

The Nature of God

By Gordon Kirk

Announcer:

Hello there friends and again a warm greeting to you who are a part of the Biola Hour fellowship and special tape cassette ministry. We're so glad that we're able to come your way again during this month of December. We have a special guest speaker who will be sharing with us in just a moment from God's word. My, what an exciting time of the year this is as we look forward to the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Obviously the greatest event in the history of all mankind. And you know it's your gift to the Ministry of Biola that enables us to continue to communicate news about that gift to those around us who don't know Jesus Christ whether it's here in La Mirada Southern California across the country and around the world. And we do deeply thank you for your faithful continued interest in this ministry both the Biola Hour and the education process which goes on at Biola. Now before we get to our study today I just might mention that we have a number of new friends who perhaps have never heard about the beginning of Biola.

To many individuals the name Biola may sound a bit strange but let me just explain if I may briefly how Biola came about sometime before nineteen hundred eight. God bless the Ministry of two Bible study and soul winning clubs and out of this effort they were led to organize the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. Mr. Lyman Stewart was elected the first president as the permanent

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organization took shape. February 25th nineteen hundred eight after four more years of growth. Dr. Rubin Archer Torrey was elected to serve as the first Dean spanning the years in 1936.

The Bible Institute program was expanded to become a four year course leading two degrees in theology Christian education and sacred music and then in 1949 the Bible institute became Biola College as curriculum was expanded and offered through the Bachelor of Arts degree since that time Biola has relocated on a beautiful 75 acre campus in La Mirada from the early years of the Bible Institute from sixth and hope Streets in downtown Los Angeles. Most recently Biola has added two graduate schools Talbot Theological Seminary and Rosemead Graduate School of Professional Psychology this means diversifying the broad scope of Educational Ministry which is participated in here at Biola.

It's our prayer that Biola will continue to be effective in the education of young people for a broad range of fields of service whether it be nursing physical education teaching the pastorate foreign mission field biology mathematics Christian camping yes whatever it might be we desire to see the Lord use this educational ground as a facility for better preparing the Christian leaders of the future. And again we thank you for making that ministry possible. You really do enable us to continue not only in the broadcast of the Biola Hour itself but also in that important educational process well today we're privileged to present to you one of the professors who is a part of the Biblical Studies Department of Biola. He's Professor Gordon Kirk. And we're honored to present his message on the Biola Hour fellowship today Professor Kirk.

Gordon Kirk:

Thank you Al. It's a privilege for me to be a part of the Biola Hour fellowship. And as we think about the areas that are taught at Biola College. One of my favorite classes is entitled God Christ and the Holy Spirit. It's an upper division theology class where we work through areas of the existence of God His Trinitarian nature his attributes the names of God. And we spend time on Christology that would deal with the person of Christ and his work the deity of Christ his humanity and then we look into areas of the Holy Spirit that deal with his personality and his deity and his work within our lives.

One of the questions that I enjoy asking our students and I'd like to ask each of the listeners today as we are spending time in this area is what is it that comes into your mind when you think about God. Walter Hendrickson in his book disciples are made and not born states. This every problem that a person has is related to his or her concept of God. Hendrickson goes on to state this if you have a big God then you have small problems but if you have a small God then you have big problems.

And then he says it's as simple as that. If your god is small every problem is an obstacle for him to work through. But if your God is big every problem becomes an opportunity to see God work. And as we think about areas of the nature of God I would like to spend some time thinking about the attributes of God. When an elementary school teacher several years ago asked her children to put together some advertisements that would be taken from the hard sell techniques of the advertising world what would apply to God.

Now friends these may suffer a bit from the hard sell techniques of the advertisements that we hear. But there is genuine. As the faith of those little elementary school kids one little child said this God is like Dial referring to the soap because he really gives round the clock protection. Now the little child wrote God is like Pan Am because he makes the going great. Another little child wrote God is like Bayer aspirin because he works wonders. I was spending some time with a college seminar not too long ago and I asked some of the people to jot down some ideas of commercials and one of the college students came up with this and said God is better than Lady Clare all only he knows for sure now we might laugh about those and chuckle But I think the favorite one that has been a reminder to me as one of the advertisements at the elementary school children put down and they said God is like Hallmark cards. He cared enough to send the very best.

Now as we think about areas of life. What I appreciate about those commercials is the fact that even these little kids and I hope ourselves we can look at various advertisements various media campaigns and realize that what is often claimed of a product or a particular item is only true of God. Only he can perform he can maintain he can operate and sometimes what they even claim to be a part of their product or their item. But as we think about the question what comes into your mind when you think about God.

