

Level 1 Lesson 5

THE NATURE OF GOD

By Andrew Wommack

To have a positive relationship with the Lord, we must know His nature and His real character. Is He angry because of our sin, or is He a merciful God who wants to give us His life and blessing, independent of our performance? The Scriptures actually give us two different views of God, not that He has ever changed or done anything differently. There was a period of time that in the terminology used in the Bible, God “held men’s sins against them.”

This can be compared to raising children. When they’re very young, it isn’t possible to reason with them, to tell them why they should act properly or why they shouldn’t be selfish and take toys away from their brothers or sisters. They have to be told the rules and, if they break them, be disciplined. The rules have to be enforced even though they don’t know about God and the devil, or that they’re giving place to the devil when they are selfish. They may not understand the concepts, but they can understand that if they repeat the action, they will be punished.

In a sense, that’s what the Lord did with the Old Testament. Before people were born again, they didn’t have the spiritual perception we have under the New Covenant, so He had to give laws and enforce them with punishment, sometimes even death, to deter them from sin. Because Satan was destroying people through sin, there had to be restraints placed on sin, and they had to be enforced. Although this left the false impression that God didn’t really love us because of our sin, that is not what the Word of God teaches. Romans 5:13 says, “*Until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law.*” “Until the law” means until the days of Moses when God gave the Ten Commandments and other ceremonial laws that applied to the Jewish nation. Up until that time, sin was in the world but wasn’t imputed. The word “impute” is a bookkeeping term; e.g., you go to the store to buy something and say, “Put it on my tab.” When it is put on your tab, it is recorded and charged against your account, and the purchase is imputed to you. If they failed to impute it, that means it wasn’t recorded and held against you.

This verse is saying that until the time the Ten Commandments came, sin was not being held against people. That’s an amazing statement. Look at Genesis 3 and 4. Most people have the concept that when Adam and Eve sinned against God, because He was holy and man was now sinful, He could have nothing to do with sinful mankind. They think God drove man out of the Garden to remove him from His presence because a Holy God couldn’t have anything to do with unholy man. They further think that until you clean up your act through right actions, God once again cannot have any relationship with you. That is contrary to the message Jesus brought. Romans 5:8 says God commended His love toward you, and while you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you; so the New Testament teaches that God extended His love to you while you were living in sin, not after you have cleaned up your act. One of the great truths of the Gospel that will change

your life is to understand that God loves you just like you are. He loves you so much that if you receive His love, you won't want to stay as you are. You will change, but you'll change as a byproduct of God's love not in order to get His love.

In Genesis 4 you can see that God was still fellowshiping with man, still talking with Adam and Eve even after they sinned. He talked with Cain and Abel, and when they came to offer sacrifices to Him, He spoke to them in an audible voice. By their reaction, we can see that they were accustomed to hearing His voice, and it didn't scare them. When Cain killed his brother Abel and became the first murderer on the earth, God's audible voice came from heaven: "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain lied to God, seemingly without compunction. That can happen only if a person is so used to hearing the voice of God that they take it for granted and have no fear of it. All this says is that God was still fellowshiping with mankind and had not broken fellowship, as is commonly believed. He was not imputing man's sins to him. Does that mean that He condoned their sins or that they were not wrong? No, that's the reason He eventually gave the Law. God had to give the Law to bring man back to a proper standard. God had to show man that he needs a Savior and that he has to humble himself and receive forgiveness as a gift. Sadly, religion has manipulated and controlled these things to teach that the Law was given so you can keep it and thereby earn God's forgiveness and acceptance. No! The purpose of Old Testament Law was to magnify your sin to such a degree that you would despair of ever saving yourself and say, "God, if this is your standard of holiness, I can't do it. Forgive me, have mercy on me." The overall nature of God has always been love.

Discipleship Questions

1. Read Romans 5:13. What does the word "impute" mean? _____
2. Read Romans 7:7. What was the purpose of the Law? _____
3. Read Galatians 3:24. According to this verse, what was the purpose of the Law?

4. Read John 8:1-11. How did Jesus deal with the woman caught in adultery?

5. Did Jesus' words and actions reflect the true nature of God? See John 3:34.

6. Read 1 John 4:8. According to this verse, what is the true nature of God? _____
7. Read Romans 5:6. God's love was directed toward us when we were what? _____
8. Read Romans 5:8. God loved us while we were what? _____

9. Read Romans 5:10. God loved us while we were what? _____

10. If you asked Jesus Christ to forgive you and be your Savior and Lord, trusting Jesus' sacrifice as payment for your sin, would God show you His true nature of mercy and grace? _____

Scriptures to Use with Questions

Romans 5:13 – *“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”*

Romans 7:7 – *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”*

Galatians 3:24 – *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”*

John 8:1-11 – *“[1] Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. [2] And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. [3] And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, [4] They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. [5] Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? [6] This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. [7] So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. [8] And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. [9] And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. [10] When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? [11] She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”*

John 3:34 – *“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”*

1 John 4:8 – *“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”*

Romans 5:6 – *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”*

Romans 5:8 – *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Romans 5:10 – *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”*

Answer Key

1. Read Romans 5:13. What does the word “impute” mean? **To charge to one’s account.**
2. Read Romans 7:7. What was the purpose of the Law? **To make sin known.**
3. Read Galatians 3:24. According to this verse, what was the purpose of the Law? **To show mankind their need of the Savior, Jesus Christ.**
4. Read John 8:1-11. How did Jesus deal with the woman caught in adultery? **In mercy and grace.**
5. Did Jesus’ words and actions reflect the true nature of God? See John 3:34.
Yes.
6. Read 1 John 4:8. According to this verse, what is the true nature of God? **Love.**
7. Read Romans 5:6. God’s love was directed toward us when we were what? **Without strength; i.e., helpless and ungodly.**
8. Read Romans 5:8. God loved us while we were what? **Sinners.**
9. Read Romans 5:10. God loved us while we were what? **Enemies.**
10. If you asked Jesus Christ to forgive you and be your Savior and Lord, trusting Jesus’ sacrifice as payment for your sin, would God show you His true nature of mercy and grace? **Yes.**

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