

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 19 Aug 2019)**Read - Isaiah 55:1-13**

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” v 9

We continue looking at the character of God. Last week we looked at the fact that God is the Creator, and this week we study the personal aspect of His character.

What does it mean to be a person? Probably the best definition of personality I have seen is: “To be a person we have to be able to think, to reason, to feel, to judge, to choose and to communicate in words that constitute a language”.

In our reading for today, Isaiah makes it clear that our God is a God who thinks, reasons and chooses. This is one of many, many verses in the Bible that make it clear to us that God is a personal God.

If we go all the way back to Genesis 1 we discover the words ‘God said’ numerous times and in chapters 2 and 3 we see God talking with Adam and Eve.

We also find in the Bible that God has emotions: He can be angry (Psa 2:12), jealous (Zech 1:14-15), merciful (Psa 78:38) and joyful (Deut 30:9).

Of course, we also see the personal God in the form of Jesus who came to live, walk, eat and talk with people, sharing His thoughts and desires. He has always sought to engage with mankind.

Prayer: Thank You Lord that you are a personal God.

Most of these notes are based on daily devotions by Selwyn Hughes.

DAY 2**Read - Psalm 139:1-24**

“How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!” v 17

There are many folk in the world who believe in a ‘power’ that sustains the universe. Some will call it ‘nature’ others call it ‘an energy’. There are also many religions that worship man-made idols and feel they have a power to influence their lives.

What we see in our reading from the Psalms today and from Isaiah yesterday is that throughout Scripture, God is portrayed as a personal being, not simply a force or energy.

We might be tempted to take this for granted and say “I know that, so what?”

Selwyn Hughes points out that most of the people who believe in formless life-force do so because such a force makes no demands of them. We are not challenged to relate to a force in the same way we are challenged to relate to a person.

We can just believe the force exists and get on with our lives the way we want. This may at first glance seem attractive, but in the end it is a lonely, meaningless existence. A force gives us no consolation in tough times, or meaning and purpose, or any sense of belonging.

So many people look for short-term comfort in believing in a life force but find no salvation, mercy or grace. We are blessed to have a personal God who not only engages with us but desires that we should live a full, meaningful life with Him forever.

Prayer: Thank You Lord that we can live in You.

DAY 3**Read - Psalm 47:1-7**

“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”” v 1

C S Lewis puts what we were discussing yesterday this way: “The Pantheist’s God does nothing, demands nothing. He is there if you wish for him, like a book on the shelf. He will not pursue you. There is no danger that at any time heaven and earth should feel awe at his glance. But Christ the King is there. And His intervening presence is terribly startling to discover.”

“It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone.”

“There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at burglars hush suddenly; was that a *real* footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him! We never meant it to come to that! Worse still supposing He has found us? So it is a sort of Rubicon. One goes across or one does not. But if one does there is no manner of security against miracles. One may be in for *anything*.”

In fact we are in for a surprise: our God is a gracious, forgiving God and we can find rest in our souls because of that. There is nothing to fear in God because he is personal and we know His nature is loving, kind and gentle.

It is only when we understand God as personal that we are then able to relate to Him. Before that we tend to fear Him and so are afraid to walk in the way he wants for us.

Prayer: Lord thank You that You are always ‘there’ for me. I am never alone.

DAY 4**Read - Luke 11:1-13**

“He [Jesus] said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father.” v 2

But Jesus took the relationship between us and God even further. He said we should relate to God the way we relate to a father.

A relationship with a father should be personal, special, unique, loving, caring . . . Unfortunately for many folk that is not the case, so we must be careful to focus on what the relationship should be, rather than our own experience of human, imperfect fathers we may have had.

A father relates to his child on a one on one basis. He doesn't only talk to children as a group. The personal nature of God means that He deals with each one of us as a unique person.

While there may be general rules of conduct and responsibility in any house, there is always some special bond between a parent and a child and usually some connection that is different to the other siblings. So too with God.

His personal nature means that there is a relationship with me that is different to all others – yes we have common standards and engagements, but He speaks to me as an individual and to you in a different way.

I am not just one of a crowd – he knows the number of hairs on my head! [Matt 10:30]. In His eyes I am a unique being because He is a personal God, not just a faceless force.

Prayer: Father, Your love for me is so amazing that it changes me. Thank You that You are always here and always personal.

DAY 5**Read - Matthew 6:25-34**

“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?” v 26

Some folk struggle with the concept that the great and mighty creator of the universe can have time for little old me – one of 7 billion people on one of billions of celestial bodies in the universe.

Selwyn Hughes tells this story: Dr Henry Norris Russell, one of the great astronomers of the last century and a Christian, once gave a talk on the vastness of the universe. Afterwards someone asked him this question: “How is it possible for such a great and infinite God to have time for me?” This was his reply: “An infinite God can dispatch the affairs of the universe in the twinkling of an eye, thus giving Him plenty of time for you.”

It is only because our God is personal that we know He has time for us. He has demonstrated throughout the Bible that He has time for people, not just the ‘important’ people, but also the less significant people.

Jesus chastised His disciples for keeping the children away from Him [Matt 19:14] and He also told us that if we want to know what the Father is like, we should look at Him. No other religion or belief has that sort of intimate, personal relationship with their god.

Our God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, is a loving, personal God and wants us to relate to Him in that way.

Prayer: Help me to see You as personal.

DAY 6**Read - Acts 9:1-9**

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” v 5-6

Saul (Paul) grew up in first century Jewish traditions, where God was seen as a demanding, harsh disciplinarian who expected absolute obedience at risk of death.

As a result his picture of God was that He was one who had to be obeyed and that it was Paul's duty to arrest all those who disagreed with his view of God. One could say that he saw God as personal, but not a very nice person.

Jesus came to show all of us that He loves all people and that He wants to have a personal, loving, gracious, guiding, caring relationship with everyone.

So Jesus had to have a supernatural encounter with Saul in order to make him change his views of God.

We all have some strange views of God and what He is like which affect the way we approach Him, listen to Him, ask Him and obey Him. He wants us to have an open personal relationship with Him.

We all need a supernatural encounter with Him in order to change our views. It may not be like Paul's but it needs to be something that reaches deep inside us and helps us to see God as He really is – personal!

Prayer: Father meet me in a supernatural way so I can know You the way You truly are.