



Chapter 3: Where Is God?

If God is there, where is He when I really need Him? I have questions and struggles and needs and I'm not sure He even knows about them. Is He relevant to my daily life? Does He even care?

That's What They Say?

"If someone were to prove to me right this minute that God, in all his luminousness, exists, it wouldn't change a single aspect of my behavior."

Luis Buñuel (1900-1983), Spanish filmmaker

"One must keep pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

*C. S. Lewis,
professor and author*

"The trouble with many people today is that they haven't found a God big enough for modern needs."

*J. B. Phillips,
English theologian*

"To you I'm an atheist; to God, I'm the Loyal Opposition."

Woody Allen, actor



WHAT THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD ARE FOREMOST IN YOUR MIND?



What's God Got to Do with It?

In his book *The Portable Atheist*, Christopher Hitchens makes a distinction between the existence of God and the existence of an *intervening* God. As an articulate representative of atheism today, Mr. Hitchens points out that his dispute is primarily with the latter. He recognizes that any belief system regarding a god presumes that God's "wishes have been made known or can be determined."

This, then, is the hinge of all human thought about God: not *does He exist?*, but *is He relevant?* As Christians, we affirm God's relevance in our lives.

But we just discovered God's desire to reveal Himself in His Word. We know He has something to say, that He is relevant. So, what does that look like?

Consider these typical depictions of God:

Absentee Landlord: He created the world, then moved on to another project.

Cosmic Bellhop: God provides what we need if we simply have the faith.

WHAT IS YOUR DEPICTION OF GOD?



TO WHAT EXTENT IS GOD INVOLVED IN EVERYDAY WORLD EVENTS?



TO WHAT EXTENT IS HE INVOLVED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND CONCERNS?



Food for Thought

Gallup and other polls indicate that 90% of Americans believe in a “higher power.” At the same time, pollsters tell us that a decreasing number of people consider their faith when making daily decisions.

HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THIS DISCREPANCY?



TAKE INVENTORY. FROM THE LIST BELOW, WHICH AREAS DO YOU CURRENTLY FIND TO BE A CHALLENGE? WHY ARE THESE A CHALLENGE?



- OPPOSITE SEX
- Job
- MARRIAGE
- FINANCES
- KIDS
- FAMILY
- OTHER

IF GOD KNOWS ME COMPLETELY, IT'S A LITTLE SCARY BECAUSE:



IF GOD KNOWS ME COMPLETELY, IT'S ENCOURAGING BECAUSE:



The Rat Race

Pat Morley in his book, *Man in the Mirror*, asks: “Has anybody ever won the rat race?”

“The proverbial questions of the rat race—‘What’s it all about?’ and ‘Is this all there is?’—have tortured us all at one time or another. No matter how successful we become, these questions always lurk in the shadows, just waiting to pounce on us when life’s inevitable problems overtake us. We strain to keep it all together, but the pressure is often like a tight band around our chest. Sometimes, the gravity of our debts and duties weighs us down so much that our interior posture is in a slump—even if we fake it and stand tall to the world.”

“The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you’re still a rat.”

Lily Tomlin

DOES MORLEY'S WORD PICTURE DESCRIBE YOU AT ALL?



God in the Workplace

In the question of God’s relevance, there are three life issues (work, relationships, and money) hanging in the balance.

Colossians 3:23-25 instructs workers in the following way: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.”



IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES GOD GIVES ABOUT WORK IN Colossians 3:23-25? ☆

HOW WOULD THE WORLD CHANGE IF PEOPLE FOLLOWED THESE PRINCIPLES? ☆

REFLECTING ON YOUR LINE OF WORK, HOW WOULD THE WORKPLACE BE DIFFERENT IF MOST PEOPLE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD DESCRIBED IN THIS PASSAGE? ☆

God and Relationships

Author Ken Boa describes the Bible in one word—“relationships.”

THINK ABOUT YOUR SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS—SPOUSE, CHILDREN, PARENTS, FRIENDS, AND LIST THE FIVE PEOPLE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU: ☆

Reflect on I Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”



HOW DOES THE QUALITY OF YOUR SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS COMPARE TO I Corinthians 13:4-7?

WHICH ATTITUDES DESCRIBED PRESENT THE GREATEST CHALLENGE TO YOU?



