

GOD ALMIGHTY



**CORE
CLASS**

Part of the *Bible Doctrine Series*

Table of Contents

– Session 1 –

Intro Thoughts.	3
Divine Revelation – Nature, Method, and Purpose	4
God's Nature: Transcendent, Immanent, and Triune	8
The Names of God.	11

– Session 2 –

Incommunicable Attributes	24
Independent, Self-Existent, and Self-Sufficient	25
Immutable and Unchanging	27
Eternal and Infinite.	30
Simplicity, Oneness, and Unity.	32

– Session 3 –

Communicable Attributes	35
Power, Sovereignty, and Providence	36
Spirituality and Invisibility	39
Knowledge and Omniscient	41
Wisdom, All-Wise, and Omnisapient	43
Faithfulness and Truthfulness	45
Love.	47
Goodness, Grace, Mercy, and Patience	51
Holiness.	53
Jealousy.	57
Righteousness	60
Justice and Wrath	62
Final Thoughts: Connecting It All Together.	65

Bibliography	67
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Session 1: Intro Thoughts, Revelation, God's Nature, Trinity, Glory, Names of God, Intro Attributes

Intro Thoughts

The more you know God, the more you will fall in love with Him for He is the most awesome, desirable, and beautiful of all.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism - Who is God?

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

The value of studying God is found in value of God Himself.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

— A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (pg. 1)

Why is this statement true?

Tozer calls the church to attention and states:

"With our loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine Presence. We have lost our spirit of worship and our ability to withdraw inwardly to meet God in adoring silence. Modern Christianity is simply not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience the life in the Spirit. The words, 'Be still, and know that I am God,' mean nothing to the self-confident, bustling worshiper in this middle period of the twentieth century."

— A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (pg. viii)

What do you think about this quote? Is Tozer right?

"The heart of all theology is nothing less than to know God, and to make him known."

— Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, (pg. 24)

"Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. As He is the subject of our study, and our helper in it, so he must himself be the end of it. We must seek, in studying God, to be led to God. It was for this purpose that revelation was given, and it is to this use that we must put it."

— J. I. Packer, *In Knowing God*, (pg 23)

What would be a false or improper aim to studying God?

Packer claims that there are several things that are evident in those that know God:

1. Those who know God have great energy for God.
2. Those who know God have great thoughts of God.
3. Those who know God show great boldness for God.
4. Those who know God have great contentment in God.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 – What does the average person in society like to boast about? What does the godly man boast about?

Why is it so hard to take this perspective on life?

How does God describe Himself? Why did He pick these two characteristics?

What does it say about God – that He delights in these things?

Divine Revelation – Nature, Method, and Purpose

"If God is a personal being, it is not surprising that we can know him only by revelation, since the same is true of every person. Other people know us only to the extent that we reveal ourselves to them."

— Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, (pg. 15)

A. The Nature of Revelation: God creates and reveals Himself to Humanity

God can be truly known. What He says about Himself is true and accurate.

- We pursue Him! We pursue knowledge of Him.
- We devote our lives to knowing Him more (Jeremiah 29:13).
- There is no greater purpose in life.
- How should this reality impact your time, resources, schedule, and library?

God can't be fully, completely, or exhaustively known.

- In the same way that an ant can't understand the complexities of a man, we in our finite nature can't fully understand our infinite God.
- God, therefore, reveals Himself over time.
- He progressively reveals His nature and character in His world throughout history, through His interactions with man (blessings and judgments), through His Word, and finally (and most completely) in His Son.

B. Methods of God's Revelation: God's Word, God's Son, and God's Creation

1. **God's Word** – Tells the story of God's redemptive plan through the ages. It records the self-revelation of God's character and attributes through all stages of history and in all genres of literature. God has revealed Himself to us by His Word. The better we know God's Word the better we will know Him.
2. **God's Son** – To see the Son is to see the Father (John 10:30), for He is the radiance of the Father's glory (Hebrews 1:1-3), an exact image of the Father (Colossians 1:15), and the fullness of deity dwells in Christ (Colossians 2:9). It is Jesus who has made the Father known (John 1:18).
3. **God's Creation** – God's creation is filled with His glory (Isaiah 6:3), and the heavens proclaim and preach of the greatness of God (Psalm 19:1-2). God's creation displays His invisible qualities, His eternal power, and divine attributes so that they have been clearly seen by all of humanity (Romans 1:20). "Hundreds of false religions in the world are evidence of the way sinful people, without guidance from Scripture, will always misunderstand and distort the revelation about God found in nature. But the Bible alone tells us how to understand the testimony about God from nature" (Grudem, 149).

C. Purpose of God's Revelation: To Bring Glory to Himself

Before beginning a discussion on God's attributes, we should stop and reflect on God's purpose and motivation. He is glorious and He desires, seeks, and expects to be glorified by all that He has made.

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another."

— Isaiah 48:11

1. Aspects of God's glorious Nature

- Internal – The weight and reality of God's infinite worth and value. God does not have to work at being glorious – He simply is.
- External – The outward display of God's internal worth in the form of splendor and

light. Heaven itself will be eternally lit by the glory of God (Revelation 21:23). Examples – Moses, the Transfiguration, and Revelation 1:16.

- Reflective – God's nature and divine attributes are reflected in His creation and people (Genesis 1:27, Psalm 19:1-2, Romans 1:20, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Revelation 21:11).

2. God's Purpose for Creation

Why is Eden different than Heaven?

Why would God take creation through a redemptive plan that takes thousands of years? How is the Gospel connected to God's glory (2 Corinthians 4:4)?

Do all of God's attributes bring Him glory?

Isaiah 6:3, Isaiah 43:7, 21, 25, Psalm 19:1-2, Romans 1:20 - By nature, how does God's creation bring Him glory? Does it do it perfectly?

How does glory function within the Trinity? How are we included?

"The circle of glorification, however, does not begin with creation. There is also a circle of glorification within the Trinity itself. The Father glorifies the Son (John 8:50, 54, 13:32, 14:13; 17:1,5), and the Son glorifies the Father (John 7:18; 13:31; 17:4). The Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14), and therefore glorifies the Father through the Son" (Frame, 594).

"Each member of the Trinity speaks and acts in such a way as to enhance the reputations of the other two, to bring praise and honor to the other persons" (Frame, 595).

God displays His glory by revealing His character and redemptive plan over time.

We participate in glorifying God. We do not need to create methods for glorifying God. Ultimately, we glorify God as participants (receivers and proclaimers) in His redemptive plan for the ages.

By Reflecting...

- His Image
- His Glory
- With ever-increasing accuracy (2 Corinthians 3:18)

By Recognizing...

- Our finite nature in comparison to His infinite worth, value, knowledge, and power
- Our depravity, thirst, and dependence satisfied in His abundant provision alone (Matthew 5:6)

By Receiving...

- Christ as Savior and Lord
- Adoption, grace, mercy, and goodness

By Responding...

- With praise and adoration (Psalm 145-150)
- With love (Mark 12:30-31) and service (1 Peter 4:11)
- In unity in the Family of God (John 17)
- With humility (Philippians 2:5 & Ephesians 4:1-2) and thankfulness
- With delight in His goodness (Psalm 37:4)
- With satisfaction in Him (Philippians 3:7-8)

By Reporting...

- Proclaim His worth and grace to the church and world
- Demonstrate His love
- Share our testimony (1 Timothy 1:15-17)
- Enhance His reputation in everything we do and say (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Knowability, Nature

Some deny God's existence or the ability to know Him. Instead, they practice:

- Atheism
- Agnosticism
- Gnosticism
- Experientialism

God's Nature: Transcendent, Immanent, and Triune

How do we begin a discussion about God? How do we classify or accurately communicate who He is and what He is like?

A. The Transcendence and Immanence of God the Creator

God Creates - Time, Space, and Matter

Exists Outside

Transcendent

Incommunicable

Greatness

Natural

Dwells Inside

Immanent

Communicable

Goodness

Moral

B. God is Triune

There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory (Westminster Shorter Catechism).

