

Analysis of A.W. Tozer's  
The Pursuit of God and The Knowledge of the Holy

by  
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What are we to do when we are seeking to “find” God? What should be our response after we have “found” Him? According to Aiden Wilson Tozer, Christians “have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him we need no more seek Him.”<sup>1</sup>

Who is God? Who does the Bible say that He is? Is this a different person than the god whom this world describes? According to A. W. Tozer, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”<sup>2</sup>

Within the expanse of two short books, A. W. Tozer gives an excellent introductory overview of these two topics; topics that will never be fully comprehended by anyone but God Himself. In The Pursuit of God, Tozer sincerely gives direction to those striving after God, and in The Knowledge of the Holy, he examines many of the known attributes of God.

Resting solidly upon biblical mandates, Tozer's The Pursuit of God is a classic instruction manual for those of us who have chosen to follow Christ. Tozer's fundamental premise for writing this book is that we are not currently lacking people to teach Bible fundamentals but rather we are missing ministers who will help the few thirsty Christians to drink deeply from the well of God.

Alas, it does seem that our Christian society has primarily taught its people that once you

have found your way to the church, that you have arrived at a destination. This is a twisted perversion of the truth, which Tozer readily dispels at the beginning of the book. He says, “Everything is made to center upon the initial act of ‘accepting’ Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls” (Pursuit, 16).

To pursue God, however, is a misnomer if we believe that through our own actions we can seek Him and find Him. God is all-powerful and ever present. Tozer summarizes, “Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this, that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man” (Pursuit, 11).

The whole concept of pursuing God must be seen in the context of the true relationship between Creator and creature. Since God is not only the creator, but also the sustainer of our lives, we must fully understand the complete desperation of our situation, and our complete dependence upon Him. Faith is needed for spiritual survival, which is “the gaze of a soul upon a saving God” (Pursuit, 89). Due to the sinfulness of our nature, we cannot do anything to earn a relationship with God on our own. Fortunately, God loves us so much, that He first sought us. He created within us a desire to fellowship with Him, and He sent His one and only Son to die upon a cross for our sins. Therefore, we can only pursue a deeper relationship with God because He first extended an invitation for us to fellowship with Him.

Tozer makes a wonderful distinction within his discussion of God's universal presence, that “the will of God is the same for all. He has no

<sup>1</sup> Tozer, A.W. The Pursuit of God (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc, 1948), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Tozer, A.W. The Knowledge of the Holy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 9.

favorites within His household. All He has ever done for any of His children He will do for all of His children. The difference lies not with God but with us” (Pursuit, 66). In essence, the closeness of our fellowship with God is dependent upon us, not Him. We cannot claim that our heavenly father is always too busy working to have time for us. Rather, God is here pursuing us, but only some of us respond to His desire for intimacy by spending time with Him.

To have God is to have everything. The key is to only have Him, and to possess nothing. Those who do this, the poor in spirit, “have broken the yoke of the oppressor; and this they have done not by fighting but by surrendering. Though free from all sense of possessing, they yet possess all things. ‘Theirs is the kingdom of heaven’” (Pursuit, 23). In order to have peace and rest from our burdens, we need to humble ourselves of pride and pretense. Indeed, Jesus bought us passage into God’s presence. To follow Him, we need to die to self, and trust God with our very lives.

When we have faith and believe in God, only then can He be known personally. We are not to “go through life trying to love an ideal”, but rather “that God can be known in personal experience” (Pursuit, 50). Communication is the basic means of developing a personal relationship, and so it is no different with God. As Tozer asserts, “God is speaking. He is by His nature continuously articulate. He fills the world with His speaking voice” (Pursuit, 73). Again, God is doing His part, and we need to listen as well as to engage Him in conversation.

This wonderful treatise leads any Christian, at any point of spiritual development, into a deeper relationship with God. Indeed, Tozer’s overall thrust is to lead the Christian into a solid lifestyle dedicated solely unto God, so that “the seeking man reach a place where life and lips join to say continually ‘Be thou exalted’” (Pursuit, 103). We should not be living a dual existence, as there is no room in the Christian walk to divide our lives into the sacred and the secular. Instead we should do everything to the

glory of God, constantly desiring to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ? What are His attributes? The attributes of God, which were shown to us in the person of Jesus Christ, are the whole subject of Tozer’s The Knowledge of the Holy. His working definition is that “an attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself” (Holy, 20).

The attributes that we use to think about God demonstrate who we really believe God to be. But “Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God” (Holy, 10). This is due to the painful process of analyzing our own life, as we must do in order to determine what our actions say that we believe about God. Unfortunately, the battle usually lies within the eighteen inches between our mind and our heart. Words and actions can be miles apart, directly affecting our everyday Christian walk. As Tozer states, “A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well” (Holy, 10).

God first spoke to Moses “I AM THAT I AM”. Volumes of information can be gathered from God’s statement, but the first one is that God is self-existent. He has no creator, no beginning, and no end. Tozer says that “Whatever God is, and all that God is, He is in Himself” (Holy, 39). God has no need for anyone or anything, but instead He upholds everything by His hand. In fact, Tozer goes on to say that “An elementary but correct way to think of God is as the One who contains all, who gives all that is given, but who Himself can receive nothing that He has not first given” (Holy, 39).

Tozer has a very balanced, biblical view of the Almighty God that we serve. “Through the self-revelation of God in the Scriptures and the illumination of the Holy Spirit the Christian gains everything and loses nothing” (Holy, 112). He demonstrates that he has thought long and

hard about the immensity of whom God truly is, and recommends not that we merely accept his conclusions, but that we seek and discover God for ourselves. Tozer recommends that the “formula for personal revival” is to “Acquaint thyself with God” (Holy, 121).

A grand and mighty overview of all previous believers, and including our present generation, can be judged by their perception of God. Tozer states, “I think it might be demonstrated that almost every heresy that has afflicted the church through the years has arisen from believing about God things that are not true, or from over-emphasizing certain true things so as to obscure other things equally true” (Holy, 85).

Throughout The Knowledge of the Holy, Tozer gives us a picture of God that is completely self-contained, and never contradicting. For example, he states that “The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of the creation are inseparably united” (Holy, 113). “Since God’s first concern for His universe is its moral health, that is, its holiness, whatever is contrary to this is necessarily under His eternal displeasure” (Holy, 113). God cannot exercise justice without mercy, nor love without discipline. God cannot contradict Himself, as He is faithful to His word. Nor can God ever leave us or forsake us; He has given all born-again Christians His Holy Spirit, and He cannot forsake Himself.

Tozer also goes to great lengths to assure us that God is fully in control, and that He is the Only person in control. For example, “God’s sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free” (Holy, 115). And also, “God is said to be absolutely free because no one and no thing can hinder Him or compel Him or stop Him. He is able to do as He pleases always, everywhere, forever” (Holy, 116). Praise God that He is in control, and that He is a God of details, working everything together for His divine purpose. Tozer summarizes this thought as “All God’s acts are done in perfect wisdom,

first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time” (Holy, 66). But even this is only the best way that we creatures could imagine doing something. As Tozer admits, “Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined” (Holy, 66).

In addition to a wonderful overview of God’s attributes, Tozer also ends this book with an excellent chapter entitled “The open secret”. There could be no better way to end such a grand book, as he leads the reader through not only the steps of salvation, but the steps of discipleship in which every believer should engage himself fully to the end of deeper knowledge and better relationship with God Almighty.