

GOD

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DISCUSSION
GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

A WORD ON ATTRIBUTES

Is God defined by His attributes? Yes, and no. Is He the sum of the attributes we will talk about? No. Is God, God? Yes. However, God is not defined by His attributes. He defines His attributes. God is wholly what He is, but we could never completely explain all that He is.

God reveals His character to us through actions and words, and He tells us what He is like in ways we can understand. In studying what theologians call the different “attributes” of God, we learn more about Him—who He is, what He does, and why He does it. Yet, no study of God’s “attributes” is exhaustive or complete because we cannot define God and put Him in a box. These terms do not define who God is, but we can use these terms—often God-given—to grasp in our finite minds who our infinite God is.

It is unhelpful to think of God’s actions as being tied to certain attributes. Instead, we should think of all of God, all His “attributes,” acting together, all the time. Because God is infinite, believers will be learning more and more about Him for all of eternity. As we learn, we will find increasing satisfaction in knowing God for who He is: eternally powerful as the Triune God and eternally good in all His character.

GOD’S ESSENCE

By nature, God exists as one essence, or being, with three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). While this can be hard to wrap our minds around, the idea remains rational. God’s Trinitarian nature upholds the Christian faith. Without this key aspect, our faith would not make sense. In fact, the essence of God being three in one actually makes sense of everything in the world.

GOD’S ETERNAL POWER

At some point in life people ask themselves: “Who is God? What is He like? What is His name?” Even leaders of our faith—past and present—have wrestled with these questions.

- Paul asked Jesus, “Who are you Lord?” Jesus replied, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” By this statement, Paul knew that Jesus was God.
- When God commanded Moses to lead the Israelites, Moses asked God who He should say had sent him. God said, “I Am Who I Am.” In this, God declared Himself the one and only God.

- When the Jews questioned Jesus, saying, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” In saying this, Jesus declared His eternal existence.
- When the High Priest asked Jesus, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus said, “I am.” He was saying He was and is equal with the one true God.

When God describes Himself, He often merely defines Himself as The One, The Eternal Being, The One Who Was, Is, and Is to Come—The I Am. He eternally has held, holds, and will hold all power, forever.

GOD’S ETERNAL GOODNESS

The great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, once said, “God Himself is the great good...the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased.” The author of Hebrews summarizes this thought saying, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6) Through faith, God rewards with the greatest good: Himself. He became man so we might know Him in a way that is personal. This personal relationship with the living God is the single greatest gift we can ever receive. It is also the greatest gift we can share with others! Jesus said, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the father.” If you want to know more of what God is like: Look to Jesus.

This study guide is made up of three weekly sections:

1. DISCUSSIONS

Each week has groupings of questions that seem to fit well together. These groupings are called “discussions.” They are designed to help you get into God’s Word, apply the sermon, and guide your group discussion. Use the discussions, or questions, that fit best with your group’s situation or needs. Beyond your Small Group, these questions can also be used in the context of a Bible study or discipleship relationship.

2. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

These questions were created specifically with families in mind and we hope they’ll be useful in facilitating family discussion (maybe around the dinner table, or another family devotional time). These questions are applicable for all ages, including young children. We pray these bless you as you disciple your family.

3. NEXT STEPS

Each week, we’ve suggested some next steps. Whether you take these steps, or find out other ways to respond, our hope is that you intentionally act on and obey God’s Word.



WEEK ONE

“GOD IS THREE AND ONE”

John 8:48-58; Ephesians 4:4-6

DISCUSSION 1

The concept of the Trinity can be hard to understand.

1. How can we make sense of the Christian claim that God is three persons in one essence (or being)?
2. What analogies might help us explain the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
3. Where do these analogies fail in representing the mystery of the Trinity?

DISCUSSION 2

Read Ephesians 4:1-6, focusing on how the Trinity has a practical impact for the life of Christians today.

1. How does the Trinity influence and dictate the way the Church functions and interacts?
2. How do the roles of the Trinity directly affect the way God relates to His children? Refer to John 14:26 and 2 Corinthians 13:4 to help inform your answer.
3. How does the Trinity affect every aspect of our lives (Ex. marriage, family, Christian living, discipleship, etc.)?

DISCUSSION 3

The Trinity distinguishes Christianity from all other religions.

