

SHOW US THE FATHER

A Bible Study in 4 parts

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INTRODUCTION

Many prayer times, both public and personal, start with a time of worshipping God.

We praise God for who He is and for what He has done, but often our attention quickly shifts from who **God is** to what He has done **for us** and **we** become the focus, rather than **God**. We change from saying “I praise you because you are the mighty creator” to “I praise you because you care for me.”

There is nothing wrong with praising and thanking God for all He has done for us, in fact we need to do that, and to do it often. However, God is much greater than we are, and we limit our view of Him if we only look at Him in relation to ourselves and those we know and pray for.

We broaden our vision of God when we spend time thinking about who He is; His nature, His attributes, His abilities and His characteristics. Our minds are very limited when we try to focus on God, so we need to turn to Him and ask Him to show us what He wants us to know, in ways we can understand. Where can we look to learn about God?

CREATION

Romans 1 v 20 tells us that “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, so that men are without excuse.” God is the creator and we see Him in His creation. It is good to look at the detail of the created world and to remember that God brought all that exists out of nothing. He brought order and purpose out of chaos. He made a universe in which each part has a function, but He also created beauty, and made us able to appreciate the beauty of His creation. We do learn about God when we look thoughtfully at His world, but because of sin His creation has been marred and our picture is imperfect.

1 Corinthians 13 v 12 “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

Where can we see a clearer picture of God - before we meet Him in Heaven?

GOD'S WORD

1 Sam 3:7 says “Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.” Later, the situation had changed: 1 Sam 3:21 “The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there He revealed himself to Samuel **through His word.**”

Just as Samuel learnt about God through His word, we will also learn about God as we read the Bible.

Because the entire Bible is “God-breathed” or inspired (2 Tim 3:16) we will always learn about God when we study it. However, some sections present God more directly than others.

The four studies presented here look at :

- * God's Description of Himself in Genesis and Exodus.
- * Isaiah's Description of God in Isaiah 6 & 40.
- * Paul & John's Description of God in Acts 17 & Revelation 4.
- * Jesus' Description of God in John's Gospel.

SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS

Theme To God be the Glory Australian Hymn Book 85

STUDY 1

Australian Hymn Book (AHB)

- 53 The God of Abraham Praise.
- 46 Our God, our help in Ages Past
- 13 Let all the World in every Corner Sing
- 10 All People that on Earth do dwell.

Psalm Praise

- 22 Tell out my Soul
- 91 God is our Strength and Refuge
- 108 Safe in the Shadow of the Lord

Ring of Praise

- 9 Exalt the Lord our God
- 51 Father of all things
- 114 How Great Thou Art

STUDY 2

AHB

- 58 Praise the Lord, Ye heavens adore Him
- 71 My God how wonderful Thou art
- 67 O Worship the King, all Glorious Above
- 68 Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven

Psalm Praise

38 Glory give to God in heaven
6 God of Gods we sound His Praises

Ring of Praise

4 Be Exalted O God
44 My God how Wonderful Thou art
178 Sing to the Father
119 Majesty

STUDY 3

AHB

80 Immortal, Invisible God only Wise
65 Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty
28 Praise to the Lord the Almighty
27 Sing Praise to God who Reigns Above

Psalm Praise

149 O Praise God in His Holiness
130 I lift my Eyes

Ring of Praise

19 Thou Art Worthy
100 The Heavens Declare
122 To God be the Glory for the Things He has done
124 Through our God we shall do Valiantly

STUDY 4

AHB

16 The Lord's my Shepherd
14 Now thank we all our God
30 Through all the Changing Scenes of Life
144 Ye Servants of God

Psalm Praise

114 Bless the Lord, O my Soul
123 I love my Lord

Ring of Praise

50 Father I thank You
78 I will sing of the Mercies
111 This is Love
94 Great is your Faithfulness
145 Meekness and Majesty

At the same time God is presented as the shepherd of His flock, the one who gathers the lambs and carries them close to His heart. He does not grow tired or weary, but He strengthens those who hope in Him. When we consider God's greatness and the magnitude of His creation, we can be left feeling that we don't matter, that we are too unimportant for Him to listen to our requests. Isaiah says that God is never too weary to listen. When we place our hope in Him, and not in idols, God will renew our strength and we will spiritually soar on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary, walk and not be faint. Is this your current experience? If not, is it possible that you are letting something come between you and God? What are the most important things in your life? Family? Work? Friends? Fulfilment? Something you are doing for God? Are they bringing you closer to God or are you putting any of them in the place only God should occupy? Remember God's condition for renewing our strength is that we hope in Him and in Him alone.

