



INTRODUCTION

A RÉSUMÉ UNLIKE ANY OTHER

What would you think if the following résumé came across your desk?

GOD

Address: Everywhere

Home Phone: Talk wherever you are; I'll hear you.

Birth Date: None (from all eternity)

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS:

Creation to present: Creator, Guardian, Judge, Father, Preserver, Shepherd, and Ruler. As the Potter, I am “fired” from my position by hundreds of thousands of clay pieces every day—but so far, no one has been able to find a decent replacement. I remain the altogether holy, sovereign, just, and powerful God of the universe.

EDUCATION:

None (Isa. 40:13–14)

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DEGREES:

BA, BS, BFA, BBA, BM, BMEd, BARC, EDS, EDD, MA, MAT, MPA, MFA, MSN, MM, MS, AB, MED, MSBA, MTX, ThM, ThD, DD, MPhil, MPH, DBA, MSW, DPharm, MOT, MPT, DPT, DDS, MPA, MDiv, PhD, MD, DO, JD, LLM, SJD, MBA, DMgt, DC, DVM. All summa cum laude. (More degrees available upon request.)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I created the entire universe out of nothing (Gen. 1), including 150 billion galaxies, 1×10^{37} stars (a one with 37 zeroes behind it), 50 million animal species, and 490,000 species of plants. (That's 50 billion galaxies, 1×10^{12} stars, 48.5 million animal species, and 230,000 plant species more than mankind has classified or discovered.) I could have created all this in one hour. Actually, I could have created it in a second. But by taking my time, I wanted to demonstrate to the human race just how incredibly precious everything in creation is to me ... including you.

PATENTS AND PUBLICATIONS:

1. Creation: Universal Patent no. 1
2. The Holy Bible

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:

On average I answer about four hundred thousand prayers every minute. Sometimes adults and children forget to pray, or don't know exactly how to pray or what to pray for. I understand. I also answer an extra eight million prayers a minute offered up on behalf of individuals by the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 8:26–27).

Moreover, I take great pleasure and interest in knowing every intimate detail of each person's life. I know every time you sit down, and every time you stand up. I even know the words in your mind before they reach your tongue (see Ps. 139:1–4). I know your secret desires, joys, hopes, and needs (see 1 Chron. 28:9), along with such details as the exact number of hairs on (or missing from) your head, the precise number of micrograms of plaque on your teeth, and

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the literal number of water molecules evaporating from your skin and lungs each second (see 1 John 3:20).

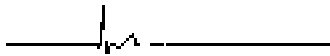
LANGUAGES SPOKEN: 6,000+

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Every day I take at least one supergiant star (1,000 times wider and 1 million times brighter than your galaxy's sun) and squeeze it together in my hands, setting off a spectacular supernova explosion. Then I take the core left behind, the neutron star (a teaspoon of it weighs more than a billion metric tons), and hold it between my fingertips. Standing directly over my "cosmic vacuum" (something you call a black hole), I release the star. No force in the universe—except me—can resist the gravitational pull of a black hole. Not even light! Instantly, the neutron star disappears—plunging into infinite density and creating a hyper nova with gamma ray bursts so strong that it outshines the rest of the universe! It's so incredibly beautiful! The intense burst of light and colors is utterly amazing! (In the beginning, I purposely stretched out the universe like a curtain [Isa. 42:5] making use of something you call "gravitational time dilation" to allow you the pleasure of seeing these spectacular explosions from earth today.)¹

REFERENCES:

1. God the Son
2. God the Holy Spirit.



To say that this is an impressive résumé would be one of the biggest understatements in history. How would you react if this paper came across your desk? Would you not be completely blown away by just the knowledge that such a person even exists? What would happen if this individual were sitting directly across from you in a chair? What would you say? How would you act? Understandably, our minds become entangled in a sticky web of intangible realities trying to fathom such a far-out thought.

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Imagine instead that you're suddenly all alone in your office with the king or queen of England. What intelligent questions would you ask of your royal guest? Or what comments would you make? Would you make some remark about the weather? Or chitchat about the latest rookie signed by the New York Yankees? Would you not have tremendous difficulty even finding the proper words in the midst of your disordered thoughts?