What would you say if someone came up to you and said you know you talk a lot about Jesus you pray to God? You spend some time in your Christian way of life. But what is it that you mean as you talk about God A.W. Tozer in his book knowledge of the Holy says an attribute of God is that which describes what God has revealed to be true of himself. As we think about this

Christmas season especially this being December and we think about the attributes of God I am especially concerned about times to where we apply some of God's attributes to those things that would not meet up to God.

There was an article published in a magazine not long ago that was entitled the false god of Christmas written by George and Anna Zeller and listen to some of the excerpts that I've put together. Some parents have been guilty of teaching their children some very subtle untruths about Santa Claus. These are based on the facts that they are only true of God. Christian parents should check some of the false statements and see if they are not in some ways inadvertently teaching their children to confuse Santa Claus and God. Some would say Santa is omniscient and with a little song he knows how children believe.

Throughout the year he knows if you've been bad or good. Also he knows perfectly what every child wants for Christmas. Some even would attribute one of God's attributes out of omnipotence to Santa Claus. No storm is too great to hinder Santa from performing his annual miracle of delivering gifts. He defies the laws of nature by flying and coming down through the narrowest and sometimes the hottest of chimneys some would even relate the attribute of God's omnipresence to Santa to visit so many homes in one evening requires nothing less than omnipresence. Some of you as you go from shopping Centre to shopping Centre and your little children look and say wow how can Santa be in all those places at the same time.

If it's not explained properly we almost attribute that Santa is omnipresent some would even say that that in a very real sense that Santa is the epitome of love. Santa loves all little boys and girls

all over the world Santa is no respecter of person. He loves them all. Now friends even though Santa Claus may be an enjoyable part of some people's celebration and they really don't attribute that it is an actual Santa Claus or that he is God. It's amazing how a false concept of God can be applied to other people items or even traditions such as Santa Claus.

I would like to spend some time thinking about one attribute of God that which God has declared to be true of himself and that attribute of love. If you have your Bibles with you and you'd like to turn with me would you join me please by going to first John chapter 4. Because in first John chapter 4 we have several declarations that God is love so often we come up with particular attributes of God but they aren't as specific. In other words an attribute like God's omnipresence we don't have a place that says God is omnipresent.

Now we do have passages that indicate his presence throughout all of the world his awareness of all this taking place and I think pulling from different passages we can maintain the fact that God declares himself to be present everywhere with all of his being at all points of time but get in relationship to love it is very clear that God does declare himself as being a God of love. If you turn with me we're in first John chapter 4 look with me first of all in verse 8. It begins by saying the one who does not love does not know God for God is love.

A very clear declaration look down with me at verse 16 of this passage and we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. Notice the phrase again God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. So we have a clear declaration I believe from scripture in relationship to an attribute of God or that which God has revealed to

be true of himself that God is love. But what I appreciate so much about this passage in first John is the fact that it reveals for us several aspects of God's love.

What that love is like and I believe how we should apply if we are filled with God's spirit and are able to portray or maintain God's love. Three special aspects I would like us to consider beginning in verse 9. When you look with me please first John for and verse 9.

By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him. The first characteristic of God's love that I think is important for us to consider is that God's love seeks the good of the other person. God's love seeks the best interest of the individual. Notice that in verse 9 he sent his only begotten Son why so that we might live. He didn't do it for himself necessarily as much as for ourselves that we might live through him now friends as you think about this area and you think about being a child of God and you think about God's love being a part of your life because we're told to love one another.

Are you an individual who seeks the good of the other person husband's wives family members? Are you doing things? Are you concerned about aspects that would help the other person or do you just do things that will be a benefit to you? True love God's love seeks the best interest of the other. I think so often at times and in neighborhoods and sometimes we're guilty of even spraying the leaves on our lawn onto somebody else's lawn or parking our car in front of their house to where they don't have the facility which they need in front of their house.

And I think about this characteristic. If I'm to portray to demonstrate God's love to be Christ like I need to think of the best interests of the other person not just my own. And that's a major characteristic of God's love. A second characteristic I find in verse 10 in this is love. Not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the perpetuation for our sins. The second characteristic that has been so helpful to me is that God's love is voluntary. Notice in verse 10 in this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son.

I am so impressed as I looked down into the passage look at first John 4 and verse 19 with me we loved. Why. Because he first loved us for the passage you just begin to bounce out into my mind that while we were still enemies alienated from God. He stretched his hand forth and sent his son

[Audio Interruption]

Gordon Kirk:

For the passage you just begin to bounce out into my mind that while we were still enemies alienated from God he stretched his hand forth and sent his son.

Boy I find so often in my life that my love is insufficient as I wait for someone else to take the initiative. God didn't wait. He loved us first. I think about family situations at times when there might be anger some disagreements or some harsh words. As a family member do you take the responsibility to try to solve that problem first? Or do you kind of sit back and say well you know when they say they're sorry then I'll think it will be OK when they apologize for what they're doing then we'll put it back together.