2 Corinthians 13:14 –

Luke 4:21-23 –

1 Peter 1:2 –

What did it look like for God to exist in community in the eternal state?

- God lives in perfect community and fellowship. "The fact that God is three persons yet one God means that there was in loneliness or lack of personal fellowship on God's part before creation" (Grudem, 161).
- Personal, relational, giving, receiving, and sharing glory, abounding in Love. "In fact, the love and interpersonal fellowship and the sharing of glory, have always been and will always be far more perfect than any communion we as finite human beings will ever have with God" (Grudem, 161).
- God exists without need, lack, or loneliness (Acts 17:24-25).
- God dwells with an abundance of joy, love, and happiness.

How do we balance the singular substance of God and the distinct persons of God?

- Each person of the Trinity is co-existent, co-eternal, co-equal, co-infinite with the others
- Genesis 1:26 - Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness
- The Trinity is inseparable in operation as all three work together in harmony and common purpose making their work ultimately indivisible. Yet, there seems to some emphasis and distinction.
- Different roles, relations, and responsibilities. Distinct by paternity, generation, and procession (Allison, 91).
- "God the Father is the person who ordains, establishes, judges and appoints; he is also the person to whom worship is chiefly directed. The Son Jesus Christ appears as the Redeemer, the sacrificial victim and the mediator; he is the guarantor of our salvation and the person whose likeness we are being molded. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, the first fruits of the inheritance of the glory to come. He dwells in our hearts by faith, although not to the exclusion of Christ and is responsible both for giving us access to the Father and for producing the image of Christ in us" (Bray, 147).

Jesus is God

- Psalm 45:6-7 - Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with oil
- Heb 1:8, 14 - Jesus is called God and is worshipped by angels
- John 10:30, Hebrews 1:1-3, Colossians 2:9 - All speak to the full deity of Jesus
- Psalm 110 - The Lord says to my Lord
- Matthew 22:43-44 - The Father addresses God the Son

The Spirit is God

- Matt 3:16-17 - The Father, Son, and Spirit present in the Son's baptism
- Matt 28:18-20 - All three are named in our baptism
- 1 Peter 1:2 - The Father elects, the Spirit sanctifies, and Christ cleanses them (Allison, 91).
- The Holy Spirit is sent (proceeds) from the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26).

As far as we can understand, each person of the Trinity have likely had the same roles and relationships throughout eternity.

- The Father is eternally parental, the Son is eternally generated or begotten of the Father (though not created or dependent on him for deity) and the Holy Spirit eternally proceed from both the Father and Son.
- Likely, the Son has always submitted to the Father. They each seem to play some role in glorifying one another.

False understandings:

- Unitarianism - God is only one person
- Tritheism - rejects that God is one
- Modalism - No distinction between persons. One person wearing 3 different masks
- Arianism - denial of Christ's deity
- Pneumatomachianism - denial of the Holy Spirit's deity

This doctrine distinguishes the Christian faith from all other religions (Allison, 93).

"The balancing consideration with respect to this doctrine is the fact that we and the rest of creation can glorify God and bring him joy" (Grudem, 162).

The Gospel culminates in the church witnessing and sharing in His Glory for all of eternity (John 17:22-25) in a new Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:22-27)!

The Names of God

God has revealed Himself more and more to man over time. In the same way that we reveal ourselves through our words (conversations and interactions) and actions, God, through the history of the Old Testament, has shown more and more of Himself through His actions and interactions with man. In His dealings with Israel (and us), God shows His incredible patience, grace, mercy, love and holiness. Throughout the Psalms, He displays His beauty, majesty, and splendor. In the Prophets, God makes His justice, wrath, jealousy, and judgment known. In all these things, God reveals His almighty power, His knowledge of all things (past, present, & future), and His perfect wisdom.

God also reveals His nature through His names throughout the Bible. A name symbolizes the characteristics of the one bearing the name. The name speaks to the reality and nature of the person. God declares who He is through multiple names that He uses for Himself. A study of the names of God is a study of God Himself. A passion for God propels us into this study - desiring more of Him and not being satisfied with a remedial knowledge of God. Over time, God reveals more of Himself as He uses additional names to describe Himself to His people. Many of the thoughts from this section come from Johnson's *Our Great and Awesome God!*

"God's revealed name is, of course, more than a label; it is a revelation of what he is in relation to us."

– J. I. Packer, *In Knowing God*

"Those who know your name will trust you."

– Psalm 9:10

A. Elohim — Uppermost One

Elohim is translated, "God" in the English OT.

Elohim is the first name that God uses to reveal Himself and it is the name consistently used through the first chapter of Genesis.



"In the beginning God (Elohim). . ."

– Genesis 1:1

From this verse alone, what do we learn about God?

Elohim is a plural noun. A plural noun is sometimes used to express royalty and greatness. It is also possible that as early as the first verse of the Bible we see a glimpse of the trinity in action in the creation of the world.

This name implies that God is:

- Over all creation
- Mighty, strong, and prominent
- Great and glorious
- Omnipotent and sovereign

It was Elohim who said, "Let there be light," and the darkness heard and fled as light was created by the simple command of God to be.

It was Elohim who created the world. From the ocean floors in the deepest seas to the highest mountain peaks. From the deserts to the rainforests, God created it all. Every moment of every day God looks overall of His creation and can see every waterfall, every star in the sky, and every sunrise.

It was Elohim who created every living creature, giving some wings to take flight, gills to swim underwater, or a skeletal structure to walk, run, and jump.

It was Elohim who created man in His own image with the purpose to love man, to have mercy on him, and to have a relationship with him. It was this God who created and looked at His creation and said that it was "very good."

Isaiah 44:6, 8 – What phrase is repeated in both verses?

Why is this phrase so important for us to remember?

The word, Elohim, is used to describe other false gods in the OT, but the name, Elohim, takes on its full significance only when it describes the God who created all things.

Based upon the reality of who Elohim is, what kind of role should He play in our lives?

Elohim is king over all of creation and every aspect of His creation. What are the areas of your life where you struggle to ask God to be the king and in full control of your life?

B. Yahweh — Our Redeemer, The Self-Existent One

This name is translated "LORD" — all caps.



This Name is considered God's Personal Name.

What is the difference in how God is referenced in Genesis chapters 1 and 2?

This Name is considered Holy!

- It would not be spoken out loud by the Hebrews, for it was too holy! It was just referred to as "the Name." Because of this, we no longer know how it was properly pronounced (Yahweh or Jehovah). Original Hebrew manuscripts do not include the vowels.
- The death penalty was imposed for blasphemy of the Name (Lev. 24:16).

The Name is connected to God's Redemptive work with His people.

It is Yahweh who is our redeemer from sin and its consequences.

Exodus 6:1-3 – How will God reveal Himself as Yahweh?

Exodus 6:6-8 – How do we see God's redeeming work in action?

It is significant to note that often times the names, Elohim and Yahweh, are used together: The LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 6:4 –

It is awesome to realize that your Redeemer (Yahweh) is also All Powerful (Elohim) and therefore able to save. How sad it would be if we had a Redeemer unable to save or an All Powerful God who does not intercede for His people.

C. Adonai — Master or Owner – translated "Lord"

Adonai signifies ownership with the perfect right of rulership over all men. It also expresses a relationship involving Lordship and possession.



Genesis 15:1-6– What is the context in which Abram prays to God as "Lord" (Adonai)?

Abraham often approached God as Adonai when he had prayer requests, what does this tell us about Abraham's view of himself before God?

Isaiah 6:1-3– Why would this be an appropriate name of God in Isaiah's situation?

Is the Lord any different today? How should our response be similar to Isaiah's (6:4-8)?

God rarely (maybe never) uses Adonai to describe Himself. In almost all circumstances Adonai is a name by man used to address God. Why is this?

Psalms 110:1 and Matthew 22:41-46 – What do we learn about Jesus?

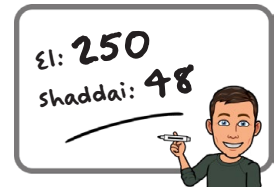
How should we recognize Jesus as Adonai in our daily life?