What would happen if it weren't England's royalty sitting face-to-face with you—but heaven's royalty? How would you address so awesome a person as God? What questions would you ask someone who not only created every member of England's royal family but also tens of billions of black holes powerful enough to suck up light and entire stars?

The earth is 93 million miles away from the sun, and we can't even look at a solar eclipse without serious eye damage. From my childhood, I remember being herded into the darkened school gymnasium every time there was a solar eclipse so we wouldn't stare at the sun and suffer permanent damage to our little peepers. Imagine if God, whose glory is more luminous than every star in the universe, were sitting, not 93 million miles away, but *93 inches away in the same room*. Every atom in your body—and for millions of miles around—would be instantly vaporized into near nothingness! Even if God shielded you from the force of his overpowering glory, would you not find yourself totally dumbstruck, face planted into the carpet fibers, unable to breathe, unable to see, incapable of even whispering to God a plea that your life be spared?

Such a formidable visit actually occurred in the life of the apostle John, the writer of Revelation. Catching a glimpse of God's overpowering presence, whose countenance John described as "like the sun shining in all its brilliance," John fell forward instantly at God's feet as though dead (Rev. 1:16–17). Every time God allowed the brilliance of his being to be merely glimpsed by a man in the Scriptures, the man's mortal knees immediately gave way, and he fell face forward to the ground in a sort of worshipful daze—or dread.

That's why I'm more than just a little skeptical when some church leaders recount their casual encounters with God: "Here I was, driving down the highway, I glanced over, and there was God—sitting in the passenger seat!" Or, "There I was, cooking breakfast one morning, and God

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appeared out of nowhere to help me defrost the bacon.” The laid-back conversations with God that usually follow are nothing short of ridiculous. If God had appeared to John while he was driving a car, the EMS crews would have needed an industrial crane to pry his body from the wreckage.

As King David declares, absolutely no one can fathom the greatness of our God (Ps. 145:3). David prayed these words before Israel’s entire assembly: “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all” (1 Chron. 29:11). Paul also described the majesty of God: “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15–16).

Not only does God’s greatness blow all the fuses in our imaginations but in the angels’ imaginations as well. If every one of the trillions of stars in the universe, if every one of the trillions of living organisms on our planet—humans, animals, fungi, prokaryotes, and plants—if every object in the universe, living or nonliving, could cry out to God, each extolling a different aspect of God’s supremacy, the universal chorus of praise would still fall pitifully short of capturing the dominion and infinite greatness of almighty God.

*How great is our Lord! His power is absolute!
His understanding is beyond comprehension!*

—PSALM 147:5 NLT

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God is King, robed and ruling, God is robed and surging with strength. And yes, the world is firm, immovable.

—PSALM 93:1 MSG



1

SCRUTINIZING THE RÉSUMÉ

Picture in your mind the following scenario:

One day you decide you want to demonstrate your love, so you go to the world's largest pet store and purchase six billion ants. Returning to your sprawling mansion, you toss all your cans of Raid into the dumpster and set loose the six billion tiny insects. "There you go, little ants. Enjoy your new home."

Suddenly, your life is consumed with looking after these minuscule creatures. You have five tons of dirt delivered to your home, then spend days shoveling it all through your house because ants like dirt—not carpet. You head off to work only long enough to buy the ants enough food, and then you race home to feed the hungry

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insects. You carefully monitor the room temperature and humidity to their liking. You park your car on the street so as not to disturb the tiny creatures on your garage floor. You sleep on the porch to allow the insects use of your bed (because they seem to really enjoy your Sealy Posturpedic mattress). And if the carpenter ants decide to make fine shavings out of the exquisite oak furniture that you personally hand-crafted, that would be perfectly okay because that would be fulfilling their passions. And if the nasty fire ants decide to get under your clothes to bite you in some rather private areas, that's okay too because that's what some ants like to do. To even think about removing just one of these insects from your beautiful home would be totally out of the question.

