



Staff Devotions

Devotion 1

God Is Great

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. Proverbs 9:10

At *Mystery Island*, we're encouraging our kids to discover the one true God. But . . . how do we know the one true God even exists? It's a question that has crossed the mind of every believer at some point—sure, I believe in God, but how do I know the God I love and serve is truly the one true God?

Before we answer that question, let's go a bit further by asking another question: how can we know anything? How do we even know to question the surety of God's existence? Here's the answer: apart from the perfect, truthful, unchanging, eternal God of the Bible, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3) and from whom come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 9:10), we cannot know anything.

Think about it.

If, as some suggest, there is no god—no ultimate standard of truth and knowledge—and we are simply the product of random processes operating on chemicals over time, then the thoughts in our brains are nothing more than the product of random chemical interactions. How could we know anything?

If, as others suggest, our universe is ruled by a god who is not eternal (Mormonism, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, ch. 14, p. 305–6) or who is deceptive (Islam, *Koran* 3:54, 8:30), how could we be sure that what we know is true today will still be true tomorrow?

The one true God of the Bible has created each person in his image and given us the ability to think rationally, to question thoughtfully, to know truth fully. And he has revealed himself to everyone so that no one is without excuse (Romans 1:18–21). Those who deny his existence or seek to change him into a false version of himself are

willfully ignorant, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

We can know the one true God exists because we have the ability to know in the first place. And we can praise him that he freely gives wisdom to those who ask for it (James 1:5). This week, let's be quick to seek wisdom from the one true God as we teach our children to know the one true God and embrace him fully.

May we be thankful as the Puritans were, not only that we can know things, but also that the one true God has enabled us to know him.

Glorious God,
I bless thee that I know thee.
I once lived in the world, but was ignorant of its
Creator,
was partaker of thy providences, but knew not the
Provider,
was blind while enjoying the sunlight,
was deaf to all things spiritual, with voices all around
me,
understood many things, but had no knowledge of
thy ways,
saw the world, but did not see Jesus only.
O happy day, when in thy love's sovereignty
thou didst look on me, and call me by grace.
Grant that I may always weep to the praise of mercy
found,
and tell to others as long as I live,
that thou art a sin-pardoning God,
taking up the blasphemer and the ungodly,
and washing them from their deepest stain.

—(Excerpt from "The Great Discovery"
in *The Valley of Vision*)



Devotion 2

God Is Almighty

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. Psalm 102:25–27

Almighty (Genesis 35:11); Beautiful (Psalm 27:4); Comforter (Isaiah 66:13); Defender (Psalm 68:5); Everywhere (omnipresent, Psalm 139:7–12); Father (Matthew 6:9); Great (Psalm 48:1); Healer (Malachi 4:2); Incomprehensible (Romans 11:33); Just (Deuteronomy 32:4); Kind (Ephesians 2:7); Love (1 John 4:8); Mighty (Psalm 50:1); Never-ending (Isaiah 9:6); Omnipotent (all-powerful, Jeremiah 32:27); Provider (Genesis 22:9–14); Quiet (1 Kings 19:11–13); Righteous (Psalm 7:17); Sovereign (Psalm 97); Trinity (Matthew 3:16–17); Unparalleled (Jeremiah 10:7); Victor (1 Chronicles 29:11); Wonderful (Isaiah 9:6); Excellent (Psalm 150:2); Yes (2 Corinthians 1:20); Zealous (Isaiah 9:7).

The Great I AM.

These are just a few of the many attributes of our one true God. In fact, someone once said that because God is infinite, his attributes are infinite. Imagine spending all of eternity discovering more and more about our amazing Creator, only to find out you still haven't uncovered everything about him and need the rest of eternity to find out even more reasons to love him!

Today, you have the great privilege of imparting a deeper understanding of the one true God to your students, focusing on his omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. As with every other aspect of the one true God, Satan twists these into lies. One we're all familiar with is the lie of "Mother Nature."

Think about it.

The one true God is omnipresent—he is present everywhere in the universe all the time (Psalm 139:7–12). He is not part of his creation; but he sees it all, all the time (Deuteronomy 4:39). How easy is it to morph this into the idea that god is in all and all of creation is god? An episode of *Sesame Street* (watched by many children) featured a survival guy who discussed all the ways "Nature" gives us

what we need—food, water, clothing, shelter. Even Christians carelessly use the term "Mother Nature" in such ways as, "Boy, Mother Nature really packed a wallop with that storm!" When we do this, we point others to a false view of God and encourage them to worship and serve created things rather than the Creator (Romans 1:22–25).

