

A photograph of a beach with footprints in the sand. The ocean is in the background with a distant island on the horizon. The sky is blue with some clouds. A black box with yellow text is overlaid on the image.

What is God Like?

1 of 11

GOD TRANSCENDS

Knowing the Unknowable God

After having examined the evidence, the reasonable conclusion we have come to is that this evidence points to a supreme intelligence that has always existed and that we call this intelligence God.

Therefore we can conclude that **we can KNOW** that **there is a God** because we can see the **evidence** of His existence everywhere about us in nature.

But had God not chosen to reveal Himself to man, there would be no way of determining **what He is like.**

“And this is eternal life, that they might know you the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Jn 17:3;

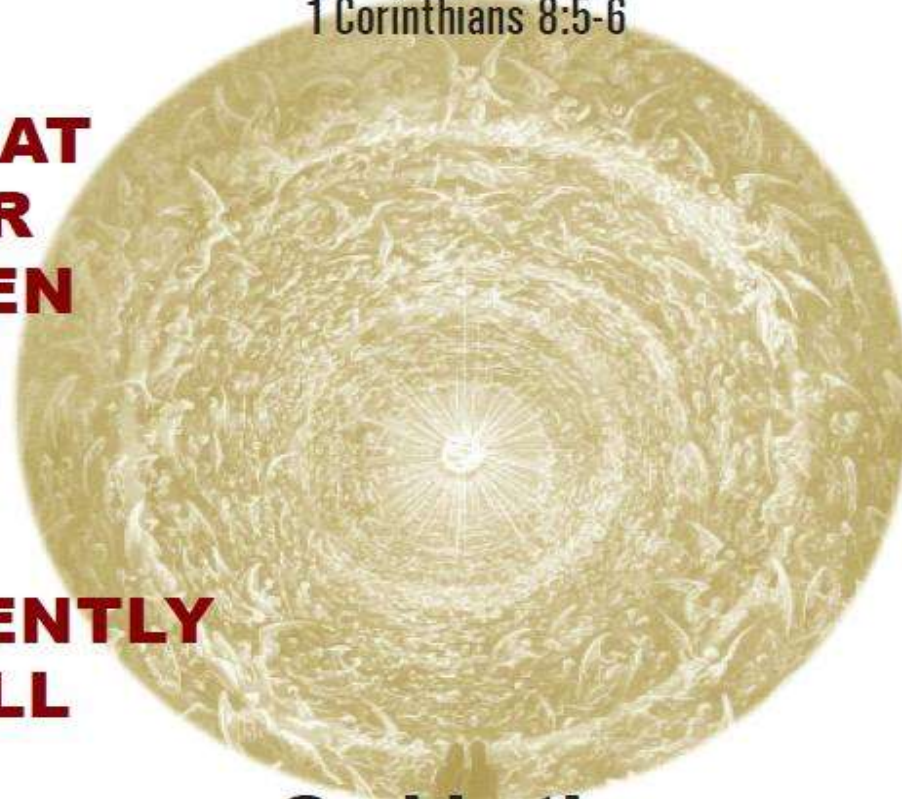
God's Transcendence

The Nature & Character of God - Part 4

God reigns

SUPREME OVER ALL THINGS

1 Corinthians 8:5-6



**God has GREAT
RICHES FOR
HIS CHILDREN**

Psalms 104:24

**God is
UNIVERSAL**

Psalms 22:7; 33:14

**God is
TRANSCENDENTLY
ABOVE ALL**

1 Timothy 6:16

**God is
INVISIBLE**

Hebrews 11:27

**God is the
AUTHOR OF ALL TRUTH**

John 17:17

Knowing the Unknowable God

God's Transcendence “Transcend” =
“**beyond** the limits of knowledge and experience,
or of the material universe.”

God exists apart from creation
“**He is Totally other.**”

The **transcendence of God** simply means
that **God is above us, that God is beyond us,**
He is unreachable in His character and in His person.

It simply means that He excels us, He surpasses us,
He is independent of us, He is all-sustaining,
self-sustaining within Himself –
He needs nothing but Himself.

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

Do you think God needs us? No!

God doesn't need us, neither was God obliged to create us, **It was the choice of His will!**

He didn't have a missing part in His life, and decided that He needed to fill it by making a creation.

Nor, in our sin, is God obliged to save us.

Now, we must grapple with these issues:

God does not need man, but man needs God

God chose to create us. He has chosen, in our sin, to save us and has promised that He will do such:-

God gains nothing from us, or indeed from anyone or anything outside of the universe.

Knowing the Unknowable God :- “Transcend.”