SUMMARY - STUDY 4

Jesus' Description of God

In John 14 Philip expresses a longing common to many people over many generations, "Show us the Father". He was not prepared for Jesus' answer, although he had spent three years as Jesus' disciple. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." This was not the first time Jesus had claimed identification with God. John 10 v 30 says "I and the Father are one", and in John 8 v 58 Jesus earned the hatred of the Jews by telling them "Before Abraham was born, I am." They realised He was claiming the name which God had given as His own in Exodus 3 v 14 (see study 1).

Jesus was able to claim this name because He is indeed God. So when we look at the way Jesus describes Himself, we also see the nature and characteristics of the Father. In John's gospel Jesus uses the phrase "I am" in seven particular places, and each time reveals a new part of His nature to us. We finish our study by examining these 7 claims of Jesus.

In John 6 v 35 Jesus calls Himself the "bread of life". He is calling His followers to change their focus from His meeting of their physical needs to His ability to feed their spiritual hunger and thirst. His next claim is that He is the "Light of the World" (John 8 v 12 & 9 v 5) Light allows us to see, it also displays, reveals and illuminates. When we meet Jesus we see our true state in God's eyes, our sinfulness is revealed. We can either choose to have Him remove our sins, or we can try and remove ourselves from His presence. Many people today feel uncomfortable when confronted by Jesus through His people, so Christians find themselves rejected, laughed at and even persecuted. Jesus warned that this would happen (John 15 v 20), but we are still to follow our master in bringing light to a dark world.

One of the reasons the Jewish leaders hated Jesus was because He revealed them to be false shepherds to God's people Israel. John 10 shows Jesus as the good shepherd, and gives His prediction that He will give His life for the sheep. By claiming to be the gate for the sheep, He is also revealing that He is the way of salvation, the only way to God. He repeats this claim in John 14 v 6 where He says "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." This is an exclusive claim, ruling out compromises with other religions. We cannot be true to Jesus without acknowledging that He claimed to be the ONE and ONLY

STUDY 1: GOD'S DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF

Note: If time is limited, use the questions marked with an asterisk to give a shorter study.

We start our study of God at the beginning, reading Genesis 1 - 2:3

- *1) What two things does Genesis 1 verse 1 tell us about God which are also reflected in Psalm 90 v 2?
- *2) How did God bring creation into being? What phrase is repeated in verses 3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26 & 29
- *3) How does John pick up this phrase in John 1 : 1 - 4, and to whom does he apply it?
- 4) a) What verses in Genesis 1 mention the Father and the Holy Spirit?
b) Since John calls Jesus the "Word of God", where does Genesis 1 refer to God's Word?
- 5) What does this say to us about God's nature from the very beginning of creation?
- 6) What does Genesis 1:27 say about God and humanity?
Do you think the likeness is physical, mental or spiritual?

God didn't just create and then sit back and watch what happened. He continued to involve Himself with individuals, even after sin entered the world and people rebelled against Him.

The study so far has emphasised God's power as creator, now we see His care for His creation.

- *7) When God speaks to Abram in Genesis 12 : 1 - 3, what does He ask Abram to do ?

What does God say He will do for Abram?.

*8) How does this promise show that God's plans were for more than just one individual? (v3)

9) How does God describe Himself : in Genesis 15 : 1?

and in Genesis 17 : 1?

In what way do these characteristics of God effect our lives today?

10) From Genesis 17 : 1, what command did God give to Abram?

Has this command ever been kept, if so by whom?

Read Exodus 3 : 13 - 15

Note: The NIV Bible tells us that the Hebrew for the word "LORD" sounds like the Hebrew for "I AM".

*11) What name does God give Himself?

*12) What characteristics go with this phrase?

*13) Why do you think God wants each generation to remember Him by this name?

(Question 14 could be used as a separate study, either privately or as a discussion, particularly if time is limited.)

14) Read Exodus 34 : 6 - 7

Here God describes some of His characteristics. For each one, find an alternative word or phrase if you feel there is one, and then try and give an example of that characteristic from daily life.

