

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

A Study of the Attributes of God

SESSION ONE

Incomprehensibility

Session Summary

To see and to know God—that, according to Jesus, is the goal of human life. That is what will make us happy. That is how our hearts will find rest. But how can we see a God who is invisible? And how can we know a God whose being is beyond our comprehension? In this session, we begin our study of God's attributes with a discussion of our complete inability to comprehend him and why this matters.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Exodus 33:12-34:7**. Try to put yourself in Moses's shoes. Why does Moses ask to see God's glory? What do you make of God's response?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss this statement by A.W. Tozer: *What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*
3. What do you think of when you think about God? What aspects of his nature or character come most frequently to mind?
4. Why is it important to recognize the incomprehensibility of God? How can we remain humble as we talk about him and pray to him?
5. Discuss this statement by St. Augustine: *But in these words what have I said, my God, my life, my holy sweetness? What has anyone achieved in words when he speaks about you? Yet woe to those who are silent about you because they have nothing to say.*
6. How would you compare the attitudes of people like Moses and St. Augustine (who marveled at God's incomprehensibility and yet longed to know him better) with the attitudes of Christians today? How could we become more like Moses and Augustine?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

Suggested Reading

Those who wish to read more about God's attributes are encouraged to read A.W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy*.

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SESSION TWO

Self-Sufficiency

Session Summary

God doesn't need you. That may sound rude or off-putting, but it's actually a wonderfully heartening truth. For what it means is that God is self-sufficient. God depends on no one and nothing else for his existence or for his happiness and, for this very reason, he can love us in perfect freedom.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Psalm 50:7-15**. What stands out to you about how God is described in this passage? How does God's independence ("If I were hungry, I would not tell you") affect the way that we relate to him?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Have you ever been in relationship with someone who is needy? In what ways did that neediness negatively affect your relationship with them?
3. *God doesn't need you.* How does this statement make you feel? Why might some people find it off-putting? Why is it actually a good thing?
4. Jonathan Edwards says that "God is self-sufficient. His happiness is in Himself." What does it mean to say that God is "happy" in himself?
5. Theologians have argued that it is precisely because God is self-sufficient that his love toward us is perfectly free. What do you think of that? How would you compare it to human love?
6. Discuss the following quote by C.S. Lewis:

In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation. It is essential...God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them.

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

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SESSION THREE

Immutability

Session Summary

God doesn't change. His character doesn't change. His purposes do not change. His will does not change. And in a world of constant change, when so much that once seemed solid and dependable is no longer so, this is enormously good news. For, to quote an Anglican prayer, "we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life" can find rest in the "eternal changelessness" of God.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Psalm 46**. Discuss verses two and three. To what do you think the psalmist is referring? What kind of situations might make a person feel like the "earth is giving way"? How is God a "refuge and strength" for the psalmist amidst the chaos and uncertainty of the world around him?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. The video begins by talking about the endless changes that we experience in modern life (what Hartmut Rosa calls "social acceleration"). Where do you see change in the world around you today? What changes encourage you? What changes worry you?
3. Who have you been able to depend on in your life? Who has been a steadfast "rock" for you in difficult times? How has their dependability helped you?
4. Are you encouraged when you think about God's changelessness? Why or why not?
5. Discuss the following quote from A.W. Tozer:

In this world where men forget us, change their attitude toward us as their private interests dictate, and revise their opinion of us for the slightest cause, is it not a source of wondrous strength to know that the God with whom we have to do changes not? That His attitude toward us is now the same as it was in eternity past and will be in eternity to come?

6. Discuss the prayer that was mentioned in the video:

Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

How have you been wearied by the "changes and chances" of life? How might you take rest in God's changelessness?

Group Prayer: Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

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SESSION FOUR

Goodness

Session Summary

"You are good and do good." This sentence, spoken by the psalmist to God in Psalm 119, identifies one of the most important and central of all divine attributes: goodness. As the most desirable of all goods that can be possibly be experienced, God is supremely good. As the generous Giver who delights to share and communicate his goodness to others, God is supremely good. In who he is and in what he does, God is supremely good. And all of this was true, as we will learn, even before the world began.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Psalm 34:8, 42:1-2, 63:1, and 73:25**. What do these verses in the Psalms communicate about God and his goodness? How well do they reflect your own experience of God? Finally, how can a person "taste and see" that the Lord is good?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Suffering, loss, and disappointment can sometimes lead us to doubt whether God is genuinely good, or whether he works for our good. Have you experienced such doubts? Talk about a time when you, or someone you know, has questioned whether God is really good.
3. In what way is God's goodness desirable? How can we *enjoy* the goodness of God?
4. Discuss this statement by Anselm of Canterbury:

Why do you wander about so much, seeking the goods of your soul and body? Love the one Good in which all good things, and that is sufficient.