Let's make sure we consistently point our children to the one true God and talk about his attributes in real, true ways that help us make sense of the world around us. The one true God is the almighty Creator of the universe—not us and not the creation itself. May we expand our vision of God's sovereignty and power over all with this prayer:

King of glory, Divine Majesty,
every perfection adorns thy nature and sustains thy throne;

The heavens and earth are thine,
The world is thine and its fullness.
Thy power created the universe from nothing;
Thy wisdom has managed all its multiple concerns,
presiding over nations, families, individuals.

Thy goodness is boundless;
all creatures wait on thee
are supplied by thee,
are satisfied in thee.

How precious are the thoughts of thy mercy and grace!
How excellent thy lovingkindness that draws men to thee!

We are weary, give us rest,
knowing that thou hast said,
'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'
Blessed be thy name!

—(Excerpt from "Fourth Day Evening: God All-Sufficient"
from *The Valley of Vision*)



Devotion 3

God Is Ruler

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Psalm 95:3

Throughout the Old Testament, the revealed God of the Bible is contrasted to the gods worshipped in the ancient Near East. The point of these passages is to reveal the sovereignty of our God over all creation and to discredit the gods of other peoples as impotent and worthless and to direct mankind to the one true God.

Think about it.

What separates the God of the Bible from the gods of this world? After God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Moses wrote, “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11).

The emphasis of accounts like these is that when we compare other so-called gods (e.g., their creative acts, motives, and eternality) to the Lord, we find they are bankrupt in majesty and power. In addition, the morality of the false gods is vastly different from the one true God, as our Bible account about Isaiah shows.

In the myths, gods are depicted as selfish, arrogant, sadistic, lustful, drunken, vain, or hateful. In other words, they mirror humanity. These gods are just powerful mortals with the same desires, character flaws, sins, and objectives as their lesser-powered creations.

For example, in the Egyptian mythologies, which Isaiah would have been familiar with, there was war between Seth and Osiris. Seth slew and dismembered his older brother Osiris and ruled Egypt in his stead. When Osiris’ son Horus claimed the throne, Seth fought with him as well. Eventually a tribunal of gods decided the dispute over who should rule Egypt. After much politicking and quarreling, Horus was granted the throne and Seth was given the position of thunder god.

Unlike these wicked gods, the one true God has no sin in him (Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:17). He is perfect, holy, and

righteous. He never changes or reneges on his promises. In this context, we can think of Isaiah’s description: “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!” We see this refrain echoed throughout the New Testament, as well. Jesus Christ is holy and without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 3:7).

In fact, it is precisely because of the holy nature of the biblical God that we have a basis for morality. He is the ultimate lawgiver and has given us standards by which we are to live. Apart from the good God of the Bible, we have no logical basis upon which to claim, for example, that murder is wrong, while helping others is right. Take a look again at the character and nature of the gods mentioned above—are any of them capable of dispensing a logical system of morality, where good is defined by their very nature? Their followers, acting consistently with their belief in their gods, show that their moral code left something to be desired—human sacrifice, murder, adultery, continual war, lying, scheming, and the like were all the norm, rather than sinful behavior to be punished.

What we do not see in Scripture is an ultra-powerful mortal bully. We see a transcendent God who is infinitely wiser and higher than man, yet visits us in order that we might know him (Psalm 8:3–4).

The God of the Bible is not merely one of a plethora of gods from which we may pick and choose to worship; nor is he to be put on par with other supposed deities. He is the omnipotent Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Truly we worship a great God, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and a great King above all gods.

In the end, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father. Today, let’s point our kids to the one true God, holy and sovereign over all, and their Savior.



Devotion 4

God Is Emmanuel

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. 2 Corinthians 13:14

From the beginning, the enemy of our souls has known there is only one true God. Even his henchmen believe in the one true God—and shudder (James 2:19). And over the years, he has used his knowledge to distort and deny this truth and draw people away from the one true God.

One of the more insidious lies he has told—and that even some Christians believe—is that all monotheistic religions believe in the same God; he just goes by different names. The god of Islam (Allah), Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses (Jehovah) is the same as the one true God of the Bible, right?

The doctrine of the Trinity helps us separate the one true God from the fakes. The one true God exists in three persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), the Holy Spirit. Each is fully God and manifests all the attributes of the one true God. For example, in the Bible, each is called the Creator (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1–3; Job 33:4); each is unchanging and eternal (Psalm 90:2; Hebrews 13:8; Hebrews 9:14); and each is called God (Philippians 2:11; Titus 2:13; Acts 5:3–4).

If a religion denies that any member of the Trinity is God, then its “god” is a fake and is based on a lie from the devil himself. It's that simple.

Islam teaches that Jesus was a man, not God nor the Son of God. Mormonism teaches that Jesus is a created being who became a god. Those in the Jehovah's Witness cult also believe that Jesus was created and thus is not infinite or eternal.

Think about it.

