

J. I. PACKER

*Five Studies for  
Individuals or Groups*

KNOWING  
GOD

BIBLE STUDY

*Fiftieth  
Anniversary  
Edition*



InterVarsity Press  
ivpress.com

Taken from *Knowing God Bible Study* by J. I. Packer.

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Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

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## SESSION ONE

# GOD BEYOND COMPARISON

*ISAIAH 40:21-31*

**ADVERTISERS TRY TO PERSUADE US** that their product is superior to all competition. In the most superlative language they tell us that what they offer is bigger, speedier, more powerful, more efficient, and in every sense better than anything else on the market. Much of the time we don't believe these claims of superiority since every product claims to be better than every other. But what if we came across something so great it couldn't be compared to anything? Is there anything or anyone beyond comparison?

### SESSION GOAL

Enlarge our thoughts about God and learn to wait on him for strength.

### READ

Chapters one through four  
of *Knowing God*

### REFLECT

\* What have you heard God compared to?

- ✧ Have you experienced problems you feared God was not big enough to handle or might not care about? What were they (or what are they)?

 **STUDY** 

*READ ISALAH 40:21-31*

In this passage the prophet Isaiah makes statements about God; yet there is an overwhelming sensation that God himself is speaking here about himself. In fact, in some places God does speak in the first person.

<sup>21</sup>Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

<sup>22</sup>He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

<sup>23</sup>He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

<sup>24</sup>No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

<sup>25</sup>“To whom will you compare me?

Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup>Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

<sup>27</sup>Why do you complain, Jacob?  
Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

<sup>28</sup>Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup>He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup>Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup>but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

1. What characteristics of the Lord do you find in this passage?

2. What does God remind the people of in verses 21-22?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why does God challenge people to compare him to anyone or anything else (vv. 23-26)?

At various times in Israel's history, the false gods of other nations drew them away from the true God. Israel also made political alliances to try to guarantee their safety rather than relying on the Lord. Perhaps God was reminding them through Isaiah that human help is ultimately futile, at least when it tries to oppose him or get around his purposes.

4. Israel complained that God seemed distant and uncaring (v. 27). How does this entire passage answer that charge?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How are we often like Israel in our complaints?

**At the time Isaiah wrote, in the seventh century BC, the apathetic nation of Israel was devoid of hope and vitality because they thought their God had lost interest in them and left them to sink. Isaiah presents God as eternal and infinite, sovereign and gracious, ready to renew the strength of all who look patiently and hopefully in his direction.**

6. Consider the images of God's relation to the natural world. What effect do they make on the reader?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Given the fact that we have this incomparable God, why do you think people try to tell him how to run things, whether the world or their own lives?

**This passage begins with the question "Do you not know?" Of course Israel could recite the facts about God's power, wisdom, and love, just as we can. But our real knowledge of God is only as great as our faith. Therefore, we need to be constantly reminded and challenged about our view of God.**

8. What does God promise to those who feel weary and without strength (vv. 28-31)?

RESPOND

- \* In what areas of your life do you especially need to admit that God knows and understands more than you do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* Consider aspects or times in your life in which you feel weary and powerless. How can the truths of this Scripture passage refresh and strengthen you?

PRAY

As you pray, express trust in the Lord. Thank him for loving you and sending his Son for you, no matter how weak or insignificant you may feel. Thank him for renewing you with his strength.

NEXT STEPS

This week, make a conscious effort to watch for evidence of the Creator in the natural world he has made. You can do this whether you live in an urban, suburban, or rural area. Make notes of what you notice and what your observations show you about God.



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