1. In what ways does the Trinity distinguish God's nature from that of other pagan and false gods?
2. How does the doctrine of the Trinity help us in understanding our Salvation?
3. Could someone still believe the gospel without believing in the Trinity (God being three persons in one nature)?

DISCUSSION 4

Some argued that the Trinity did not exist as an idea or reality during the writing of the Old Testament.

1. Where do we see hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament? Consider Genesis 1:26 and 3:22.
2. Why is it important to recognize that the doctrine of the Trinity is present throughout the Bible, not just the New Testament?
3. What problems would we have if the Trinity did not exist until Jesus? What would it tell us about God's perfection if He changed? How would that affect our faith?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Spend some time discussing the Trinity, and how it relates to our lives.
2. How is the role of a father similar to the role of God the Father? How is it different?
3. What does the Bible say about the Holy Spirit? How does that make the Holy Spirit different than a ghost or an evil spirit?

NEXT STEPS

- Reflect on how a better grasp of the Trinity might inform and transform your Christian walk. How does this doctrine change the way you worship God, understand the gospel, pray, or view the body of Christ, the Church? Praise God that He is three in one.
- Consider reading *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer, or *Delighting in the Trinity* by Michael Reeves for further study on the attributes of the triune God.

DISCUSSION 1

Holiness is a major theme in the Bible and the holiness of God is central to our faith.

1. What is meant by "holy?"
2. How is the holiness of God communicated in this week's passage?
3. What is your response to the holiness of God today? Are you repelled by it or attracted to it?

DISCUSSION 2

The un-holiness or sinfulness of humanity is also a major theme of the Bible.

1. What parts of this passage demonstrate the sinfulness of Isaiah and humanity?
2. How does Isaiah react to the holiness of God? How should this inform our view of sin and mankind?
3. What areas of your life would the holy God expose to you as sinful? Confess these sins personally and, if appropriate, publicly.

DISCUSSION 3

There is a solution to the problem of sin, and it comes from the holy God.

1. What in this text demonstrates the redemptive hope God gives to His fallen people (v. 6-7)?
2. How can you relate this forgiveness to your own life and to the lives of others?

DISCUSSION 4

We believe the holy God speaks truth. Otherwise, He would not be holy. We can be thankful that He speaks truth about Himself and us.

1. What do the following New Testament passages reveal about God's truthfulness (John 3:33; 2 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2)?
2. What other passages in Scripture can you think of that reveal God's holiness and the reality of sin?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Are you afraid of a holy God on a throne? Can you see His loving care in this passage as He reaches out to His children in love?
2. How have you seen God show love toward you? How have you shown that love to others?
3. As parents, confess sin to your family as appropriate. Teach your children, through example, the joy of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation that is found in Christ.

NEXT STEPS

- Meditate on and memorize 1 John 1:9.
- Sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" as a family.

**“OMNIPOTENT, OMNISCIENT,
OMNIPRESENT”**

Psalm 139

DISCUSSION 1

Examine Psalm 139 as a whole, paying special attention to what it reveals about this week’s topic: the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent attributes of God.

1. Define omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.
2. This text seems to break neatly across these attributes. Which verses do you think apply to each? Why?
3. David paints a picture of a big and majestic God who relates to these three attributes. How do these attributes shape our view of God? How does this view affect our daily lives?

DISCUSSION 2

Read vv. 1- 6. God knows everything that has been, is, could be, and will be. This is God’s omniscience.

1. How does this text display God’s omniscience?
2. What do you find encouraging about God’s omniscience? What could scare you? Why?
3. How could a better understanding of God help us in our walk with God (Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6)?
4. Why does David say that this “knowledge is too wonderful” for him? How is this response different than perhaps some would respond in our culture?

DISCUSSION 3

Read vv. 7- 12. God’s omnipresence means that there is not anywhere that God is not present.

1. In these verses, David claims that God’s presence is not only in heaven, but also in Sheol. Are there places where God is absent? Why or why not? Which attribute of God does David seem to be emphasizing?
2. If God is present everywhere in some capacity, what does this mean eternally for believers? What does it mean eternally for unbelievers?

3. What does v. 10 tell us about God and His ability to shepherd and care for His people?
4. How do vv. 10-12 show us that God is not bound by any opposing force? How might these verses be an encouragement in times of suffering?

DISCUSSION 4

Read vv. 13-24. God's ability to accomplish anything He wills is His omnipotence.

