

The Attributes of God

A Small Group Study based on the works of:
A.W. Pink, A.W. Tozer, Steven J. Lawson, John MacArthur,
R.C. Sproul, Martin Lloyd-Jones,
Charles H. Spurgeon, Alistair Begg, and others

Prepared by the Small Group Ministry of



Grace Life Church
of Brookhaven

GraceLifeBrookhaven.com

Table of Contents

Preface	2
Lesson One: Introduction to the Attributes (Nature/Characteristics) of God	3
Lesson Two: God is Self-Existent (Uncreated): The Aseity of God	8
Lesson Three: God is Immutable (Unchanging/Unchangeable)	13
Lesson Four: God is Omniscient (All-Knowing)	17
Lesson Five: God is Omnipresent (Everywhere Present)	21
Lesson Six: God is Omnipotent (All-Powerful or Almighty)	26
Lesson Seven: God is Sovereign (Absolute Supreme Ruler of Everything)	32
Lesson Eight: God is Goodness & God is Love	39
• God is Goodness	39
• God is Love	41
Lesson Nine: God is Foreknowing & God is Grace	45
• The Foreknowledge of God	45
• The Grace of God	47
Lesson Ten: God is Holy & God is Wrathful	51
• The Holiness of God	51
• The Wrath of God	54

Preface

It would be impossible to design a study of the Attributes of God that would encompass all His attributes. As the Psalmist proclaims in Psalm 145:3, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.” When we get to heaven, we will have a better ability to comprehend His greatness, but it will still take all of eternity to comprehend Him.

Although God is beyond our “comprehension,” which means to **fully** understand something, He has revealed a lot about Himself in His word, so that while we cannot comprehend Him, we can at least “apprehend” Him, which means, in one sense, “to lay hold of.”

In 1867, in his lectures *On the Study of Words*, Richard Chenevix Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, Ireland, talked about the difference between our inability to “comprehend” God and our ability to “apprehend” Him:

How important is it to keep in mind ... the fact that we possess the two words ‘to apprehend’ and ‘to comprehend,’ with their substantives, ‘apprehension’ and ‘comprehension.’ For indeed we ‘apprehend’ many truths which we do not ‘comprehend.’ The great mysteries of our faith...the doctrine, for instance of the Holy Trinity: we lay hold upon it, (ad prehendo) we hang on it, our souls live by it; but we do not ‘comprehend’ it; that is, we do not take it all in; for it is a necessary attribute of God that He is incomprehensible; if He were not so, either He would not be God, or the being that comprehended Him would be God also. But it also belongs to the idea of God that He may be ‘apprehended,’ though not ‘comprehended,’ by his reasonable creatures; He has made them to know Him, though not to know Him [completely], to ‘apprehend,’ though not to ‘comprehend,’ Him.

Therefore, any study of the attributes of God should be designed to help us “apprehend” Him better...to know Him better than we do now, with the understanding that full “comprehension” is and ever will be beyond our reach as creatures. Such is the design of this study.

As the basis of our study, we have chosen to draw from the following works:

- The Attributes of God, by Arthur W. (A.W.) Pink
- The Attributes of God, Volumes 1 & 2, by A.W. Tozer
- The Attributes of God Study, by Dr. Steven J. Lawson, via Ligonier Ministries
- Quotes from other Christian thinkers and theologians

We pray that your participation in this study will help you to know Christ better and drive you to worship and obedience. **Finally, we hereby grant permission for this study to be shared with anyone who might benefit.**

Attributes of God - Study Guide

**Lesson One:
Introduction to the Attributes (Nature/Characteristics) of God**

Ice Breaker Questions: Who in your life do you know best? Do you think there is more yet to know about them? How would that person feel if you made no effort to know them better?

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ~ Christ, in John 17:3

*“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, **that he understands and knows me**, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.’” ~ Jeremiah 9:23-24, emphasis added*

The foundation of all true knowledge of God must be a clear mental apprehension [or understanding] of His perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture. An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, or worshipped. ~ A.W. Pink

Discussion Question: What do you think Pink means when he says that an unknown God cannot be trusted, served, or worshipped?

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base [or ugly] as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason, the gravest question before the church is always God Himself, and the most portentous [or important] fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. ~ A.W. Tozer

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

Discussion Question: In what ways is it true that what we think about God is the most important thing about us? How does our view of God or what we think about Him affect who we are and how we live?

*The biggest problem in the church today is that we don't know who God is.
~ RC Sproul*

Christianity at any given time is strong or weak depending upon her concept of God. And I insist upon this, and I have said it many times, that the basic trouble with the Church today is her unworthy conception of God. ~ Tozer

Discussion Question: Based on Tozer's statement, is the American Church of today strong or weak? How is your answer tied to the general conception of God in the American Church today? What is the general conception of God? Is that conception related to the Sproul quote above? If so, how?

Important Things to Remember About God's Attributes from Dr. Lawson:

1. Some of God's attributes are "incommunicable," which means "un-shareable," though that's not really a word, or that those attributes are ONLY found in Him. For example, only God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (everywhere present), and sovereign.
2. Some of God's attributes are "communicable," meaning that He can "share" those attributes with us in a limited sense, but the fullest expression of those attributes is only found in Him. For example, only God is pure mercy, but we can be merciful. We can be loving, but only God is pure love.
3. God's attributes are not independent of one another but are interconnected.
 - a. These divine attributes are present in the entire Godhead; they are **ALL** possessed by all three Persons of the Trinity.

[Note: it is vital to remember – and constantly remind ourselves – that each attribute we study belongs to the Father, to the Holy Spirit, and to Christ!]

- b. Each of His attributes has always belonged to God and will always belong to Him.
 - i. God neither gains nor loses attributes.
 - ii. Those who claim that God is different in the Old and New Testaments misunderstand the nature of divine attributes.
- c. Each attribute characterizes every other attribute.
 - i. Complex beings have separate, identifiable parts, but simple beings do not.
 - ii. Because God is a simple being, it is impossible to divide Him into parts, so as to separate His goodness from His wisdom or His wrath.
 - iii. Instead, each attribute describes the others; for example, God's holiness is immutable, omnipotent, and eternal. His love is holy, omniscient, and sovereign.

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. ~ John Calvin

It is evident that man never attains to [or reaches] a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated [or deeply considered] the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself. ~John Calvin

Discussion Question: Explain what Calvin meant when he said that the only way that we can **really** know ourselves is by knowing God.

*There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plummet cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away . . . with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing."
~ Spurgeon*

Discussion Question: Based on the Spurgeon quote above, what are two primary benefits of studying the Attributes of God?

*I am appalled at what some Christians assume God is. We might say that believing the wrong thing about God is idolatry. When we think of idolatry, we think of somebody in a mud hut with a little god on his table, or whatever, and bowing down. Or we think of a pagan temple, very elaborate and ornate, with a lot of people burning incense. But idolatry is much broader than that. Idolatry is simply thinking something about God that is untrue of Him. It is postulating anything about God that is not right. In its fullest stage, it is creating a god. In its secondary stage, it is making the God who is into something that He isn't. And maybe in its third level, which even Christians are guilty of, it is thinking thoughts about God that are untrue of Him. Psalm 50:21 says, "You thought that I was one like yourself." God says, "You thought I was like you." And that's precisely what men have done, for the most part, is in idolatry made God into their own likeness, or into imaginations that belong to their own minds. The essence of idolatry is entertaining thoughts about God that are unworthy of God, and it can come in a lot of forms. So, we declare God, not only because there are people who don't believe in Him, either in philosophy or practice; but there are also people who believe wrongly about God, and we must declare the right things about God, and so it's very important.
~ John MacArthur*

Discussion Question: Based on the MacArthur quote above, what is another reason we should study the Attributes of God?