According to the Bible, Jesus suffered the punishment of death that human beings deserve as a result of their sin against a holy God. Because God is infinite, his punishment of sin is infinite. Can a created being—one that is not infinite—endure the infinite punishment from an eternal God and satisfy—eternally—God's wrath on our sin? Of course not. This is why the blood of bulls and goats could never take away all sin (Hebrews 9:13–15).

In order to spend eternity in the presence of the holy and righteous God, we need a perfect infinite sacrifice to take the punishment we deserve. Those religions that deny that Jesus

is God (and thus, that he is eternal) offer a limited sacrifice for sin that does nothing to satisfy the infinite wrath of God and is no better than a sheep.

The Jesus described in the Bible is infinite and is God. The infinite Son, in his death on the cross, suffered the infinite punishment that we deserve from the infinite Father and infinitely satisfied the wrath of God on sin. A “created Jesus” could never do such a thing.

As you teach that God is Emmanuel to the children today, think about the vital importance—with infinite ramifications—of embracing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as the triune God, the one true God of the Bible.

May we rejoice, as the Puritans did, in the way each member of the Trinity works to bring about our salvation.

THREE IN ONE, ONE IN THREE,
GOD OF MY SALVATION,
Heavenly Father, blessed Son, eternal Spirit,
I adore thee as one Being, one Essence,
one God in three distinct Persons,
for bringing sinners to thy knowledge and to thy kingdom.

○ Father, thou hast loved me and sent Jesus to redeem me;

○ Jesus, thou hast loved me and assumed my nature,
shed thine own blood to wash away my sins,
wrought righteousness to cover my unworthiness;

○ Holy Spirit, thou hast loved me and entered my heart,
implanted there eternal life,
revealed to me the glories of Jesus.

Three Persons and one God, I bless and praise thee,
for love so unmerited, so unspeakable, so wondrous,
so mighty to save the lost and raise them to glory.

○ Triune God, who commandeth the universe,
thou hast commanded me to ask for those things
that concern thy kingdom and my soul.

Let me live and pray as one baptized into the threefold Name.

—(Excerpt from “The Trinity” in *The Valley of Vision*)



Devotion 5

God Is Trustworthy

And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Psalm 9:10

Today, as we examine the account of David and Goliath, consider that David was likely in his late teens when he went against the giant. Not too much older than some of the kids in your classes. Perhaps the age of the teen volunteers on your crew. Yet, even by that age, David had learned so much about the one true God that his trust in his God was firm. He knew that God was living and active (1 Samuel 17:26), he was the ruler over all (v. 45), and he was mighty to save (vv. 46–47). He had experienced God’s massive power throughout his life (v. 37), and he was confident enough to confront those who didn’t believe (vv. 26–30).

Throughout the rest of his life, David would write of his trust in God based on what he knew to be true about his Creator. Consider all the attributes of God that David included in just one psalm (25): God is deliverer, truth, salvation, merciful, loving, good, eternal, upright, faithful, a friend, gracious, forgiving, the Redeemer. He proclaims, “O my God, in you I trust” (Psalm 25:2). Take a glance through David’s psalms, and notice how often he rehearses God’s attributes to himself and how often he reminds himself to trust in God, no matter his circumstances. In times of trouble or times of ease, David trusted God. Because he knew the Word of God, he knew who God is and trusted him because of it.

Think about it.

How well do you know the one true God? Do you know enough about him and his attributes to trust him completely with your life? Do you rehearse God’s attributes to yourself (and your family and the children in your care)?

Consider what we’ve studied about God this week: he is great, almighty, ruler, Emmanuel, and trustworthy. How does embracing and clinging to these attributes change

your perspective on your job, your relationships, your bank account, your home, your family, your life? What fears keep you from trusting God more fully? Is there one attribute that you need to meditate on to help you overcome those fears? Are there other attributes you need to remind yourself of or uncover through Bible study?

Today, let’s make sure our hearts are firmly trusting in the one true God as we encourage the children toward trusting God. May we pray with the Puritans:

Thou art all my good in times of peace,
my only support in days of trouble,
my one sufficiency when life shall end.
Help me to see how good thy will is in all,
and even when it crosses mine
teach me to be pleased with it.
Grant me to feel thee in fire, and food and every
providence,
and to see that thy many gifts and creatures
are but thy hands and fingers taking hold of me.
Thou bottomless fountain of all good,
I give myself to thee out of love,
for all I have or own is thine,
my goods, family, church, self,
to do with as thou wilt,
to honour thyself by me, and by all mine.
If it be consistent with thy eternal counsels,
the purpose of thy grace,
and the great ends of thy glory,
then bestow upon me the blessings of thy comforts;
If not, let me resign myself to thy wiser determinations.
(Excerpt from “The All-Good” from *The Valley of Vision*)