

# WE CAN KNOW GOD

## INTIMATELY!

In 1978 at the height of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, the Soviet government, at the request of the Russian church, invited me to visit that vast land. During my visit to eight cities, I sensed that millions of people were imprisoned by fear resulting from mental and physical abuse. The KGB, the secret police of the Soviet government, seemed to squeeze every individual to discover information about the activities and views of political dissidents, followers of Christ, and Jews. Under this kind of suspicion and tyranny, no one trusted anyone. Even family members turned against each other in this oppressive uncertainty.

While few of us live under such conditions today, you may have often wondered, *Who can I really trust?* Perhaps you have a friend or two you consider trustworthy. But beyond that, who can you trust with the things that you consider most private and valuable?

I am sure you will agree that trustworthiness is in short supply today. At every level of government, there are officials who feel that dishonesty serves a purpose in politics. Within our financial institutions, businessmen have used the wealth of others to their personal advantage, often depriving those who are most vulnerable, senior citizens, of their retirement funds. People break contracts without remorse under the pretense of smart business practices. Husbands and wives, some who have been married for decades, betray their spouses for their own selfish, lustful desires. Families, especially innocent children, are shattered by broken promises. Good friends become enemies over lapses in honesty.

If a close friend or relative has betrayed your trust, how did that betrayal affect

your relationship? Did it influence how much you trust other people today?

In many cases our past experiences, backgrounds, and personalities shape how we view other people and how we form relationships with them. If someone we trusted hurt us, we hesitate to trust anyone else again. If a parent or sibling treated us shamefully, we respond by protecting ourselves from other close relationships. Although trust is an important part of any healthy friendship, for many of us, building trust is one of the most difficult elements of our relationships.

But what about God? Can He be trusted? How far are you willing to go in trusting Him? The amount of trust you have in God depends on how you view Him. Some people think of Him as a big bully, a cosmic policeman, or a divine Santa Claus. Others believe He is like their insensitive, selfish parents who do whatever they want because they have the size or power.

Some consider God to be hard to get along with, someone to fear. Others think of Him as a heartless dictator waiting to punish them for doing wrong. Perhaps you see him as a kindly grandfather who just shakes His head over the terrible plight of humankind but does not get involved. Do you see Him as loving, gracious, tender, and compassionate? Or as critical, jealous, vindictive, and haughty?

I hear from many Christians who are discouraged in their quest to know God more fully. They claim to have tried to learn what God is like but have come up short. Maybe they failed on a commitment they made to God and feel the communication lines are down between themselves and heaven. Others believe that God has abandoned them or treated them unfairly. Some simply do not know what God is like and have decided that they probably will never know more than they do now. Millions of people cry out, “*Who are you, God?*”

## **WE CAN HAVE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOD OF CREATION**

In Chapter 1, we learned how important it is to know God and to have the right view of Him. But how can we develop a relationship with a Being who is beyond our comprehension? The process toward intimacy is similar to getting to know a new neighbor.

Imagine that a new couple moves next door to you. What impression do you get of what they are like? You probably notice the furniture and belongings carried into their house, and the type of car in their driveway. The first time you meet them, you most likely find out what they do for a living. Are they lawyers or construction workers, computer specialists or businessmen, teachers or factory workers? You probably ask

questions about their hobbies and interests. Do they enjoy gardening or do they pride themselves in how well they play golf? These facts give you a little insight into what kind of people they are.

As you get to know your neighbors better, you also discover more about their character. Are they kind, generous, amiable, and compassionate? Or do they speak harshly, criticize, and act rudely toward others? Do they have good character?

With time, you may get to know your neighbors more intimately. Are they ambitious or lazy? Do they shade the truth or are they honest? Do they keep their word? Do they practice values similar to yours or do they live by a different set of rules? How do they react under stressful situations? This closer relationship uncovers the deeper qualities of their inner lives.

Of course, God is not like a next-door neighbor. He is so much more than that. His characteristics are far above what we as humans can accomplish or even understand. But because He is loving and gracious toward us, He reveals His character to us so we can relate more intimately with Him. As in any relationship, developing intimacy is a process. Someone has aptly said, “If we take one step toward God, He will take two steps toward us.”