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Two: God is Self-Existent (Uncreated): The Aseity of God

Ice Breaker Question: What are some things that every human needs to sustain life?

Now consider for a moment that God needs absolutely **nothing** outside of Himself to exist!

*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, **nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything**, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ~ Acts 17:24-25, emphasis added*

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ~ John 5:26

“Aseity” (pronounced “uh-SAY-ity” or “uh-SEE-ity,” from Latin *ā* “from” and *sē* “self”, plus -ity) is **the property by which something exists by itself, of itself, and from itself, with no dependence on anything outside of itself.**

In the beginning, God... ~ Genesis 1:1a

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For **what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.** So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ~ Romans 1:18-23, emphasis added*

Discussion Question: Why do you think that the Bible offers no explanation for the existence of God prior to Genesis 1:1?

God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ~ Exodus 3:14

*Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."
~ John 8:58*

"God has no origin," said Novatian, and it is precisely this concept of no-origin which distinguishes That-which-is-God from whatever is not God. ~ Tozer

Discussion Question: According to Tozer, what is a primary difference between God and everything else in the universe, including the universe itself?

*When I see the word "aseity" on a blackboard or written in a textbook...I get chills up my spine, because in that one little word is captured all of the glory of the perfections of God's being. What makes God different from you, and different from me, and different from the stars, the earthquakes, and any creaturely thing is that God and God alone has aseity. God alone exists by his own power.
~ R.C. Sproul*

*Of God's many distinct attributes, one of the most difficult for finite human beings to come to terms with is His aseity, or self-existence. Unlike us, God has neither beginning nor end, and He is not dependent upon anyone or anything.
~ Lawson*

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, **from everlasting to everlasting** you are God. ~ Psalm 90:1-2, emphasis added*

*"In the beginning, God" (Gen. 1:1). There was a time, if "time" it could be called, when God, in the unity of His nature (though subsisting equally in three Divine Persons), DWELT ALL ALONE. "In the beginning, God." There was no heaven, where His glory is now particularly manifested. There was no earth to engage His attention. There were no angels to [sing] His praises; no universe to be upheld by the word of His power. There was nothing, no one, but God; and that [was the case], not for a day, a year, or an age, but "from everlasting." During a past eternity, GOD WAS ALONE: SELF-CONTAINED, SELF-SUFFICIENT, SELF-SATISFIED; **IN NEED OF NOTHING**. ~ Pink, emphasis added*

Discussion Question: If God is “in need of nothing,” why did He choose to create the universe and everything in it?

*There was a time when you were not. There was a time when I was not. There was a time when the universe was not. But there never was a time when God was not, because a self-existent, eternal being cannot **not be**. God is necessary “being.” God’s “being” is eternally necessary. ~ R.C. Sproul*

God is the only “being” that exists. Everything else is “becoming.” We aren’t really “human beings,” but “human becomings.” ~ R.C. Sproul, paraphrased

Discussion Question: What did Sproul mean that God is the only “being” and everything else is “becoming”?

...for “In him we live and move and have our being”; ~ Acts 17:28a

Reflection: Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Now feel your heartbeat in your neck or wrist. The only way you can breathe, and the only reason your heart is beating is because God has life within Himself – He is LIFE. Now, raise and lower one of your hands. Stand up and sit back down. The only way you can move at all is because God has motion within Himself – He is MOTION. Now feel the skin on your arm. Feel the table. Shake the hand of someone sitting next to you. The only way that you, or the table, or the person sitting next to you – or any other created thing exists, is because God has the power of “being” within Himself – He is **BEING!**

God’s attributes, though distinct in our conceptions and in our God-talk, do not exist in God as a set of really distinct properties. ... This means that God just is the love by which He loves, the wisdom by which He is wise, the power by which He is powerful, and so forth. And each of these divine virtues is nothing but divinity itself, the very “Godness” of God. Divine simplicity does not merely assert [or, claim] a harmony among God’s attributes...but rather claims that each attribute, though variously disclosed and understood by us, is really nothing but the simple God Himself. For all the mystery that attends [or, accompanies] the doctrines of aseity and simplicity, it should be clear that God would not be God if He were not perfectly self-sufficient and uncompounded. Because He is not composed of parts, He cannot fall apart on us. There just are no parts into which He might fall. It is because He is “a se” and “simple” that we can cast ourselves on Him and His Word utterly and unreservedly. ~ Dr. James E. Dolezal

Discussion Question: Considering that quote from Dr. Dolezal, why is it important that we have looked at the self-existence or aseity of God before any of the other attributes on our schedule?

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide**Lesson Three:
God is Immutable (Unchanging/Unchangeable)**

Ice Breaker Questions: When was the last time you changed your mind about something? In what ways have you changed as you've gotten older?

It is hard for anyone to go a day, even an hour, without changing in some way. Our thoughts and emotions are in a constant state of flux. Even our greatest desires and plans change over time. God, however, never changes His mind or His course of action in the world. He is an immovable rock, a mighty fortress, and the only sure anchor in an ever-changing world. ~ Lawson

*Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but **you are the same**, and your years have no end. **The children of your servants shall dwell secure**; their offspring shall be established before you.
~ Psalm 102:25-28, emphasis added*

Discussion Question: Why does the Psalmist say, "The children of your servants shall dwell secure"? How is the security of believers tied to the immutability, or the unchanging nature, of God?

However unstable I may be, however fickle my friends may prove, God changes not. If He varied as we do, if He willed one thing today and another tomorrow, if He were controlled by caprice [sudden, impulsive, and seemingly unmotivated notions or actions], who could confide in Him? But, all praise to His glorious name, He is ever the same. His purpose is fixed, His will is stable, His word is sure. ~ Pink

Discussion Questions: Have you ever suffered from a broken promise? Have you ever caused suffering by breaking a promise you made? How should we be affected by the knowledge that God will not, and really **cannot** ever break a single promise?

The immutability of God is among those attributes less difficult to understand, but to grasp it we must discipline ourselves to sort out the usual thoughts with which we think of created things from the rarer [thoughts] that arise when we try to lay hold of whatever may be comprehended of God. To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself. The concept of a growing or developing God is not found in the Scriptures. It seems to me impossible to think of God as varying from Himself in any way. ~ Tozer

Discussion Questions: Have you ever seen someone behave in a way that seemed “out of character” for them? Have you ever surprised yourself by behaving, or reacting to something, in a way that seemed contrary to who you think yourself to be? God never acts “out of character!”

*In Malachi 3:6, God explained the reasons He had not totally destroyed the disobedient sons of Jacob: “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.” James wrote, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17). God does not change. Change is either for the better or for the worse. Both are inconceivable with God—He couldn’t get any better and wouldn’t change for the worse. There is nothing about Him that needs to change. That God does not change is a great source of comfort to believers. It means that **His love is forever. His forgiveness is forever. His salvation is forever. His promises are forever.** In Romans 11:29, Paul writes, “The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” God doesn’t change His promise. “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). If our faith runs low, He doesn’t change toward us. The security of salvation, then, is based on God’s unchanging character. ~ John MacArthur*

Discussion Questions: Have you considered the importance of God's immutability in relation to His other attributes? His omnipotence never weakens. His omniscience never falters. His love never changes. His wrath never sleeps. Considering these and others, how can an understanding of God's immutability affect your Christian walk? How should we live in light of the Immutability of God?

