

The “Larger View” - #1

What Kind of Person Is God?

1. As human beings, we are very prone to be self-centered. We think that the whole world revolves around us. Down through the centuries, this idea has led to a serious misunderstanding of the plan of salvation. While it is true that God has gone to unbelievable lengths to save you and me and that we are very important to Him, the plan of salvation is **not** primarily about us. The main issue in the great controversy is **not** primarily about how God saves you and me. The central issue in the great controversy is about God—His character and His methods. In other words, what kind of Person is He, and how does He run His government?
2. These issues were first raised in heaven in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary before this earth was created. Lucifer, by that time changed into Satan, claimed that he knew a better way to run the universe. Instead of loving and caring and serving each other, angels, as holy beings, would just look out for themselves. God knew that such a society would not work and would soon lead to disastrous consequences. But, it was hard for Him to make that clear to His creatures, the angels.
3. So, one-third of the angels were eventually convinced to take Lucifer’s side and “war” broke out in heaven over the way to run the universe. (Revelation 12:7) From that day to this, the basic issue has been the same: Is God’s way of running the universe better, or is Satan’s way better? Who do we trust? What does the evidence show?
4. A. Graham Maxwell (and Ellen White before him) has done a fantastic job of clarifying these issues for many of us. But how well do we really understand the implications of this basic issue? Look at the statement below taken from the end of his book, *Servants or Friends?* Consider each phrase and ask yourself what is implied by that particular phrase.

I believe that the most important of all Christian beliefs is the one that brings joy and assurance to God’s friends everywhere—the truth about our heavenly Father that was confirmed at such cost by the life and death of his Son.

God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be—arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. God is just as loving and trustworthy as his Son, just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious Person who values nothing higher than the freedom, dignity, and individuality of his intelligent creatures—that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey, may be freely given. He even prefers to regard us not as servants but as friends. This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting Good News that wins the trust and admiration of God’s loyal children throughout the universe.

Like Abraham and Moses—the ones God spoke of as his trusted

friends—God’s friends today want to speak well and truly of our heavenly Father. They covet as the highest of all commendations the words of God about Job: “He has said of me what is right.” A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?* Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.

5. What does the life and death of Christ tell us about how God runs His universe?
6. Is the evidence “adequate”? Do you understand it clearly?
7. Do people really believe that God is arbitrary, unforgiving, and severe? Where is the evidence for those traits?
8. Are we sure that the Father is just like His Son? How can we know that with certainty?
9. Why does a majestic, powerful God—who has a whole universe to run—care about us as human beings on this one small, rebellious planet?
10. Does God really care about our “freedom, dignity, and individuality”? Why?
11. Are we really convinced that we need to love, trust, and obey Him? Why?
12. Why would such a Person want to be an intimate Friend with people like us? What does that really mean?
13. Does what you know about God make you excited and want to spend more time with Him?
14. Do we really want to be God’s friends? Is it safe to be His friend?
15. Do we want to speak about Him more than anything else?

This is not a one person exercise! Tell us what you think. Send us your comments at info@theox.org. We really want to hear from you!