### **GOD HELPS US GET TO KNOW HIM**

Through their own ability, human beings cannot advance in their knowledge of God beyond a few biographical facts. But God in His love and mercy has taken steps to make Himself known to us in many ways. Because God is so far above us in every aspect, the process begins with Him as He reveals Himself to those who hunger and thirst to know Him.

The most important place we can turn to find the truth about what God is like is in His holy Word, the Bible. It gives us the most accurate picture of almighty God. Although all facets of God’s nature are always present, He reveals Himself in three primary ways:

*God reveals Himself as our great Creator.* Genesis 1, the first chapter in the Bible, unveils the Creator’s mighty works, His unlimited power, and eternal knowledge. In Part I, “Our Great Creator,” we will discover that our Creator-God has no limitations.

*God reveals the depth of His integrity as our perfect Judge.* The remainder of the Old Testament shows how God built a nation of people dedicated to Him and how He led and blessed these people. Throughout this historical account, God gives laws and promises that establish His nature as one of holiness and integrity. If the people obeyed these laws, they would be blessed and happy; if they did not, they would bring God’s wrath and judgment upon themselves. In Part II, “Our Perfect Judge,” we will

look at the holiness, truthfulness, righteousness, and justice of our perfect God.

*God reveals Himself as our gracious Savior.* In the New Testament, God sent His Son to earth as Savior of the world. Jesus is the flesh-and-blood picture of God with whom we can relate. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus prove God's love, mercy, and faithfulness. In Part III, "Our Gracious Savior," we will discover the depths of God's compassion through His Son and how we can know that love.

Would you not agree that the most astounding news we can ever hear is that God, the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, invites us to have an intimate relationship with Him? He makes it simple for us to do so. Knowing God intimately can transform your life into one of passion, joy, adventure, and peace. With a clearer understanding of the greatness of our God, we will be able to:

- Learn how to worship and praise God as a part of our daily lives
- Renew our passion, love, and commitment for God
- Clear up misconceptions about God's role in our lives
- Understand the depths of His love
- Learn what it means to "fear" God
- Discover ways to seek God wholeheartedly
- See how His names reflect His character
- Learn how to tell others about God's character in clear and simple terms

Before we begin discovering a right view of God, understanding some truths about what God is like will give us insight into His unique character.

### **GOD IS A PERSONAL SPIRIT**

Someone asked Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, if God existed. He replied, "The question is not relevant. If there were a God, man could not comprehend him anyway. So what good would it be to have such a God?"

Some "religious" people consider God a force, an evil spirit, or something encased in wood or stone. As a result, their concept of God is hazy or impersonal. If God were merely an energy force or a composite of the universe as New Age philosophies teach, knowing Him personally would be impossible. And if God were merely an idol, made by man's hand from wood or some precious metal, our efforts to know Him would be

futile. How could a human have a relationship with an inanimate object?

But God's Word reveals God as a personal Spirit; therefore we can know Him personally. This may seem like such a simple concept, but it is the underlying truth on which we base our understanding of God.

The Bible shows that God has a distinct personality. The New Testament book of John says that God is Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Although He does not have a physical body as we do, He possesses all the characteristics of a personality: He thinks, feels, and wills. The Bible gives us several proofs that we can know God personally.

*Many Old and New Testament believers knew God and were considered His friends.* Let me give you a few examples.

God called Abraham, the "father" of the Hebrew nation, "My friend."<sup>2</sup> Moses met with God "face to face" when he talked to God in the tabernacle. Can you imagine how this personal experience must have changed his life? The Book of Exodus describes this encounter, which occurred just before Moses received the Ten Commandments:

Whenever Moses went to the Tabernacle, all the people . . . would rise and stand in their tent doors. As he entered, the pillar of cloud would come down and stand at the door while the Lord spoke with Moses. Then all the people worshiped from their tent doors, bowing low to the pillar of cloud. Inside the tent the Lord

spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.<sup>3</sup>

Both Enoch and Noah were said to have "enjoyed a close relationship with God"; Job talked of a time "when God's intimate friendship blessed my house."<sup>4</sup> And in the New Testament, Jesus, the Son of God, told His disciples, "Now you are My friends."<sup>5</sup>

*God has names.* Many couples use great care in giving their newborn baby a name that has significance to their family. In the same way, each of God's many names reveals something important about His character. In the Bible, He is called Almighty, Eternal God, Heavenly Father, Lord of Hosts, Living God, Most High, and Jehovah, along with many other names. In the next chapter, we will see the incredible truth behind God's most important name, Jehovah. (For a complete listing of the names of God with Scripture verses, see Appendix C.)

