

LESSON 2 God Is the Pattern for Our Lives

An interesting thing about families is the likenesses between members. For example, we have two children—a girl and a boy. Both have big brown eyes like their father. The boy has curly hair like his father; the girl has straight hair like her mother. People usually say that they look alike, and are just like their dad.

Of course, family likenesses can be seen in our attitudes and actions too. We were upset with our little boy just recently because, instead of dressing, he was reading. Then we remembered how many times our parents were angry with both of us for that same love for books. We also loved to read and did not always choose the right times.

There is also family likeness that is spiritual. Jesus told the Pharisees who thought they were so good: “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire” (John 8:44). If Christians are indeed God’s children, they will show family likeness in their nature, attitudes, and actions.

The Plan

- A. God Has Character
- B. God Is Love
- C. God Is Righteous

The Goals

1. Describe God's character.
2. Describe how Jesus demonstrated God's character.
3. Discuss how God's love differs from human love by explaining the meaning of grace and mercy.
4. State how God's righteousness is shown in His attitudes and actions.

A. GOD HAS CHARACTER

The Meaning of God's Character

Goal 1. Describe God's character.

God is a person. However, He does not have a human form, for He is not a human being. God is also not just a power at work in the universe. Certainly it was by His power that the universe was created. But God is more than a power. He has ideas, purpose, intelligence, and emotions. He thinks, responds, and is far beyond the human beings He created in His image. It seems almost insulting to say that God is a person. Yet that is the best description we can give. All those qualities that give Him personality are His character. God is wonderful—His character is beyond our understanding. But He has chosen to show His character to us, so that we can be like Him and imitate His ways.

The universe, which God created, shows us something about His unlimited power and intelligence. Paul writes,

For 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. (Romans 1:20)

But men twisted God’s truth (Romans 1:21–25). Many religions teach that there is a Creator—God—but they do not have a true understanding of God’s character. God himself has had to make that clear in special ways.

First, God revealed himself in history to men that He chose. People like Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah received special insights into God’s nature. The nation of Israel was chosen to demonstrate the ways of God. The Old Testament records the knowledge about God that was given to the world in this way. Even though the Old Testament fully describes the character of God, most of humankind remains ignorant of Him.

Also, God revealed His character by sending His son, Jesus Christ, to live among men.

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, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1:1–3)

Application

- 1** Which qualities of God’s character does creation show you? Circle the letters of the correct answers.
- a)** God is just a force in nature.
 - b)** God is wise and intelligent.
 - c)** God is cruel.
 - d)** God is all-powerful.

2 Give three sources from which you can discover God’s character. The words that you use may not be just like ours, but the ideas should be the same.

- a)
- b)
- c)



The Showing of God’s Character

Goal 2. Describe how Jesus demonstrated God’s character.

The revelation of God in Jesus recorded in the New Testament Gospels in no way contradicts the revelation of God in the Old Testament. Jesus made God’s nature, feelings, and actions easier to understand by living them out in a way people could best understand. The Gospel of John calls Jesus “the Word,” or revelation, and it says this about Him:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Because Jesus is the son of God, He was able to tell about God and show God’s character in attitudes and actions. John writes, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1:18).

Jesus completed the revelation of God. He made God’s character known to all. What is more, by His death and resurrection, He made available to all people the right to become children of God. By the power of His Spirit, God’s children are in the process of being changed into the likeness of God. Read what Paul says:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into

his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
(2 Corinthians 3:18)

Glory is the word used in the Bible to describe the wonderful presence of God. Jesus, God's Son, reflected this glory. (See John 1:14.) He shone in this dark world. And as you become more like God, you, too, will reflect His glory.

Glory includes all the characteristics of God. The ones that John noticed most in Jesus' glory were grace and truth. Grace reminds us of the goodness of God, in that He is loving. Truth reminds us of God's holiness and righteousness. These two parts of God's character affect ethics. God's attitudes and deeds come from His love and from His righteousness.

Application

- 3** Memorize 2 Corinthians 3:18. Does this verse encourage you?
- 4** Pray about how you can cooperate with the Lord as He changes you. You might begin by asking Him to show you, as you study the rest of this lesson, where you are not reflecting His character, His glory.