Now you might be chuckling at the sheer absurdity (and stupidity) of such a scenario, but this isn't too far off from how most of the world views God: as some sort of cosmic caretaker whose sole function is to make sure that we, the more than six billion ants, are all having a grand old time here on one of his greatest creations we call Earth. "Just keep the good times rollin', God." And when the good times stop rollin', some come to the conclusion that this "cosmic caretaker" is merely a figment of our hyperactive imaginations. One boy, about to celebrate his bar mitzvah, said this to a team of interviewers for a *Life* magazine feature article: "God doesn't exist. If there was a god, and he was nice to me, he would let me get things I want, like a dog and cat, and to not be allergic."¹

But I fear that I've committed a grave error in the analogy above. I hope I haven't led you to believe that the distance that exists between the majesty of God's being and us is similar to the distance that exists between us and ants. Actually, in relation to God's infinite and majestic being, we are far, far less than tiny insects. In fact, we are far less in comparison than the unicellular bacteria that inhabit the crevices and hairs of our bodies.

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The importance of God's grandeur is grossly misunderstood by the world at large. We the clay (see Jer. 18:6) sometimes condemn God the Potter for seeking his own glory, making the Creator out to be some sort of conceited, selfish, egotistical superhero.

In a sense, God has no choice but to place his worth above every other living creature.

John Piper explains that for God to take delight in someone, or something, more than himself, would be idolatry. God "does all that he does to magnify the worth of his glory," asserts Piper. "He would be unrighteous if he valued anything more than what is supremely valuable, namely, himself."²

Not too long ago I heard a song with the lyrics, "You are the Father's obsession," referring to God's "obsession" for us. Well, God certainly does love us, but the central reference point of all his attention must first be himself. Celine Dion's words are closer to the truth: "That's the way it is." That's just the way it is with God. He is, in and of himself, self-contained, the definition of love, regardless of anyone else. How can someone as great as God our creator be "obsessed" with our imperfect beings? If the critics truly understood the greatness of God's majesty and just how much God has done for us, they'd understand that living for the glory of God is the only path in life that makes sense. They would also understand why God *cannot* place our worth above his worth.

According to Piper, the King of king's number one priority is this: "*The Chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever.*"³ Therefore, no matter how much evil there is in the world, God can never be downcast or discouraged. God can never be envious of the Donald Trumps and John Travoltas of this world because he is perpetually and infinitely happy in himself. We read in Psalm 115:3, "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him." Daniel proclaims that God, "does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth" (Dan. 4:35). Job writes, "But [God] stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases" (Job 23:13). If God were exceedingly wise and powerful, why would he not work out events for his endless pleasure? Wouldn't you if you were God?

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All too often, though, we carry around this idea in the back of our minds that God exists only to satisfy *our* desires. “Hey, Potter!” shouts the arrogant piece of clay. “I’m not very happy with your decisions! *You owe me big time!*” If you can’t get past the fact that God places *his* desires and *his* happiness above ours, you will never progress another step in this critical journey into understanding God more. The only “footprints” you will spy on this expedition will be your own. That is not to say that our heavenly Father isn’t concerned with our happiness, or our desires. He definitely is. But if God were to place our earthly desires ahead of his desires, our worth above his majesty, our ignorance over his wisdom, and our imperfection above his holiness, he’d make a cosmic mockery of infinite magnitude of his altogether glorious being. It would be impossible for God to relinquish control of the universe to anyone—especially us.

The Potter does not exist for the clay’s enjoyment. We exist solely for God’s highest glory and endless pleasure (see Isa. 43:7). Parents owe their child love, protection, and guidance because they “borrowed” from the Creator the building blocks of life—unique blocks that came delivered to us with some strict moral rules. Because God created the entire universe out of nothing, only God holds the exclusive rights to everything we see, own, and use—including our own bodies. *We owe God absolutely everything. He owes us absolutely nothing.*

You might have been doing a double take these last few paragraphs. For how can God still be happy when his rebellious creatures commit billions of treacherous acts of sin—revolting spiritual adultery—day after day? If God works everything out to his good pleasure, how can he possibly look down upon all the death, suffering, and sin on this earth, and be just as happy as if he had never created us?

Piper shares with us more of his personal insight:

How can God be happy and decree calamity? Consider that he has the capacity to view the world through two lenses. Through the narrow one he is grieved and angered at sin and pain. Through the wide one he sees evil in relation to its eternal purposes. Reality is like a mosaic. The parts may be ugly in themselves, but the whole is beautiful.⁴

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We look at the evil in our world and say, What was God thinking? Perhaps, though, we should be asking the question: What is God seeing from his perspective that we're not seeing from ours?