"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." *Ephesians 5:25*



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A MARRIAGE THAT FITS Ephesians 5:25? DESCRIBE THAT RELATIONSHIP.

WHAT PRIMARY THEME(S) EMERGE FROM GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD RELATIONSHIPS AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE?



God and Your Wallet

God and money. The combination conjures up visions of televangelists' indiscretions or the discomfort of sitting through a sermon on tithing. It's fodder for late night comedy on TV and caricature in Southern novels. Funny stories about the offering plate are almost as prevalent as lawyer jokes.

Which means we don't like to talk about God and money. In fact, many would consider it seriously lacking in taste as subject matter for polite conversation. Does that mean we leave the matter alone? Would God prefer for us to "be nice" and never mention it?

You might be surprised to learn that the Bible has more to say about money than any other single subject—over 2300 verses make reference to it. Why? It has been said that our handling of finances conveys more about us—and our values—than anything else. Money is complicated today. So how could an ancient book like the Bible possibly advise us on money management? Is it relevant?

Money issues in the Bible:

"The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." *Proverbs 22:7*

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” *1 Timothy 6:7*

CAN YOU GIVE EXAMPLES OF THESE PRINCIPLES IN ACTION TODAY?



WHICH OF THESE ISSUES—CAREER, RELATIONSHIPS, AND MONEY—PRESENT THE GREATEST CONCERNS TO YOU?



Crisis Management

“I’m thinking about you.”

We tend to hear those words from others when they don’t know what else to say. When our struggles either embarrass or concern them. It’s comforting to know someone is thinking of us. But it only goes so far to ease our pain, doesn’t it? Is this all the Bible has to say when we hurt? Are God’s words impotent when our hearts are injured and in danger of breaking? Perhaps there is truth, but is there relief? There may be answers, but is that truth satisfying? If God is thinking of us, what are His thoughts?

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” *John 16:33*

“...mourn with those who mourn.” *Romans 12:15*

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” *Proverbs 15:1*

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 4:6,7*

HAVE YOU EVER SENSED GOD’S PERSONAL CONCERN FOR YOU IN THESE TYPES OF STRUGGLES?



Can You Really Trust God with Your Needs?

Life teaches us to be skeptical. Everywhere we turn, it seems someone is out to take advantage of us. Spam solicitations, telemarketers, opportunistic co-workers, deceitful business partners, and selfish relatives. There’s no end to the list of people who might hurt and disappoint us.




HOW DOES OUR SKEPTICISM TOWARD PEOPLE INFLUENCE OUR ABILITY TO TRUST GOD?



In some cases, it might even seem like God is directly responsible for disappointing circumstances or failed ambitions. 

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS A PERSON MIGHT HAVE THIS IMAGE OF GOD?

Read Hebrews 13:5, 8: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’...Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” 

DO THE STATEMENTS IN THIS VERSE SPEAK TO YOU PERSONALLY?

What Does God Care About?

The Bible is clear on two points about God:

1. He cares.
2. He gets involved.

“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue



you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.” *Psalm 139:1-8a*

ACCORDING TO THE PASSAGE, HOW MUCH IS GOD INVOLVED WITH US?




DO YOU BUY IT? WHY OR WHY NOT?



HOW IS GOD INVOLVED PERSONALLY IN EVERYDAY LIFE?



“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body,  what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” *Matthew 6:25-34*

WHAT PROMISES DOES GOD MAKE? HOW ARE THESE PROMISES RELEVANT TO YOUR LIFE?

The *Take It Further* section is to help you go a little deeper through challenging questions, audio recommendations, and reflective exercises. This section is optional for use in your study. You may do all, one, or none of the suggestions.

Take It Further



THINK: IF GOD CARES SO MUCH, WHY IS LIFE SO HARD AT TIMES?



LISTEN: *IT'S NOT AS BAD AS YOU THINK* BY PHILIP DE COURCY



CONSIDER: WHICH OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THIS SESSION CAUSE YOU THE MOST DIFFICULTY? WHAT DO YOU WISH GOD WOULD HELP YOU WITH?



CONSIDER LISTENING TO "IN GOD WE TRUST" BY RACHEL LAMPA. HOW COULD THIS APPLY TO YOU?