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ~ Hebrews 13:8

A vision of the steadfastness of our immutable God brings a sense of security and stability to our unsettled lives. In a world full of uncertainty, we can live our lives fully assured of God's unwavering love for His children. And that will result in lives overflowing with worship. ~ MacArthur

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Four: God is Omniscient (All-Knowing)

Ice Breaker Questions: What was the most difficult subject in school for you? Have you ever gotten frustrated because you couldn't find an answer to a question, or you couldn't figure out how to do something you needed to do?

God has never learned from anyone. God cannot learn. Could God at any time or in any manner receive into his mind knowledge that he did not possess and had not possessed from eternity, he would be imperfect and less than himself.

~ Tozer

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell... ~ Tozer

Because God knows all things perfectly, he knows no [one] thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything, he is never surprised, never amazed. ~ Tozer

"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,... ~ Isaiah 46:8-10

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable [or impossible to understand] his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"

~ Romans 11:33-34

Discussion Question: What phrases in Isaiah 46:8-10 and Romans 11:33-34 point to God's omniscience?

Lord, how terrible is Thine omniscience for Thine enemies. That eye which burns in heaven as a flame of fire is always upon them. They would fain flee away from it, but they are never able. But for Thy people, Thine omniscience is a comfort and a refuge. Thou art He who can help them against themselves and the deceitfulness of their own hearts. They invite Thine omniscience to search their heart and to cleanse them from their secret faults. ~ Andrew Murray

Discussion Questions: Why should God's omniscience terrify those who are not in Christ? In what ways is His omniscience a comfort to those who have been born again?

God not only knows the outcome of history, but He is also familiar with every human thought and action throughout history. ~ Lawson

God knows all things instantly and simultaneously. ~ Lawson

[Note: *In other words, God never has to "think back" or recall information – His perfect knowledge is always "instantly and simultaneously" present in His mind. All His perfect knowledge about everything throughout all history and all the future is in His mind all at once, and His attention is never divided!]*

Discussion Questions: How many things can you focus on at the same time? Can you drive a car while reading the newspaper, working a math problem, and cooking?

God knows not only the reality of what is, but also the possibility of other things that might have been. He is aware of the potential consequences of every possible human action that ever could have been taken (Matthew 11:21&23). ~ Lawson

Discussion Questions: Have you ever been slow to decide because of too many variables? Describe a time when you were afraid to act because of unknown or unpredictable outcomes of your possible actions.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. ~ Psalm 139:1-6

God is omniscient. He knows everything: everything possible, everything actual, and all creatures of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell. "He knoweth what is in the darkness" (Dan. 2:22). Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him, nothing is forgotten by Him.

Well may we say with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. 139:6). His knowledge is perfect. He never errs [or, makes a mistake], never changes, never overlooks anything. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Yes, such is the God [to] whom "we have to [give an account]"! ~ Pink

Discussion Questions: Have you ever kept a secret from someone? Have you ever had a secret revealed in an embarrassing way?

People, the marvel of marvels to me is that God knows everything and still loves me. Nothing is hidden from God. Do you know that everything about your body God knows? And the hairs of your head are numbered? ... Everything about you, God knows. You say, "Why would God bother to count your hair?" He didn't have to count it, He intrinsically [or, automatically] knows it. God isn't doing that just to prove a point, going around keeping a record book on hair. Anything that is, He knows; and doesn't have to learn it or find it out, He knows it. ~ John MacArthur

*Divine omniscience provides no comfort to the ungodly mind, but to the child of God it overflows with consolation [or, comfort]. God is always thinking about us, never turns His mind from us, always has us before His eyes; and this is precisely how we would want it, because it would be dreadful to exist for a moment outside the observation of our heavenly Father. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring countless benefits to us: It is consequently a supreme delight to remember them.... In all our wanderings the watchful glance of the Eternal Watcher is constantly fixed upon us—we never roam beyond the Shepherd's eye. In our sorrows He observes us incessantly [or, endlessly, or without stopping], and not a painful emotion escapes Him; in our toils He notices all our weariness, and He writes all the struggles of His faithful ones in His book.
~ Alistair Begg*

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Five: God is Omnipresent (Everywhere Present)

Ice Breaker Question: Can you describe a time when it would have been helpful to be able to be in two (or more) places at once?

As embodied beings, we are limited by space and time. When confronted with competing demands on our time, we often excuse ourselves by stating that we can't be in two places at once. God, however, can be in two places at once. In fact, He is everywhere at once. ~ Lawson

*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.
~ Psalm 139:7-10*

"Am I a God at hand," declares the Lord, "and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord. ~ Jeremiah 23:23-24

Does the Lord turn Himself unto our prayer only after long delay? Is not He omnipresent? Is not every whispered and stammering prayer known to Him before there is yet a word in the tongue? ~Abraham Kuyper

Discussion Questions: Since God is omnipresent, or "everywhere present," how far do the prayers of believers have to travel to reach Him? Since He is both omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (everywhere present), should we ever wonder if He hears us?

The doctrine of divine omnipresence teaches that God is at the same time present in every part of the universe. As a spiritual being, God does not experience spatial constraints and is not barred from any location. Moreover, when God is present in all places, He is present in the fullness of His being.
~ Lawson

Discussion Questions: Have you ever considered that God is just as much in your kitchen as He is at the Church? He is just as much in your bedroom, your workplace, your classroom, your sports arena as He is in heaven – He is always **fully** present in every square inch of the universe. Knowing that, should we behave differently at church than we behave at other places in our lives?

Why don't you bring your pornography to church, sir? God is just as much in your bathroom as He is at the church building! ~ Ray Comfort, paraphrased

*...know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above **and** on the earth beneath; ~ Deuteronomy 4:39, emphasis added*

*For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, **and also** with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*
~ Isaiah 57:15, emphasis added

Few other truths are taught in the Scriptures with as great clarity as the doctrine of the divine omnipresence. Those passages supporting this truth are so plain that it would take considerable effort to misunderstand them. They declare that God is immanent in [or present throughout] His creation, that there is no place in heaven or earth or hell where men may hide from His presence. They teach that God is at once far off and near, and that in Him men move and live and have their being. ~ Tozer

[Omnipresence] is an eminently [or exceedingly] practical attribute of God which describes His presence in every place at the same time! As a result, there is nowhere in the universe that lies outside of God's cognition [or awareness] and care. God can be scoffed at, mocked at, disbelieved, impugned [or insulted], spurned, blasphemed, etc., but ultimately, He is unavoidable! Every man must prepare to meet God now through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ as Savior, or later in Christ as Judge! ~ Pink

*The word “present,” of course, means “here, close to, next to,” and the prefix “omni” gives it universality. God is everywhere **here**, close to **everything**, next to **everyone**. ~ Tozer, emphasis added*

*This is the fundamental thing, the most serious thing of all, that we are **always** in the presence of God. ~ Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, emphasis added*

Discussion Questions: Have you ever felt distant from God, or do you feel distant from Him now? How should you think about that now, considering His omnipresence?