Life makes much more sense after scrutinizing God's résumé, and understanding a little more how almighty God views life through his "wide lens." We tend to view life through only the narrow lens and forget that God sees all the ugly pieces as a beautiful whole. The more we can view life from a top-down, divine perspective, the easier it will be to arrange our stepping-stones, and the more treasures we will uncover on our journey into answering the question *Why Doesn't God Stop Evil?*

AH, SOVEREIGN LORD!

*The scientific facts known today are a stick
of dynamite under the front porch of our
spiritual complacency.*⁵

"Spiritual complacency." Would such a pervasive evil of moral mediocrity, rebellious indifference, and gloomy reflection exist in the world if we truly understood the absolute sovereignty of almighty God? Would the existence of evil remain such a stumbling block to our faith if we were truly able to embrace the truth that God is in complete control of the world—including every aspect of our lives? "Ignorance of Providence is the greatest of all miseries," writes Calvin, "and the knowledge of it the highest happiness."⁶

To help us better understand the sovereignty of God, Charles Swindoll offers this simple definition:

Sovereignty means our all-wise, all-knowing God reigns in realms beyond our comprehension to bring about a plan beyond our ability to alter, hinder, or stop.⁷

Remember I emphasized that *everything* God does is for his own good pleasure? The psalmist writes, "The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths"

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(Ps. 135:6). That pretty much covers every nook and cranny of creation, doesn't it? And *absolutely nothing* can rob God of one iota of his divine pleasure: no king, no judge, no celebrity, no terrorist, no virus, no nuclear warhead, no asteroid, no atheist, no international treaty, no NATO command force—not even the legions of demons and the Devil himself can frustrate God's purpose. *Nothing* will prevent God from accomplishing his perfect mosaic.

Swindoll goes on to explain:

His plan includes all promotions and demotions. His plan can mean both adversity and prosperity, tragedy and calamity, ecstasy and joy. It envelops illness as much as health, perilous times as much as comfort, safety, prosperity, and ease.... It is at work through all disappointments, broken dreams, and lingering difficulties. And even when we cannot fully fathom why, He knows. Even when we cannot explain the reasons, He understands. And when we cannot see the end, He is there, nodding, "Yes, that is My plan."⁸

What I hope to tattoo across your heart here is the truth that our all-wise God utilizes a precise level of order to bring about his highest delight. No other achievable plan, or mosaic, could bring even a smidgen more delight and satisfaction to the heart of God—otherwise he'd "Just Do It," as the Nike slogan says. What happens today, God willed for his happiness an eternity ago.

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. (Isa. 46:9–10)

Perhaps you've never stopped to ponder God's desires, his purposes, and what he actually controls in the arena of life. If you're like many today who gaze on life from an "ant's perspective," you might be in for quite a shock in the rest of this book. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne."⁹

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“While people reject the God of Scripture as their Sovereign,” says the esteemed Bible teacher, Dr. John MacArthur, “they still claim Him as their servant. For some people that is *all* they mean by ‘God Bless America.’”¹⁰ God can be anywhere he wants to be as long as his goal is to prosper us, protect us, and make us happy; but as soon as he takes his rightful position on the throne as supreme ruler of the universe, we balk.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. (Ps. 103:19)

Dr. MacArthur hits a sensitive nerve with this truth:

We are so used to man-centered theology that if it doesn’t start with us we can’t understand it.... We are so proud, we are so self-centered, we are so man-centered in even our theology, that if it doesn’t start with our choice we can’t handle it.... We want to start with us and try to work our way back to God and hope He makes sense from our view.¹¹

This is my favorite quotation in the book—and probably the entire book series—because it so effectively exposes one of the biggest problems in the church today that is causing most of the confusion over God’s character. Read the quotation again carefully. Undoubtedly, the greatest hindrance to our understanding of God’s sovereignty lies in our depraved state of self-centeredness and our ensuing “nursery school” view of God’s dominion. We, the ants, want God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, to foolishly put our wishes ahead of his perfections—our passions ahead of his flawless plans. We want God to sleep outside on the pavement and trek off to work each day, so that we can enjoy his beautiful home, the freshly delivered meals, and his comfy Sealy Posturpedic mattress. We are so human-centered in everything we do every second of every day, it is little wonder that the world is at a loss to understand God in the complicated matters of life. If we ever hope to understand God, we *must* start with the sovereign—not the servants. Stephen Charnock, a seventeenth-century Puritan, once said, “To slight

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his sovereignty, is to stab his deity.”¹² We need to stop gazing on life with our self-centered, near-sighted, “narrow-lens” goggles, and start viewing life from a truly divine perspective.