Additional Study:

THE PSALMS

The book of Psalms is another source of help and inspiration, when we want to consider God's nature and character. It is also helpful in providing us with words to express our thanks, praise and worship of God.

You could add the following Psalms to your study of God the Father:

Psalm 8	92	111
147		
24	93	113
148		
33	95	117
149		
46	96	134
150		
47	97	135
50 v 1 - 15	98	138
66 v 1 - 12	100	144
84	103	145
90	104	146

d) How does John 14:6 influence your response to these accusations?

In John 15:1 - 8 Jesus calls Himself the true vine.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." v1

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." v5

7) a) How do vine branches receive their nourishment?

b) How are we to receive spiritual nourishment?

c) How can we "remain in Jesus" in practical terms?

d) What does Jesus say about the eternal worth of our work if we do not remain in Him?

There is another "I am" recorded by John in the book of Revelation.

As we complete our study let us once again remember just how great, timeless and mighty is the one who is worthy of all praise.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Rev 1:8)

CHARACTERISTIC

ALTERNATIVE

EXAMPLE

v6 The LORD, the LORD

v6 the compassionate

v6 gracious God

v6 slow to anger

v6 abounding in love

v6 and faithfulness

v7 maintaining love to thousands

v7 forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin

v7 He does not leave the guilty unpunished

15) Which of these are particularly meaningful to you? Why?

SUMMARY - STUDY 1

God's Description of Himself

When we want to study God, it seems reasonable to go to the beginning of the Bible, God's revelation to us. Genesis 1 verse 1 tells us that God existed in the beginning and that He is the creator of both the heavens and the earth. These thoughts are reflected in Psalm 90 verse 2 "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." God is not bound by our concept of time, He existed before time came to be. Is there anywhere in your life that you are putting time limits on God? How much time will you give Him to answer your prayers?

Genesis 1 also introduces the concept of the Trinity, although we have to look for it. Verse 1 speaks of God and verse 2 says that the "Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." But where is the Son? Look at God's method of creation. The phrase "And God said" is repeated in verses 3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26 & 29. John 1 tells us that Jesus is The Word, one with God, divine but distinct. John 1 v 3 says that "Through Him all things were made", so when God planned creation, Jesus brought it into being and the Spirit hovered, giving protection to the new creation.

The other information we have about God from Genesis 1 v 27 is that He made humanity in His own image. We need to bear in mind that His image has been distorted by sin, however we can still see glimpses of God's image when we see the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy shown in humanity (Philippians 4 v 8) and we can look forward to seeing humans as we were meant to be when we reach heaven.

We see God's perseverance and His mercy when we look at His dealings with Abram. Despite mankind's continuing disobedience, God doesn't give up on His people. His promise to Abram in Genesis 12 v2 & 3 reaches further than to the family and descendants of one man who was prepared to obey God, it promises blessing to all peoples on earth. God is indeed God Almighty, the God of the whole earth (Genesis 17 v 1), but He is also prepared to involve Himself with His creation. He comforts Abram in Genesis 15 v 1 declaring Himself to be Abram's shield and his very great reward. Where has He shielded you? Do you consider knowing Him to be a great reward?

Read John 10:7 - 18

- 3) a) How does Jesus describe Himself in verses 7 & 9?
- b) What is the function of this particular object?
- c) How does Jesus fulfil this function for people?

Jesus then changes the image and describes Himself as the good shepherd.

- 4) a) What is the difference between the "hired hand" and the shepherd?
- b) What are a shepherd's tasks and how does Jesus fulfil them for us?
- c) What extra length did the good shepherd go to?
- d) When did Jesus do this?

John 11:25 & 26 As Jesus addresses Martha, we read : Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" These two verses appear to be a series of contradictions.

- 5) a) What sort of life is Jesus talking about?
- b) Jesus speaks of two different types of death, what are they?
- c) How is Jesus the resurrection and the life?

From John 14:6 NIV Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- 6) a) To what is Jesus the way?
- b) What truth is He claiming to be?
- c) What kind of life is He?

Our society is not fond of absolutes, we like to think things are relative. An act may be bad in itself, but if it's done for a good purpose society says it becomes acceptable. We are told that we need to be tolerant. Christians are accused of arrogance for daring to claim that they alone, of all religions are the holders of absolute truth.