Many argue that hell is a place of separation from God (Matthew 25:41), and if so, then God cannot be said to be in a place that is separated from Him. However, the wicked in hell endure His everlasting anger, for Revelation 14:10 speaks of the torment of the wicked in the presence of the Lamb.... Just as God is sometimes separated from His children because of sin (Isaiah 52:9), and He is far from the wicked (Proverbs 15:29) and orders the godless subjects of darkness to depart at the end of time to a place of eternal punishment, God is still there in the midst. He knows what those souls suffer who are now in hell; He knows their anguish, their cries for respite, their tears and grief for the eternal state that they find themselves in. He is there in every way as a perpetual reminder to them of their sin which has created a chasm from every blessing that might be otherwise granted. He is there in every way, but He displays no attribute other than His wrath. ~ Pink

Discussion Question: When a person is born again, or “saved,” what is he or she saved **from**?

Christians get excited about the return of Jesus. Oh, happy day! Yes, it is a happy day for the saved, but for the unsaved the return of Jesus is the worst of all conceivable calamities. It is a day of desolation, as the prophet Zephaniah foretold. Near is the great day of the Lord. Near, coming very quickly, a day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble, of distress, destruction, desolation, darkness, gloom. And on the day of the Lord’s wrath, all the earth will be devoured, for He will make a terrifying end to the inhabitants of this world (see Zeph. 1:14–18). ~ R.C. Sproul

Discussion Questions: Knowing that God's omnipresence means that He is always right where you are, in His fullness, and that His omniscience means that He always knows **everything** in your heart and mind and **everything** about **every** circumstance you face, how should you live your life? What changes do you need to make in your walk? How about in your prayer life?

*When you wish to do something evil, you retire from the public into your house where no enemy may see you; from those places of your house which are open and visible to the eyes of men you remove yourself into your room; even in your room you fear some witness from another quarter; you retire into your heart, there you meditate: He is more inward than your heart. Wherever, therefore, you shall have fled, there He is. From yourself, whither will you flee? Will you not follow yourself wherever you shall flee? But since there is One more inward even than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from God angry but to God reconciled. There is no place at all whither you may flee. Will you flee from Him? **Flee unto Him.***
~ Herman Bavinck, Dutch Theologian (1854-1921), emphasis added

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Six: God is Omnipotent (All-Powerful or Almighty)

Ice Breaker Questions: If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt powerless?

Sovereignty and omnipotence must go together. One cannot exist without the other. To reign, God must have power, and to reign sovereignly, He must have all power. And that is what omnipotent means, having all power. The word derives from the Latin and is identical in meaning with the more familiar almighty which we have from the Anglo-Saxon. This latter word occurs fifty-six times in our English Bible and is never used of anyone but God. He alone is almighty. ~ Tozer

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns." ~ Revelation 19:6

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ~ Job 42:2

God possesses what no creature can: an incomprehensible plenitude [or, superabundance] of power, a potency that is absolute. This we know by divine revelation, but once known, it is recognized as being in full accord with reason. Grant that God is infinite and self-existent, and we see at once that He must be all-powerful as well, and reason kneels to worship before the divine omnipotence. ~ Tozer

Since He has at His command all the power in the universe, the Lord God omnipotent can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished. His self-sufficiency makes it unnecessary for Him to look outside of Himself for a renewal of strength. All the power required to do all that He wills to do lies in undiminished fullness in His own infinite being. ~ Tozer

Discussion Questions: Based on what we've read so far, how should such knowledge affect your prayer life? How should it affect the way you face trials and difficulties?

“If God were stinted [or, lacking] in might and had a limit to His strength we might well despair. But seeing that He is clothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for Him to answer, no need too great for Him to supply, no passion too strong for Him to subdue; no temptation too powerful for Him to deliver from, no misery too deep for Him to relieve.” ~ Pink

*For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his **eternal power** and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. ~ Romans 1:20, emphasis added*

Discussion Question: In what ways does creation point to God’s “eternal power” or omnipotence?

He [Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. ~ Hebrews 1:3

We cannot have a right conception of God unless we think of Him as all-powerful, as well as all-wise. He who cannot do what he will and perform all his pleasure cannot be God. As God has a will to resolve [or, determine] what He deems good, so He has power to execute His will. ~ Pink

Like all His attributes, God’s omnipotence is co-extensive with His being. There is no area of the universe where He is not exerting His power. From a blade of grass to the stars of the sky, everything and everyone is dependent upon His immeasurable power for its existence. ~ Lawson

But however strong may be the purposes either of angels or of men, whether of good or bad, whether these purposes fall in with the will of God or run counter to it, the will of the Omnipotent is never defeated. ~ Augustine of Hippo

For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back? ~ Isaiah 14:27

Discussion Question: What does it mean for your Christian walk that God’s will is never defeated, His purposes never annulled [or, cancelled], or His hand turned back?

We can do very little. God can do whatever He wills. We, beyond very narrow limits, must use means [or, instruments or mechanisms] to accomplish our ends. With God means are unnecessary. He wills, and it is done. He said, Let there be light; and there was light. He, by a volition [or, an act of His will] created the heavens and the earth. At the volition of Christ, the winds ceased, and there was a great calm. By an act of the will He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, and raised the dead. This simple idea of the omnipotence of God, that He can do without effort, and by a volition, whatever He wills, is the highest conceivable idea of power, and is that which is clearly presented in the Scriptures. ~ Charles Hodge

Discussion Question: *What does it mean that God requires no “means” to exercise His power?*

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?” ~ Jeremiah 32:26-27

*I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and I am God. Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?”
~ Isaiah 43:11-13*

The knowledge that God can overcome all obstacles should encourage us to pray to Him boldly and persistently. ~ Lawson

Discussion Questions: *Is there anything that God **cannot** do?*

*As a theological term, omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything. The Bible indicates several things that God cannot do. He cannot lie. He cannot die. He cannot be created. He cannot act against His nature. He cannot **be** God and **not** be God. What omnipotence **does** mean is that God holds all power over His creation. No part of creation stands outside the scope of His sovereign control. God cannot build a rock so big that He could not move it. Why? If God ever built such a rock He would be creating something over which He had no power. He would be destroying His own omnipotence. God cannot stop being God; He cannot **not be** omnipotent. ~ R.C. Sproul*

“The omnipotence of God is His ability and strength to bring to pass whatsoever He pleases”. ~ MacArthur

Discussion Questions: Have you known people who have shown extreme hostility toward the gospel? How can a consideration of God’s omnipotence provide encouragement when you pray for or witness to them?

*God possesses all power. All human power and ability ultimately belongs to God. Even Satan’s power is allotted [or, rationed, or doled out] to him by God.
~ Lawson*

Discussion Questions: Consider how any power that you possess has been delegated to you from God. How should this affect your relationships with others, whether in the workplace, the family, at school, or among friends? How should it affect your view of yourself, your skills, your abilities?

Discussion Question: Since Satan has no power on his own, but only has power allowed by God and limited by God, how should that change how we think about Satan’s ability to cause us harm?

When the Virgin Mary was puzzled by Gabriel's announcement to her of the conception of Jesus in her womb, the angel said to her: "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Here the angel was reminding Mary of God's omnipotence. What may be impossible for us is possible with Him. To say that nothing is impossible with God means that He can do whatever He wills to do. His power is not limited by finite limitations. Nothing or "no thing" can restrict His power. His power is only restricted by what and Who He is. Sin is impossible for Him because one cannot sin without willing to sin. God cannot commit sin because He never wills it. Job got to the heart of this matter when he said: "I know that You can do everything and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You" (Job 42:2). For the Christian, God's omnipotence is a great source of comfort. We know that the same power God displayed in creating the universe is at His disposal to assure our salvation. He showed that power in the Exodus from Egypt. He displayed His power over death in the resurrection of Christ. We know that no part of creation can frustrate His plans for the future. Though powers and forces of this world threaten to undo, we have no fear. We can rest in the knowledge that nothing can withstand the power of God. He is the One who is almighty. ~ R.C. Sproul

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide**Lesson Seven:
God is Sovereign (Absolute Supreme Ruler of Everything)**

Ice Breaker Questions: If you could be in total control over something, what would it be? Have you ever been afraid or frustrated in a situation in which you had no control?