To aid us in attaining this new perspective, we must perform one of the most humbling acts ever: We must look back on the fascinating mix of characters and the key events that have altered our destinies for the glory of God. These are the “footprints” of God in our lives. This is God’s intricate handiwork shaping every second, every step, every thought we’ve ever had right from the moment of conception. Then, if you want to completely blow your mind, try taking a look back through history from a divine perspective to see God’s footprints extending all the way back to the beginning of time. In doing so, you will gain a newfound appreciation and a raw excitement for the path-maker whom Paul extols as, “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15b).

Let’s start this humbling experience by first ...

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Most newly fired or laid-off employees dread the thought of having to put together yet another updated résumé. What do I list as my strengths? My weaknesses? Do I include my hobby of collecting hamster toenail clippings? Do I describe how fast I can stitch up the gaping abdominal hole in a warm corpse when I need to jump back on the helicopter ASAP to fly this guy’s liver on ice in an Igloo cooler to an anxiously awaiting liver transplant team two hundred miles away? What will I write that will knock the socks off my next employer?

Picture, if you will, the monarch of England also sitting down one day to type up her personal résumé. “Hmmm,” she thinks. “I wonder what I should write to convince my British subjects that I am fit to rule the country? I’ve never had to type out anything so ... revealing.”

Now that’s pretty silly, isn’t it? What king or queen of sound mind would commit such an absurd and humiliating act? He or she is already the sovereign.

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Imagine for a moment a world-renowned specialist of about fifty years of age, having had fourteen years of university training, having written more than a hundred research studies, and having traveled around the world to share his or her knowledge with the most brilliant minds on the globe, bending down on one knee to condense tens of thousands of hours of training and experience into thirty words in a soft voice to an eight-year-old. (It happens more often than you think.) Now picture this child pulling away with the disrespectful remark, “Yeah right. What do you know, Doc?”

No one would blame the medical doctor for just walking away. But instead, the specialist stays down on one knee and spends the next fifteen minutes kindly explaining to the naive child the rigorous training program required to be competent to treat this child’s illness.

On a much greater scale, God has stooped to our diminutive level, like the kind, world-famous medical doctor stooping to the level of a child, to explain why he is competent to treat our “diseases” here on earth. God leaves his throne in heaven to descend to our level to kindly explain to us why he is more qualified than we to rule the universe. But we often just pull away with the attitude or action that asks, “What do you know, God?”

Who could blame God for walking away? Despite our heavenly Father’s knowing that we would keep stabbing at his deity with our butcher knife of narcissistic pride, God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, has, for some reason, “humbled” himself to the point where he has provided us with a copy of his “résumé” in the Holy Scriptures, kindly explaining to us why he alone is qualified to run this universe—along with our lives.

Interestingly, there are some who hold to something called “open theology.” In a sense, God is seen by some as a ruler who is too perfect for his own liking. For life to be exciting for the Divine and fair for us mortals, God is said to voluntarily limit his powers so that he can’t see around the next corner. These individuals believe that God is in the same old 1969 Dodge Charger RT—“the General Lee”—as the rest of us, racing through the Hazzard County of life at one hundred miles an hour with his hair on fire, taking random sideroads and jumping creeks

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like Bo and Luke Duke—not quite sure if there's going to be a boulder or a cow lying on the road around the next hairpin turn. And somehow, despite all the uncertainties and mishaps, God always manages to out-wit and out-maneuver “Boss Hogg”—the Devil.

Does this fit with God's résumé and his past (and future) work experience? Actually, it doesn't (see Job 40:1–2; Ps. 139:16; 1 John 3:20). For how can God claim perfect and sovereign reign over his creation if he is ignorant of the affairs of his kingdom, incompetent to devise the best possible plan (because he doesn't know what's coming), and too weak and restricted to carry it out? Does God get himself into a sticky mess like Bo and Luke Duke, and then miraculously pull off a mind-blowing, high-flying stunt at the last second to save his hide?