Rom 11:34-36;

“Oh, what a wonderful God we have!

How great are his riches and wisdom & knowledge!

How impossible it is for us to understand

His decisions and His methods!

For who can know what the Lord is thinking?

Who knows enough to be His counsellor?

And who could ever give Him so much that

he would have to pay it back?

**For everything comes from Him; everything
exists by His power and is intended for His glory.**

To Him be glory evermore. Amen.”

Knowing the Unknowable God :- “Transcend.”

God is a self-entity. God is above us!
God is beyond us! God does not need us!
We must have high views of God.

If we are going to think of God, we must realise that,
before the creation of the world and the universe,
**God was perfectly blessed in Himself. Father,
Son and Holy Spirit - that divine fellowship of love**
between those three Persons of one essence –
there in eternity past, was perfection, perfect blessedness.

**God did not need man nor creation!
Creation added nothing to God,
for you cannot add to God.**

Knowing the Unknowable God :- “Transcend.”

Even Christ and His cross **added nothing**
to God's divine being or to His glory.
Now think about that!

Christ and His cross could not add to God,
for God cannot be added to – **yes!**
it revealed Him; **yes!** it manifested His glory
& brought great glory to God & praise to His name;

but it did not add to His essential goodness
and greatness and holiness and godliness!
God has never been without it, neither will He ever
be without it. we cannot add anything to our God.

Knowing the Unknowable God:- “Transcend.”

Isaiah 40:22-24;

“It is God who sits above the circle of the earth.

The people below must seem to him like grasshoppers! He is the one who spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them.

He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing. They hardly get started, barely taking root, when He blows on them and their work withers. The wind carries them off like straw.

We have a great God! He is God and there is none other! He is God above all gods! He is above, He is supreme, He is exalted, He is a place that none can approach to! He is a being that none can strive after or even find! until He has revealed Himself.”

God's Transcendence.

Ecc 5:2;

“Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.”

God exists apart from creation

“He is Totally other.”

God is different from creation

“He is Holy other.”

1 Sam 2:2;

**“There is no one holy like the LORD,
Indeed, there is no one besides You,
Nor is there any rock like our God.”**

God's Transcendence

God exists apart from creation

“He is Totally other.”

God is different from creation

“He is Holy other.”

Isa 40:25

**“To whom then will you liken Me
That I would be His equal?
says the Holy One.”**

God's Transcendence.
Should Inspire Reverence and Awe
We need to recapture that Reverence.

Isaiah 6:1-5;

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two He covered his face, & with two He covered His feet, and with two He flew. And one called out to another and said,
**" Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory."**

**"The foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of Him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.
Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
and I live among a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.'"**

God's Transcendence.

Should Inspire Reverence and Awe

We need to recapture that Reverence.

1 Tim 6:15-16;

“For at the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

He alone can never die, and He lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach Him.

No one has ever seen Him, nor ever will.

To Him be honour and power forever. Amen.”

God's Transcendence.

Should Inspire Humility

God is unsearchable, incomprehensible:

Job 11:7-9;

“Can you discover the depths of God?

Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?

They are high as the heavens, what can you do?

Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?

Its measure is longer than the earth

And broader than the sea.”

Job 36:26;

"Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him;

The number of His years is unsearchable.”

God's Transcendence.

Should Inspire Humility

God is unsearchable, incomprehensible:

Psalms 97:2;

**“Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice
are the foundation of His throne.”**

Psalms 145:3;

**“Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised,
And His greatness is unsearchable.”**

God's Transcendence.

Should Inspire Humility

God is unsearchable, incomprehensible:

Isa 40:28;

“Do you not know? Have you not heard?

**The Everlasting God, the LORD,
the Creator of the ends of the earth**

Does not become weary or tired.

His understanding is inscrutable.”

Isaiah 45:15;

**“Truly, You are a God who hides Himself,
O God of Israel, Saviour!”**

God's Transcendence.

Should Inspire Humility

God is unsearchable, incomprehensible:

Isa 55:8-9;

**“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,”**

declares the LORD.

**“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.”**

Rom 11:33;

**“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom
and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are
His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**”**

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

God is unknowable in two senses:

1. We cannot know at all, without divine revelation:

1 Cor 2:11-13;

“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?

**Even so the thoughts of God
no one knows except the Spirit of God.**

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know
the things freely given to us by God,

which things we also speak,
not in words taught by human wisdom,
but in those taught by the Spirit,
combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

God is unknowable in two senses:

1. We **cannot know** at all,
without divine revelation.
2. We **cannot know Him** In His fullness,
even with revelation.:-

Ex 33:18-23;

“Then Moses said, ‘I pray You, show me Your glory!’
And He said, ‘I Myself will make all My goodness
pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the
LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom
I will be gracious, and will show compassion
on whom I will show compassion.’”