*God is described throughout the Bible by a personal pronoun.* He is not described

as an “it,” but as “He,” a word that denotes a definite gender and personality. An impersonal force cannot be described this way.

*God acts as a distinct personality.* The Bible consistently demonstrates that God is a conscious, self-aware being, someone who thinks and makes decisions. For example, He is the Creator. How could an inanimate object of gold or silver or some impersonal force design the intricacies of the universe? That takes planning, unlimited intelligence, and supernatural power. Also, the Bible tells us that God “speaks,” “sees,”

and “hears.”<sup>6</sup> God exhibits a range of emotions from righteous anger to holy jealousy to love and grief.

### **GOD IS THREE PERSONS IN ONE**

As we learn more about God’s personality, we will find many areas that are hard to understand. This is because God is so far above our limited understanding that we cannot grasp the fullness of His nature. The fact that God is three-in-one is one of these difficult concepts. Yet this truth is one of the most important aspects of God’s relationship with us.

Theologians have called God’s triune nature the Trinity. The members of the Trinity are involved with everything together, yet they also have distinct roles. This is hinted at in the first chapter in the Bible. Genesis 1:26 reads, “Let *us* make people in *our* image” (emphasis added). The plural pronouns “us” and “our” mean that more than one person was involved. Who else but God was present during creation? No one. Therefore, the Trinity in its simplest terms means one God manifested in three persons with three distinctive roles.

*God the Father* is first in the Trinity. In general, He orchestrates action. For example, He sent to earth God the Son, Jesus, and bestowed His authority upon Him.<sup>7</sup>

*God the Son* is the second person of the Trinity. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.<sup>8</sup> He is the cornerstone and head of the worldwide Church.<sup>9</sup> Jesus now sits at

the right hand of God the Father interceding for His Church.<sup>10</sup>

*God the Holy Spirit*, the third person of the Trinity, is our Comforter. As the “active arm” of God on earth, He lives within believers and guides us into all truth.<sup>11</sup> He

convicts us of sin and helps us know God and His will.

Yet God is still one. It is difficult for us, with our limited comprehension, to understand how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are distinct personalities, co-equal, yet one at the same time. Our best efforts to understand this relationship fall far short.

One popular analogy is to compare the Trinity to water. It can be three distinct forms: liquid, ice, or steam. The same chemical formula,  $H_2O$ , can assume each form

under different temperatures. In a similar way, God assumes three different “forms” to accomplish His purposes.

Here is another analogy. We all play different roles in our lives. I am a husband, father and grandfather, and the head of an international organization. I perform different duties in each role, yet I am the same person. God also performs different roles—heavenly Father, loving Son, and Spirit of Comfort.

Of course, the Trinity is far more complex and profound than any awkward illustration I can give. One of my seminary professors once said, “If you try to understand the Trinity, you will lose your mind...If you deny the Trinity, you will lose your soul.”

The reason I take the time to explain the mysterious relationship between the three members of the Trinity is that this truth underlies all the work of God. These are a few examples:

- God the Father orchestrated creation.<sup>13</sup> God the Son performed the work of creation.<sup>14</sup> God the Holy Spirit was also involved.<sup>15</sup>
- All three members agreed upon Christ’s birth in human form.<sup>16</sup> Christ’s baptism, which marked the beginning of His earthly ministry, was attended and approved by all three members.<sup>17</sup>
- Christ’s resurrection was the work of the Trinity: God the Father raised Christ from the dead.<sup>18</sup> Jesus laid down His life and took it up on His own accord.<sup>19</sup> The

Holy Spirit was the power in the resurrection.

