

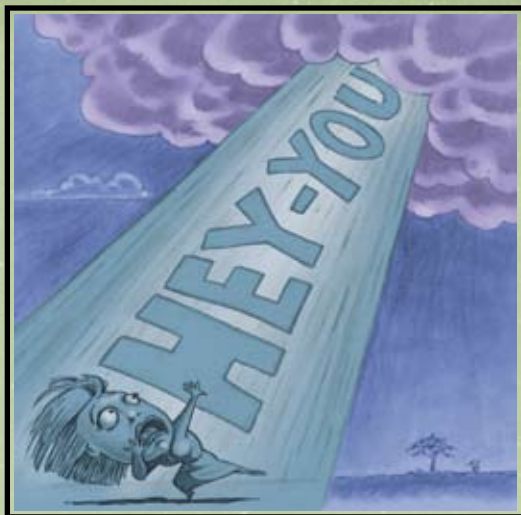
Understanding



God

By Ian Coate

Who is God & what does He want?



How can the human finite mind possibly comprehend an infinite God who has neither beginning or end?

If God created everything, who created Him?

If God is all-powerful, does He need our help - or do we need His?

Does a perfect and all-powerful God have limitations?

How can a self-proclaimed 'God of love' sentence people to an eternity in hell?

If God created us with our own free will, what is so important about the choices we make?

Is God trying to communicate with us in non-coercive ways, but we chose not to listen?

What has Jesus Christ got to do with God and our eternal salvation?

This booklet examines these questions and endeavours to bring us a step closer in understanding God.



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Understanding God

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Understanding God.

God is:
infinite.



Infinity and Beyond

Isaiah 40: 12 -14

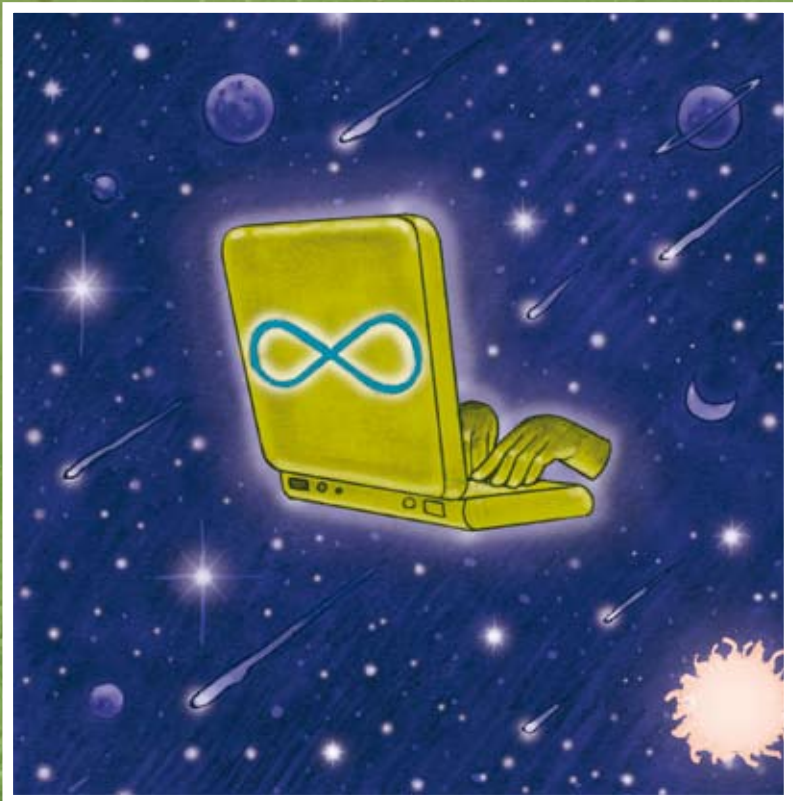
Each night, the universe stares down and challenges us to understand it. However, the infinite universe is something far beyond our finite minds to comprehend. It is something that may not have a start or an end. If it does - what is beyond? Heaven! Then what is beyond Heaven? Nothing! Then what is beyond Nothing?

Our finite minds can easily state what infinity is (academically), yet it can not possibly grasp something that has no start, middle or end. We would be very foolish to say that the universe does not exist simply on the basis that it is beyond our complete understanding.