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

God is unknowable in two senses:

- 1. We cannot know at all, without divine revelation**
- 2. We cannot know Him In His fullness, even with revelation:**

**“But He said, ‘You cannot see My face,
for no man can see Me and live!’**

**Then the LORD said, ‘Behold, there is a place by Me, and
you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about,**

while My glory is passing by,

**that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you
with My hand until I have passed by.**

**Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back,
but My face shall not be seen.”**

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

God is unknowable in two senses:

- 1. We cannot know at all, without divine revelation**
- 2. We cannot know Him In His fullness,
even with revelation:**

Job 26:5-14;

**“Behold, these are the fringes of His ways;
And how faint a word we hear of Him!**

But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

Deut 29:29;

**“The secret things belong to the LORD our God,
but the things revealed belong to us
and to our sons forever,
that we may observe all the words of this law.”**

**We know that the book of Deuteronomy,
in its very name, is the second giving of the law
to Moses. It was given there, first of all,
in Exodus 20 on Mount Sinai.**

What the word of God is saying here is that **God has been revealed in His law.**

God has been revealed to men and women through the precepts that we read in this book, by His blessing and by His cursing.

And one of the basic lessons that we learn from these words before us is that

God is a holy God,
that is why His law was revealed to us.

He is a **righteous** God, His eyes cannot look upon iniquity and therefore **His law portrays and conveys that truth to us.**

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

verse 29 is saying:-

**There are secret things
that belong unto the Lord our God
that we do not know.**

**Those things which are revealed belong
unto us and to our children's children forever,
that we may do all the words of this law.**

**There are things that God, in His mercy and grace,
has revealed unto us as His children –
but there are other things, things that no man
or woman, or perhaps even the angels, can know.**

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

There is no god like our God!

**Oh, that we could lift ourselves from the depths
of our own human existence, our pitiful daily chores
in life, the sphere of all our existence,
that we could be pulled by His Spirit at this moment
to see that God is transcendent!**

**The irony of a study like this is
although God is unknowable.
Yet we will seek to try and
know the unknowable.**

God's Transcendence-Should Inspire Humility

Paul said to Timothy, :-

“Great is the mystery of godliness”.

There is a danger in the age in which we live that we bring everything down to a manageable level.

**Where we feel that we have got God in a box,
that we can understand Him,**

**we can define Him, we can speak of all His attributes
and His persons that are revealed to us,**

**yet, in depth, we forget that the secret things
belong unto our God and there is
a measure of mystery and paradox in God.
Let us never lose the mystery of God.**

Is that part of our problem today:-
that **we have lost the awe and
the reverence** of the unknown?

Those secret things that no man can know,
that great **glory of God** that no man
can see and live, that **great person of God**
that no human mind can hold and sustain.

One man said that “today's society spells
God with a small 'g' and man with a capital 'M'.”

Let us beware when contemplating and
thinking about God that we do not strip God
of the great mystery of His Godliness.

What can be known? What can we know about God?
And indeed what is God like?

How do we define God?

How can we describe God? even though it's our purpose of studying God in these studies.

It's our intention to understand from God's divine revelation - the word of God - what He is really like, the paradox is that **God is not like anything!**

Isaiah said: "To whom, or to what, shall you compare God?" - God is not exactly like anything that exists in this universe – in other words, **He can't be compared to anything.**

God is transcendent, He is above, beyond, superior to anything and everything!

It's amazing to think of the **lengths that God has gone to** that we might understand Him in some small way,

We could say that He even may have stripped Himself of some of that mystery, in order that He might communicate to a natural world who He is and what He is like.

That's why within the word of God He incorporates many **'like' words**, to say that God is **like such-and-such**, to describe Himself by comparing Himself to another thing although He is not exactly like that.

For example **Ezekiel chapter 1.**

'It came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God'.

Ezekiel saw what **no language could describe,
and the point of what he is saying is this:-**

Ezekiel **had no reference point!**

He had **nothing to compare God with!**

He just says, **“I saw visions of God”,**

Ezekiel saw something different from what he'd ever known in his whole existence, so what he does is he uses 'like' words. He uses comparisons,

v13 he says: 'As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance', note that word, 'their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps'.

He didn't see burning coals of fire, he didn't see lamps, but he saw something that he couldn't describe, that he didn't know what it was, but it was LIKE burning coals of fire, it was LIKE the appearance of lamps.