I remember that in medical school one doctor flashed up an X-ray of a woman's chest and upper abdomen. We could hardly believe our eyes. The woman had swallowed more than two hundred metal objects! Safety pins, coins, nails, tacks—anything metal that she could get down her esophagus was sitting there in her stomach. I could just picture this deranged woman coming into the emergency room.

“Doc, I still don't feel so good.”

“The blood tests we did this morning are all normal,” replies the ER doctor. “What's the matter?”

“I've still got indigestion. My stomach feels kind of ... full.”

The doctor sighs. “Any vomiting, heartburn, chest pain, abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, or blood in your stool?”

“No, just some minor indigestion.”

“Well, like I said this morning, you probably just ate some bad chili down at the local fast-food restaurant last night. You'll be fine. Go home, take some Maalox, and don't call me in the morning. I'll be golfing.”

Now, how would this doctor know that this woman had just swallowed more than two hundred metal objects if he didn't have the X-ray? (He'd soon find out when she started bleeding internally.) How could this doctor properly manage this patient without seeing the big picture? In the same way, I ask, how can God properly manage or rule this world without seeing the “big picture” of life? How can he describe himself as “the only wise God” (Rom. 16:27), with an understanding that “has no

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limit” (Ps. 147:5), if he can’t see around the next corner? Could God claim to be all-knowing and all-powerful if he had to rely on us to tell him the results of the “X-rays”?

Therefore, to be the competent, sovereign ruler of the universe requires that one be a) all-knowing; b) all-wise; c) all-powerful; and d) absolutely free. If such a wise, all-knowing, and all-powerful God exists, don’t you think he would want to communicate his truth to us by the most objective means possible? Wouldn’t a doctor who has the power to heal want to communicate this to his or her patients? Why then is it so difficult to fathom that someone as intelligent as God would write down these answers for our spiritual sickness in black and white—in his one and only authorized autobiography?

Let’s see if God fits the position of Sovereign Ruler of the universe by scrutinizing his résumé as written up for us in his number one best-selling book.

JOB QUALITIES FOR SOVEREIGN RULER:

All-Knowing

“His understanding has no limit,” we read in Psalm 147:5b. God knows every time we sit down, lie down, stand up, or think. “You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it all” (Ps. 139:3–4 NASB). God “understands every motive behind the thoughts” (1 Chron. 28:9) and he knows (all-too-well) “the secrets of the heart” (Ps. 44:21). “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight” (Heb. 4:13a). Not a sparrow falls without God knowing about it (see Matt. 10:29). And if we’ve missed anything, John says, “God is greater than our hearts, *and he knows everything*” (1 John 3:20b). He knows every single atom of your body so intimately that should you choose to have your remains cremated and scattered over a ten-mile stretch of ocean from an airplane, God will raise up every last atom on the final day and transform your natural body into a spiritual body (see 1 Cor. 15:42–44). That’s how much God knows.

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All-Wise

Our Creator and Sovereign Lord is “the only wise God” (Rom. 16:27). “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom. 11:33a). “To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his” (Job 12:13). So naturally, when we need wisdom, where should we turn? “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

Just how wise is God? Well, according to one researcher, we make 300 to 17,000 decisions every day.¹³ If you were to add up how many decisions you make between the ages of five and seventy-five, taking the lowest number of 300 per day, it would total almost 7.7 million decisions! Now, if it took you only four seconds to make the average decision, you have spent a minimum of 8,500 hours—or approximately one year of your life—scratching your brain, wondering what to do. If you are an indecisive individual, this is like four or five years.

Let's pretend you turned every single decision over to God. What would take you a year to do, God could accomplish in less than one second—and every decision would be absolutely perfect. Ever regretted a decision you've made? Maybe that boyfriend with the diabetic Chihuahua who you discovered three months into the relationship was already married to the mafia kingpin's daughter? Or that '92 car you bought that ended up on the front cover of, “*The World's Worst Lemons*”—five editions in a row? Consider this: Every day God makes more decisions in a second than you could make in a million lifetimes. And he hasn't regretted one decision yet.