Romans 1:1– A slave in the Old Testament was "not their own." Whether voluntarily or not, they belonged to their lord. We are the same before Adonai. How did Paul reflect this in his life?

What are areas in our life where it is difficult to give Jesus mastery?

D. El Shaddai — God Almighty

- El – refers to God's power and might. It is basically an abbreviation of Elohim.
- Shaddai – comes from a Hebrew derivative that means "nourishment." This signifies God as One who will nourish and take care of His people.



El Shaddai – is the name of God often associated with blessings and promises. The names combined means that God is powerful enough to nourish, satisfy, and supply for all of our needs.

Read Genesis 17:1-7– The context of these verses:

- A. Verse 1 - How should Abram respond to El Shaddai?
- B. Verse 3 – Why does Abram fall on his face?
- C. Verse 2- What will El Shaddai do for Abram?

Why can Abram trust God?

- D. Verse 5 - What happens to Abram's name?

Genesis 35:10-12 – What does God do to Jacob's name?

What does El Shaddai promise to do for Jacob?

In both passages, the name El Shaddai is connected with incredible blessing. Those who came in contact with El Shaddai had both their name and future permanently changed!

2 Corinthians 5:17– How has El Shaddai changed your life?

What do we learn about our relationship with God as El Shaddai in:

Romans 8:28 –

John 14:2-3 –

What are some needs and desires in your life that only El Shaddai can satisfy?

How can knowing God as El Shaddai increase your intimacy with God?

E. El Elyon — Most High God

In a polytheistic culture, this name makes it clear that God is above all other false gods. There is no comparison – He is the Most High!

Genesis 14:17-20– Why is El Elyon the prominent name given to God when "Gentiles" are involved?

God alone is El Elyon! See what happens when Nebuchadnezzar forgets this in Daniel 4:28-33. What happens to King Nebuchadnezzar?

What was the mistake that he made?

How do we at times make this same mistake?

Why is there a tendency for man to get confused with who is most high–Himself or God?

Daniel 4:34-35– How did Nebuchadnezzar address God?

How can God use difficult situations in our life for our good and for His glory?

Daniel 4:37– This is the right reaction to God’s discipline. Why does this pagan king respond to God more appropriately than many Christians during his times of trial and hardship?

F. El Olam — The Everlasting God

Olam – This word’s definition has two aspects. First, it refers to eternity, the distant future, duration perpetual, without end, always, everlasting time; a broad range between the remotest time and perpetuity; ever continuing (Es. 26:4); it can be used with God, the everlasting God, and the God of eternity. Also, this word also refers to the disclosure of a secret over time. This is seen in God’s progressive revelation of His nature and plan over time.

Genesis 21:33 – This is the first time El Olam is used.

Psalm 90:1-4- What is it like for God to be everlasting?

Jeremiah 10:10-12 – What is Jeremiah’s message to the people? How should the world respond to the everlasting King?

How do they actually respond?

Psalm 10:16– The Kingship of God is Olam (everlasting). How should that reality affect the way we live?

This name of God is also in reference to the various stages of God’s revelation of Himself and the revelation of His plan.

Ephesians 3:8-12– How has God revealed His plan over time?

Can you think of any examples of this in the Old Testament? How does the OT point to the coming of Christ?

Micah 5:2– What do we learn about the coming Messiah?

G. Yahweh-Yireh — The Lord Our Provider

Genesis 12:1-3– What has God promised to provide for Abraham?

Genesis 22:1-14– Do you think Abraham remembers God's promises in 12:1-3 as he goes up the mountain?

Who provides the sacrifice?

How do we see God as Yahweh-Yireh in the New Testament?

Abraham does not have to drop the knife on Isaac, but God the Father is willing to drop the knife on Jesus to provide a way for man to reach Him. This is love immeasurable—the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of our provision!

Romans 8:32– How does this reality affect our faith and trust in God as our provider?

Psalms 84:11– How can we use this verse about Yahweh-Yireh to fight sin in our lives?

H. Yahweh-Rophe — The Lord Who Heals

Rophe – To heal

Exodus 15:22-26– How does God meet their needs?

In the New Testament, how do we see Yahweh-Rophe in action in the life of Christ and through the ministry of Christ? Why has Jesus been called the Great Physician?

Can Christ still meet your spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional needs today?

What areas of life do you need Yahweh-Rophe to work? Do you ever keep God out of certain areas of your life because of fear, embarrassment, or self-protection?

What will happen if we do not expose and open up all areas of our life to Christ?

I. Yahweh-Nissi — The Lord My Banner

Banner – this is not a flag, but it was a pole with an ornament that stood as a sign or cause.

Exodus 17:8-16 – Moses held up the staff to represent the Lord as Israel's sign and cause. This is a great visual for Israel to remember God as their Banner.

God must stand alone as our cause and purpose. What else do we hold up as our cause instead of Christ?



John 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:32– Jesus must be lifted up as our banner, what will happen when we do this?



top: "banners of arms"
bottom: banners

What are 2 specific areas in your life where you can be doing a better job at holding up Christ?

J. Yahweh-M'Kaddesh — The Lord Who Makes Us Holy

Leviticus 20:7-8 – How do we see both man and God in action in these verses?

Leviticus 20:26 – What do we learn about God's intention for Israel?

John 17:17-19 – How do we see both the Father and the Son functioning as Yahweh-M'Kaddesh?

What is the method that God uses to sanctify us?

sanctify -
To make one holy.

Philippians 1:6 & 2:12-13 – What else do we learn about how God is working in our lives?

In what areas do you need the work of Yahweh-M'Kaddesh?

How do you know if you are taking personal holiness seriously? Who in your life knows about your present struggles?

K. Yahweh-Shalom — The Lord Is Peace

Judges chapter 6 – Context: Israel is a crushed and defeated nation under the rule of Midian. To the average Israelite, life is characterized by oppression, persecution, death, and no hope of freedom, life, or peace.

Judges 6:11-24– By verse 24, has Israel experienced any peace?

Why did Gideon give the altar this name? How is faith linked to peace?

Philippians 4:10-13– What has Paul learned about peace and contentment?

John 14:27– How do we see Jesus as Yahweh-Shalom?

What kind of peace does He leave with us?

What does it mean if we are not experiencing peace? What is our first step to finding true peace?

L. Yahweh-Rohi — The Lord Is My Shepherd

Psalm 23– What are all of the qualities that you find describing a Good Shepherd?

John 10:1-18– What do we learn about Jesus as the Shepherd?

What would our lives look like if we truly believed He was our Good Shepherd?

Ever Wonder Why We're Called "Sheep?"

Sheep are...

- » Foolish
- » Helpless
- » Restless
- » Easily led astray
- » Unable to carry burdens
- » Easily lost (no navigational instincts)
- » Unable to defend themselves apart from running away
- » Content with whatever satisfies, even if it is wrong for them
- » Able to discern their shepherd's voice from other shepherds
- » Flock/community animals — isolation only increases stress

*Did you know that sheep are **so** helpless that if they fall over on their backs ("cast down"), they cannot even right themselves on their own? Their shepherd has to help them. Without someone coming to their aid, they quickly die.*



M. Yahweh-Sabaoth — Lord of Hosts or Lord Almighty

"This name reveals the Lord as captain of the armies (hosts) of heaven who is mighty to save his disobedient, wayward people and to fulfill His purpose in the world. The glory of our heavenly commander is not fleeting!" (Johnson, Our Great and Awesome God, 154).

Isaiah 6:3– Why would this be the cry of the angels?

2 Kings 19:32-36– Watch the Lord of Hosts at work defending His people.

Psalm 46:7, 11– How does this comfort you?

2 Kings 6:15-19– Can you imagine what life would be like if we could see God's army at work all around us? Everyday there is spiritual warfare all around us, how should this reality be reflected in our daily life?

Matthew 26:51-53– How did Jesus, while on earth, experience His Father to be Yahweh-Sabaoth?