And as you read down this passage, the nearer he comes to the throne of God, **the less definite** his words become, **the less specific** and accurate they are. Look at verse 26:

“And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as **the appearance** of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was **the likeness** as **the appearance** of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as **the appearance** of fire round about within it, from **the appearance** of his loins even upward, and from **the appearance** of his loins even downward.

I saw as it were **the appearance** of fire, and it had brightness round about. As **the appearance** of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was **the appearance** of the brightness round about. **This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord!**”

He couldn't see the glory of the Lord and live,
so God had to convey to him **the likeness,**
the appearance of the glory of the Lord.
Do you see what a glorious God we have?
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes!

We are so inadequate that God has to describe
Himself **in likeness, in appearance,**
in the languages of 'as it were'.
God cannot be put into our pitiful language,
He can't be contained into our puny minds.

We need to beware that in all our doctrines
that we take from the word of God, **that**
we do not ever try to define the indefinable!

We need to beware in contemplating God
That we never ever put Him into our
conception, for we tend
- as in everything in life –
to try to reduce God to our manageable terms.

A. W. Tozer said this:-

“The God of **contemporary Christianity**
is only slightly superior to the gods
of Greece and Rome
if indeed he is not actually inferior to them,
in that he is weak and helpless
while they, at least, had power.”

What have we reduced God to?

**This great transcendent, superior, the secret things
that belong unto Him - we have brought Him down
and stripped Him of all His power,
all of His sovereignty, all of His dignity
and we have made ourselves god over Him!**

We don't worship the Bible, we worship God!

**He is greater than what the Bible depicts,
He is greater than any language.**

**He is greater than any vision, He is greater than
any concept imaginable, any thought that
can enter into the heart or mind of any child of God.**

Idolatry is when we move from what God is said to be like, **to imagine that He is that way.**

For instance when we read that there was an appearance of burning coals, or we read that God appeared like unto the form of a man, that **we make Him into a man.**

That's not what the word of God says. It's **'like'** the appearance, it's **'like'** the thing, it's **'as it were'** - and that's why we reject idols and idolatry, **because we can make an idol out of God.**

Nicholas of Cusa, in his book **'The Vision of God'**, prays this prayer addressing Him - and this is what he says to God: “If anyone should set forth any concept by which You can be conceived, **I know that that concept is not a concept of You.**”

Do we understand that? If any man or woman,
or book or picture, tries to depict God,
it is other than God is

because God cannot be depicted!

J.B Philips wrote a book “your God is too small.”

Draw a picture of God if you like,
and make a statue, or have a picture in your
mind of who He is and what He looks like.

When we behold the glory of God and perhaps even
then are not able to look upon His greatness,
we will know all our concepts, all our puny thoughts,
all the ways in which we have stripped Him,
& reduced Him, & brought Him down, & de-qualified
Him to everything that we can understand. **We will
then see how far short of understanding we were.**

If any man comes unto you and says:-

'I've a way you can see God, I've a way that you can understand God or reduce God down to manageable terms' – That person will be way off the mark.

**God is greater than what the Bible shows,
He is greater than any language, He is greater
than any vision, He is greater than any concept
imaginable, any thought that can enter into
the heart or mind of any child of God.
He who is invisible can never truly be depicted.**

**The paradox is:- we can know
that we cannot know everything.**

**If we cannot know everything and the secret things
that belong to our God, how can we get
a little bit of a glimpse of His great transcendence?**

**How can we enter into the rays of His glory,
at least to be as the hymn says:
'Lost in wonder, love and praise'
at the greatness of our God?**

**How can we know
at least something about God?**
**I believe the only way to know God
is through His revelation.**

**Yes, the pagan in the jungle can look at creation, and
the sun, and the moon, and the stars
and realise there is a Creator, and realise
that there is another in the universe!**

**But he can never understand, from looking
at creation, the greatness, the magnitude,
the dignity, the almighty nature, the holiness
and righteousness and powerfulness
of our God - it cannot be done.**

Zophar the Naamathite
asked Job the question:

'Can you, by searching, find out God?'

**You cannot! He can only be known
when He reveals Himself, to the human heart.**

When He takes the word of God and
it is preached, and that word of God
is found on good ground
in the heart of an unbeliever,

and **“faith comes by hearing and
hearing by the word of God,”** and a revelation
has taken place through the revelation of
the word of God. – God has made Himself known
by His Spirit to a human being.

How can a man know God!? John 3.