*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him **all things hold together**. ~ Colossians 1:16-17, emphasis added*

We distinguish sometimes between God's efficacious will [or, His will that directly causes things to happen] and His permissive will. ... If something happens in this world, whether by the power of men, the power of nature, the power of machines, etc., God always has the power and authority to at least prevent it from happening, does He not? And if He does not prevent it from happening, that means at least this much: He has chosen to let it happen. That doesn't mean that He applauds it. That doesn't mean He's in favor of it insofar as He gives His divine sanction to it. But He does allow it to happen (again, not always in the sense of approving) and, in so allowing, He is making a decision and making that decision sovereignly. He knows in advance what is going to happen, and if He decrees that it shall happen, He is retaining His sovereignty over it. ~ Sproul

I like to explain it this way: if there is one molecule in the universe running loose, outside of the control of God's sovereignty, what I like to call "one maverick molecule," then the practical implication for us as Christians is that we have no guarantee whatsoever that any future promise God has made to His people will come to pass. If we have one maverick molecule running loose out there, we have no assurance whatsoever that this single molecule may not be the grain of sand in the machinery of God's eternal plan. It may be the thing that runs amuck and makes it impossible, ultimately, for Christ to return to this planet. It may be the thing that destroys any hope for the consummation of the kingdom of God, leaving all those promises of God unfulfilled. There are no maverick molecules in a universe where God is sovereign. ~ Sproul

Discussion Questions: How does God's sovereignty – His absolute control over everything – give us hope in His promises? Explain how the absolute trustworthiness of His promises also describes His absolute sovereignty or relies on His sovereignty.

God's sovereignty means that he is in control of everything, that he planned everything from the beginning. ~ Tozer

What do we mean by the sovereignty of God? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay [or, stop] His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (Dan. 4:35). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will (Psa. 115:3). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "The Governor among the nations" (Psa. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as [it pleases] Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the "Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Such is the God of the Bible. ~ Pink

Discussion Questions: Do you worry about the current state of the United States Government? How should knowing that God is in control of "setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as [it pleases] Him best," as Pink described, change the way you think about politics and government? How should such knowledge change the way you pray about such things?

God's sovereignty in salvation means that He saves whom He will, and those whom He saves owe nothing to anything in or of themselves. They are saved because God graciously chose them in eternity and regenerated and called them in history. They cannot even take credit for their faith because it is the gift that He Himself sovereignly bestows. ~ Pink

*No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes [or, despises] the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors [or, hates] the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, the flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God's work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for their salvation. But that is, after all, precisely what Scripture teaches. Even faith is God's gracious gift to His elect. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father" (John 6:65). "Nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). Therefore no one who is saved has anything to boast about (Ephesians 2:8–9). "Salvation is from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).
~ MacArthur*

Discussion Questions: What effect does the concept of God's sovereignty have on human pride? Is it more difficult for Americans, with our sense of "rugged individualism" and our love of liberty and independence, to come to terms with God's sovereignty than others in the world who aren't so drenched in thoughts of independence?

*Moreover, everything that exists in the universe exists because God allowed it, decreed it, and called it into existence. "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases" (Psalm 115:3). "Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps" (Psalm 135:6). He "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Romans 11:36). "For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6).
~ MacArthur*

What about sin? God is not the author of sin, but He certainly allowed it; it is integral to His eternal decree. God has a purpose for allowing it. He cannot be blamed for evil or tainted by its existence (1 Samuel 2:2: "There is no one holy like the Lord"). But He certainly wasn't caught off-guard or standing helpless to stop it when sin entered the universe. We do not know His purposes for allowing sin. If nothing else, He permitted it in order to destroy evil forever. And God sometimes uses evil to accomplish good (Genesis 45:7, 8; 50:20; Romans 8:28). How can these things be? Scripture does not answer all the questions for us. But we know from His Word that God is utterly sovereign, He is perfectly holy, and He is absolutely just. ~ MacArthur

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. ~ Psalm 33:6-11

The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. ~ Psalm 93:1-2

There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: "Mine!" ~ Abraham Kuyper

Discussion Questions: Understanding that, as Kuyper said, Christ claims sovereignty over every square inch of human existence – including your existence – how should that affect your willingness to pray? How should it affect the content of your prayers?

*God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me a great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore him as a sovereign God.
~ Jonathan Edwards*

No doctrine so glorifies God and so humbles man as [the doctrine of His sovereignty]. ~ Lloyd-Jones

Discussion Questions: How can dwelling on the sovereignty of God cause one to adore and worship Him as it did for Edwards? Explain what Dr. Lloyd-Jones meant when he said that the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God is the most God-glorifying and the most man-humbling doctrine.

The notion of the sovereignty of God is able to evoke [or, produce] in the mind of man either humility or rebellion. ~ Alistair Begg

Discussion Questions: Why would the notion of the sovereignty of God evoke a sense of rebellion in a person?

*Scripture affirms both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We must accept both sides of the truth, though we may not understand how they correspond to one another. People are responsible for what they do with the gospel—or with whatever light they have (Rom. 2:19-20), so that punishment is just if they reject the light. And those who reject do so voluntarily. Jesus lamented, “You are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life” (John 5:40). He told unbelievers, “Unless you believe that I am [God], you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). In John 6, our Lord combined both divine sovereignty and human responsibility when He said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (v. 37); “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life” (v. 40); “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (v. 44); “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life” (v. 47); and, “No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (v. 65). **How both of these two realities can be true simultaneously cannot be understood by the human mind—only by God.***
~ MacArthur, emphasis added

Discussion Questions: MacArthur has noted elsewhere that there are other biblical doctrines that are just as impossible to harmonize as the doctrines of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, but few, if any people react with such controversy to those other hard-to-reconcile doctrines. For example, is Christ God or is He man? The answer is “yes.” Also, did the Holy Spirit write the scriptures or did men? Again, the answer is “yes.” Why do you think such seemingly irreconcilable doctrines are not controversial, but often the debates surrounding God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility can be heated and deep?

God's sovereignty governs creation: Everything that exists has God as its source. All things belong to God and exist for His glory. Plants, creatures, and the forces of nature are under God's complete control (Ps. 33:6–9). God's sovereignty governs history and providence: Rather than simply create things and set them in motion, God orders and directs human affairs (Ps. 33:10–11). In all circumstances, God is at work for the glory of His name and the good of His people (Rom. 8:28). God's sovereignty governs salvation: God predestines His people for salvation based on His eternal purposes, not His simple foreknowledge of human actions and decisions (Eph. 1:3–7). God's choice of His elect was made by Himself and for His glory. ~ Lawson

Discussion Questions: How can God's absolute sovereignty comfort those who are facing adversity? Is there a situation in your own life where you can find relief by meditating on God's sovereignty?

When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head. ~ Spurgeon

Discussion Question: Explain what Spurgeon meant in the above quote.

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Eight: God is Goodness & God is Love

- **God is Goodness**

Ice Breaker Questions: Who is the kindest person you've ever known, and why did you choose that person for your answer?