How should it impact us to know that God is Yahweh-Sabaoth?

N. Yahweh-Tsidkenu — The Lord Our Righteousness

Tsidkenu - An unswerving adherence to the standard of fairness. The idea is synonymous with truth.

Jeremiah 23:6 – Who is this referring to? How can you know your answer is correct?

Habakkuk 2:4 – How is one's righteousness connected to the condition of their heart?

Romans 1:16-17 – How is the Gospel connected to righteousness?

How can God (Jesus) be our righteousness? (Check 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

What does it mean that we have taken on Christ's righteousness?

In Christ, exactly how righteous are we?

O. Yahweh-Shamma — The Lord Who Is There

Ezekiel 48:35 – What is going on in the book of Ezekiel?

Why would God wait until the last words of the book of Ezekiel to reveal His name Yahweh-Shamma?

In light of what we know about Ezekiel, what do we learn about how God deals with His people from the use of this name?

Ezekiel 43:1-9– What do we learn about “The Lord Who Is There” from this passage?

How should people respond to the fact that God’s presence will dwell with them in the city?

Psalm 139– How does David communicate the fact that God is always near? What does this tell us about God’s relationship with us?

How does knowing that God is right beside you (and even in you) at all times affect you and your view of Him?

How should this reality about God be reflected in the Christian’s life?

How should this reality affect our marriages?

Session 2: Incommunicable Attributes

There are qualities of God that we do not have or share (incommunicable), there are some that we do share (communicable), and there are aspects of our nature that reflect His nature. "It is equally futile to attempt to maintain a distinction between the 'communicable' and the incommunicable' attributes of God, at least at the level of the divine essence. There is certainly a real difference here, but it is tied to, and logically dependent on, the prior distinction between the persons and the essence of God" (Bray, 104).

Independent, Self-Existent, and Self-Sufficient Immutable and Unchanging Eternal and Infinite Simplicity, Oneness, and Unity

- A perfect harmony exists in all of God's attributes. One does not dominate another. God is never put into a perplexing situation trying to negotiate His attributes. God is infinitely complex and yet perfectly unified in His attributes.
- God reveals Himself through His attributes.
- God is never revealed separate from His attributes.
- By nature, God exists outside of and separate from His creation (opposed to pantheism).
- "Every one of God's attributes are identical with his being: God's attributes do not differ from his essence nor from one another" (Bavinck, 120).

What would happen if we emphasized one attribute over another?

How does society do this? How does this contribute to misunderstandings about the problem of evil? The existence of hell? The "good" who die young?

Independent, Self-Existent, and Self-Sufficient

Definition - Only God in nature, substance, and essence is autonomous, all-sufficient, and free in every way, always. He never has need, want, or lack of any sort. Everything in all of creation, visible and invisible, is dependent upon our independent God.

Descriptive Verses

Romans 11:34-36

1 Corinthians 8:6

Daniel 4:35

Isaiah 64:8

Psalms 19:21

Acts 17:25

Psalms 36:9

Psalms 102:25-27

Proper Response

In light of God's independence, how should we approach Him?

How does this affect the way we pray?

What would happen if God had a lack or need?

How would it change our relationship with Him if He needed us like we needed Him?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

Where does the world get this wrong?

What happens if an individual begins to see themselves as self-sufficient, and depend upon their own wits, wisdom, and power?

How do Christians get this wrong? When do they often make this mistake?

How does 'rugged individualism' fit into this discussion?

Favorite Quotes

"He is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, absolutely independent, not only in his existence, but consequently also in his virtues and perfections, in all his decrees and deeds" (Bavinick, 143).

"When we think of anything that has origin we are not thinking of God. God is self-existent, while all crafted things necessarily originated somewhere at some time. Aside from God, nothing is self-caused" (Tozer, 25).

"The human mind, being created, has an understandable uneasiness about the Uncreated. We do not find it comfortable to allow for the presence of One who is wholly outside of the circle of our familiar knowledge. We tend to be disquieted by the thought of One who does not account to us for His being who is responsible to no one, who is self-existent, self-dependent and self-sufficient" (Tozer, 26).

"An elementary but correct way to think of God is as the One who contains all, who gives all that is given but who Himself can receive nothing that He has not first given" (Tozer, 32).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Immutable and Unchanging

Definition - God (because His is fully independent) is unchanging in nature, perfections, quality, and purpose.

Descriptive Verses

Malachi 3:6

Hebrews 13:8

James 1:17

Isaiah 46:9-11

Possible Misunderstandings and Results of Unbelief

In theology books, one will read about God's impassibility. This is a tricky balance. We see God emotionally moved throughout Scripture and Jesus clearly displays emotions throughout His life—we would argue our emotional nature is a (fallen) reflection of His nature. Some important, fine points:

- God's nature (infinitude, self-existence, omni-presence, eternal purposes, holiness...) is not altered or changed by His own emotions or the passions of His creation.
- God's interactions with His people are often motivated and in response to the joys and pains of His children.
- He is present and active with His creation, acting and responding (though never surprised or out of control of circumstances, actions, or responses) while unchanging in His absolute nature and purpose.

impassible –

The inability of God to be subject to passions.

Our unchanging God lives outside of time and yet, dwells and interacts with His creation that is ever-changing in time space history. Watching these interactions may cause us to think that God is changing as His people are changing and as His plan is unfolding.

What does it mean when the Bible says that God repents (Genesis 6:6)? Or changes His mind (Amos 7:3)?

Numbers 23:19 -

1 Samuel 15:29 -

"The explanation is very simple. When speaking of Himself, God frequently accommodates His language to our limited capacities... When He institutes a change in His dealings with men He describes His course of conduct as repenting" (Pink, 38).

God's expressions of displeasure or sorrow based upon a circumstance does not show a change in God, but a true interaction with His creation as He moves them towards His ultimate unchanging purpose. Sorrow is a part of this process, much like a father watching a child make a bad decision in order to learn from their consequences.

Does God have a physical mind? Why is it important to realize when anthropomorphic language is being used?

Psalm 78:65 - "walking"

Jeremiah 7:13 - "rising early"

Why would He speak this way about Himself?

How would an unchanging God respond to a repentant people (Jonah 3:10)?

Some hold that Christ gave up His divine nature according to Philippians 2:7 (the Kenosis Theory), how would this position contradict God's immutability?

"The emptying includes change of role and status, not essential attributes or nature" (Grudem, 550). "Therefore, the best understanding of this passage is that it talks about Jesus giving up the status and privilege that was his in heaven" (Grudem, 551).

What happens if we confuse immutability with immobility?

Kenosis Theory –

Literally means "to empty."

Introduced in the late 1800s by Lutheran theologian Gottfried Thomasius, kenosis theory states that Jesus gave up His divine attributes (omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence) while living as a man on earth.

If this were true, then it means that Christ wouldn't be fully divine. Therefore, His death on the cross wouldn't be sufficient to atone for the sins of the world.



Is God unmoved or unaffected by my pain? How would it change our connection and fellowship with God if we viewed Him as unmoved by our emotions and pain?

Favorite Quotes

"He is ever the same. His purpose is fixed, His will is stable, His word is sure" (Pink, 39).

"Moreover, being immutable in his existence and essence, he is also unchangeable in his thoughts and will, in all his purposes and decrees" (Bavinick, 146).

"Though unchangeable in himself, God lives the life of his creatures, and is not indifferent to their changing activities" (Bavinick, 151).

"God, though immutable in himself, is able to create mutable beings; that he, though eternal in himself, is immanent in time; that he, though transcending all spatial relations, is present in every point of space; that he though he is absolute essence, is able to give a distinct existence to transient beings" (Bavinick, 151).

"The answer surely must lie in saying that the persons of the Trinity are indeed moved by our suffering, but that God's essence is untouched by it" (Bray, 99). "The implications which a doctrine of divine passibility has when applied to God's essence are catastrophic. We are left with a God who can be crippled with pain" (Bray, 100).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Eternal and Infinite

Definition and meaning - In strength, presence, knowledge, and in all moral qualities God is absolute, limitless, and unbound with perfect unity within Himself. Eternity is infinity applied to time - but before time God was, He fully existed in essence and person without a succession of moments in His own being. God lives outside of time and space while simultaneously filling every location and moment of time past, present, and future - everything is "present" to God.

