

SESSION THREE

Image of God

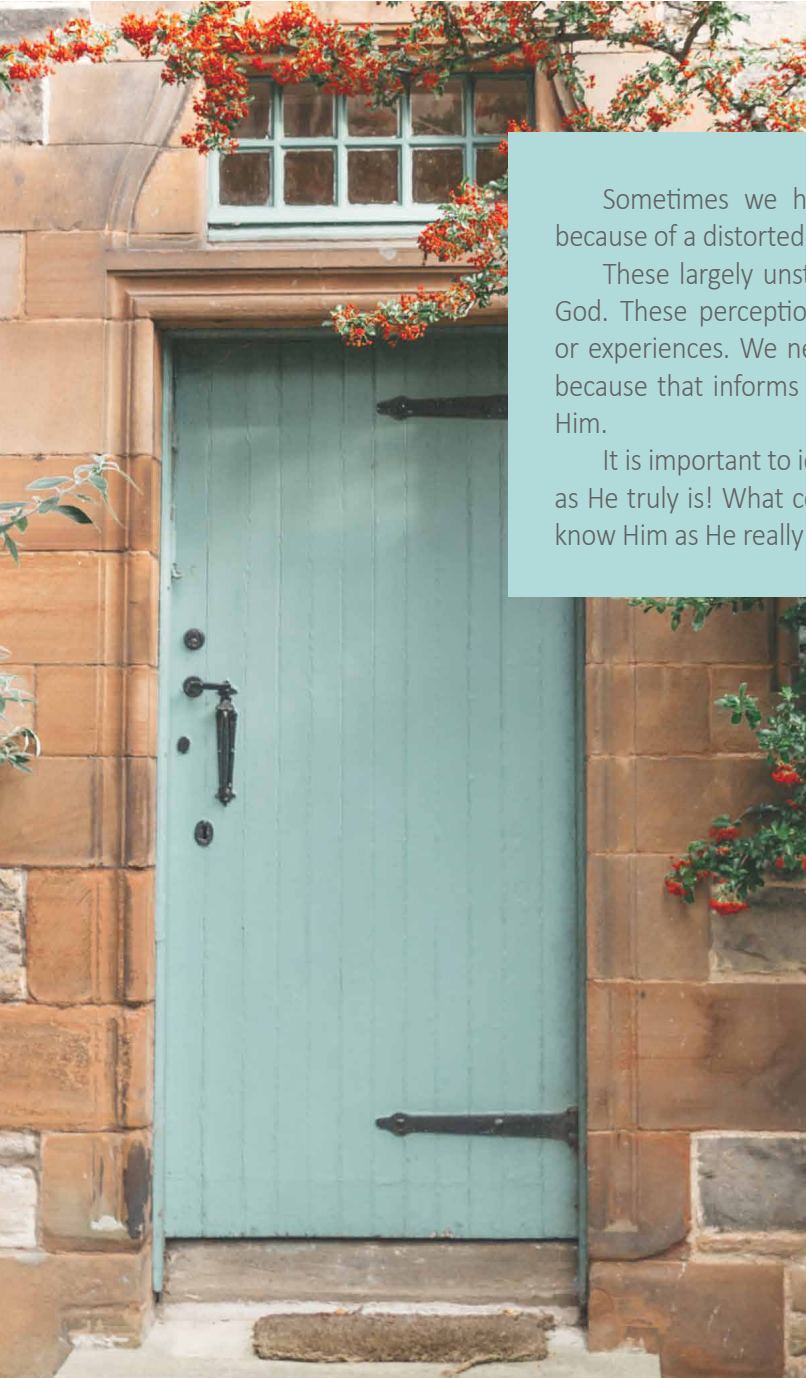
PRAYING WITH OTHERS | LEVEL ONE



SESSION THREE

Image of God

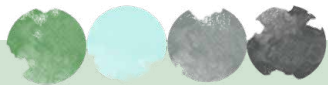
THE DOORWAY



Sometimes we have difficulty hearing and relating with God because of a distorted perception we have of Him. These largely unstated misperceptions affect what we expect of God. These perceptions are often deeply rooted in our upbringing or experiences. We need to have an awareness of how we see God because that informs how we relate to Him and how we hear from Him. It is important to identify false views of God so we relate with Him as He truly is! What could be better than that? Tell God you want to know Him as He really is.

Lord, I've seen you as:
Use the Names of God you've experienced.
.....
.....
.....

Lord, I want to know You as:
Use the names of God you want to experience.
.....
.....
.....



Mark the following misconceptions about God that you can relate to.

