It is noteworthy that here, for the third time in this chapter, Moses uses the verb "created." This Hebrew verb is used only when God is the author of an action, and only of an action which is unique and unprecedented. Previously Moses had used this verb only when describing God's creating the universe (1:1) and the first living creatures to move about by their own volition (1:21). Here this special verb is used to describe the creating of the crown and climax of God's creative activity. Let it be stated again that the verb "create" does not in itself imply a making out of nothing. God did use a lump of earth to create Adam.

To equip his first human creatures for the awesome assignment of managing the earth for him God created them in his image, in his likeness. Here is the ultimate evidence that mankind, whom God created male and female, is pre- eminent in God's creation. Some Bible students have seen in "the image of God" only a reference to man's human- ness, his self-consciousness, his intellect. But that is clearly not the biblical meaning of the term. (Even after Adam and Eve fell into sin and lost the divine image, they retained their human personality and their powers of intellect.) The image of God cannot describe a physical resemblance to God, since God is a spirit. The New Testament describes the divine image as a special knowledge, knowing God to be the source of every blessing (Colossians 3:10). It describes the divine image as holiness, an absence of sinfulness (Ephesians 4:24).

In trying to understand the concept of the image of God, it may be helpful to describe the effect the divine image had on the personality of Adam and Eve - on their intellect, emotions and will. Unlike the mental dullness and ignorance we bring with us into the world, Adam and Eve understood perfectly with their intellect what God wanted them to know. While they possessed the image of God their emotions were also in tune with God's; they found their greatest happiness in God. And unlike the rebellious will each of us brought into the world, their will was in complete harmony with God; what he wanted was what they wanted. Every impulse and desire of theirs was in tune with God's good will. Created in the image of God, they were human replicas of what God is like.

We know that this beautiful relationship with God was destroyed when Adam and Eve doubted God's love, disobeyed his command, and dragged the whole human race down with them. All of the descendants of Adam and Eve, with a single exception, brought a sinful image with them into the world - a mind ignorant of God's good plan for them, emotions that find joy in things that displease God, and a will

which rebels against God's good and gracious will. The New Testament brings us the wonderful news, however, that through faith in Christ the image of God is again created in the sinner, who is thereby restored to that precious relationship Adam and Eve once enjoyed with God.

As long as we live in a sinful world, the image of God is only partially restored in us by faith. That new nature created in us by the Holy Spirit must coexist with the sinful image we received from our parents. St. John assures us, however: "When (Christ) appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). When the believer enters eternal life, the image of God in him will be completely restored. "Male and female he created them." It is significant that immediately following this statement (which, incidentally, is not made about any of the animals) God gave his first two human creatures the blessing: "Be fruitful and increase in number... fill the earth."

Jesus referred to this statement in a conversation with the Pharisees recorded in Matthew 19:4-6. There Jesus made it clear that human procreation is not just a biological matter, simply the result of a union of male and female. As God sees it (and as God wants us to see it) human conception and birth are to be considered only in conjunction with the marital union of a man and a woman pledged to each other for life. Jesus' words to the Pharisees combine quotations from Genesis 1 and 2: "At the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate." In contrast to the animals, which propagate by means of random mating, a wise Creator designed human reproduction to be the result of a lifetime commitment of two people in marriage. The fact that in our society almost half of all marriages end in divorce does not change the fact that God has made his intentions clear. And one more thing is clear. God will have the last word in history, as he had the first at creation.

It's important to remember that the first two human beings came from the hand of their Creator not as half-animals but as royalty, with unrestricted dominion over all of God's creation. Since through sin we have lost this dominion, it's difficult for us to appreciate what this meant for Adam and Eve. In the sinful world in which we live dominion usually signals conquest and often exploitation. God's two perfect children were to rule everything God had created not in order to dominate it or take advantage of it, but to protect and preserve it for God. Similarly Christians, who look upon themselves as stewards of our natural environment, will be sensitive to waste and abuse of the world's natural resources.