Descriptive Verses

Isaiah 40:28 -

Isaiah 43:13 -

Psalms 147:5 -

1 Kings 8:27 -

Jeremiah 23:24 -

Psalms 90:2 -

Possible Misunderstandings or Results of Unbelief

Sin separates us from God - how is this possible?

What would be the outcome of God not being eternal? Not being infinite?

God is everywhere, but is God everything?

Should we view eternity as "a really long time?" Before creation, was there time?

What happens when we try to use time to measure eternity or measuring tape to measure infinity?

What can happen if we lose the balance between God being both infinite and personal?

"To God himself, all of his existence is always somehow 'present'" (Grudem, 169).

Favorite Quotes

"The study of physics tells us that matter and time and space must all occur together: if there is no matter, there can be no space or time either. Thus, before God created the universe, there was no 'time,' at least not in the sense of a succession of moments one after another. Therefore, when God created the universe, he also created time" (Grudem, 169).

"God's immanence is not an unconscious eminence, but a conscious presence of his being in all his creatures. That is the reason why the nature of this divine presence varies in accordance with the nature of these creatures" (Bavinick, 163).

"God's infinity is qualitatively different from that of mathematics, in that it is boundless as well as endless" (Bray, 86).

"We can say the following: in God's perspective, any extremely long period of time is as if it just happened. And any very short period of time (such as one day) seems to God to last forever: it never ceases to be 'present' in his consciousness. Thus God sees and knows all events past, present, and future with equal vividness" (Grudem, 170).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Simplicity, Oneness, and Unity

Definition - Every attribute is identical with God's being by reason of the fact that every one of God's virtues is absolutely perfect in God. God is whatever He has, God's essence is His attributes, they are Him, not simply pieces or parts of Him. God does not function with one attribute and not another. He is fully, completely, and consistently God in all His attributes and nature.

Descriptive Verses

John 1:4 -

1 John 1:5 -

John 14:6 -

Hebrews 12:29 -

Proper Response

Do we ever need to worry about God acting out of character with Himself?

Does God ever express love over justice? Justice over love?

Throughout our lives we meet people (parents, friends, co-workers) who seem one way and then end up another way, inconsistent in character, actions, and purpose. How can this affect our view of God?

How can we be reassured of His character and consistency?

How does our inconsistency impact our relationships?

What would happen if God became inconsistent, shifted His priorities, or preferred to display one of His attributes over another?

Possible Misunderstandings or Results of Unbelief

What if we let go of this understanding as we study the triune nature of God?



Is there ever a "family feud" within the persons of the Trinity?

Favorite Quotes

"We would not want to say that these attributes are only characteristic of some part of God, but rather that they are characteristic of God himself and therefore characteristic of all of God" (Grudem, 178).

"Hence, this simplicity does not conflict with the doctrine of the trinity, for the Divine Being is not composed of three persons, neither is each person composed of God's being plus the personal property; not the one and only uncompounded (simple) being exists in three persons; every person or personal property is distinct from God's being not 'in the object' but 'in reason'; every personal property is indeed a 'real relation,' but does not add 'something real' to the 'essence.' The personal properties 'do not compose but only distinguish" (Bavinick, 172).

"We must never fall into the trap of imagining that God is governed by his attributes, rather than the other way round" (Bray, 93).

"The simplicity of God means that he cannot be analysed or subdivided into parts" (Bray, 94).

"There is a single and simple spiritual being, whom we call God" (Belgic Confession 1561, article 1).

"The simplicity of God means God is not made up of his attributes. He does not consist of goodness, mercy, justice, and power. He is goodness, mercy, justice, and power. Every attribute of God is identical with his essence" (DeYoung, Kevin, Theological Primer: The Simplicity of God, TGC, 2013).

"God is whatever he has. He is not the composite of his attributes, some in greater and some in lesser amounts. God is a simple being without parts or pieces. His attributes do not stick to him; he is what they are" (DeYoung, IBID).

"Many errors have been made in attempts to understand God...One is an excessive analysis, in which God is submitted to a virtual autopsy. The attributes of God are laid out and classified in a fashion similar to the approach taken in an anatomy textbook" (Erickson, 264).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Session 3:

Communicable Attributes

Communicable means shareable, but does not mean equal. There are qualities of God that we do not have, there are some that we share, and there are aspects of our nature that reflect His nature. For example, we love, but He has infinite holy love.

Some of these communicable attributes include:

Power, Sovereignty, and Providence
Spirituality and Invisibility
Knowledge and Omniscient
Wisdom, All-Wise, and Omnisapient
Faithfulness and Truthfulness
Love
Goodness, Grace, Mercy, and Patience
Holiness
Jealousy
Righteousness
Justice and Wrath

Power, Sovereignty, and Providence

Definition - God has no external constraints on His actions to complete His purposes and will. "God's exercise of power over His creation is also called God's sovereignty" (Grudem, 217).

Descriptive Verses

Genesis 18:14 -

Jeremiah 32:17 -

Luke 1:37 -

Matthew 19:26 -

Psalms 115:3 -

Psalms 29:10 -

Proper Response

We do not have limitless power or sovereignty, but God has given us the ability to act in such a way as to make decisions, oversee, and even rule (like in the Garden of Eden). How should we use the will, power, and influence that God has given us?

What are some wrong ways of using our God-given will, power, and influence?

How can we know if we are using them in a way that honors the Lord?

How does understanding these attributes of God impact the way we view the world? Our circumstances?

How does this attribute affect our anxiety and worry?

Does this guarantee comfort and ease for the Christian life? Why or why not?

Genesis 1:1-5 - What do these verses say about God's power?

Was God tired after creation?

Isaiah 40:28 - Is there a point when God would run out of energy to perform or finish a task?

Isaiah 14:24 & 40:15-17– What do we learn about God's power from this text?

Isaiah 46:10 & 43:13– What do we learn about God's power from these texts?

Is there anything that can thwart God's purposes and plans?

How does this reality relate to the happiness of God?

Colossians 1:15-16 – What do we learn about Christ?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

God only uses His power in a way that is consistent with His character. Why would God give us only limited power?

Many have grown up with the experience of someone using power in a way that is abusive or wicked. How might this impact their view of God?

If God is sovereign, how is there still wickedness in the world?

Why would God delay justice and judgment? What does this delay teach us about His character?

Favorite Quotes

"Although God's power is infinite, his use of that power is qualified by his other attributes (just as all God's attributes qualify all his actions)" (Grudem, 217).

Providence – "The conviction that God, in his goodness and power, preserves, accompanies, and directs the entire universe" (Frame, 274).

"We have an intuitive sense that it is our ability to exercise our wills and make choices, and to do so in a relatively free way, that is one of the most significant marks of God-likeness in our existence" (Grudem, 217).

"God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free" (Tozer, 108).

"And were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end His reign and undo His kingdom; if that one stray atom of power belonged to someone else, God would be a limited ruler and hence not sovereign" (Tozer, 108).

"God is said to be absolutely free because no one and no thing can hinder Him or compel Him or stop Him" (Tozer, 109).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Spirituality and Invisibility

Definition - God does not have boundaries or limits. He exists everywhere fully at all times and in all places. In a limited way, we share in His spirituality and worship Him in and through this part of our nature.

Descriptive Verses

John 4:24 -

1 Timothy 1:17 -

Psalm 139:7 -

Jeremiah 23:23-24 -

Ephesians 4:9-10 -

Revelation 6:9-11 -

Possible Misunderstandings and Results of Unbelief

At what times do we often feel like God is unavailable or unaware? How does understanding the spiritual nature of God help us in these moments?

Our internal world is made up of thoughts, feelings, motivations, pains, intentions, and hopes. This world is often described in Scripture as our "heart." We know that there is some kind of spiritual and physical combination—our mind and our spirit. What happens if we believe that God cares about our external world more than our internal world?