That's how wise God is!

All-Powerful

He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. 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

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them away like chaff. “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One (Isa. 40:23–25).

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Eph. 3:20).

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

“I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?” (Jer. 32:27)

Just how powerful is God? Let's say God wants to give you a front row seat to his biggest and most spectacular supernova explosion. Taking you in the palm of his hand, he gently sets you down on the edge of the biggest black hole in the universe. You look to your right. Then to your left. And suddenly all the rays of light for a hundred galaxies around are sucked past your eyes in the most dazzling, scintillating array of colors you've ever seen. All you can do is stare wide-eyed as God drops the neutron star into the black hole. Whoa. You thought the 2000 New Year's celebration at the Egyptian pyramids was stunning. This makes the millennium celebrations look like a toaster short circuiting. And through it all, the most powerful force in the universe is holding you from being pulled by the second most powerful force in the universe into utter blackness. Miraculously, your clothes, your hair, and your eyes are not ripped out of your body. Instead, the microscopic oil particles on your hair, the dirt under your fingernails, the plaque on your teeth, the lint and stains on your clothes, are instantly sucked into oblivion, leaving you the cleanest you've been since the good ol' days when mom scrubbed off half your epidermis in your Saturday night bath ritual.

And through it all, you haven't budged a millimeter.

That's how powerful God is!

Absolute Freedom

For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back (Isa. 14:27)?

WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP EVIL?

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD (Prov. 21:30).

But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. (Job 23:13)

How much liberty does God have? If you were placed in front of a firing squad composed of fifty of the world's top snipers aiming AK-47s at your body, God, at his discretion, could easily and freely accomplish any of the following:

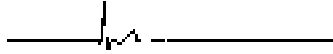
1. Not allow one bullet to touch your body.
2. Redirect the path of each bullet, shave each one down with a specific razor edge, and give you a better haircut than you could receive at any salon in Beverly Hills.
3. Replace fifty of the top snipers in the world with fifty of the worst snipers in the world, and redirect every one of the stray bullets through the center of your forehead.

No matter how accurate or inaccurate a firing squad is, or what type of guns they are using, it makes no difference to God. He would have just as much freedom to spare your life or to end it right there on the spot.

Don't misunderstand me here; it's not that God is a capricious being, flitting through the world with a "drive-by shooting" mentality—not caring who lives and who dies. That's certainly not the God I wholeheartedly serve. But God alone created us, along with this entire universe. He owes nothing to anyone. He has no favors to repay. He has no boss, no high court, no government, and no Howard Sterns telling him what he should and shouldn't do. God is just as free to make a decision in his perfect character that spares a life as he is to take a life. He is so free, in fact, that he is not even bound by the constraints of time. Imagine living a life where you had as much time to do whatever you want, whenever you want, however you want, in any galaxy you want, with no care in the world about where you had to be Monday morning.

That's how much freedom God has.

SCRUTINIZING THE RÉSUMÉ



After closely studying these verses, it is obvious that God has all the necessary qualities—and more—for the job as supreme ruler. But to what extent does he exercise his right to rule? Perhaps he takes extended vacations on company time.

JOB PERFORMANCE STATS:

Ruler over Nature

God says, “I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert” (Isa. 50:2b). “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45b). Lightning, thunder, snow, hurricanes, clouds, rain, atmospheric pressure changes, and the tilting of the earth on its axis do not occur except by God’s will (see Job 37:3–13; Ps. 107:25; Dan. 2:21).

Moreover, the Almighty preserves the life of every beast on an ongoing basis (see Ps. 36:6), holding in his hand the life essence of every creature (see Job 12:10). He daily supplies food for the beasts of the field and the birds of the air (see Ps. 147:9). How can we help but agree with Elihu when he said, “God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding” (Job 37:5)?

Consider this: There are hundreds of zoos, aquariums, wildlife parks, and animal sanctuaries scattered around the world, many requiring hundreds of workers to monitor and care for the animals and birds. The world famous San Diego Zoo and San Diego Wildlife Park together have more than 3,200 individual birds, and more than 1,300 species and subspecies. If you take the hundreds of thousands of birds and animals in all the zoos worldwide, the total still pales in comparison to the number of creatures roaming free on the planet. Who do you think is the zookeeper looking after them? God’s zoo is bigger than all the zoos in the world combined—and he runs it himself.