1. Consider verses 13, 16, and 19. What attribute (or attributes) does David seem to be affirming of God in these verses? When David asks God to "slay the wicked," what does he imply about God's power?
2. How does v. 13 impact our present culture?
3. In vv. 23-24, what is the relation between God revealing our sin to us, and our ability to pursue godly living?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Is there anywhere that God is not present? Is there anything God does not know? Is there anything God cannot do?
2. How can the fact that God is present everywhere encourage us when we are frightened or suffering?
3. If God knows everything about us, does that help us obey Him? Why or why not?
4. How does God's creation of babies show His power? When does a baby become a person? Why?

NEXT STEPS

- Spend time praying into these attributes of God. Thank and praise Him for His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.
- Pray David's prayer over your own life. Confess your sin and walk in holiness (Psalm 139:23-24).

DISCUSSION 1

People often miss the context surrounding 1 Corinthians 13. To better understand the context, read 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 (Possibly break into smaller groups and report back to the larger group).

1. What is the general theme of 1 Corinthians 12?
2. What is the general theme of 1 Corinthians 14?
3. In light of chapters 12 and 14, why do you think Paul gives the deep description of “love” that we see in chapter 13?

DISCUSSION 2

First Corinthians 13 has a poetic structure that helps us taste and see the beauty of God’s love and mercy. We can look at the life of Jesus and see the perfect example of these qualities.

1. As you look at this description of love, list some moments in the life of Jesus that demonstrate His endless love. Also, list times where you have personally experienced His love.
2. Describe some of the occasions where someone has shown the love of Jesus to you in very practical ways.

DISCUSSION 3

In the last verse, Paul states that “the greatest of these is love.”

1. Why is love the greatest virtue?
2. What aspects of this description of love mean most to you? Why?
3. Describe how you have experienced love from God and others. How have you, in turn, demonstrated this love to others?

DISCUSSION 4

We will not have perfect love in this life, but we've been given a perfect example of one who does love perfectly: Jesus.

1. How would you define God's mercy to you? How would you define His love and grace?
2. Are you encouraged or discouraged that you will not be able to love perfectly in this life? Why or why not?
3. How can God's perfect love motivate us to love more perfectly?
4. Should we seek to show mercy as God does to help us love others better? Can you think of times when you have done that? What did that look like?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. How can our family love each other with a 1 Corinthians 13 love this week? List 2-3 ways.
2. Parents: Tell your children some things you have done to show selfless love to your kids. Ask them to tell you ways they have seen your love for them.
3. Read Ephesians 2:13-14. How does God's love reconcile everyone—even if you've been hurt by someone, or have significant differences?

NEXT STEPS

- Read Philippians 1:9-11. Pray that your love would abound more and more in accordance with this passage.
- Thank God that He has always loved you, even when you were still dead in your sins (Ephesians 2:5).
- Meditate on and memorize Romans 5:8.

DISCUSSION 1

Consider the fact that God has always existed and always will exist. With that in mind, read vv. 1-4.

1. In v. 1, Moses says, “Lord you have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Based on this, what does it mean that God is infinite?
2. In this text, the Hebrew word *מִקְוֵה* is translated as “dwelling place.” This Hebrew word occurs five times throughout the Psalms, and this is the only place that it is translated as “dwelling place.” Two of the five times it is translated as “refuge.”
3. Two times, the word is translated as “refuge.” Read Psalm 71:3 and 91:9. How might these verses help us understand better what it means that God is our dwelling place?
4. How does God’s infinitude give us confidence that He truly can be a dwelling place of refuge for us in our lives? What does it practically look like to have God as a refuge?
5. Consider vv. 2, 4. How can it be true that for God, “a thousand years are but yesterday”?

DISCUSSION 2

Consider God’s sovereignty and man’s condition. Considering that, read vv. 3-11.

1. In Psalm 90:7, Moses says, “We are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.” How does this verse show God’s good sovereignty?
2. What insight does v. 7 give, regarding our condition before God? Why is this right for God to act this way?
3. What are “secret sins”? What does Moses say about them? How does this help us live righteously (v. 8. Also, see Numbers 32:23)?

DISCUSSION 3

God is eternal, and we are finite. With that in mind, read vv. 12-17.