In a similar way, an infinite God is far beyond human understanding. Our finite minds cannot possibly comprehend a Being who has no beginning or end, is all-powerful, all-knowing and is everywhere at the same time. It is impossible for our finite minds to academically grasp Him. Consequently, many are quick to state, 'God does not exist'. However, we cannot reject God (and still remain objective) because He doesn't conveniently fit into the limited range of human understanding. If we do, we should equally state, 'The universe does not exist'.

Understanding God.

God is:
outside of time and space.



The Divine Programmer

Genesis 1:1

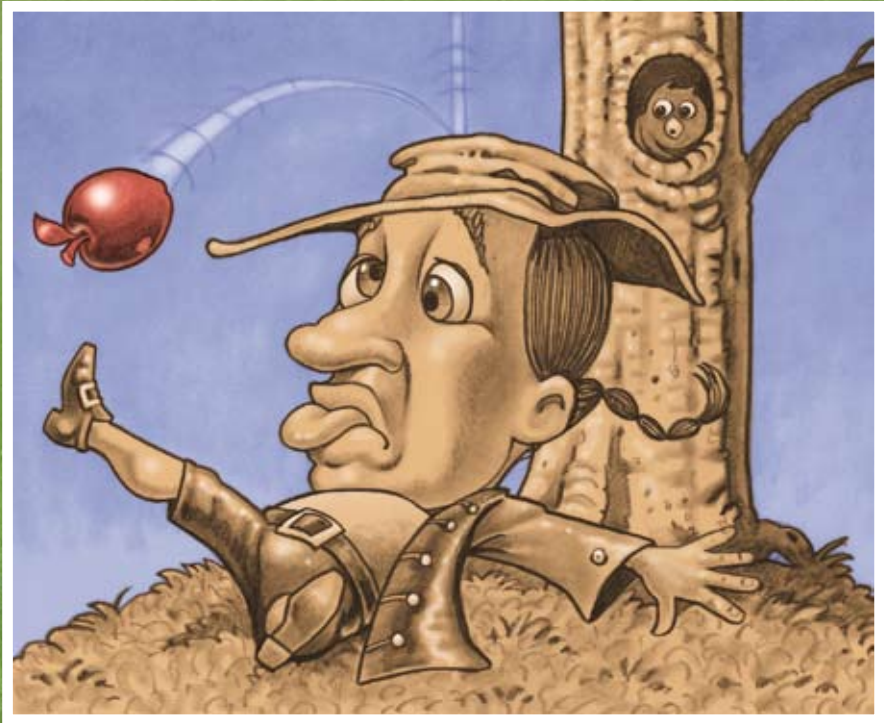
Computer programmers create programs that include entire cyber worlds. It is also evident that these programmers are not subject to the boundaries that they have designed for characters in their cyber world.

God has created a colossal program - the universe. Within He has written boundaries (laws of time, space and science). Every creature within His universal program is subject to these boundaries. Like computer programmers, He that created the universal programme is not subject to the boundaries of His program. The universe is subordinate to its Creator. God is outside the laws of time, space and science that He created - as programmers are outside their program.

God is omnipresent (every-where and in every-time at once) and it is impossible for a human finite mind to fully grasp an infinite being. When we try to fit God into our limited understanding, it is like a computer-generated-character trying to comprehend its programmer. All we need to remember is that the laws of time, space and science are subordinate to the Creator – not the other way round. At any moment, God can change a boundary if it suits His purpose – we call this act a miracle.

Understanding God.

God is:
consistent.



Consistent Laws

Isaiah 46:11

Sir Isaac Newton recognised that the laws of the physical world are constant when he coined the phrase, 'For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.' - A handy thing to remember before stepping off a roof.

God set many scientific laws into motion and decreed that they remain constant. God also created mankind with his own will and decreed that it remain free. The laws of 'free-will' are as constant as any scientific law in the physical world. For every decision there will be consequences. We are free to succeed and free to fail. This explains most of our suffering in life – we bring it upon ourselves (individually & nationally).