STUDY 4: JESUS' DESCRIPTION OF GOD

Note: To shorten this study, I suggest that you choose a smaller number of the "I am" claims and study them fully, rather than studying several questions from each one.

In John 14 v 8 Philip asks Jesus "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus' answer is stunning : "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (v 9). This follows His claim in John 10:30 "I and the Father are one."

If we, like Philip, want to see what the Father is like, we need to look at Jesus. In John's gospel, Jesus makes a series of statements about Himself, starting each with the phrase "I am" . As we consider these claims, we are studying both the Son and the Father, who are one.

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

This claim of Jesus was made soon after He had fed more than 5000 people, so their minds were focused on His provision for their physical needs. Jesus changes this focus to His provision for our spiritual needs.

- 1) a) Why does Jesus call Himself the bread of life?

- b) What does bread do for us physically that He does spiritually?

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 9:5 " While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Light can display, reveal and illuminate.

- 2) a) What other things does light do?

- b) How does Jesus fulfil each of these functions as the light of our world?

God gave Himself the name "I AM WHO I AM" when He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush which was not consumed. God is the central reality, unchanging, utterly dependable and faithful and His desire for His people is that they fully trust Him. Like Moses and the Israelites we also find ourselves in situations where obeying God makes things go from bad to worse. When this happens, we need to look at who God is and ask ourselves if we really believe that He "works for the good of those who love Him in ALL things" (Romans 8 v 28). Do we trust Him to be perfectly loving to us, or do we think that He might let us down?

God gives Moses another description of Himself in Exodus 34 v 6 & 7. He calls Himself "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished." Our God is loving, patient and faithful, but he is also righteous and just. Where have you seen these attributes of God as He has dealt with your life?

STUDY 2: ISAIAH'S DESCRIPTION OF GOD

Note: If time is limited, use the questions marked with an asterisk to give a shorter study.

Isaiah, son of Amoz, ministered to Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1 v 1). He was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Micah, beginning his ministry in 740B.C., the year King Uzziah died (Isaiah 6 v1). The second part of the book, chapters 40-66 may have been written during His latter years. He appears to have lived until at least 681B.C., as the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon, mentioned in Isaiah 37 v 38 reigned from 681-692B.C. Isaiah declares both God's judgement of His people and His future salvation and restoration of them.

God's commissioning of Isaiah includes a vision of God Himself.

Read Isaiah 6 v 1 - 5

*1) What words does Isaiah use to describe God?

2) What word did the seraphs use to describe God?

What does it mean?

What are the consequences to us of this characteristic of God?

*3) What was Isaiah's reaction to His vision of God?

Why would he feel this way? (See Exodus 33 v 19 - 20)

As we saw in Study 1, God cares for and protects His creation like a loving Father, but He is also the glorious, awesome God of Isaiah's vision.

4) In what ways are you acknowledging His greatness and giving God the glory in your own life?

Read Isaiah 40 v 10 - 31

*5) Verses 10 & 11 present two contrasting pictures of God. What are they?

and to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. What is your response to that? Have you accepted His invitation, and if so who are you sharing that invitation with?

Paul, in contrast to John, is presenting a reasoned argument to an audience who who have never heard of Jesus and who worship a multitude of false Gods. He gains their attention by starting to talk about something they are familiar with, the altar to "An unknown God" (Acts 17 v 23). He also starts by complimenting them, rather than attacking their false beliefs. "I see you are very religious" (v 22). Having made contact with them, he then presents the facts, clearly and concisely, still without attacking. He lets the truth speak for itself "He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." (v 25).

Today, many people are just as ignorant of the truth about God and Jesus as were those 1st century Greeks. When we have an opportunity to speak about Jesus to someone who doesn't know Him, we should remember Paul's example and start with something that is familiar to the other person. We should also avoid attacking their ideas outright, because that will just make them defensive and they will stop listening to us. God's word can stand on its own, because it is truth, and those really searching for truth will recognise it as such ("He is not far from each one of us" v 27). Our responsibility is to speak the words God gives us to say, what happens to those words is God's responsibility, not ours. We can expect Paul's experience to be ours too; "Some sneered, but others said "We want to hear you again on this subject." Acts 17 v 32.