- **When you are doubting whether God cares about you or will speak with you.**
- **When you are angry at God, frightened of Him, or shy away from Him.**
- **If you have been deeply hurt or abused by a significant family member, a pastor or a church (we often unwittingly transfer those experiences onto God).**
- **When you have an intensely negative gut reaction to something you read in the Bible.**
- **During times of great stress or intense trial.**
- **When you sense spiritual warfare; Satan will attempt to get you to believe lies about God.**
- **When you sense something fundamentally wrong in your relationship with God.**
- **When you attempt to hear God and end up feeling condemned, misunderstood, disconnected, judged or abused.**

Common Misconceptions

There are elements of truth in many of these following perceptions—however, they are distorted enough that they block our ability to relate to God as who He is.

- God uses hardships and trials to teach me things. If I learn something, that's good. If I don't get it, I will repeat similar scenarios until I get it right.
- God loves and is there for the poor and the oppressed. I don't have any "real" problems. Therefore, I shouldn't expect much of His attention or time.
- God's standards are high—and rightly so. He wants me to behave. Talking to Him means reviewing what I'm doing wrong. It's up to me to get things right.
- God wishes I would be appreciative of all He has done and just be joyful and obedient. He is rightfully frustrated with me being so messed up and needy.
- God has forgiven me, but if I do something I know is wrong, I must do penance and clean myself up before I can be close to Him again.
- God loves me (I suspect); He just doesn't like me.
- God has shown me what He wants; His commands are all over the Bible. I shouldn't be asking Him for anything more when I already know what He wants from me. Since I don't do what He wants—pray, read my Bible, go to church, witness, serve others—how can I expect much from Him?
- God doesn't have much use for me. Because of the magnitude of my past sin(s), I cannot expect God to bless me or use me.
- God wasn't there for me when I really needed Him. I can't depend upon Him, therefore what's the use in getting close to Him now.
- God is most happy with me when I'm working for Him.
- God gave people good minds. I'm supposed to use the mind God gave me and do what I know is right. Closeness (or intimacy) with God is a concept made up by touchy/feely people.
- God loves me too much to let really bad things happen to me. He wants me to be happy. Because He wants the best for me, my life will be blessed and worry-free.
- God is almighty and sovereign. If I talk to Him as if He is just my father or friend, I will be irreverent and flippant.

STUDY

What is your image of God? *Policeman? Father? Parent? Judge? Comforter? Friend? Distant? Tyrant?*
How long have you had this image? Is this image Biblical?

.....

.....

How have your misconceptions blocked your ability to talk with God as your perfect Father and friend?

.....

.....

In what ways would a different image of God challenge your regular practices?

.....

.....

.....

How does God want you to know Him in this season of your life?

.....

.....

DISCUSSION



Have you ever thought about your image of God before?

Were you surprised by any of your responses to the misconceptions of God?

MINISTRY

Bring to the Lord any image of Him that has damaged your relationship with Him or others, and thank Him for how you've experienced the truth about Him. Ask the Lord to replace any false image with who He truly is. Ask Him how He wants you to know Him in this season.



Exchanging Lies

It's time to change how you have seen God to the real presence of who He is. Fill in the chart below.

<p>Renounce <i>HANDS DOWN</i></p> <p>I renounce this lie. I once saw Him as:</p>	<p>Receive <i>HANDS UP</i></p> <p>I receive this truth. I now see that He is:</p>
<p>Renounce <i>HANDS DOWN</i></p> <p>I renounce this lie. I once saw Him as:</p>	<p>Receive <i>HANDS UP</i></p> <p>I receive this truth. I now see that He is:</p>

Prayer

Make time each day to pray the Lord's Prayer.

Names of God

Circle the names of God in the list below that you have experienced. The names of God are also included in the Prayer Toolbox.

A faithful God who does no wrong	Father	God of the living
A forgiving God	Father of compassion	God of the spirits of all mankind
A fortress of salvation	Father of our spirits	God of truth
A glorious crown	Father of the heavenly lights	God our Father
A jealous and avenging God	Father to the fatherless	God our strength
A Master in heaven	God	God over all the kingdoms of earth
A refuge for his people	God Almighty (El Sabaoth)	God the Father
A refuge for the needy in his distress	God Almighty (El Shaddai)	God who avenges me
A refuge for the oppressed	God and Father of our Lord J.C.	God who gives endurance and encouragement
A refuge for the poor	God Most High	God who relents from sending calamity
A sanctuary	God my Maker	Great and awesome God
A shade from the heat	God my Rock	Great and powerful God
A shelter from the storm	God my Savior	Great, mighty and awesome God
A source of strength	God my stronghold	He who blots out your transgressions
A stronghold in times of trouble	God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob	He who comforts you
An ever present help in trouble	God of all comfort	He who forms the hearts of all
Architect and builder	God of all mankind	He who raised Christ from the dead
Builder of everything	God of glory	He who reveals his thoughts to man
Commander of the Lord's army	God of gods	Helper of the fatherless
Creator of heaven and earth	God of grace	
Defender of widows	God of hope	
Eternal King	God of love and peace	
	God of peace	
	God of retribution	

Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine	Lord will Provide	The compassionate and gracious God
Him who is able to keep you from falling	Love	The Eternal God
Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead	Maker of all things	The consuming fire
Holy Father	Maker of heaven and earth	The everlasting God
Holy One	Most High	The exalted God
Holy One among you	My advocate	The faithful God
I AM	My Comforter in sorrow	The gardener (husbandman)
I AM WHO I AM	My confidence	The glorious Father
Jealous	My help	The Glory of Israel
Judge of all the earth	My helper	The God who saves me
King of glory	My hiding place	The God who sees me
King of heaven	My hope my light	The great King above all gods
Living and true God	My mighty rock	The just and mighty One
Lord (Adonai)	My refuge in the day of disaster	The living Father
Lord Almighty	My refuge in times of trouble	The Majestic Glory
Lord God Almighty	My song	The Majesty in heaven
Lord is Peace	My strong deliverer	The one who sustains me
Lord (Jehovah)	My support	The only God
Lord Most High	One to be feared	The potter
Lord my Banner	Only wise God	The rock in whom I take refuge
Lord my Rock	Our dwelling place	The spring of living water
Lord of all the earth	Our judge	The strength of my heart
Lord of heaven and earth	Our lawgiver	The true God
Lord of kings	Our leader	You who hear prayer
Lord my God	Our Mighty One	You who judge righteously and test the heart and mind
Lord my Maker	Our Redeemer	You who keep your covenant of love with your servants
Lord my shield	Our refuge and strength	You who love the people
Lord who heals me	Righteous Father	Your glory
Lord who is there	Righteous judge	Your praise
Lord who makes me holy	Rock of our salvation	Your very great reward
Lord who strikes the blow	Shepherd	
	Sovereign Lord	
	The Almighty	

Upgrading Your Image of God

Thanksgiving

We enter His gates with thanksgiving... What are you thankful for? What has God given you? What gifts has He lavished upon you?

Offer Him a heartfelt psalm of thanksgiving, focusing on the blessings He has given you. If your current circumstances are difficult or hard, what can you be thankful for in terms of God's heart toward you? That He said "He would never leave nor forsake you" is worthy of thanks alone.

Worship

Adore God. Magnify His name. If thanksgiving opens His gates, then worship opens His heart. Magnify has two meanings: First, to see something bigger than it is in actual size. Second, to see something as big as it really is. We tend to magnify our problems and not the Lord. See Him as big as He is.

Stillness

It is in stillness and peace that God begins to speak. His voice is in the still and quiet. Be still and know that He is God. Rest there. Live there. Connect with the Almighty there. Still the clamoring in your thoughts. We all have a background conversation in our minds that either feeds our fears or lifts our spirits. Stillness promotes a God-consciousness.

Prince of Peace

Embrace God as your Prince of Peace, draw on His restful nature to sustain you. As troubles rise in your heart, ask the Prince of Peace to soothe you. He is your refuge, your strong tower. If it helps, picture a strong tower, ruled by God. Live in it.

Man of War

God is your protector. He is gentle as a Lamb, and fierce as a Lion. He is your shield, your sword, your strength. Let Him fight your battles for you... don't take matters into your own hands. Allow Him to be fully God in your life—the provider of peace, and the protector of your life.

Season

Tell God what you are coming into. Examine your new season. Share your fears, your dreams. Hide nothing—He knows and sees all anyway. Listen as He whispers to you. Expect the Lord to give you a "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17).

Teach

Begin to ask God questions. What does HE want to teach you in this next season of life that He could only teach you this way? What lessons are there for you to learn? What pitfalls does He want you to avoid? Write down questions and expect God to answer. The revelation that comes will lead you into a new experience of Him.

Experience

God has a plan to reveal something new and fresh about himself to you. Ask God what it is. He will give you a vision of all that He wants to be for you. Your circumstances will then be filled with promise. Perceive problems as opportunities to experience all that God longs to be to you. Consider crafting a prayer asking for everything heaven holds for you.

Abide in Him

Just be. Just be with God. In the Garden of Eden, God and Adam would sit and talk with one another. Abide in Him. Love Him. Minister to Him.

RESOURCES

Books

***The Pleasure of His Company:
A Journey to Intimate
Friendship With God***
by Dutch Sheets

***Beautiful Outlaw: Experiencing
the Playful, Disruptive, Extravagant
Personality of Jesus***
by John Eldredge

***Abba's Child: The Cry of the
Heart for Intimate Belonging***
by Brennan Manning

***The Nature of God, Upgrading
Your Image of God and Who
He Wants to Be for You***
by Graham Cooke

Videos

Just Give Me Jesus
by Anne Graham Lotz [YouTube]

Healing Our Image of God and Ourselves
by Brennan Manning [YouTube]



Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.