1. Why is it important for God to “teach us the number of our days”? How does this relate to having a “heart of wisdom”? How might this change the way we make daily decisions?
2. In vv. 14-15, Moses asks God to “satisfy us in the morning” and “make us glad all of our days.” If these things are being asked of God, what does it suggest about Him? How does this affect the ways we seek satisfaction? How might we need to change our current desires?
3. Why does Moses ask that God would “establish the work of our hands?”

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Read vv. 14-15. Where do we find satisfaction in this life and forever?
2. Why are our lives so short? Who controls the length of our lives? What hope do we have? Who gives us that hope?
3. How long has God existed?
4. Consider how God is sovereign (completely in control) and infinite (eternal). How does this impact the way you view God as your refuge or dwelling place?

NEXT STEPS

- Spend time in prayer. Individually, think about— or discuss together— where you might be looking for satisfaction outside of God.
- Talk as a Small Group, or with a friend or family member, about what it looks like to live wisely, with the knowledge that your days are numbered (Read Colossians 4:5).

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss the importance of knowing God.

1. Do you have any specific examples of how a wrong understanding of God might lead us into trouble?
2. How does thinking rightly about God help your obedience to and relationship with Christ?
3. This summer, what are some ways you want to learn more about who God is? What are some ways you want to meditate on His glory? How will you do these disciplines?

DISCUSSION 2

Transcendence points to God’s otherness, setting Him apart from us. He is to be worshipped because He is above and beyond us. (Consider reading Acts 17:24; Is. 40:9-31; Ps. 8; Job 26-28, 38-41; 1 Chron. 29:11).

1. From the texts above, or others, what are some of the ways the Bible shows us God’s transcendence? What metaphors are used to explain God’s transcendence?
2. How does God’s transcendence apply to your life?
3. If we lost a high view of God (transcendence), how might this diminish our view of Him and our walk with Him?
4. What are some ways you can point others to the transcendence of God?

DISCUSSION 3

Immanence points to God’s nearness and desire to draw close to us. (Consider reading Ps. 139; 34:18; 145:18; Deut. 4:7; John 14:18; Ex. 33:14-16).

1. From the texts above, or others, what are some of the ways the Bible shows us God’s immanence? What metaphors are used to explain God’s immanence?
2. How does God’s immanence apply to your life?

3. If our understanding was that God is transcendent but not near and close to us (immanent), how might this diminish our view of Him and our walk with Him?
4. What are some ways you can point others to God and the beautiful truth that He is both transcendent and near to us (immanent)?

DISCUSSION 4

Relate these attributes to the incarnation.

1. Jesus is often thought of as the display of God's immanence. How does Jesus display both God's immanence and transcendence?
2. How can a believer meditate on Christ's incarnation to increase their worship, trust, and confidence in God, and their eagerness to approach God?
3. How does seeing and knowing Jesus, as revealed in Scripture, help us to more clearly and intimately see who God is (John 14:9)?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. What does transcendence mean?
2. How does the Bible and the creation around us show that God is transcendent?
3. What does immanence mean?
4. How do we know that God is and promises to be near to us?

NEXT STEPS

- Take time this week to read passages in the Bible about God's transcendence and immanence (see discussions 2 and 3 for related verses). Meditate on these attributes of God and spend time thanking and adoring God for all He is.
- Pick one attribute you want to lean into during this series. Share this plan with at least one other friend, family member, or Small Group member. Need some ideas? You might choose to read a book on the attributes of God and pick one attribute to study in depth. You might spend time journaling about the ways you can see God's attributes in Scripture and in creation. Another idea is to commit to meditating on (dwelling on intentionally) and praying about God's attributes each week this summer.

DISCUSSION 1

God is independent, but also relational.

1. How does Paul describe God in this passage?
2. What are some of the truths stated here that show us God is independent?
3. Does this make you feel like God is not approachable? Why or why not?
4. In order for God to be God, He must be independent. In other words, in order to be God, He can't rely on anything or anyone other than Himself. Why is this true?

DISCUSSION 2

Paul makes it clear that God's good news is for all people.

1. What does v. 26 say about the diversity of God's creation?
2. How does this verse help us see God's personal care for all His created people?
3. What does this verse tell us about how we should live with others (even those different than us)?
4. Verse 27 is the gospel spoken to Greek pagans. How does it illustrate the gospel? Is it comforting to you?

DISCUSSION 3

God is not an abstract, powerful deity who does not have time for His creation. He is deeply personal and relational.