God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune, averts all sorts of danger and calamity; and that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a benevolent Father, who cares for us that no evil befall us.
~ Martin Luther

The goodness of God...is the loveliness, benign character, sweetness, friendliness, kindness, and generosity of God. Goodness is the very essence of God's Being, even if there were no creature to whom this could be manifested.
~ Wilhelmus à Brakel, Dutch Reformer, 1635-1711

The goodness of God is the drive behind all the blessings He daily bestows upon us. God created us because He felt good in His heart and He redeemed us for the same reason. ~ Tozer

The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people. ~ Tozer

Discussion Question: Romans 8:28 states, "for those who love God all things work together for good." Can you think of difficult experiences in your past when you doubted the wisdom and goodness of His plan, but which turned out for good?

*The goodness of God is seen in the variety of natural pleasures which He has provided for His creatures. God might have been pleased to satisfy our hunger without the food being pleasing to our palates—how His benevolence appears in the varied flavors which He has given to meats, vegetables, and fruits! God has not only given us senses, but also that which gratifies them; and this too reveals His goodness. The earth might have been as fertile as it is without its surface being so delightfully variegated. Our physical lives could have been sustained without beautiful flowers to regale our eyes, and exhale sweet perfumes. We might have walked the fields without our ears being saluted by the music of the birds. Whence, then, this loveliness, this charm, so freely diffused over the face of nature? Verily, "The tender mercies of the Lord are over all His works" (Ps. 145:9).
~ Pink*

Discussion Questions: How can you help unbelievers to see that their lives have been affected by the goodness of God? How would you conduct such a conversation?

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness [or, goodness] is meant to lead you to repentance? ~ Romans 2:1-4

Kindness is a good way to explain goodness here, because it is not goodness as opposed to badness. It is not that God is good as opposed to bad; it is that He is good in the sense of being benevolent. The word here, "chrēstotēs," means good in the sense of generous, good in the sense of merciful, good in the sense of kind, and so kindness is an apt translation of this word. Its equivalent in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "chesed," which basically is translated lovingkindness. ~ MacArthur, commenting on Romans 2:1-4

Discussion Question: Based on everything we've studied so far in this lesson, what aspects of God's "goodness" are meant to lead people to repentance? Mention several you can think of.

- **God is Love**

Ice Breaker Question: What was your favorite "love song" in your youth or now?

*Nothing binds me to my Lord like a strong belief in His changeless love.
~ Spurgeon*

Discussion Question: In the above quote, what other attribute of God, which we have already studied, does Spurgeon link with the love of God?

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ~ Romans 5:8

*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.
~ 1 John 4:16*

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ~ Ephesians 2:4-5

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ~ Romans 8:37-39

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ~ 1 John 4:7

We love because he first loved us. ~ 1 John 4:19

Discussion Question: Thinking back to our first lesson, we learned that some of God's attributes are "communicable," meaning that He shares them with us in some small degree, and others of His attributes are "incommunicable," meaning only God possesses those attributes. Looking at 1 John 4:7 and 1 John 4:19, does the Bible teach that "love" is a communicable attribute of God or an incommunicable attribute?

Remember this: had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, divine love would have put you there. ~ Spurgeon

Discussion Question: How can the Spurgeon quote above provide comfort to believers who find themselves in tough circumstances? What verse comes to mind?

'We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19). God did not love us because we loved Him, but He loved us before we had a particle of love for Him. Had God loved us in return for ours, then it would not be spontaneous on His part; but because He loved us when we were loveless, it is clear that His love was uninfluenced. It is highly important, if God is to be honored and the heart of His child established, that we should be quite clear upon this precious truth. God's love for me and for each of 'His own' was entirely unmoved by anything in us. What was there in me to attract the heart of God? Absolutely nothing. But, to the contrary, there was everything to repel Him, everything calculated to make Him loathe me—sinful, depraved, a mass of corruption, with 'no good thing' in me. ~ Pink

Nothing God ever does, or ever did, or ever will do, is separate from the love of God. ~ Tozer

Discussion Question: How can the Tozer quote above help us to reevaluate circumstances in which we find ourselves?

Our most fundamental inclination as fallen human creatures is to exchange the truth that God reveals about Himself for a lie, and to serve and worship the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18-32). We commit idolatry every time we substitute a lesser concept for His glory, whether that substitution takes the crass form of stone gods or the more sophisticated form of redefining God's character to suit our tastes. A god stripped of justice, of holiness, of sovereignty, and the rest, is as much an idol as a statue of wood or stone. We must be careful not to substitute for the biblical God a god who is exhausted in his character by the one attribute of love, especially as popular culture defines it. As Christians we believe in a God who is simple and not made up of parts. God is not one part sovereign, one part just, one part immutable, one part omniscient, one part eternal, and one part loving. Rather, He is all of His attributes at all times. To understand any single attribute, we must understand it in relation to all His other attributes. The love of God is eternal and sovereign. The love of God is immutable and holy. We treat all of His other attributes in the same way. God's justice is loving and eternal. His holiness is loving and omniscient. Our concept of the love of God will stay on track only as we understand His love in relationship to His other attributes. Whatever else God's love is, it is holy. His love is therefore characterized by the qualities that define holiness—transcendence and purity.
~ Sproul

Discussion Question: How has modern popular Christian culture, including modern popular Christian music, trivialized the love of God?

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Nine: God is Foreknowing & God is Grace

- ***The Foreknowledge of God***

Ice Breaker Questions: Thinking of someone you love (if you are married, think of your spouse), when did you realize you loved them?

God knows both the micro- and macro-dimensions of the entire universe. He numbers the very hairs of our heads. Not only does He know what we will do before we do it, but also He knows all the options we could have chosen at the moment. He knows all contingencies [or, possibilities]. Yet God's knowledge of contingencies is not itself contingent [or, conditional]. His foreknowledge is perfect and absolute. He is not a Great Chess Player who must wait to see what we will do, but He knows absolutely what we will do before we do it. Before a word is even formed on our lips, He knows it altogether. ~ Sproul

*When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things always were, and perpetually [or, forever or always] remain, under his eyes, so that to his knowledge there is nothing future or past, but all things are present. And they are present in such a way that he not only conceives them through ideas...but he truly looks upon them and discerns them as things placed before him.
~ John Calvin*

*God has never looked into the future and learned anything. God is omniscient. He never looks into the future and sees anything He has not already foreordained. If all God does is look into the future to see what someone will do, then that's all that foreknowledge is. Since mankind is totally depraved, no one would repent if foreknowledge only entailed observation and not God acting to bring about a state of affairs. Foreknowledge does not mean foresight. Romans 8:29 states, "whom He foreknew," not "what He foresaw." It is a gross misunderstanding of what the word foreknowledge means. Foreknowledge more accurately refers to God's previous choice to love a certain group of people.
~ Lawson*

Discussion Question: As a mind-blowing exercise, pause and consider seeing every moment – every action, every thought, every possibility - in history and the future all at once as if they were happening now!