What happens if we base our belief in God's personal presence on how we feel?

When the Bible uses language to describe God in a human way (anthropomorphic language), does it diminish His spirituality in any way?

Why would God, who is spirit, often reveal Himself by describing human body parts?

How is it that God, who is spirit and is present everywhere, is also described as being in a location at a specific time?

Favorite Quotes

"God is spirit; that is, he is not composed of matter and does not possess a physical nature" (Erickson 266).

"He does not have the limitations involved with a physical body. For one thing, he is not limited to a particular geographical or spatial location" (Erickson, 268).

"The Bible often speaks of God as if he were a man, not only by using images that describe him as a king, a shepherd, a father, and a judge, but also by speaking of God as walking (Gen. 3:8), smelling an aroma (Gen. 8:21), etc. Scripture also ascribes body parts to God, including arms (Num. 11:23), hands Ps. 111:7), a mouth (Deut. 8:3), and eyes (Deut. 11:12)" (Frame, 366).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Knowledge and Omniscient

Definition - God possesses all information and understanding of Himself and all things, in all places, at all times - He has full and complete awareness. There is no micron of knowledge that is forgotten or unknown to God in any way, including knowledge of the actual and the possible.

Descriptive Verses

Hebrews 4:13 -

Acts 15:18 -

Job 21:22 -

Psalms 139:1-4 -

Romans 11:33 -

Matthew 11:21 -

Proper Response

Jeremiah 23:23-24— Is there anything under heaven that escapes God's attention?

Jeremiah 11:20— How does it make you feel to know that every emotion and intention that you have is known fully and completely by God?

Jeremiah 17:10— How many of your thoughts does God know about?

Jeremiah 51:17 - How does our knowledge compare to God's?

Isaiah 55:8-9— Why can this verse be so hard for us?

Should we expect to always understand what God is doing and why? What is the proper response when we don't understand or even disagree?

How does our knowledge of God relate to our love for God?

1 Corinthians 1:26–29– How are we described? How does this glorify God?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

What can happen if we think God lacks knowledge about us or our situation? The world? Our needs?

How does it change the way we talk to God when we realize that He knows all of our thoughts and motivations?

Why would a God who is all wise and all powerful allow bad things to happen to good people?

Why is there suffering in the world?

Why does evil appear at times to go unpunished?

How would an all-knowing God view the past, present, and future? How would that affect His decision making?

Favorite Quotes

The definition "says first that God fully knows himself. This is an amazing fact since God's own being is infinite or unlimited. Of course, only he who is infinite can fully know himself in every detail" (Grudem, 190).

"The apprehension of God's infinite knowledge should fill the Christian with adoration. The whole of my life stood open to His view from the beginning. He foresaw my every fall, my every sin, my every backsliding; yet, nevertheless, fixed His heart upon me. Oh, how the realization of this should bow me in wonder and worship before Him!" (Pink, 21).

"Divine omniscience means God knows all things, all true and false propositions" (Feinberg, 304).

"Here is encouragement to prayer. There is no cause for fearing that the petitions of the righteous will not be heard, or that their sighs and tears shall escape the notice of God, since He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Pink, 18).

"Now the Divine knowledge of the future is not a mere abstraction, but something which is inseparably connected with and accompanied by His purpose" (Pink, 19).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Wisdom, All-Wise, and Omnisapient

Definition - God knows how to use His knowledge to accomplish His ends in the best way. "the perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most" (Berkof, 69).

Descriptive Verses

1 Timothy 1:17 -

1 Corinthians 1:21 -

Psalm 104:24 -

Ephesians 1:8 -

Proverbs 2:6-7 -

Proper Response

How does this truth impact our faith, point of view on life, and perspective on suffering?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

1 Corinthians 1:24 - When we look to Christ, we see the wisdom of God in action. How would you explain this to someone?

How often do we hear ourselves and others ask "why?" Why must we experience this pain, hardship or loss?

Why would God choose not to change this difficult circumstance?

How does an understanding of this attribute and reality of God affect all of our "whys?"

Favorite Quotes

"All God's acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined" (Tozer, 61).

"God's decisions about what he will do are always wise decision: that is they always will bring about the best results (from God's ultimate perspective), and they will bring about those results through the best possible means" (Grudem, 193).

"Christians are frequently in danger of forgetting that common sense is a divine gift, which

needs to be used to the glory of God as much as the more spectacular gifts" (Bray, 220).

"When Christian theology declares that God is wise, it means vastly more than it says or can say, for it tries to make a comparatively weak word bear an incomprehensible plenitude of meaning that threatens to tear it apart and crush it and the sheer weight of the idea" (Tozer, 59).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Faithfulness and Truthfulness

Definition - "God's truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth... God's faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised" (Grudem, 195). God fulfills His promises over time in a way that He can use to display His love and goodness (2 Peter 3:9, 15).

Descriptive Verses

John 17:3 -

1 Thessalonians 1:9 -

1 John 5:20 -

Titus 1:2 -

Hebrews 6:18 -

Numbers 23:19 -

1 Thessalonians 5:24 -

1 Corinthians 1:9 -

Where can you think of examples of God's faithfulness in Scripture?

Proper Response

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 - What does God expect of us?

2 Corinthians 6:6, Galatians 5:22 - God expects us to be patient. What is the difference between patience and laziness? Patience and indifference?

How can we display love and goodness in our patience?

When is it the most difficult for you to be patient?

Faithfulness is a cornerstone to our relationships. How does God relate our relationship to Him with our marriage relationship (Ephesians 5:31-32)?

God is truthful in all things. What can cause us to slant the truth? When are we tempted to say less than or more than we need to in a conversation?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

How can relationships from our past affect our belief in God's faithfulness?

In some cases, we may not like what God has said. Does that ever give us the right or permission to question the truthfulness of what He has said? What happens if we do?

Favorite Quotes

"If God's genuineness is a matter of his being true and veracity is his telling of the truth, then his faithfulness means that he proves true. God keeps all his promises" (Erickson, 291).

"God has appealed to his people to be honest in all situations" (Erickson, 290).

"The truthfulness of God is also communicable in that we can in part imitate it by striving to have true knowledge about God and about his world" (Grudem, 196).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Love

Definition - God is ultimately the definition and explanation of love (1 John 4:8). From before creation (John 14:31; 17:24), God displayed love in His triune nature, then extends and demonstrates His willingness to give of Himself to His creation. God's love is seen in every moment of this life, but is most clearly displayed in Jesus and His redemptive work (Romans 5:8).

Descriptive Verses

1 John 4:8 -

John 3:16 -

John 3:35 -

Romans 5:8 -

Romans 2:4 -

Proper Response

1 John 4:8- "God is love" – how must we properly define love?

How does society skew the definition of love? In what way do many Christians have a warped view of love?

Why is it necessary for God to be triune in order to be a loving God?

What makes John 15:9 such a powerful statement?

How is the creation of man related to God's love? Was it necessary for God to create?

In the cross, how do we see God's love for both man and Jesus at the same time? (John 3:16 & Hebrews 12:2)

Mark 12:30-31 – How are we to reflect God's attribute of love? Is this an appropriate expectation (1 John 4:11)?

Why do we daily fail to live out these commandments?

John 13:34 & John 15:12 – What must our love look like?

How is love both intangible and tangible at the same time?

How do you know when someone truly loves you?

John 14:15, 21, 23 - What is the proper response or outflow of this love?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

Does God's love supersede any of His other attributes?

What happens if love is not backed up with holiness?

Does God's love contradict any of His other attributes? What happens if we believe that it does?

How do we explain God's love and justice to someone?

How do we explain God's love and holiness to someone?

Favorite Quotes

"'God is love.' It is not simply that God 'loves,' but that He is Love itself. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature" (Pink, 77).

"It is one of the most amazing facts in all Scripture that just as God's love involves his giving of himself to make us happy, so we can in return give of ourselves and actually bring joy to God's heart" (Isa. 62:5; Zeph. 3:17-18) (Grudem, 199).