SUMMARY - STUDY 3

John and Paul's Description of God

Like Isaiah, John is given a vision of God, but this vision is not a commissioning at the start of his ministry. It comes near the end of his life when he is imprisoned on the island of Patmos, probably to prevent him preaching the Gospel. However, God uses this time when John is set aside from his normal activities. He gives John both a vision of Himself and His future victory over Satan and his forces of evil, and a message to pass on to God's people. This message will provide correction for their errors and an assured hope for their future, as they watch the continuing conflict between good and evil.

When you experience a time of being "set aside" do you fret about the things that you can't do, or do you wait expectantly to see what God has planned for this time? Remember that He has told us His plans are "to prosper us and not to harm us" (Jeremiah 29 v11). He may be planning to use your enforced change to give you a greater vision of Himself and to encourage others whom you would not normally reach. Who would God have you ring, write to or pray for? Will you do it?

Any idea that God is alone in heaven is quickly dispelled by reading Revelation 4. God is surrounded by heavenly beings who recognise His holiness and worship Him, so why has He continued with His care and concern for fallen humanity? Why does He want us to be with Him in heaven? Paul gives us an insight into at least part of the answer when he says "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." (Acts 17 v 27) God created us with the ability to choose right or wrong. Because of sin, our choices are biased towards the wrong, but the Holy Spirit, indwelling the Christian, renews our ability to choose the right. God wants us to love, honour and worship Him because we choose to accept Him as our Creator and Lord, not because our natures give us no alternative.

What is your attitude to God? Do you see Him as the mighty King of Heaven, and the Lord of all His Creation worthy to receive all glory and honour and power? (Revelation 4 v 11) He is, and we must never forget His greatness and the homage we owe Him, but He is also the Shepherd of Isaiah 40 v 11 "tending His flock and carrying the lambs close to His heart". The creator of the universe, the Lord of Heaven wants us to be His children

*6) Where have you seen these 2 sides of God's nature in your life?

7) What do verses 12 - 17 remind us about God?

8) *(Personal, not necessarily for sharing)*
Where have you been trying to tell God how to handle a situation in your life or the life of someone you care about?

9) What do verses 14 - 22 say about our significance compared to God's?

As God is so much better equipped to make the best choices for our lives, how can we know what His plans are for us? (See Jeremiah 29 v 11 - 13)

Humans were created in God's image (Genesis 1 v 27), but we try and create our own image of God.

Verses 18 - 20 remind us of the idols that the Jews saw in the societies around them.

*10) What are the idols of our society?

Which ones are a temptation to you personally?

Verses 21 - 25 compare God and His creation, especially people.

11) What words or phrases describe people and the way God treats them?

What part of God's nature does this emphasise?

In verses 26 - 28 we are reminded of God's mighty, creative power.

12) Where is our attention directed in verse 26?

How does this increase our picture of God's power even more?

There are times for most of us when we have felt overlooked or forgotten by God. When we've concluded that we were too unimportant for God to listen to our requests.

*13) What do verses 27 & 28 say about God?

*14) What promise do verses 29 - 31 give to us?

What do we need to do to receive these promises?

*15) The entire passage has shown us God's might, what do verses 29 - 31 say about God's care for His own?

b) What does He require now?

*13) a) Regardless of whether we accept His authority or not, what does verse 31 say will happen?

b) What characteristics of God make sure that this will happen?

*14) a) Who is "the man He has appointed"?

b) What proof did God give that He has the power to do what He says? (v 31)

Paul reminds us that as well as being our creator and our sustainer God will be our judge.

We have had a glimpse of God's glory in heaven when we studied Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4. As we complete this study, let us remember that one day each of us will stand before this same throne and will be either welcomed as a good and faithful servant or ordered to depart into eternal punishment. (Matthew 25 v 21 & 41)

The path we take is determined by our response to Jesus' statement in Revelation 3 v 20

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

Have you invited Him in as your Lord and Saviour? Where will you be spending eternity?

PAUL ACTS 17 V 24 - 31

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, visited Athens during his second missionary journey. It is thought to have been made around 49 -52 B.C. and is described in Acts 15 v 39 - 18 v 22. On this trip Paul's companion was Silas. Arriving at Athens, Paul noticed an altar dedicated "to an unknown God" (Acts 17 v 23)

The passage we are studying is Paul's declaration of this "unknown God" to the Greek philosophers.