Always waiting for the other person. God's love. True love as we're filled with God's Spirit allows us to reach out and try to solve the disagreement. Make that first step of confession or honesty or even communication. May I ask you in all honesty if you call yourself a child of God you've trusted in Christ as your savior as God love as God's love flows through you. Do you take the initiative or do you always wait for someone else. I know of forms of some family situations to where there has been some kind of the divisive nature that has taken place or a division within that family and sisters or brothers or a mom and a child or a dad and a child have not spoken for years and one of those members calls themselves a believer and I'm saying for all of us we need to reach out and try to make the bridge try to reach that gap and bring it together rather than waiting for someone else.

Boy I think so often of students here at Biola. There's probably not a semester that goes by but that one student or another might come to my office and as I am his or her advisor they might say would you please sign my departure card. I'm leaving. And sometimes I really try to probe and say well what is it what does cause the decision for you to leave or what allows you that sense to where you feel you shouldn't remain at Biola and oftentimes someone will say well you know the people just aren't friendly here is kind of clique ish and you know sometimes I've had the opportunity to view that student in different situations and I have found so often that the lonely person is the one who never takes the initiative not always.

Now don't misunderstand me but there are times when the person you walk into a church service you walk into a large group or as our students filtered down to campus and to chapel and we sit there in the bleachers and they sit there waiting for somebody else to say hi first for somebody

else to take the initiative. Men and women God's love if we're to be Christ like we need to take the initiative take that first step and I think it's important part to realize that God's love that not only seeks the good of the other person but God's love is also voluntary.

A third aspect that I see in relationship to this passage and a characteristic of God's love is found in first John four 10 as diverse concludes in this is love. Not that we love God but that he loved us. Notice and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. A third characteristic I'd like to emphasize for us is that God's love is self-sacrificial. He sent His Son men and women if you're gonna develop a love relationship with someone else it's going to cost it's going to take sacrifice.

And that's just not financial sacrifice. But I believe we need to emphasize more of the interpersonal sacrifice. God sent his son and I think as we view areas of our time and families our time with neighbors our time as we develop friendships and local churches or neighborhoods. The key issue of self-sacrifice is that giving of ourselves. I came across a brochure several years ago that listed 93 gifts for any season to give. With all your heart you could possibly put together more than ninety three and I'm not going to read all 93 but just listen to some of them.

One gift might be a smile and a shoulder to lean on or rub a tired back mail a letter to an old friend wash the dishes or empty the trash when it's not your turn. Clean the garage for your mate. Use just one parking space instead of right in the middle of two play catch with a little boy or a girl in the neighborhood. Take a box of homemade cookies to work. Take your kids to the park

or the zoo or the snow or serve breakfast in bed to your mate. You see all those things don't cost a lot.

By way of financial remuneration but they cost in the area of time and I see God the father sending his son in a sense of personal self-sacrifice in the same way I believe that we should characterize or portray Christ likeness. The idea of giving oneself moms and dads are you giving the time to your children to give them good eye contact where you show that you respect them and you listen to what they're doing and they're saying that takes time. Family members do you listen to each other on the job. Do you take the time to help someone if you want to portray God's love that you might be able to be characterized as one who is walking in a Christ like manner?

You need to have a kind of love that seeks the good of the other person that is voluntary and that is self-sacrificial. I'd like to close by just weaving three ideas together. First is this as we think about our season. Would you reflect upon God's love reflect upon that for God so loved the world that he did what he gave. Yes love begins as an attitude and that sense of concern. But it doesn't stop there it includes an action for God so loved the world that he gave and so as we think about this Christmas season as you think about areas of your life realize that an aspect of God is His love and that in God's love he gave.

Secondly would you accept God's love gift of Jesus Christ. It isn't enough just to have joined a church or to go to a Christmas service or to give money or to have been baptized. But the issue is what have you done with Jesus Christ. If any of us were to leave this life today and enter the very

presence of God and he asked us the question on what basis Shall I allow you to enjoy my eternal presence what would you say friends a scripture indicates that Jesus said he was the way the truth and the life no one could come to the Father except through him.

And the basic issue is what have you done with Jesus Christ. Have you accepted the love gift from God? For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. So would you reflect upon God's love and accept his love gift if you haven't done that yet. But then thirdly would you demonstrate God's love. This Christmas season would you allow the power of God's Spirit because one of the fruit of the spirit is love? Would you allow by the power of God's Spirit to help you seek the good of the other person and take the initiative.

Allow your love to be voluntary not waiting for someone else and then sense a self-sacrificial a voluntary giving of one's self for the other's best interest. Let's bow together and thank God for what he has done and what he's provided.