5. God not only is good; He also *does* good. Where do you see evidence of God's goodness and generosity in the world around you? Where do you see evidence of it in your own life?
6. How is the goodness of God expressed in God's own life as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? How should the eternal expression of God's goodness as Trinity impact the way that we think about God?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

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SESSION FIVE

Power

Session Summary

"I sing the almighty power of God," wrote Isaac Watts. The description of God that we find in Scripture is a description of a God of overwhelming power and might—a God whose voice can bring worlds into existence, make mountains tremble, and raise the dead. The power of God is a consuming fire, never safe but always good.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Psalm 2** and **Luke 8:43-48**. What do each of these scriptures convey about the power of God? Based on these two scripture passages, why should we take comfort or find hope in the power of God?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Annie Dillard says that many people, when they come to church, do so without having the "foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke." Is this true? In what ways do we "tame" God in our minds? How can we recover an awareness of God's power?
3. What Bible passage or story do you think of when you think of God's power? What stands out to you about that passage? How does it help you understand the power of God?
4. How is God's power different from the power of a tyrant? Why is it important to keep in mind God's other attributes—such as goodness—when we think of his power?
5. Read and discuss this sonnet by John Donne:

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

SESSION SIX

Wisdom

Session Summary

Does God really know what he's doing? We believe that God is good and God is powerful, but can we really trust his purposes and his plans? In other words, is God wise? That is the question that we address in this session as we reflect on the wisdom of God. We'll discuss what it means to call God wise and why this matters so much to our everyday lives.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Genesis 22:1-14**. How does this story illustrate Abraham's trust in the purposes and plans of God? Verse 4 says that the journey to Mt. Moriah took three days. What might Abraham have been thinking during that journey? How can Abraham be a model for us?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. C.S. Lewis says that the attitude of modern people is to put God on trial, to assume that He needs to explain and defend his plans to us. Do you think that Lewis is right? Where have you seen this tendency in yourself?
3. How does the natural world display the wisdom of God? How might observing the complexity and beauty of the physical universe help us better understand and trust God's wisdom?
4. Read and discuss **Romans 8:28-29**. How have you generally understood this verse? How does the "purpose" of God given in verse 29 (for us to "be conformed to the image of his Son") change the way you think about this promise?
5. Where do you struggle to trust God's wisdom in your own life? What would it look like for you to more fully trust in that wisdom?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

SESSION SEVEN

Justice

Session Summary

When it comes to justice, we find ourselves in a quandary. We hear reports of wrongs done, we see faces of those who have been wronged, and our hearts cry out for justice. Something must be done! At the same time, when it comes to ourselves, we desperately hope for mercy. But how can both of these longings be fulfilled? How can we find both justice and mercy? We find it through the justice of God.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Romans 3:9-26**. In verses 10-18, Paul cites a litany of Old Testament scriptural texts. What point is he trying to make? What does it tell us about injustice? What does Paul mean in verse 26 when he says that God is “both just and the justifier”? How does this relate to what he says in verses 24 and 25?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. What do you think about the justice of God? How is it a good thing? What makes it difficult to think about?
3. The video mentions Sister Dianna Ortiz's experience of injustice. What are some other examples that stand out to you?
4. Discuss the following quote from Miroslav Volf: “If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make the final end to violence, God would not be worthy of our worship.”
5. Read Psalm 96:11-13. Why is God's judgment a cause for celebration, as it is depicted in the psalm? What would you say to someone who doesn't like the Bible's depiction of God's judgment of sin?
6. How can God show us mercy without ceasing to be just? How did Jesus display both the justice and the mercy of God?

Group Prayer

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SESSION EIGHT

Faithfulness

Session Summary

According to John Wooden, one of the most important character traits that a person can have is faithfulness. To be faithful is to be a person who others “can bet the farm on and still be able to sleep at night.” The One who exemplifies faithfulness more than any other, the One upon whom we can count no matter what, is God. In this lesson, we discuss what it means to call God faithful, how we experience God’s faithfulness, and how we can become faithful people.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 1:15-22. Why is Paul’s faithfulness in question? How does he relate his faithfulness to God’s? Spend time specifically discussing verse 20. What biblical promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. Who stands out to you as a model of faithfulness? Who is one person you know you can always count on?
3. How faithful or reliable are you? Who counts on you?
4. What biblical stories can you think of that demonstrate God’s faithfulness to his people?
5. What promises of God do you rely on?
6. How have you experienced God’s faithfulness during times of difficulty or hardship?

Group Prayer

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SESSION NINE

Holiness

Session Summary

Of all the attributes of the God of Scripture that set him apart from all the false gods of other religions, the most notable is that of holiness. Holiness is everywhere in the Bible. The prophets refer to God as the Holy One of Israel. The angels who surround his throne cry, “Holy, holy, holy.” And where God meets his people is holy ground. In this session, we explore the attribute of divine holiness—what it is, how we experience it, and why it is good news.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **Exodus 3:1-6** and **Isaiah 6:1-7**. What similarities do you notice between these two passages? How would you compare your experience of God to that of Moses and Isaiah?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. What do you think of when you hear the word “holy”? How have you usually understood the holiness of God?
3. Discuss the following quote from A.W. Tozer: “We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God's holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness.”
4. How do you experience God's holiness in worship?
5. How do you respond when you feel unholy?
6. Why is the holiness of God good news? How does God share his holiness with us?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.

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SESSION TEN

Love

Session Summary

God is love. Those three little words, stated twice over by St. John in his first epistle, contain the most profound meaning. For of all the divine attributes, the one upon which Scripture places the greatest emphasis is that of love. But what does it mean to say that God is love? How does God's love compare to our own? And where can we see that love revealed? These are the questions we'll consider in this final session of our study.

Appointed Scripture

Read and discuss **1 John 4:7-21**. What verse most stands out to you in this passage? Why? How does John describe the relationship of God's love toward us and our love toward one another?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss the story about the elderly apostle John, whose only words every week to the church community were: "Little children, love one another." Why would John say that over and over? Why do we need to hear it over and over?
3. How does God's love compare to our love? How does it differ?
4. Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 4:6. How does Paul's claim—that it is in the face of Jesus that we see God—impact the way you think about God? How is God's love expressed in Jesus's death on the cross?
5. How would you explain God's love to a non-Christian?
6. What is your biggest takeaway from this study of God's attributes? What is something that you'd like to think about more?

Group Prayer

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.