Best of all, there’s no admission fee.

WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP EVIL?

Ruler over Mankind

God determined in eternity exactly the moment in history when you and I would be born, where we would live (see Acts 17:26), and when we would die (see Job 14:5). God provides the very oxygen molecules we breathe each minute (see Job 12:10). He supplies our food and water (see Ps. 107:9). And he is directly responsible for the salvation of souls (see Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13). He is ultimately responsible for guiding the very steps of men and women (see Prov. 20:24) and dishing out to each individual all the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge he or she will ever attain (see Dan. 2:21). “The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts” (1 Sam. 2:7). God even controls who gets what from lottery winnings—right down to the last penny (see Prov. 16:33).

“He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them” (Job 12:23). God has raised to power and leadership every king, president, dictator, CIA officer, and policeman who has ever lived or will ever live (see Rom. 13:1). The King of Glory directs the hearts of earthly kings like you and I would direct a trickle of water by taking a stick and plowing a path from a mud puddle (see Prov. 21:1). God protects nations (see Isa. 41:10–11), and he frustrates them (see Ps. 33:10).

Did you know that more than one hundred thousand employees work at the Walt Disney Company and its affiliates throughout the world in more than twenty-seven hundred job classifications? This doesn't even include the thousands they have to hire at theme parks and resorts during peak summer hours. Some people have never been to a Disney park or resort to see Mickey and Minnie; others have shaken hands with the famous pair dozens of times. It takes tens of thousands of people to entertain only a fraction of the world's population for the odd day trip. What would happen if all the people in the world—six and a half billion and counting—decided to show up at the Disney theme parks and resorts on the same day? How many employees would it take to look after all these customers for just twelve hours?

Well, God manages the fine details of the lives of more than six billion people every minute of every day. And he does it himself—without pay and vacation time—and without making one mistake.

SCRUTINIZING THE RÉSUMÉ

Imagine if you could find someone like that to run your business.

Administrator of Good and Evil

Joseph said to his brothers,

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (Gen. 50:20)

God, in his eternal purpose, decided beforehand that Herod and Pontus Pilate would be the ones to bring about the crucifixion of Christ (see Acts 4:27–28).

The Lord said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” (Ex. 4:11).

I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things (Isa. 45:7).

The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster. (Prov. 16:4)

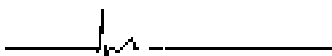
In the United States in 2004, there were approximately 2.1 million prisoners in federal or state prisons or in local jails. Every now and again we hear of someone who has been wrongly imprisoned, like Joseph was in Bible times. Every prisoner in America’s prison system, and in every prison system around the world, whether guilty or innocent, is there under God’s control. Yes, God sometimes even allows innocent people to be put behind bars.

Now, some of these prisoners have criminal records the size of a small novel. Every act of evil committed by every criminal in the world has served some purpose in God’s sovereign plan. God is the administrator of good—and he is the administrator of evil. It is no harder for God to work the millions of murders, thefts, assaults, and drunk driving charges into his sovereign game plan for his glory, than it is to fit together all the good deeds done since the beginning of time.

The saint and the criminal are both useful to God’s purposes.

WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP EVIL?

If our all-wise Creator controls and sustains all the elements and laws of nature to such a mind-boggling order of precision; if our all-powerful Creator upholds the life of every living creature on the face of the earth by daily providing indispensable oxygen, food, and water; if our all-knowing God is currently directing the hearts of kings and leaders for his own wise purposes; if mankind's every step, every thought, and every word, whether good or evil, is being governed and used by our sovereign God at this very moment for his greatest glory, is there *anything* that God doesn't have complete control over?



Our times are *definitely* in God's hands (Ps. 31:15).

Those who argue that God rarely interacts in the affairs of his creation haven't read his official autobiography. Those who believe that our universe has somehow spun wildly out of his control or think that God wound up the universe like a clock and walked away are often the ones who would rather use a *Cliff's Notes* version of God's autobiography—rather than just read it.

For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen. (Rom. 11:36 NLT)