Paul is making a reasoned description of God, comparing the true God to the false ideas of his audience. This is a contrast in approach and in purpose to the passages we studied from John and Isaiah (Study 2), as both those writers are describing visions which God has given them of Himself.

Read Acts 17 v 24 -31

- 7) What basic facts about God does Paul establish in verses 24 & 25?
- *8) If God does not need humans to serve Him (v 25), what was His purpose in making us? (v 26-28)
- 9) We like to think we can control our own lives, what does verse 26 say about that?
- *10) Paul has already said God does not need us to serve Him (v 25), how does he show that we need God ? (v 28)
- 11) We are less likely to confuse God with a silver or gold image today. (v29)
 - a) In what ways do we limit God and devise our own wrong ideas of Him?
 - b) How can we protect ourselves from these mistakes?
- 12) a) How has God treated people who were ignorant of the truth about Him in the past?(v30)

SUMMARY - STUDY 2

Isaiah's Description of God

God had a difficult job for Isaiah to do. He was to give God's words to the people of his time, and just as today, Isaiah's contemporaries were not pleased to be presented with their failure to live up to God's standards and with the news of God's coming judgement. To prepare Isaiah for this ministry, God gave Isaiah a vision of Himself which is recorded in Isaiah 6, along with God's call and commissioning of him.

Isaiah sees God's majesty. He is seated on a throne, high and exalted with the train of His robe filling the temple. He is attended by angelic beings called seraphs, who use two of their six wings to cover their faces. Even they cannot look directly at God's glory. They describe God as "Holy" and "Almighty". God's holiness, glory and purity show Isaiah his own state before God, and he expects to die. But God's purpose is for Isaiah to be His messenger, and so his sin is atoned for and he is sent to speak the words God gives him.

We are taught by Jesus to call God our Father, and this is a wonderful privilege and great joy. But we must also remember God's greatness and His holiness, and not presume on His love by losing our sense of awe in His presence. We must also remember our own sinfulness and that the reason we can approach the Father is because Jesus has atoned for our sin. Jesus has called us to be His witnesses, who is He asking you to witness to? Is there someone in your family, a friend or a neighbour? Should you be writing to your local council, your member of Parliament or a newspaper in support of God's standards? Like the people in Isaiah's time, most people today don't want to hear about God's words and laws, but a witness who refuses to testify is of no use. Are you prepared to let God use you as He chooses, or do you want to do the choosing of how and when?

In chapter 40, Isaiah describes God's relationship with His creation. We are shown His might as creator of the world and the heavens, His greatness and the insignificance of everything else in comparison. We are reminded that we can never understand His mind, or offer Him advice - although many of us try! Where are you trying to tell God how to handle a situation in your life, or in the life of someone you care about? Are you trying to stand between God and His will for someone you love?

STUDY 3: JOHN AND PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF GOD

Note: If time is limited, use the questions marked with an asterisk to give a shorter study.

JOHN REVELATION 4

John, Jesus' beloved disciple, was on the island of Patmos "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." (Revelation 1 v 9.) Patmos is a small island off the coast of Turkey which was used as a Roman penal settlement. It is probable that John had been sent there as a penalty for preaching the Christian Gospel. He tells us that on the Lord's Day he was in the Spirit (Revelation 1 v 10). God gave him not a dream, but a vision, which he was to tell to show God's servants what must soon take place. (Revelation 1 v 1). We may feel that the things God revealed to John are slow in occurring, but Peter reminds us :

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." (2 Peter 3 v 8)

Read Revelation 4 v 1 - 6 and Ezekiel 1 v 26 - 28

- *1) Describe the visions of God seen by both John and Ezekiel.

- *2) What impression of God do these descriptions make on you?

Read Revelation 4 v 6 - 11

- 3) a) What feature of the living creatures is mentioned in both verses 6 & 8?

b) What do you think that feature represents?
- *4) What quality of God do the living creatures praise? (This quality was also praised in Isaiah 6 v 3)
- *5) What aspect of God do the Elders praise?

So often evil seems to flourish in our world and good seems to be weak and powerless

- *6) By looking at the parts of God's character described in verses 8 & 11, how does this give us hope for the future, both on earth and in heaven?