B. GOD IS LOVE

Goal 3. Discuss how God's love differs from human love by explaining the meaning of grace and mercy.

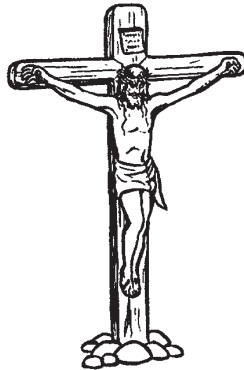
One of the most difficult things for us to understand when we become Christians is how God could have loved us so much that He allowed His only Son die for us. We are not used to this kind of love. Most of the time the love we see in the world is selfish. God's love is so much higher than human love. He is always concerned about what is best for us. He is full of love, even when we do not love Him in return. He loves the world even when it rejects Him. This kind of love is active. It shows itself in attitude

and action, as 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 tells us. In the Bible, God’s loving attitude is called grace and mercy.

Grace is love which shows that it wants the best for another person. Grace does not wait for that person to be good enough to be loved, or to love in return. Grace is an unselfish attitude of pity or compassion. Peter writes of “the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ” (1 Peter 5:10). God’s grace is seen because He wants our best even when we are sinful. But His love had to become action to rescue us from our sin.

A person shows mercy when he or she does something for another who does not deserve it. Do you remember the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37? He saw the need of his enemy, had pity on him, and helped him.

God has shown grace and mercy to us. He loves without conditions. He wants our best and provides a way of salvation though we do not deserve it.



You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6–8)

God's love is not selfish, neither must it be earned. He wants us to reflect His glory and goodness. That means He wants us to love the way He loves and to show grace and mercy.

Application

5 Read what Jesus said about loving in Luke 6:27–36. Write the following portions of this passage in your notebook. Beside each verse, write one way you can do what the verse says.

Verse 27—Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

Verse 36—Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.



C. GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

Goal 4. State how God's righteousness is shown in His attitudes and actions.

At the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Sèvres, France, is a bar of special metal. This bar is exactly one meter long. It is the perfect standard by which all other lengths are judged. Most countries have a copy of this bar.

While this bar is the perfect standard for mathematical measurement, God is the standard of all perfection. All He says or does is true. That is what we mean by saying that God is righteous. He does not change, and He does not do wrong because those things would be against His nature. God will not be happy with anything less than complete righteousness in those who are to be like Him. Because He is just and true, He has to judge His creation.

When God had finished His creative work, He was very pleased with it (Genesis 1:31). But humanity sinned. Paul tells us clearly, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In His righteousness, God could not tolerate humanity's sin, so he provided a means through whom humans can become righteous again. That means is His Son, Jesus.

The story is told of a judge who demanded truth and justice. One day his son was brought before him for a crime that he had committed. The son admitted his guilt, so with tears of love the judge sentenced him to prison—justice demanded punishment. Then the judge rose, took off his robe, stepped down to where his son stood, and said to the guards, “I will serve the prison sentence for my son.”

As God’s child, you are not condemned along with the world. Jesus has taken your place and met God’s justice. Now God’s justice has set you free. For this reason you should be true and righteous, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we understand that God’s love and righteousness are both parts of His nature, then we can begin to see how these attitudes affect what He does for us. We can also see how God expects us to think, to feel, and to act, so we can become more like Him.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

Application

- 6** Write Micah 6:8 in your notebook and memorize it.
- 7** Read Ephesians 5:8–10. Then list in your notebook things God expects you to do now that you are His child.
- 8** When we say God is righteous we mean
 - a)** He can be measured.
 - b)** He does not do wrong.
 - c)** He is too good to listen to us.
- 9** How can God’s righteousness affect your attitudes and actions?



Check Your Answers

5 Your answer

1 Statements **b)** and **d)** are correct.

6 Your answer

2 **a)** God can be known through His creation.

b) God can be known through the men to whom He spoke as recorded in the Old Testament.

c) God can be known through Jesus Christ.

7 Your answer

3 Your answer

8 **b)** He does not do wrong.

4 Your answer

9 Your answer may be different than ours, but here are a few examples: He can help you not to do wrong, to have a better attitude, to show constant love, and to have humble fellowship with Him.

