

Question 2

Q. What is God?

A. **God is the creator** and sustainer **of everyone and everything**. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in His power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through Him and by His will.

The degree to which we will find hope in God depends upon who this God is. You see, if we belong to a weak or feeble God, how can we hope fully in Him in times of trial or distress? If He is untrustworthy or unreliable, can we really and entirely lean upon Him?¹ Worse, if He is not immutable, what hope can we have that He won't change His mind or love towards us?

As A.W. Tozer famously said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Thankfully, the Bible has much to say about God, for ultimately, it is not a book about us, but Him.

There are many places we could start about defining who the true God is. But it is perhaps best to start where the Bible starts.²

And the first thing we learn about God³ is that He is the all-powerful Creator of everyone and everything:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1)

There are few verses in the Bible that are as theologically packed as this one:

1. God is utterly unique in that He transcends both space and time.
 - In fact, He is the One who *created* space and time!!
 - As Michael Card notes, "In the beginning, *was* the Beginning."

¹ Prov. 25:19 (NLT) – "Putting confidence in an unreliable person in times of trouble is like chewing with a broken tooth or walking on a lame foot."

² Interestingly, this is precisely where the apostle Paul begins when evangelizing the Gentiles in Acts 14 and 17. The reason he can do this is because of Romans 1:18-31 (cf. Psa. 19:1-2)

³ Our next question will deal exclusively with the Triune nature of God, who as YHWH is one essence in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- As Genesis 2 picks up, this God who created all things is to be known by His covenant people as “I AM.”
 - “YHWH”⁴ comes from the Hebrew verb *hayah* (“to be”), and thus Exodus 3:6 can be translated “I AM that I AM” or “I WILL BE whom I WILL BE,” and highlights His self-existence.⁵
- Thus, according to the Bible, everything can nicely and neatly be put into one of two categories: uncreated or created.⁶
 - The true God *alone* belongs to the former, and *everything* else belongs to the latter.⁷
- Grudem: “The Bible clearly requires us to believe that God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). This means that before God began to create the universe, nothing existed except God Himself.”⁸

2. God is all-powerful and transcendent

- ‘*Elohim* (“God”, “gods”) highlights His sovereign omnipotence.
 - This frequently used Hebrew name for God (*'elohim*) is a plural form. When it refers to the one true God, the singular verb is normally used, as here. The plural form indicates majesty; the name stresses God's sovereignty and incomparability – he is the “God of gods.”⁹
- One of the primary ways that YHWH encourages His people is by reminding them that He alone is the Creator of everyone and everything, and thus is distinguished from, and sovereign over, the idols (false gods) of the nations who threaten them. As almighty Creator of all, He is thus Lord of all, and able to rescue His people from all:

⁴ In generations past, the name “Jehovah” was used for the LORD. The vowels (*e, o, a*) that follow the consonants (*J, H, V, H*) come from the Hebrew word *adonai* (‘Lord’).

⁵ The apostle John notes how Jesus lays claim to this title in John 8:58.

⁶ “Heavens and earth” are a merism, and simply means “everything.”

⁷ As Grudem notes, “creation is distinct from God, yet always dependent on God.”

⁸ Grudem, Wayne A.. *Systematic Theology* (p. 263). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. He goes on to say, “When we speak of God’s existence “before” the creation of the world, we should not think of God as existing in an unending extension of time. Rather, God’s eternity means that he has a different kind of existence, an existence without the passage of time, a kind of existence that is difficult for us even to imagine. (See Job 36:26; Ps. 90:2, 4; John 8:58; 2 Peter 3:8; Rev. 1:8). The fact that God created time reminds us of his lordship over it and our obligation to use it for his glory.” See also Rom. 4:17, where Paul says God, “calls into being that which does not exist” (LSB), and Heb. 11:3.

⁹ NET Bible notes on Gen. 1:1.

- Psa. 33:6-12
- Isa. 40:28-31; 42:1-8; 45:11-23; Jer. 10:12-16; 33:19-26, etc.