- All three members of the Trinity participate in the miracle of the new birth when a

person becomes a child of God.

- All three members of the Trinity participate in the atonement—when we receive

forgiveness of our sins. And then all three persons of the Trinity come to live in

the new believer's life.

Each member of the Trinity has His own role to play, but each is fully God. God is not three separate Gods like some might envision, but has complete unity. No Person in the Trinity is less important, less powerful, or less of anything than any other Person. As we discover more about God, we will see how the Trinity works in our behalf.

### **DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP IS AN ADVENTURE**

Today, after more than fifty years of getting to know God, I have more joy in the Lord's presence than I have ever had. My communication with Him grows sweeter and sweeter. There is no one in the universe with whom I would rather spend time than my heavenly Father. I do not have adequate words to describe to you the many things He has done for me and the marvelous ways He has guided my life to make it an exciting adventure. My number one priority in life is to maintain my love for Him and to demonstrate my love by my obedience.

To this end, Vonette and I begin every day on our knees reading His holy, inspired Word and surrendering the activities of our day to His guidance. I want to be a suit of clothes for the Lord Jesus. I invite Him to walk around in my body as His temple. My heart's passion is to let Him think with my mind, love with my heart, speak with my lips, and continue to seek and save sinners through me. This is what He came to earth to do 2,000 years ago.

As we explore the amazing attributes of our glorious Lord, I encourage you to walk with Him, talk with Him, worship and praise Him, and give Him your cares and worries. He yearns to be your loving Savior and wrap His strong arms around you. You need never feel lonely or abandoned again. Here is a prayer you might pray as we begin our journey to know God more intimately:

Dear God, I want to know You as You really are, the Creator God of the universe, our Heavenly Father, who holds everything in Your hand. You know my past, present, and future. Help me to love, trust, and obey You with all my heart, soul, mind, and will. Thank You for giving me an opportunity to know You intimately as my heavenly Father and to tell others about You and Your marvelous love. Amen.

## CHAPTER 3

# OUR

# AWE-INSPIRING GOD

How big is your God? Renowned theologian and Bible translator J. B. Phillips once wrote, “Your God is too small.”<sup>1</sup> By now, you have probably realized that this is a problem we all face.

Truthfully, none of us can completely grasp the width, depth, complexity, or immensity of any part of God’s nature. But if we merely have a human-centered view of God, we limit ourselves to only what we can accomplish through our self-efforts. Or we may think that He is just a little more intelligent, powerful, or wise than we are. Such a view of God robs us of an intimate life-changing relationship with an awe-inspiring God.

God has given us minds that can see farther than our own human limitations. For example, we can discover the intricacies of the DNA molecule, which no one has ever seen. We can study about places we have never visited, such as the underwater world

of deep-sea creatures. We use cellular telephones with the knowledge that the signals may be coming to us from as far away as telecommunication satellites orbiting in space. These concepts extend our thinking beyond what we can observe with our eyes. In the following pages, let us put aside our tendency to be superficial in our understanding of God and stretch our minds to get a clearer idea of His magnificent nature.

### **GOD'S MOST IMPORTANT NAME**

One of the biblical concepts that help establish God's unlimited nature is His most important name. When God commanded Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery, Moses wondered what to tell them if they should ask the name of this God. In His short reply, the Lord spoke some of the most profound and revealing words recorded in the entire Bible. He said, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'<sup>2</sup>"

The Israelites immediately understood that the Hebrew word for I AM identified God as the only self-existent, eternal, personal Supreme Being. They clearly realized who had given Moses the message. It was God Himself! In the very next verse, God said to Moses:

"Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation" (NIV).

The word "LORD" is written in all capital letters in many Bible versions to distinguish this name from other references to God. It is translated from the Hebrew YHWH, which means God's personal name. Other Bible versions translate it as Jehovah. In Isaiah 42:8, God clearly says, "I am the LORD [YHWH]; that is My name!" This name was so sacred and holy that the ancient rabbis would not allow anyone to say it aloud for fear that someone would inadvertently use it wrongly. When reading Scriptures that contained this name, the rabbis substituted Adonai (Lord) instead of reading aloud the most holy name. Consequently, the exact pronunciation of YHWH was lost. Today, scholars believe it was pronounced Yahweh.