We may point our finger accusingly at God and ask, 'How can You allow suffering?' But God rarely intervenes when it comes to the repercussions caused by our own stupid decisions. We may earnestly pray for God to miraculously remove bad repercussions (never do we ask Him to remove good repercussions), but God would sooner suspend the 'laws of gravity', than tamper with the 'laws of free-will'.

This is not to say God leaves us alone to deal with life's problems. He has promised to deliver us THROUGH adversity – not OUT of adversity. God provides the necessary strength to overcome any suffering brought upon by ourselves or others, but it is up to us whether we CHOOSE to utilize His provision.

Understanding God.

God is:
a patient Father



The Ungrateful Son

Judges 8: 34

A wealthy man had a son who he loved very much. He constantly showered gifts upon him. He spent every moment of his day teaching and caring for his son. As the boy grew into manhood, he turned away from his father and soon came to despise him - yet his father continued to support him in the hope that he would come around. He paid his bills, furnished him with a mansion and wrote to him daily. Instead of being thankful, the son ripped up the letters, ceased all contact and cursed anyone who dared mention his name in conversation. However, the son never stopped taking his father's support.

Sadly, the ungrateful son illustrates humanity. God is our heavenly Father and many of us imitate the son's attitude. God spends every moment with us: giving, teaching and caring - yet, many turn away. In spite of this, God still continues to support us with the desire that we will come around. He supplies us with the riches of the universe, things that cannot be measured in wealth (sunshine, oxygen, gravity, atmosphere, environment, etc), He has paid our bills (Christ on the cross) and written to us (the Bible). We may curse God - but isn't it ironic that we still expect Him to support us. Moreover, as the perfect Father - He does.

Understanding God.

God is:
a willing Sacrifice.



Parental Instincts

Proverbs 3:11,12

Nature is a curious thing. It seems we've all been programmed with a survival instinct - an overwhelming drive to stay alive. This instinct is in all of God's creatures. However, there is another instinctive program that overrides the survival instinct - it is a parental instinct. Nature shows us that when young are threatened, the mother or father override their survival instinct and fight to the death to protect them. What makes an animal, programmed for survival, suddenly forfeit their life so their young may live? Where did this selfless and loving instinct originate and who is the programmer?

This loving instinct originates with God and He is the programmer. Through Adam, we all sin and are under the penalty of death and judgement. We must remember, God is perfect, God is law and He must condemn or He would not be perfect. However, there is another facet to God's character - He is a parent and we are His children. So as a parent, God has a dilemma - His children are threatened with judgement at death and He must judge them. The thought of His children suffering is abhorrent to Him - He would die to protect them. That is why He willingly came to earth as a man (Jesus Christ) and forfeited His life so we could survive. As our substitute, He took the punishment from judgement onto Himself so we could have eternal life - evidence of a perfectly, loving God.

Understanding God.

God is:
transcendent.