1. How do you know God is near you? List some ways or reasons you know Him to be near.
2. When does God seem distant? Why might that be? What is the remedy?
3. How is God relational within Himself?
4. Why is the Trinity necessary for God to be God?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Can you think of a time on TV, in school, or in the neighborhood when people have acted like there is no God? (Spend time discussing the current reality of a world that ignores God and acts like He does not exist)?
2. What are some examples of times you have felt God's nearness? How can you grow closer to Him this week?

NEXT STEPS

- Pray for a heart that draws near to God because He is near to you.
- Meditate on and memorize James 4:8.

DISCUSSION 1

The law revealed the sinful nature of man and God's righteous standards.

1. In v. 21, Paul reveals one of the purposes of the Law in the Old Testament. What is it? How is the Law a gracious gift of God (Rom. 7:7; 7:12)?
2. Why was the law insufficient (Rom. 8:3)?
3. Read Galatians 5:1–6. What are the dangers of focusing too strongly on law instead of focusing on—and being motivated by—God's grace?

DISCUSSION 2

Our gracious God is good.

1. How do you know if you are good enough for God to accept you? Are some people more deserving of heaven than others?
2. What does it look like to be motivated by grace? What would be the tangible evidence of that?
3. According to vv. 21-22, what is the only way that we can be obedient to God and be righteous in His sight? How does this differ from being under the Law?
4. In vv. 22b-26, Paul supports his claim that the righteousness of God comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. Why is Jesus the only way?

DISCUSSION 3

God is just, and evil mankind is deserving of just punishment.

1. From the text, how does Jesus save us? Why is salvation necessary, and what does it tell us about human nature?
2. Many people ask, “How can a good God allow so much evil?” Paul seems to be answering the opposite question in vv. 24-26 when he asks, “How can a good and righteous God allow any good things to happen to evil people?” God graciously gives good things to undeserving sinful people (rain, crops, pleasures, etc.). How does the death of Christ uphold God’s justice?
3. In the original Greek, the word for righteousness and justice are the same, and Christ’s death displays God’s righteousness or justice in two ways. First, it shows God as righteous. Second, it makes people righteous. How does Christ’s death do both? How does this truth affect the way we live in both instances?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Why does a just God allow evil people to live (1 Pet. 3:9)?
2. How does Christ’s death show God’s goodness toward us?
3. Read v. 24. What does it mean that salvation is a gift? How do we receive this gift?
4. How does God’s goodness and justice affect the way we live?

NEXT STEPS

- In light of what you’ve learned about God during the first eight weeks of this series, how can you help others grow in their understanding of God as well? Finding hope with a Small Group, leading a Small Group, or helping to disciple the next generation are all great ways to help others grow in their knowledge of God.
- Consider having a conversation with someone you know who struggles with the presence of evil in the world. Listen to their struggles. After you have listened, ask if you can share the truth of Romans 3 with them.

DISCUSSION 1

God is faithful.

1. What does it mean that God is faithful? What are some passages from Scripture that come to mind?
2. God is not only faithful to His people, but also faithful to Himself. Read 2 Timothy 2:13. How does this verse provide insight into God’s justice by highlighting His faithfulness to Himself?
3. How have you seen God’s faithfulness in your life recently? What example or story can you share with your Small Group or with others, to encourage them?

DISCUSSION 2

God is steadfast.

1. What does it mean that God is steadfast?
2. How does God’s steadfastness relate to His faithfulness? Why does this matter?
3. Is it possible to have one (faithfulness or steadfastness) without the other?

DISCUSSION 3

After reflecting on some examples, consider on how these realities apply to us.

1. Identify examples of God’s faithfulness and steadfast love in this passage (Consider reading Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:9; Dan. 6:26; Ps. 89:8; 1 Cor.10:13).
2. How does God’s steadfastness and faithfulness motivate us to share the good news with others? Why?
3. How can we show God’s faithfulness and steadfastness to others?
4. Share a time in your life when these truths helped sustain your faith.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. What does it mean that God is faithful?
2. What does it mean that God is steadfast?
3. When was a time that you relied on God's steadfastness and His faithfulness?
4. Why is it encouraging that God is steadfast and faithful?

NEXT STEPS

- Create a journal in which you regularly record God's faithfulness in your life.
- Meet with someone you know who is going through a hard time. Listen to them. Encourage them through the Scriptures and through stories of God's faithfulness and steadfastness in your life.

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