**“Except a man be born again,
he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

**Isn't it a wonder? Except a man be born from above,
the supreme knowledge of God can be found
only as the Spirit of God reveals
the Christ of God in the gospel of God!**

Matt 11:27; the Lord Jesus said it Himself:-

**"My Father has given me authority over everything.
No one really knows the Son except the Father,
and no one really knows the Father except the Son
and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."**

2 Thess 2:13-14; “As for us, we always thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord.

We are thankful **that God chose you** to be among the first to experience salvation, a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and by your belief in the truth.

He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul tells us:- “for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

It is not just knowledge, it's not just sight but it is faith that is the evidence of things not seen.

God does not reveal Himself to the head, He does not reveal Himself to the intellect, or to the emotions.

He doesn't reveal to the eyes by sight, or the mind by imagination - but to the heart by faith and by love. For Christ is God's complete disclosure of Himself.

**God still is incomprehensible in His essence
and in His divine nature
but He has also condescended to reveal Himself
in the incarnation of His own Son.**

**This should Inspire a Deep Respect
for the Word of God.**

**2 Tim 3:16-17; “All Scripture is inspired by God
and is useful to teach us what is true
and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives.**

**It straightens us out
and teaches us to do what is right.**

**It is God's way of preparing us in every way,
fully equipped for every good, God wants us to do.”**

**God's Word is Living and active;
powerful – Heb 4:12; Rom 1:16;
When preached as well:**

1 Cor 1:21-24;

**“For since in the wisdom of God the world through
its wisdom did not come to know God,
God was well-pleased **through the foolishness of
the message preached** to save those who believe.**

**For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for
wisdom; but **we preach Christ crucified**, to Jews a
stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but
to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.”**

God's Transcendence- Inspires Respect for the Word

God's Word is Living and active; powerful –
When preached It has an inherent
power and authority that is unique to preaching.

2 Tim 2:14-15;

“Remind everyone of these things,
and command them in God's name
to stop fighting over words.

Such arguments are useless,
and they can ruin those who hear them.

Work hard so God can approve you. **Be a good worker**, one who does not need to be ashamed and **who correctly explains the word of truth.**”

God's Transcendence- Inspires Respect for the Word

God's Word is Living and active; powerful –
When preached It has an inherent
power and authority that is unique to preaching:-

2 Tim 4:2;

**“preach the word; be ready in season
and out of season; reprove, rebuke,
exhort, with great patience and instruction.”**

Titus 2:15;

**“You must teach these things and encourage your
people to do them, correcting them when necessary.
You have the authority to do this, so don't let anyone
ignore you or disregard what you say.”**

God's Transcendence- Inspires Respect for the Word

God's Word is Living and active; powerful –
When preached It has an inherent
power and authority that is unique to preaching:-

Titus 3:8;

“This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning
these things **I want you to speak confidently,**
so that those who have believed God
will be careful to engage in good deeds.
These things are good and profitable for men.”

God's Transcendence- Inspires Respect for the Word

**God's Word is Living and active; powerful –
When preached It has an inherent
power and authority that is unique to preaching:-**

1 Cor 13:12;

**“For now we see in a mirror dimly,
but then face to face; now I know in part,
but then I will know fully
just as I also have been fully known.”**

God's Transcendence- Inspires Respect for the Word

James 1:22-25;

“And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance.

You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law- the law that sets you free and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”

God's Transcendence

God does dwell, for us, behind a cloud at times doesn't He? **It seems that we can't understand Him,** that we try to behold Him but we're grasping in the dark of unknowing.

So we feel He can never, perhaps, clearly be seen by the light of understanding, nor felt by the natural senses that we have.

Yet, We believe, by faith
we can reach out and we meet Him
in the Incarnate Almighty Word of God.

God's Transcendence

And the nail-scarred hands of the
Lord Jesus Christ pulls us towards God
and whispers in His still small voice:-
'Behold your God.'

“Strangely I sensed Him everywhere,
The God I ached to find.
Yet could not find Him anywhere,
Above, before, behind.

Mystery amazing, love unknown,
In human form He stands,
He calls with tender human tone,
Uplifting nail-torn hands.

God's Transcendence

**And the nail-scarred hands of
the Lord Jesus Christ pulls us towards God
and whispers in His still small voice:-
'Behold your God.'**

**Yes, for in Jesus, God most high
Has come from heaven above,
To answer all my aching cry
With His redeeming love.**

**Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
My Saviour, King divine.
For in my Saviour now I see:
Lo, God and heaven are mine!"**

God's Transcendence.

Should Inspire Reverence and Awe.

Should Inspire Humility.

**Should Inspire a Deep Respect.
for the Word of God.**

Should inspire Commitment to God.

Should inspire Obedience to God.

Should inspire Service to God.

What is God Like?

1 of 11

GOD TRANSCENDS

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Next in the series:- God Draws Near.