The Fish-Man

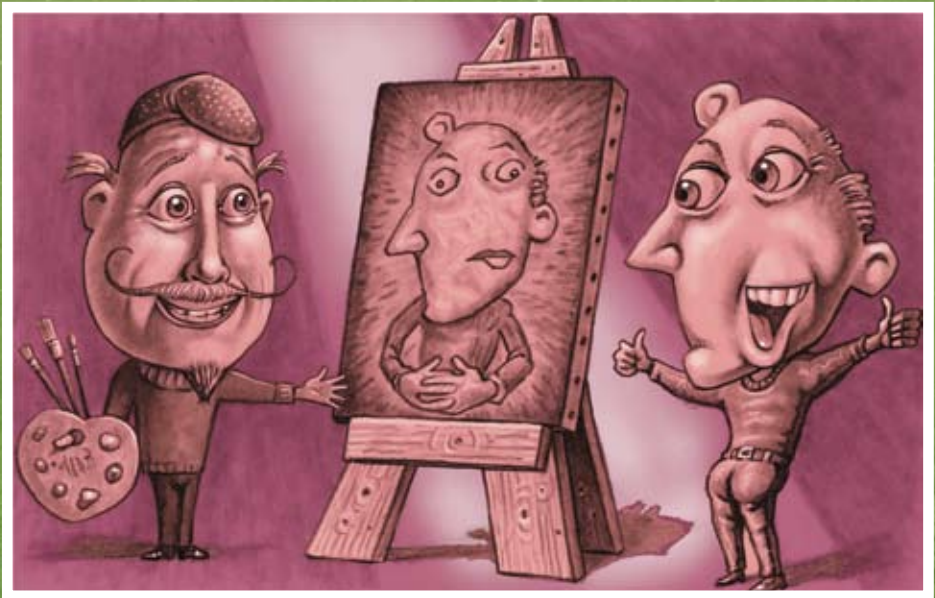
John 10:30

A man owned a very extravagant aquarium and spared no effort in its maintenance. He spent hours attending all his fish and knew their every characteristic and trait. Yet, for all the time he spent with his fish, it was evident the fish knew nothing of him. The man wished that they could know him, but this seemed impossible. Every time he made his presence felt, the fish hid in fear. When the man cleaned the tank, as careful as he was, the fish didn't understand that the disturbance was imperative for their future well-being. They never showed acknowledgement when he showered them with food. The man finally realized that if his fish were ever to grasp who he was, he would have to become a fish and swim among them.

As ludicrous as the above illustration sounds, this is similar to what God did. He humbled Himself and took the form of man (Jesus Christ). We must understand that the human brain is incapable of comprehending a Being who has existed simultaneously in the past, present and future - that knows everything that has, will and may happen - with power to create and destroy the universe and the heavens with a single word. It would be easier for a fish in a tank to appreciate the man outside, than for mankind to comprehend an all knowing, all present and all powerful God. However, God gave us the best illustration of who He is (in a way that our tiny brain could understand) by becoming one of us and walking among us. So, if we wish to know God, we can by knowing Jesus Christ.

Understanding God.

God is:
an Artist.



The Ultimate Artist

Psalms 86: 8.

One of the greatest pleasure artists experience is to see expressions of delight and enjoyment as people appreciate their artworks.

Is not God the ultimate Artist, who all other artists try to imitate? God has created a living interactive exhibition. His awe-inspiring landscapes can actually be entered. His ever changing seascapes are there for our recreational pleasure. Each day, He paints a new sunrise and sunset for us to see. His exhibition includes living portraits of people and animals for companionship. His fruit-bowls are bursting with flavour and His flowers literally smell of perfume. God receives great pleasure from watching His sons and daughters delight in His many artworks. When time is taken to enjoy and savour an artwork, it always pleases the Artist.

Understanding God.

God is:
not a genie.



God or Genie?

Ephesians 2: 8,9

Genies are magical beings from folklore who grant wishes if their lamp is rubbed the right way.

We often get into the bad habit of thinking God is like a genie - rub Him the right way and He will grant our every wish. We must understand that God does not bless us on the basis of who we are or what we do, He blesses us solely on the basis of who He is. We can do nothing to earn God's blessings – we only receive through His grace. Furthermore, God can not be bribed, bullied, blackmailed or suckered. God has many reasons why He blesses some and withholds blessings from others. These reasons are always in accordance with His eternal plan.

Every time we feel that God isn't giving us what we deserve, we should stop and consider what we truly deserve in judgement. The only reason we receive blessings instead of condemnation is because Jesus Christ went to the cross on our behalf. Eternal salvation is a free gift - it can neither be earned nor deserved. If we believe in Christ we will be eternally blessed and thankfully NEVER get what we truly deserve (judgement in time and eternity).

Understanding God.

God is:
a protective Parent.



Righteous Violence

Psalms 5: 11,12

A beautiful illustration of parenthood is a female humpback whale tending her calf. Although great in size, she is graceful and gentle and never seeks trouble. Her whole existence is devoted to her helpless calf - but often trouble comes their way. A pod of killer whales in search of food will try to separate mother and calf. The mother will always warn the killers to keep back. If these warning go unheeded, she instinctively defends her calf with an act of violence by bringing down her mighty tail on those wanting to harm her calf.