"In fact, our love for others within the fellowship of believers is so evidently an imitation of Christ that by it the world recognizes us as his" (Grudem, 199).

"The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal and intimate thing, too. God does not love populations He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end" (Tozer, 102).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Goodness, Grace, Mercy, and Patience

Definition – “The **goodness of God** means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval... God’s **mercy** is his goodness toward those in distress, his **grace** is his goodness toward those who deserve only punishment, and his **patience** is his goodness toward those who continue to sin over a period of time” (Grudem, 197).

Descriptive Verses

Exodus 34:6 -

Psalm 103:8 -

Hebrews 4:16 -

Romans 9:15 -

1 Peter 5:10 -

Romans 11:6 -

1 Corinthians 15:10 -

Romans 2:4 -

Proper Response

James 5:8 - How do we respond to His patience?

Titus 2:11-12 - What happens when we have a proper understanding of God’s grace?

Paul teaches that we are saved without works (Eph 2:8-9) and James says that faith without works is dead (James 2:17) - How are both right?

How could we say God's grace and mercy is an extension of His love and goodness?

In what way does every man, Christian or not, receive God's love and grace?

Romans 5:8– How is this a show of grace?

Ephesians 2:8-9– What role does grace play in our salvation? Why is it sometimes hard to fully accept God's grace?

What is it inside of man that causes him to want to earn His salvation through works? How is this desire still seen in the life of the Christian?

John 1:14 & 17– How is Christ described?

How are grace and truth juxtaposed to the Law? Why is that?

What are some examples of how we see both Christ's grace and truth going hand-in-hand as He interacts with and ministers to people?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

How does our relationship with God begin to shift if we don't believe His grace covers all of our sins?

What happens when we view a particular sin as being beyond the grace of God?

Why do we often trust in our own work over God's gracious work on our behalf?

Does everyone receive the same portion of God's goodness? Is this fair?

Favorite Quotes

"Good is, first of all, a general term of commendation. We describe as good any kind of excellence, including beauty, economic value, usefulness, or skillfulness—indeed, anything that evokes a favorable response" (Frame, 403).

"When we say God is good, we evaluate God's conduct on the basis of his own revelation. God is both supremely good and the ultimate standard of goodness" (Frame, 407).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Holiness

Definition - God's holiness speaks to His complete 'otherness' and moral perfection. He stands distinct from His creation in such a way as to arouse reverence, awe, and wonder.

Descriptive Verses

Isaiah 6:3 -

Hosea 11:9 -

Psalms 22:1-5 -

Psalm 145:21 -

Revelation 3:7 -

Proper Response

Exodus 3:5-6 - "The word 'holy' does not appear in Scripture until God speaks to Moses at the burning bush, the point at which he revealed his covenant name to Israel" (Bray, 215). Why would God introduce this attribute in this moment?

Isaiah 6:1-5 - Who are the Seraphim? Do they have a greater knowledge of God than we do?

How do they respond to their knowledge of God?

Recognize that they could have been singing about any of God's attributes, why did they sing about God's holiness?

How would our perspective change if we knew the Lord better?

How does Isaiah respond to God's holiness?

How should God's holiness affect our view of sin? Our view on the sins of society?

1 Peter 1:15-16 - What is God's expectation of His people?

Romans 1:2– How is God's Word described?

1 Peter 2:9– How are God's people described?

If it is God's, it is holy. It really is that simple. This level of holiness is necessary to be of God and to be found in Him.

How is God's holiness connected to His wrath?

Why is God's wrath justified and even desirable?

Why must all evil be judged and punished? What would happen if evil were allowed to eternally persist?

How is it that we can be found holy before God (Ephesians 1:3-4)?

2 Corinthians 5:21– How does this help answer the above question? (Righteousness refers to our position before God – a position of being legally forgiven, reconciled, and united to Christ.)

Why is it necessary for us to be “in Christ” to be considered holy before God?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

God is morally pure and completely free from sin and temptation. He stands as arbiter of right and wrong and the only One who can judge based upon His own character. He is the moral **plumb line** to which everything else must be measured. Without Christ, God's holiness is impossible to attain, incomprehensible, and infinitely beyond our reach.

What does God use to determine His standard of holiness?

What if He used some other standard?

Most people believe if they are a good person, God will let them into heaven. What does this tell us about their view of God's holiness?

Some believe that God will eventually forgive those who denied Him and are being punished in hell. Does this fit with His holiness? His infinite worth, value, and justice?

Is eternal punishment a reasonable punishment for rebelling against an infinitely holy and just God?

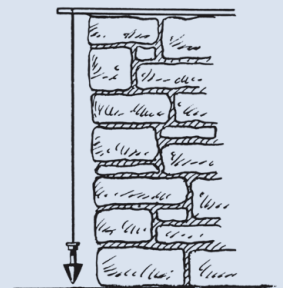
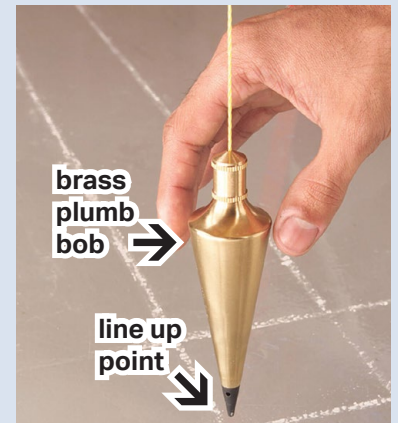
It can be argued that rebellion against an infinite God is worthy of an infinite punishment. One may ask, what about God's love? It is easy to forget that God's love, patience, and common grace were consistently displayed throughout the entirety of their life, yet they choose denial and sin.

Favorite Quotes

"There are two basic aspects to God's holiness. The first is his uniqueness. The other aspect of God's holiness is his absolute purity or goodness" (Erickson, 287-8). The first aspect has been referred to as His majestic-holiness, it communicates His separateness from His creation. The second describes His own morally perfect nature and reflects His expectation for His creation.

plumb line –

A line with a plumb bob (also "plummet") attached at the end. A plumb line is a tool that serves as the standard by which a straight (unleaning), vertical line is determined. Usually associated with structures, such as walls, but can be used in other areas, such as fine art.



"Holiness, then, is a very rich concept. It speaks of God's transcendence and separation from finite and sinful creatures. But it also speaks of how God draws them to himself, making them holy. Holiness marks God's transcendence, but also his immanence, his presence to redeem us" (Frame, 29).

"God's holiness drives us to worship him. Yahweh is the Lord who moves us to worship him with reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28)" (Frame, 29).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Jealousy

Definition - God, the only infinite and sovereign being in the universe, is due all glory and majesty, anything less is idolatry. God shows covenant fidelity and faithfulness to His people and expects the same from them.

Descriptive Verses

Exodus 20:5 -

Exodus 34:11 -

Deuteronomy 4:24 - Why does God connect His jealousy to being a consuming fire?

Deuteronomy 32:21 -

The entire book of Hosea

Ephesians 5:22 -

Nahum 1:2 -

Proper Response

Why does God deserve all of your love and commitment?

Whenever we love something more than God, what does it say about our relationship with God? How does God feel in that moment?

How can God's jealousy help sanctify the Christian who is wavering in His commitment to the Lord?

In human covenant relationships (marriage), we are given the option of divorce only when one of the members is unfaithful (Matthew 19:7-9). God remains faithful even when we are unfaithful. Even with ongoing, consistent, and intentional unfaithfulness, God remains faithful to us! How should this reality affect our thoughts and feelings towards God? Our prayers? Our commitments?

Do you presently have any hobbies or habits that compete with your love for God?

Do you have any relationships that are drawing your heart away from the Lord?

"We can also move from God's love to his wrath by means of his jealousy. God's love is covenantal. It creates a special relationship between God and his creatures - a marriage, in effect. So when people reject him, he is filled with holy jealousy, and the result is wrath. When we see God's love, not as a mere sentimental affection, but as a covenant commitment, we see it as a jealous love that leads to wrath when it is abused" (Frame, 467).