3. God is creative and imminent

- The verb used here, “to create” (*bara'*), always describes the divine activity of fashioning something new, fresh, and perfect.¹⁰
 - Though He created all things by the power of His Word, He is not disconnected from His creation, as the ‘god’ of deism asserts.¹¹ Nor, as the pantheists believe, is God *a part of* His creation.
 - ⇒ As Gen. 2 makes clear, God is very involved with His creation, most notably humankind, the very apex and zenith of the creation account.¹²
 - ⇒ In the words of the apostle Paul, “[God] is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).¹³
 - ⇒ Psa. 148:18 – “The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”¹⁴
 - ⇒ James 4:8 – “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”
- As Grudem [helpfully] notes, the God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in His creation. The Bible is the story of God’s involvement with His creation, and particularly the people in it.¹⁵

¹⁰ This is beautifully captured in Psa. 139. Though the Hebrew word *bara'* is not used, the idea of God’s intricate and intimate creation of us is highlighted and cherished by David.

¹¹ To the contrary, says the preacher of Hebrews: “[The Son] continues to sustain [φέρων] all things by His powerful Word” (my translation). Cf. Col. 1:17b.

¹² Psalm 8, which many theologians consider an intra-textual commentary on Genesis, communicates the same truths.

¹³ This does not contradict Deut. 4:7, where YHWH is said to be “near” only to Israel. The book of Acts chronicles the major epochal shift of the gospel of God going global. As Paul notes in Acts 14:16, YHWH – the God of Israel – by and large, left the Gentiles to themselves. But with the coming of Jesus Christ to fulfill God’s promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), the gospel is now being sent out to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; cf. Matt. 28:20).

¹⁴ Again, we see this fulfilled missiologically in the book of Acts, where God-fearing Gentiles like Cornelius have their prayers heard and answered (10:1-4).

¹⁵ Grudem, Wayne A.. Systematic Theology (p. 267). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Other Scriptural proofs:

1. God is eternal

- Psa. 90:2 (NET) – “Even before the mountains came into existence, or You brought the world into being, you were the eternal God.”¹⁶
- Rev. 1:8 (cf. 4:8) – “I AM the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty One.”¹⁷
- John 17:5 – “And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.”

2. God is infinite

- This applies to all His attributes. For example, His power is infinite, as is His wisdom, love, etc. As the only uncaused and uncreated One, he is not subject to any of the limitations of His creation.
- Psa. 147:5 (LSB) – “Great is our Lord and abundant in power; His discernment is infinite.”
- Psa. 145:3 – Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.”

3. God is unchanging/immutable (in all His attributes)

- Psa. 102:25-27 – “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end.”¹⁸
- Mal. 3:6 – “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

¹⁶ Lit. “Even from everlasting to everlasting You [are] the mighty God [’e].”

¹⁷ My translation, emphasizing one of John’s favorite phrases (Ἐγώ εἰμι = “I AM”).

¹⁸ The author of Hebrews attributes this to the Lord Jesus Christ (1:10-12).

- James 1:17 (NLT) – “Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.”

4. God is in absolute control of everyone and everything¹⁹

- Psa. 115:3 (LSB) – “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”
- Prov. 21:1 – “The king’s heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of Yahweh; He turns it wherever He pleases.”
- Dan. 4:34-35 – “At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Application:

1. Ultimately, God created the universe to showcase His glory.
 - Rev. 4:11 – “Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created.”
 - Cf. Psa. 148
2. Because God rules over all the universe and that nothing in creation is to be worshiped instead of God or in addition to Him.²⁰

¹⁹ Because YHWH is the Creator God *of* all, He is also the Lord God *over* all (cf. Isa. 45:18; Col. 1:16; Acts 4:24, etc.).

²⁰ E.g. Isa. 42:5-9. Cf. also Paul’s argument in Romans 1:18-23.

3. This also has a profound impact on our understanding of evangelism²¹, missions, and the great commission.²²

²¹ R.C. Sproul notes how in their denial of the Lordship of God over them, the truth about God as Creator is always attacked first by the culture, academic institutions, and media.

²² See especially Psalm 96.