People are sometimes shocked that the Bible is filled with wars and violence approved by God. We live in a brutal world (the Devil's kingdom) where many blood-thirsty individuals and nations cause harm and havoc. God desires to peacefully deal with everyone and wishes no harm on anyone. He paid the price at the cross so ALL may have salvation. However, should a predator threaten those under His care, God is forced to act. Firstly, He gives a warning and, if they persist, He will lift His mighty 'hand of judgement' and send it crashing down. God does not desire this, but He has made promises to care for His children. God knows that sometimes the only way to deal with ruthless people and violent nations is to speak in the single language they understand. God's violence is not unlawful, but a righteous violence to which any mother forced to protect her child can attest.

Understanding God.

God is:
the Great Conductor.



A Life of Harmony

Proverbs 3: 5,6

Conductors are directors of an orchestra. They organise the musical talents of singers and instrumentalists and are responsible for an exact reading of the score and success of any musical presentation.

If we desire our life to be filled with beautiful music (happiness and inner peace), it is best to follow God's lead. He is the Great Conductor. He knows the score and His timing is always perfect. At exactly the right moment He will signal the start of certain events in our life and He knows the exact moment they should finish. No one is more able to conduct the romances and tragedies of our life.

Until the day we die, we will hit high notes (good days) and low notes (bad days); however, if God is on our podium, we can be assured that every note will be synchronized in a spiritual harmony. Furthermore, when God is conducting our lives we will soon have an audience of ready listeners. Discord occurs only when we choose to push God off the podium in our eagerness to orchestrate our own life.

Understanding God.

God is:

*always wanting to provide
for us.*



Hell

2 Thessalonians 1:9. Psalms 143:7.

The absence of water makes a desert. The absence of land makes an ocean. The absence of warmth makes the polar caps. The absence of light makes darkness. The absence of God's provision makes Hell.

Hell - for lack of a better word, is simply a place where God's abundant provision is absent. In life, God sustains us with oxygen, gravity, water, sunshine and all the universal laws of order - even when we make it quite clear that we want nothing to do with Him. However, there will come a day (death) that God must respect our decision to live apart from Him - His perfection demands it. On that day He may say to those who rejected salvation, 'It saddens Me that you have refused all My gracious offers of salvation and shown on all occasions that you want nothing to do with Me. I must respect your decision (free will) and leave you in a place that has been set aside where my provision shall be absent, where I will not sustain the environment or the universal laws of order, where My light will be nowhere to be seen and where you are beyond the reach of My comfort. It is a place where I shall respect your wish and remain absent from you for eternity.'

What a foolish thing to say we don't need God in our lives. Hell is the void that is created when God's provision is absence. It is a place of absolute darkness, chaos and everlasting discomfort. Let us not eternally regret being separated from God when Heaven is simply ours for the asking, (John 3:16).



About Ian Coate

Ian was trained in the army as an illustrator reprographic and military photographer. In the mid 1990's, Ian discharged from the army to pursue a career as a military artist and freelance illustrator. Since this time, Ian has created numerous artworks for museums around Australia and produced military prints for collectors worldwide.

Ian is also endeavouring to make the Christian message easier to understand with the use of illustration. For further Biblical illustrations, that are free to download, please visit his website at:

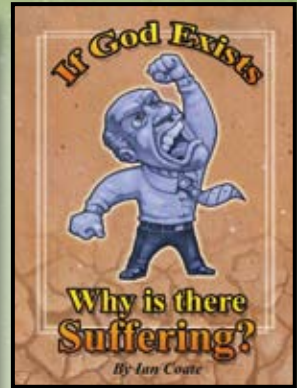
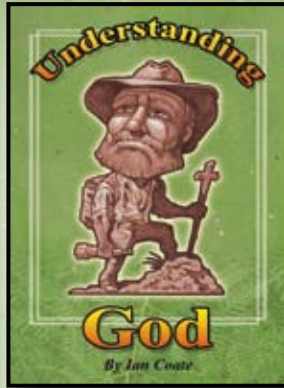
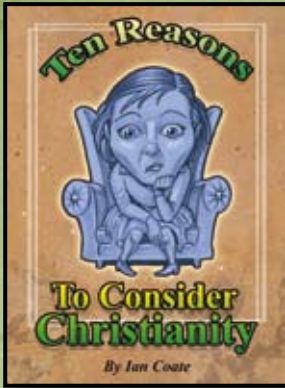
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