Because I AM contains no adjective or qualifier that describes or limits its meaning, it signifies that God is complete. He has no beginning, no end, needs no help, no counsel. Everything He is and does is perfect, not lacking in anything.

## THE SPLENDOR OF GOD

As king of Israel, David composed many lyrical psalms expressing God's grandeur. In Psalm 145, he writes:

I will praise You, my God and King, and bless Your name each day and forever. Great is Jehovah [YHWH]! Greatly praise Him! His greatness is beyond discovery! Let each generation tell its children what glorious things He does. I will meditate about Your glory, splendor, majesty and miracles. Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue; I will proclaim Your greatness. Everyone will tell

about how good You are, and sing about Your righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

Many other biblical writers also wrote of God's splendor. In the New Testament, Paul describes Him as "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, [to

whom] be honour and glory for ever and ever."<sup>4</sup> The apostle John described what happened when he glimpsed God the Son during a vision. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. Then He placed His right hand on me and said: 'Do not be

afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One.'"<sup>5</sup>

Our God is so gloriously incomprehensible that our minds just cannot grasp the whole nature of God. Yet we must find some human way to understand God's characteristics—at least in part. Four basic qualities of God are integral to each of His other attributes: His infinity, self-existence, eternal nature, and self-sufficiency.

### **God is infinite.**

One day, Augustine, a leader in the early Church, was walking along the ocean shore pondering God's nature when he noticed a small boy playing in the sand. The child scooped a hole in the sand with a seashell, then ran down to the water's edge and dipped his shell full of seawater. Immediately, he ran back and dumped the water into the hole he had made in the sand. Of course, the water just leaked out through the sand.

Augustine asked the boy, "What are you doing?"

The boy confidently replied, "I am going to pour the sea into that hole."

"Ah," Augustine later reflected, "that is what I have been trying to do. Standing at the

ocean of infinity, I have attempted to grasp it with my finite mind."<sup>6</sup>

Who can understand God's infinity? The prophet Isaiah writes, "Who has measured

the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance, and the hills in a pair of scales? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as

His counselor has informed Him?"<sup>7</sup>

God's infinity means that He has no limits, boundaries, or end. God cannot be compared to any finite standard. Everything within our world is finite; even the universe, as vast as it is, has a limit. God and only God is infinite. Since His infinite nature relates to all of His attributes, God's love, holiness, mercy, and all other qualities are unlimited in their scope and expression.

### **God is self-existent.**

As humans, we use the word "create" differently than God does. When we "create" a work of art, we start with a material, such as sculptor's clay, and mold it into a different shape. Our "creation" is actually something reshaped, rearranged, combined, or invented. Mankind has never made something out of nothing. Not so with God. When He created the world, He made it out of nothing. We cannot really comprehend what that means. We have never seen "nothing."

We cannot even use the word "created" to describe God. God was not created. Everything else in the universe had a beginning, except God. Because He is the Creator, He exists outside of the created order. He is different from and independent of His creation, dwelling in pure existence far above everything He has made.

God is also the force or cosmic glue that holds everything together.<sup>8</sup> Without Him, everything that He created would disintegrate.

### **God is eternal.**

Imagine that you want to discover what is going on in a room filled with people, but the door is locked. You peer through the keyhole, trying to piece together what each person in the room is doing. People move about, coming into view, then disappearing out of sight. What a frustration! If only you could open the door and walk into the room to see what is going on!

That is how time and space are to us. We look at events through a keyhole, and all we know is what we can see happening right now. For us, time defines boundaries. We mark the point in time of our birth and death. We count history by years and ages. As a human being, I cannot even begin to imagine what it must be like to live outside the boundary of time.

But God is not bound by the dimensions of time. Before He spoke the first word of creation, time did not exist. He created time as a temporary context for His creation.