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

Some think God's jealousy is selfish. Why is this a misconception and illogical?

Many view idols as objects that we worship. In the Christian life, what are other examples of idols in our lives? Can anything become an idol?

If it is wrong for a man to be jealous, why is it good and right for God to be a jealous God?

When we are jealous, what are we saying about God? What are we saying about ourselves?

Favorite Quotes

"Since He is the only God, the Creator of heaven and earth He cannot endure that any creature of His own hands, or fiction of a creature's imagination should be thrust onto His throne, and be made to wear His crown" (Spurgeon, Sermon, *A Jealous God*).

"The jealousy of God for your undivided love and devotion will always have the last say. Whatever lures your affections away from God with deceptive attraction will come back to strip you bare and cut you in pieces (Ezekiel 16:38-40)" (Piper, Sermon, The Lord Whose Name is Jealous, 10/28/1984).

"Jealousy is not merely a passing mood with God. It is the essence of His person. He cannot be other than jealous. Since He is the highest and greatest being there is, infinitely holy and glorious, He must be passionately committed to preserving His honor and supremacy. He must zealously desire exclusive devotion and worship. To do less would make Him less than God" (Strauss, *A Jealous God*, www.bible.org, 1996).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Righteousness

Definition - As a noun, righteousness refers to God's innate moral nature and for man it refers to a life that is pleasing to God (which is impossible on our own Romans 3:10-12). As a verb, God's righteousness is revealed through the Gospel (Romans 1:17) and is received or given through faith in Christ (Romans 3:22-23) because of His redemptive work on the cross (Romans 3:24-25). Righteousness, as applied to man, is always a gift received, not a status earned. It is a "right standing" declared (forensic in nature) and given to us by faith through the work of Jesus.

Descriptive Verses

Psalm 19:7-9 - The Law reflects His nature and is a true expression of His righteousness.

Romans 1:17 - His righteousness must be revealed to us.

Romans 3:5 - Our failure of His moral standard points to the reality of His righteousness.

Romans 3:22-25 - A relational righteousness is offered through a declared "right standing" before God based upon the work of Christ.

Proper Response

Can we achieve God's standard of righteousness on our own?

2 Corinthians 5:21 - How do we meet His standard?

What did Jesus need to do to give us His righteousness?

Why could we call our right standing before God a result of "alien righteousness?"

Misunderstandings or Possible Results of Unbelief

Some question why God gets to be the standard of righteousness. Are there other sources to determine right and wrong?

What standards does the world try to use to establish a "right" standing before God?

Can you think of some ways that we try to find righteousness outside of Christ?

What are examples of attempts at self-righteousness?

What are some examples of self-justification?

Why are we often motivated (consciously and subconsciously) to find righteousness by our own means?

Why do we sometimes struggle with the belief that God wants to spend time with us? Is there anything that would prevent us as Christians from full acceptance before God?

Favorite Quotes

"This is, as it were, the holiness of God applied to his relationships to other beings" (Erickson, 286).

"The righteousness of God also means that his actions are in accord with the law which he himself has established. He conducts himself in conformity with what he expects of others. He is the expression in action of what he requires" (Erickson, 286).

"So the righteousness that God expects from us is essentially to image his own ethical character - his love, his holiness, his righteousness" (Frame, 449).

"So righteousness is a kind of elemental fairness. As we sow, so shall we reap. As we want others to do to us we should do to them" (Frame, 450).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Justice and Wrath

Definition - God is fair and consistent. He administers His righteous law and moral standards without partiality or favoritism. Rewards and punishments are given without partiality to persons. Wrath is in proportion to God's infinite value, holiness, and justice.

Descriptive Verses

Genesis 2:17 -

Romans 6:23 -

Romans 12:19 -

James 2:9 -

Numbers 11:1-2 -

Proper Response

What role does fear towards God play in the life of a Christian?

Proverbs 1:7 - Why is fear the beginning of wisdom?

When is fear appropriate and when is it inappropriate in the life of a Christian (2 Timothy 1:7)?

Fear can be connected to awe, wonder, and trembling and fear can be connected to the desire to avoid pain, judgment, and wrath. God's holy just standards have been met in Christ. Therefore, we are left with only awe, wonder, and trembling before His greatness, not before a swinging gavel.

Philippians 4:11-13 – What do we learn about the process of Christian growth from these verses?

How does God's justice influence our desire for justice in the world?

Isaiah 5:7 - What does God expect of Israel? How is Israel doing with God's expectations?

Possible Results of Unbelief or Misunderstanding

Why is there so much evil if God is just?

Why do the wicked seem to go unpunished? Why do they prosper? (Psalm 73)

Favorite Quotes

"His justice is his official righteousness, his requirement is that other moral agents adhere to the standards as well" (Erickson, 288).

"God is, in other words, like a judge who is a private individual who adheres to the law of society, and in his official capacity administers that same law, applying it to others" (Erickson, 288).

"So Scripture speaks often of the wrath of God as his response to sin. Wrath differs from jealousy and hatred, in that jealousy is more focused on the specific sin of idolatry, while wrath opposes our sin in general. Also, jealousy and hatred are motives for wrath, wild wrath actually executes punishments" (Frame, 464).

"God's wrath is terrible, but, in the course of history, the Lord is eager to defer that anger, to forgive those who turn from sin" (Frame, 466).

If I truly believed this character quality or truth about God, how would I think, feel, and behave differently?

How might it change my perception and understanding of myself, my relationships with God and others, or the world?

How will I remember what I have learned about the Lord? Is there a mental picture or illustration that will help?

Final Thoughts: Connecting It All Together

The study of God's Word is the study of God. As you read, meditate on how you see God at work, what He says, how He relates to others, along with His purpose, passion, and intentions. Become a student of the Living God!

The following are passages where several of God's attributes are in action at the same time. Oftentimes, misconceptions are present and corrected. These are great passages to study using all you have learned to seek a greater understanding of Him.

Psalm 73 - From this Psalm, what do we learn about God's attributes and our weaknesses, limitations, and misconceptions?

How do we see God's attributes in action in each of these texts?

Deuteronomy 13:1-11-

Deuteronomy 31:19-22 -

Isaiah 1:18-20 -

Jeremiah 9:12-16 & 24:4-10 -

Jeremiah 18:5-12 -

Are all of God's attributes equally as beautiful and praiseworthy?

Lamentations 3:39-40– What do we learn about our place before God?

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14– What is this man's conclusion?

Mark 12:30-31 - How does the greatest commandment point to what we know to be true about God?

You have one life, use it to pursue God and to make Him known. No pursuit is more joyful, challenging, and worthy of your time. Run to Him and linger in His presence. Moses prays, "Let me know Your ways that I may know You" (Exodus 33:13). We get to know the Lord by watching Him at work. God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's Son reveal and proclaim the beauty of God. Let's join Moses in praying, "Now show me your glory!" (Exodus 33:18).

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2019 Core Class Schedule

GOD'S CREATION 1-DAY, CORE CLASS INTENSIVE

Apr 12 Angels, Demons, The World, Man (Dignity and Depravity)

JESUS, THE MESSIAH

Apr 25 The Person of Christ

May 2 The Offices of Christ

May 9 The Work of Christ

May 16 The Work and Glory of Christ

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

Sept 5 The Person of the Holy Spirit

Sept 12 The Work and Gifts of the Spirit

Sept 19 Nature, Purpose, and Marks of The Church

Sept 26 Discipline, Offices, Sacraments

SALVATION

Oct 17 Redemptive Old Testament Historical Narrative, Prophecy

Oct 24 The Work of the Cross

Oct 31 Applications of the Cross

Nov 7 Life at the Foot of the Cross

THE END TIMES 1-DAY, CORE CLASS INTENSIVE

Nov 15 Personal Eschatology – Death, Intermediate State
Cosmic Eschatology – Return of Christ, Resurrection, Judgment,
New Creation



BIBLE CENTER
CHURCH

Glorifying God by producing more maturing followers of Jesus