[Background Music Begins]

Gordon Kirk:

Father with all honesty. We thank you for the fact that you were willing to give your son. You took the initiative you had are good in view. I asked that we would be the kind of people. Who would allow that to be a part of our life and that we would walk in your spirit and not quench your spirit. But we would be able to allow those situations to be characterized by your love. We

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thank you that you sent Jesus Christ that we might have a relationship with you. Through Him.

Amen

Announcer:

And our sincere thanks to Professor Gordon Kirk of the biblical studies department at Biola. It's been a real joy to share his message with you on this tape cassette just for the members of the Biola Hour fellowship by the way next month. Dr. Lyman Straus our daily teacher on the broadcast will take on the interesting and important question could Jesus sin so be looking for the next in our series of cassette tapes very near future. You know many people who hear about Biola assume that because it was founded in nineteen hundred eight.

There must be a large number of endowments and contributors. But the fact is that the greatest endowment Biola has is people just like you down through the years God has blessed this ministry with a number of concerned friends who through their consistent gifts both large and small have enabled the Biola Hour and the educational process at Biola to continue these dedicated young people will truly be the leaders of tomorrow. And your support enables them to be educated for effectively reaching others for Christ. Right now we've asked the president of Biola Dr. J Richard Chase to come and to express our appreciation for your part in this ministry. Dr. Chase.

Dr. J Richard Chase:

One of the major themes in all of scripture is that majestic phrase the just shall live by faith. We find it in the mind a prophet Habakkuk and that we find it in the epistles of Romans Galatians in

Hebrews. And that phrase indicates that our hope for real far lasting for eternal life is found in our commitment to God or as the New Testament puts it specifically in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Accepting him as our personal savior in both the Old Testament and New Testament where that phrase that just shall live by faith is given one can expand that a bit and say just life in general is to be lived by faith.

But I think the major thrust of it is in relationship to approval by God or salvation if you will. And we do not earn our salvation by keeping certain patterns of the Old Testament laws. Now as the book of Hebrews would point out we cannot be successful in the life that we live. By saying I can do it all on my own strength we are to live by faith. Our faith in Christ but that particular phrase can be pushed in a variety of ways. Let me go from the sublime the scriptural content we've been talking about to the ridiculous.

Should you put on a seatbelt when you drive your car or do they just live by faith and you can get into an argument with some people should you buy life insurance or should the just live by faith. And so if you take that phrase and turn it in a variety of ways you can come up with some unusual answers. I'm persuaded though that we ought to leave it in its biblical context and think primarily of how we live and walk with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But you know at times I've had discussions with faculty they'll say why don't we live by faith more here at Biola.

In short why don't you simply increase the salaries that you pay all of us and then live by faith it'll come in. Well that's an interesting twist but I've got a response of that I say. I've got a better idea. Why don't we all live by tremendous faith? We all stop paying salaries and you can have

the faith that will come some other way. Well that doesn't set too well with faculty as you can imagine. And I have had students that say you know we wish that Biola wouldn't ask for funds over the air or through their mail appeals.

Why don't we really live by faith here? And I says well I've got an even better way. If you students really want to live by faith why don't we charge you precisely what it does cost to offer you the education that we give and then you can live by faith that God will supply it. Well usually we come to an agreement that lets both live a little bit by faith and try to balance these out. And I think the same thing happens to radio. You can say why do you why do people on radio appeal for funds.

Why don't they live by faith? Well the stations that were on many times can't live by faith because they have to pay salaries and the costs of buying time and the areas where we have to buy it. There are other stations that do not charge us and we greatly appreciate that because sometimes that's a ministry of special faith in their area. But in the main there are costs and even for those stations where there's no specific charge on the air there are still the costs of producing the program mailing out the material and all of that adds up to a hefty sum.

I think God wants us to be open. I've shared this with you today and the essence of trying to be truthful to share with you our needs and faith does come by hearing and by hearing I think you know that how we try to balance these things out and not mingle the faith that we have in God for salvation with just faith or sloppy living if you will in the business enterprise today on the Biola Hour we have needs and we are living by faith. But the faith that God will take this word

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that I've shared with you touch your heart and encourage you to send a gift to the Biola organization so that the Biola Hour can stay on the air. Thank you so much for what you will be able to do.

Announcer:

That's certainly the expression of our hearts. Friends we sincerely are grateful for your prayerful support to the Biola Hour and Biola College 1981 just around the corner. We're excited for what God is doing in the lives of these young people here on the campus of Biola. We trust that you'll continue to stand behind us knowing that you helped to make possible for these students the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a diversity of means and in countless areas around the globe. Well we'd be looking forward and hope you will be too in the next special tape cassette as a part of the Biola Hour fellowship.