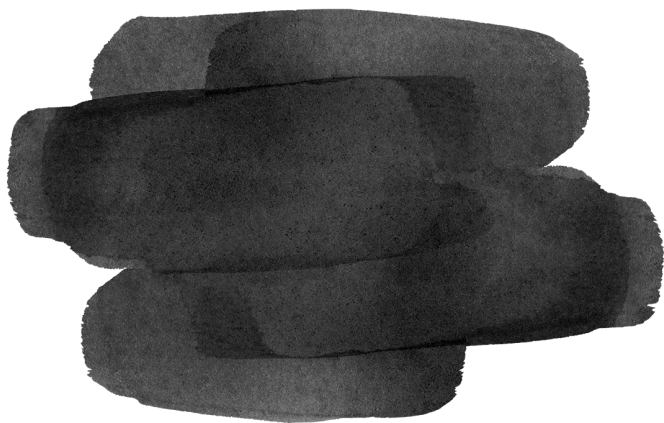


QUICK THEOLOGY

The God of the Old Testament



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Introduction

When I was a new Christian, I struggled to understand why God allowed certain things to happen; specifically in regard to my struggle with sexual sin, from age 12 to my early 20s. I wondered why God allowed me to stumble on the erotic novels which led to my addiction.

I questioned God's goodness, kindness, and love, while also wondering if God was truly sovereign. I thought, "Why would He let this happen? If He is sovereign, isn't this His fault?" These theological questions were real for me as a young teenager struggling with sin. And they're questions many people are asking today over different issues in their lives. If you are reading this, you may have asked those questions—or similar ones—too. I hope, as we look at God's character, you will learn something helpful for your own spiritual journey.



Trust in God's Love

I struggled to accept God's love for years. Part of that was due to my assumptions about God's character and kindness and part was due to my own guilt and shame of addiction.

My struggle to believe God's kindness led me to wonder: Does He really desire relationship with me? Many Christians wrestle with this feeling. But the Bible upends these assumption! The Bible will often destroy our assumptions about God's character, if we let it. As we seek to understand God we must allow Him to define Himself. We have to allow the Bible, in its appropriate context, to destroy the western bias we bring to the text. We live in a culture that is enamored with love. It's unacquainted with true justice. Every man is doing what's right in his own eyes this cultural setting makes it difficult to read some passages—especially Old Testament passages in an honor-shame culture, where family honor, respect for elders, and integrity were very important.

Our cultural differences hinder us from forming an accurate picture of the God of Israel.

That's why we have to let God define Himself and allow the Bible to reorient us to who God is. We have to check our theology against Scripture to be sure what we believe is actually true. The God of the Old Testament is often accused of being vindictive, wrathful, violent, or unloving. In contrast to this, many people say Jesus is loving, kind, non-violent, and accepting. We end up presenting God and Jesus as two oppositional forces instead of one Being possessing the same nature and characteristics. God and Jesus are one, and God Himself sent Jesus. When we create a dichotomy between God and Jesus we end up with a really messed up theology that isn't what the Bible teaches at all.

The God of the Old Testament—the one we often call mean or wrathful or unjust—is the same God who sent Jesus (John 3:16). We often forget that. But the more we study the Bible, the more apparent this becomes. And as we learn the character of God, we find Him so much kinder, greater, and gentler than we ever imagined.

By looking correctly at Scripture we will see that Jesus is and was God, that God sent and is one with Jesus, and that the Holy Spirit is the essence of Christ given for our growth. The Trinity is a fundamental of Christian

doctrine. When we splice apart these persons of God based on our own feelings about love and wrath, we end up with theology that isn't what the Bible teaches at all. To understand God, we have to deal with the revealed Word of God, not just our feelings about that Word. This means wrestling with the text and letting it teach us about who the Father is. When we do that, we will come away so much more secure in His love for us—at least, that's what I have found in my own journey.