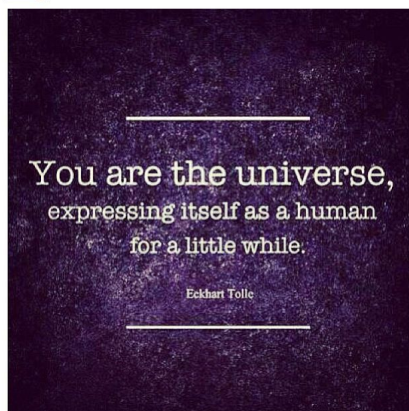


# September 27, 2017 Study Guide

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*Really? You are the universe?*

*Does God care about you at all?*

*What does it mean to exist?*

## What do we mean by God? Being itself!

St. Thomas Aquinas argued that God is not any genus, in fact, he is nothing at all. He is not even a type of being. He is not a thing, nor an individual. God is the act of being in and of itself. Is there a Yeti or a Bigfoot? God is not like that. He is, metaphorically, the ocean of existence that contains the universe, but is not limited by it. Here are some ideas about God that still have proponents.

**Polytheism:** The Greeks, the Roman and the Egyptians had multiple gods that were responsible for natural phenomenon.

**Pantheist:** Druids, animists, Wiccan and wizards believe God is nature and worship sacred oaks or spirits present in nature

**Deists:** Thomas Jefferson, Votaire, Ben Franklin and other deists believed that the material world ran by strict natural laws. Deist based their conception of God on Sir Isaac Newton's physics. There was no room for God's intervention and so he was like a watchmaker who set up perfect laws for the universe to operate. Miracles couldn't happen because God would not vary his own laws. Prayers are not answered because the original plan provided for everything.

**Biblical view:** God is the creator. God is like a bush burning without being consumed. God is the Lord of Hosts, that is, of armies. God saves and loves tenderly. The glory of God is seen in the heavens and the earth.

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- Bishop Barron argued that we are all contingent creatures, dependent on some preceding cause. Something must exist that is not dependent on anything. Is it contrary to reason that some power started it all?
- The Big Bang suggests that the universe had a beginning some 14.5 billion years ago. Did the universe always exist or did it have a beginning?
- Do you believe that there are other universes in other dimensions?
- Is there other intelligent life out there somewhere? What would that mean?

### **Motherhood and God**

- Why does Jesus call God “Father?”
- Mother and Father are not the same to a child. What does the image of ‘Father’ suggest about the otherness of a Creator?
- Why do we call earth “Mother Earth?” Do you think it is because we feed from Mother Earth metaphorically like an infant feeds from her mother’s breast?

### **God as Mother**

The Bible does compare God’s love with the love of a mother:

- “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (Is 66: 13).
- “Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Is 49: 15).
- The mystery of God’s maternal love is expressed with particular power in the Hebrew word *rahamim*. Etymologically, this word means “womb,” but it was later used to mean divine compassion for man, God’s mercy.
- God is never named or addressed as mother, either in the Old or in the New Testament. “Mother” in the Bible is an image but not a title for God. Why not?
- Mother deities in the peoples surrounding Israel were pantheistic and the difference between Creator and creature disappeared. But, the image of the Father expresses the otherness of Creator from creature and the sovereignty of his creative act. Only by excluding the mother-deities could the Old Testament bring its image of God, the pure transcendence of God, to maturity. What do you think about that idea?

### **Scripture for today**

Exodus 3:1-4:17

### **Saint for the Day!**

**Memorial of Saint Vincent de Paul, Priest September 23**