What is meant by "foreknowledge?" "To know beforehand," is the ready reply of many. But we must not jump at conclusions, nor must we turn to Webster's dictionary as the final court of appeal, for it is not a matter of the etymology [or, the grammatical and linguistic history] of the term employed. What is needed is to find out how the word is used in Scripture. The Holy Spirit's usage of an expression always defines its meaning and scope. It is failure to apply this simple, rule which is responsible for so much confusion and error. So many people assume they already know the signification of a certain word used in Scripture, and then they are too dilatory to test their assumptions by means of a concordance. Let us amplify this point. ~ Pink

The word "foreknowledge" is not found in the Old Testament. But "know" occurs there frequently. When that term is used in connection with God, it often signifies "to regard with favor," denoting not mere cognition [or, awareness] but an affection for the object in view. "I know thee by name" (Ex. 33:17). "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deut. 9:24). "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jer. 1:5). ... "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). In these passages "knew" signifies either "loved" or "appointed." In like manner, the word "know" is frequently used in the New Testament, in the same sense as in the Old Testament. "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). "I am the good shepherd and know My sheep and am known of Mine" (John 10:14). "If any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Cor. 8:3). "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19). ~ Pink

Discussion Question: Considering God's omniscience, which we studied in Lesson Four, then examining the words of Christ in Matthew 7:23, is it possible that Christ meant He'd never heard of those people or had no knowledge of their existence? If not, considering the rest of the quote from Pink, what did Christ mean when He said "I never knew you?"

When people know God in Scripture, or when God knows them, it is personal knowledge that involves a saving relationship. Therefore, in Romans 8:29, "those whom he foreknew" is best understood to mean, "those whom he long ago thought of in a saving relationship to himself." The text actually says nothing about God foreknowing or foreseeing that certain people would believe, nor is that idea mentioned in any other text of Scripture. ~ Wayne Grudem

Discussion Question: What other attributes of God that we've studied so far are closely related to His foreknowledge?

Romans 8:29 says that God foreknew certain people. A study of the idea of knowledge in the Bible will show that it usually involves a choice of intimate relations, as when Adam "knew" his wife Eve and she conceived. Romans 8:29 means that God "fore-loved" certain people, and predestinated them. He chose them; they did not choose Him. Romans 9 makes this abundantly clear, because Paul goes into a discussion of God's sovereign choice of Jacob over Esau, a choice based on nothing either had done (Romans 9:11). The objection, "Is God unjust?" could not arise unless Paul were teaching real predestination; after all, nobody accuses the "foreseen faith" view of being unjust (9:14). And Paul's answer in verse 15, which stresses that God decides whom He will save and whom He will not, clinches the matter clearly.
 ~ Ligonier Blog, *The Foreknowledge of God*

- **The Grace of God**

Ice Breaker Questions: Do you remember a time in school when you should've been punished for something, but were given grace instead? Have you ever been stopped by a policeman and "let off the hook" with only a gracious warning?

God's "mercy" means God's goodness toward those in misery and distress. God's "grace" means God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment. ~ Wayne Grudem

Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened—as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure [or, renounce or withdraw] his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain, as [soon] expect the sinner to make any confession, or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God, unless grace shall first renew the heart. ~ Spurgeon

With respect to the attribute of grace, we find that Scripture emphasizes that God's grace, or his favor toward those who deserve no favor but only punishment, is never obligated but is always freely given on God's part. God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex. 33:19; quoted in Rom. 9:15). Yet God is regularly gracious toward his people: "Turn to me and be gracious to me, After Thy manner with those who love Thy name" (Ps. 119:132). In fact, Peter can call God "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). ~ Grudem

Discussion Question: Thinking back to your answers to the Icebreaker Question in this section, how did you feel when you escaped punishment you deserved, just because of someone's kindness toward you?

*The wonders of divine grace are the greatest of all wonders. The wonders of divine power and wisdom in the making of this great world are marvelous; other wonders of his justice in punishing sin are wonderful; many wonderful things have happened since the creation of the world, but none like the wonders of grace. "Grace, grace!" is the sound that the gospel rings with, "Grace, grace!" will be that shout which will ring in heaven forever; and perhaps what the angels sung at the birth of Christ, of God's good will towards men, is the highest theme that ever they entered upon.
~ Jonathan Edwards*

*Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
~ Romans 5:20-21*

*But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.
~ Romans 5:15-17*

Discussion Question: There are many people who believe they will experience a pleasant afterlife on account of their having been a good person. How could you give a biblical response to such a person, based on the two Romans 5 passages?

Discussion Questions: Are there times in your life when you've felt that your sins were too great to be forgiven? How can these two passages in Romans 5 provide comfort for you in such times?

If heaven were by merit, it would never be heaven to me, for if I were in it I should say, 'I am sure I am here by mistake; I am sure this is not my place; I have no claim to it.' But if it be of grace and not of works, then we may walk into heaven with boldness.

~ Charles Spurgeon

It is grace at the beginning, and grace at the end. So that when you and I come to lie upon our death beds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us there is the thing that helped us in the beginning. Not what we have been, not what we have done, but the Grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends with grace. Grace wondrous grace. By the grace of God I am what I am. Yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me. ~ Lloyd-Jones

Discussion Question: How should a consideration of God's free and sovereign grace influence Christian worship? How should it affect Christian relationships?

Notes:

Attributes of God - Study Guide

Lesson Ten: God is Holy & God is Wrathful

- **The Holiness of God**

Ice Breaker Questions: Who is the godliest person you ever met? How did you feel in his or her presence?

Neither the writer nor the reader of these words is qualified to appreciate the holiness of God. Quite literally a new channel must be cut through the desert of our minds to allow the sweet waters of truth that will heal our great sickness to flow in. 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. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable... Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. ~ Tozer

And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ~ Isaiah 6:3

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" ~ Revelation 4:8

What we see throughout the Scriptures is that God rules over all of the threatening forces that we fear. But this same God, in and of Himself, frightens us more than any of these other things. We understand that nothing poses a greater threat to our well-being than the holiness of God. Left to ourselves, none of us would invent the God of the Bible, the being who is a threat to our sense of security more primal and more fundamental than any act of nature. ~ Sproul

Two things that every human being absolutely must come to understand are the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. These topics are difficult for people to face. And they go together: if we understand who God is, and catch a glimpse of His majesty, purity, and holiness, then we are instantly aware of the extent of our own corruption. When that happens, we fly to grace—because we recognize that there's no way that we could ever stand before God apart from grace. ~ Sproul

Discussion Question: Read Isaiah 6:1-7, Luke 5:1-8, and Revelation 1:9-18, and describe the commonalities of how a man reacts when he encounters our holy Lord!

*In speaking of the holiness of God it is good, perhaps, to begin with something of a definition. It was A. A. Hodge who said, "The holiness of God is not to be conceived of as one attribute among others. It is rather a general term representing the conception of God's consummate perfection and total glory. It is His infinite moral perfection crowning His infinite intelligence and power." He said, "It is infinite moral perfection as the crown of the Godhead. Holiness is God's total glory crowned." It was Thomas Watson who said, "Holiness is the most sparkling jewel of God's crown. It is the name by which He is known." R. L. Dabney wrote, "Holiness is to be regarded not as a distinct attribute, but as the result of all God's moral perfection together." They are recognizing what the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 57 and verse 15 when he said, "For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, My name is Holy." Holy is His name.
~ MacArthur*

God's holiness is manifested in His law. That law forbids sin in all of its modifications: in its most refined as well as its grossest forms, the intent of the mind as well as the pollution of the body, the secret desire as well as the overt act. Therefore do we read, 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good' (Rom 7:12). Yes, 'the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether' (Psa 19:8,9). ~ Pink

God's holiness is manifested at the cross. Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the atonement display God's infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful sin must be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son! ~ Pink