It baffles my mind to realize that God experiences all past, present, and future events simultaneously. Everything that has ever happened or will ever happen has already occurred within His awareness. God sees the beginning of the parade of life; He sees its end. All history is but a little speck within the spectrum of eternity. Our God encompasses all of eternity!

### **God is self-sufficient.**

Every living thing on earth needs food, water, and air. Without a constant supply of these, all living things die.

Although God is a living being, He has no needs. He is dependent upon nothing outside Himself. All creation relies upon God for existence and the maintenance of life. God has no need for anything and is not vulnerable in any way. He does not need our help. Yet He offers us the privilege of being involved with Him in the fulfillment of His purposes as His friends.

We will never be able to fully understand God's magnificence. In fact, His infinity, self-existence, eternal nature, and self-sufficiency are incomprehensible. But are you not glad that God is so far beyond our human abilities? We can have complete confidence in a God who is greater than us and any of our problems.

### **APPLYING GOD'S QUALITIES TO HIS CHARACTER**

One important principle about God's nature is that all the attributes of God are interactive and completely interrelated. With our human limitations, we dissect God's nature into parts or attributes so we can understand them, but that is not how they exist in God's character. Each attribute is perfectly complete and fully a part of God's personality. As we study these attributes, keep in mind that if we exalt one of God's qualities over another, we can get a distorted view of God's character. In fact, overemphasizing any one of God's attributes to the exclusion of others can lead to heresy. For example, teaching only about God's mercy and neglecting His role as a judge will prevent people from understanding God's hatred of sin and the future punishment for wrongdoing. Therefore, as we study each quality individually, we must remember that it is only one aspect of God's magnificent nature.

Since God's attributes are so interlinked, we cannot understand one without the others. The following diagram will help you see how God's attributes relate to each other and how they are all part of the whole of God's nature.

Let me apply the principle of God's unified nature to the four basic qualities we

just covered. One of the attributes we will examine is God's love. God is not just a huge bundle of love; His love has all four basic qualities.

God's love is *infinite*. There is no limit to His love; it is beyond measure.

God's love is *self-existent*. It did not come to Him from somewhere else. It has always been a part of His character. God's love did not begin at some point; it has always existed in the heart of God.

God's love is *eternal*. It never had a beginning and will last forever. His love is never less or more. It always exists without the limitations of time or amount.

God's love is *self-sufficient*. He does not need love to make Him what He already is. He is not dependent on love to make Him happy or more fulfilled.

Throughout the rest of this book, keep these four qualities in mind and apply them to each of the attributes we will learn about.

### **APPLYING NEW INSIGHTS TO YOUR LIFE**

Sometimes when I am sharing about God's love and forgiveness with an individual, he will have a questioning look on his face and ask, "But is God real?"

I kindly reply, "Oh, definitely. God is real—very real—and He has made it possible for us to know Him. But this special relationship with God requires a response from us." I often share what Jesus says in John 3:16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." The only way we can have a relationship with our great Creator is through His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing Jesus is the first step to knowing God.

Have you made a decision to turn to God by trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If not, turn to Appendix A and read "How to Know God Personally." These few pages will help you get started on your new adventure as a child of God.

Another essential step to growing in our relationship with God is listening to His Spirit. Jesus promises, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all

<sup>9</sup>truth." God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us in our relationship with Him. To discover how you can live in the power of the Holy Spirit, turn to Appendix B, "How to Be Filled With the Spirit."

A third response we make as we begin to know and appreciate our marvelous God is to seek Him wholeheartedly. David prayed, "O God, You are my God; I earnestly

search for You. My soul thirsts for You; my whole body longs for You."<sup>10</sup> Because

of David's desire to seek God wholeheartedly, God called him "a man after My own heart." I urge you to consider what might be keeping you from hungering after God. Ask God to help you resolve any issues and turn away from anything that would prevent you from having an intimate relationship with Him.

In the next chapter, we will embark on our adventure to intimacy with God by looking at God's attributes of ability, beginning with His unlimited power. Then we will see that He is present everywhere and that He knows everything. Together these abilities demonstrate that He is sovereign, ruler over all, and that such a God can do anything!