I suggest that if you do not start with the holiness of God you will never understand God's plan of salvation, which is that salvation is only possible to us through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross on Calvary's hill. But the question arises; why is that cross essential, why is that the only way whereby man can be saved? If God is only love and compassion and mercy, then the cross is surely meaningless, for if God is love alone, then all He needs to do when man sins is to forgive him. But the whole message is that the cross is at the center, and without that death, God, I say with reverence, cannot forgive. So what is the trouble? And here is the answer—'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John 3:5). And that means that He is just and righteous; it means that He is of such pure countenance that He cannot behold and look upon iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13); it is the holiness of God that demands the cross, so without starting with holiness there is no meaning in the cross. It is not surprising that the cross has been discounted by modern theologians; it is because they have started with the love of God without His holiness. It is because they have forgotten the life of God, His holy life, that everything in Him is holy; with God love and forgiveness are not things of weakness or compromise. He can only forgive sin as He has dealt with it in His own holy manner, and that is what He did upon the cross. ~ Lloyd Jones

But [starting with the holiness of God] saves us also from another thing; it saves us from the terrible danger of tending to blame God and to criticize Him in times of trouble and in times of need, and that is one of our greatest dangers—to misunderstand God, to argue and to question, 'Why does God do this; did I deserve this?' But if I start with the holiness of God I will never speak like that. I know at once that whatever may be happening to me is not the result of anything unworthy in God. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all', so that whatever may be happening to me is not in any way due to any imperfections in God; it silences me, I put my hand upon my mouth and prevent myself from speaking foolishly and whiningly. ~ Lloyd-Jones

The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God, are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord, that they are humbled and filled with holy awe, and even with dread and alarm. ~ Spurgeon

Discussion Question: What are some ways that pondering the holiness of God should change the way we pray, and the way we think about situations in which we find ourselves?

- **The Wrath of God**

Ice Breaker Question: What's the most severe punishment you ever received?

There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. ~ Jonathan Edwards

The wisdom of God devised a way for the love of God to deliver sinners from the wrath of God while not compromising the righteousness of God. ~ John Piper

A study of the concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God—than there are to His love and tenderness. Because God is holy—He hates all sin; and because He hates all sin—His anger burns against the sinner (Psalm 7:11). ~ Pink

Discussion Question: Are you surprised to learn that “there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God—than there are to His love and tenderness” in the Bible? Why or why not?

Yes, many there are who turn away from a vision of God's wrath, as though they were called to look upon some blotch in the divine character or some blot upon the divine government. But what says the Scriptures? As we turn to them we find that God has made no attempt to conceal the facts concerning His wrath. He is not ashamed to make it known that vengeance and fury belong unto Him. His own challenge is: "Look now; I myself am He! There is no god other than Me! I am the one who kills and gives life; I am the one who wounds and heals; no one delivers from My power! Now I raise My hand to heaven and declare, "As surely as I live, when I sharpen My flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on My enemies and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword will devour flesh!" (Deut 32:39-42). ~ Pink

The wrath of God is a perfection of the divine character, upon which we need to frequently meditate. ~ Pink

There are some people who completely misinterpret the very term wrath. They think of wrath instinctively as some uncontrolled manifestation of anger. They cannot think of it apart from the idea of somebody trembling in a rage and pale with passion, who has lost self-control and is speaking in a violent manner and doing violent things. Now that is quite a false and wrong idea of the meaning of wrath. Sinful man, it is true, does sometimes manifest his wrath in this way, but all that does not enter at all into the term as used of God in the Bible. Wrath is nothing but a manifestation of indignation based upon justice. Indeed, we can go further and assert that the wrath of God, according to the scriptural teaching, is nothing but the other side of the love of God. It is the inevitable corollary of the rejection of the love of God. God is a God of love, but God is also and equally a God of justice and of righteousness; and if God's love is spurned and rejected there remains nothing but the justice and the righteousness and the wrath of God. ~ Lloyd-Jones

The first preacher in the New Testament is John the Baptist. What did he say? He said, "Flee from the wrath to come"; "Repent and be baptized every one of you, flee from the wrath to come". The Pharisees came to be baptized of John, and he looked at them and said, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" It was his great message. Indeed it was the message of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But, and most surprising of all, we find it in the verse that is generally quoted as the supreme statement of God as a God of love - John 3: 16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son". Why did He do so? The answer is "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". The alternative to everlasting life is perishing. And it is John 3: 16 that teaches it. But the thirty - sixth verse of that third chapter of John is still more plain, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him". In other words, all men are under the wrath of God, and unless we believe on the Son of God the wrath of God abides upon us. What can be more plain or explicit? There it is in the Gospel of John the apostle of love. ~ Lloyd-Jones

Discussion Question: If someone were to say to you that the wrath of God is not necessary, how would you respond?

The preaching of divine wrath serves as a black velvet backdrop that causes the diamond of God's mercy to shine brighter than ten thousand suns. It is upon the dark canvas of divine wrath that the splendor of His saving grace most fully radiates. Preaching the wrath of God most brilliantly showcases His gracious mercy toward sinners. ~ Lawson

Discussion Question: Explain what Dr. Lawson means in the quote above. How or why does "Preaching the wrath of God most brilliantly showcases His gracious mercy toward sinners?"

I want to say something to you that may shock you. I believe, right now, the United States of America is experiencing the wrath of abandonment. I don't believe we're on the brink of God's wrath; I think we're right in the middle of it. People have not yet experienced eternal wrath, those who are alive. Not yet have we entered into the age of eschatological wrath. Occasionally we have some calamities in which many souls perish. But I do believe that we are now experiencing the wrath of abandonment, and not just us. Paul said this in Acts 14:16, very important statement, he said, "In the generations gone by, God permitted all the nations to go their own way." Did you hear that? In the generations gone by, God permitted all of the nations to go their own way. This isn't anything new; this is the cycle of history. It's always gone like this. C.S. Lewis, writing in his book, The Problem of Pain, said, "The lost enjoy the horrible freedom they have demanded and are forever enslaved." ~ MacArthur

The present refusal of so many to accept the doctrine of the wrath of God is part of a larger pattern of unbelief that begins with doubt concerning the veracity [or, truth] of the Christian Scriptures. ~ Tozer

Discussion Question: In what way is the Word of God assaulted by those who downplay the wrath of God or deny the existence of hell? What are other possible results from such downplaying or denials?

Among those now reading this book, there are many who are assuming they are not going to go to hell. But if there is a God (and there is), and if He is holy (and He is), and if He is just (and He is), He could not possibly be without wrath. If you have not been reconciled to Him through the blood of His Son, the only thing you have to look forward to is His wrath, which is a divine wrath, a furious wrath, and an eternal wrath. God must be regarded as holy by anyone who comes near Him. So if you would come into the presence of God, consider the nature of the God whom you are approaching, that you may come covered by the righteousness of Christ. ~ Sproul

The greatest peril facing every person, in every ethnic group, in every place on earth, and at every time in history, is the righteous wrath of God against guilty sinners, leading to everlasting suffering — unless God himself rescues us from his own judgment. ~ John Piper

God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. ~ J.I. Packer

Discussion Question: Explain how the wrath of God is “a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil.” Explain how the wrath of God is tied to His holiness.

Bonus Homework: Look back at all of the attributes we have studied over these 10 weeks, and explain how they relate to one another, understanding as we've discussed a few times, His attributes are inseparable – they aren't parts – they are ALL Him...Who He is...and begin to regularly pray that the Lord would help you to know Him better, to **want** to know Him better, and reveal Himself to you through the pages of scripture!

Notes: