

God, An Introduction (Theology)

Session Outline

1. Session Intro & Topic
 - a. Review 4 points of bibliology (briefly)
 - b. Preview next three sessions (theology, Christology, pneumatology – trinitarian understanding)
 - c. Three questions to approach theology – the study of God.
2. Question 1 – Who is God?
 - a. God is a being
 - b. God has self-revealed. These self-disclosures refute false theologies.
 - c. God has personhood.
3. Question 2 – What is God like?
 - a. His self-disclosures reveal his attributes (nature, character, being)
 - b. He is triune.
4. Question 3 – What does God do?
 - a. He created
 - b. He related

Session Intro

Say Last time together, we began our exploration into the core doctrines of Christianity by looking at the doctrine of the Bible. We discussed how the Bible is the foundational sacred text of Christianity, and how we believe it is the **inspired** and **inerrant** Word of God that sufficiently (or **infallibly**) reveals truth and the Gospel, and that it lacks nothing to accomplish its ordained purpose (**integrity**). It is from the Bible that we can understand *theology*, which is literally the study of God. The Bible reveals who God is, and how we can relate with Him. Over our next three times together, we are going to Explore God, in His three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This conceptual understanding of God as three-in-one is what we mean when we talk about the Triune nature of God (or speak of *The Trinity*). In addition to talking about the Trinity, or God in full, we will also devote some of our conversation to God, the Father. In the next two times we are together, we will be talking about God the Son, and God the Spirit.

Ask When you think about God, what is the first thought or image that comes to mind? (*Responses can point to God's nature or attributes, or imagery of Jesus [baby in the manger, itinerant preacher/Rabbi, crucified on the cross, resurrected Savior], the Holy Spirit, or Divine Being in heaven, among many others. Allow for discussion, and affirm where affirmation is appropriate*)

Say In our time together, we are going to seek to answer three questions. We don't pretend that the answers we'll arrive at will be exhaustive. Think of these as "initial responses" to three very big questions.

Question 1: Who is God?

Say It could be reasoned that maybe the way we should ask this question is "What is God?" because we can't see God. So, without an external, objective source to provide us with information about God that we wouldn't know what you believe about God (Theology)

otherwise have, we would have to rely solely on subjective sources to figure out who God is.

Ask

- What is the problem with relying on subjective resources for your understanding about God? (*Subjective resources are unreliable, they all are filtered through personal experiences with innumerable variables, prejudices, and biases*).
- What are some of the views and opinions of God that originate purely from subjective (rather than objective) sources? (*God is a force, God is nature, God is a “super human,” or ancient being with white hair and long beard. God is love (undefined). God is everything. God is nothing [or nothingness], among many other possible answers*).

Say In seeking to understand God, we go to the Bible, which we trust as a reliable, unchanging, objective resource. Moreover, the Bible claims to be the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. This is, in some ways, an autobiography, a self-revelation of God to whoever reads it. As we read it, we see that God has self-revealed some important details so we grow in our understanding of this important question. This isn't a complete list, but just a couple of the big ones, relevant to our conversation. In fact, with just the first book of the Bible, God reveals much that objectively refutes many of the erroneous, subjective opinions about God.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

From this initial self-disclosure, we can understand:

- God exists. He is real. (*This refutes atheism*)
- God is separate from the rest of the created order. (*This refutes pantheism*)
- God is singular (one God). (*This refutes polytheism*)
- God created. (*This refutes singularity creation – “The Big Bang theory”*)
- The heavens and the earth were created, they didn't exist before God, nor were they created by someone other than God (*This refutes materialism*)

Additional verses in this same book reveal a couple more significant self-disclosures:

*3 Then **God said**, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 **God saw** that the light was good; and **God separated** the light from the darkness. 5 **God called** the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Gen. 1:3-5, emphases added)*

- God is a being, but he is not a human. We'll talk more about this. (*This refutes humanism, that humans are gods*) (*Note: “saying,” “seeing,” “calling” and “separating” are actions of a being, not of a force*)
- God intervened in the creation. (*This refutes uniformism, which posits that everything that happens in science and nature has always occurred as it currently occurs.*)\

Ask

- Which of these self-disclosures about God is the most challenging to you?
- Which is the most encouraging or comforting to you? Why?

Say All these self-disclosures are important, and they are all connected. When you read it as it is presented, you see that in these claims, God is self-revealing. He is in fact demonstrating His personhood. To say that God is a person

Know What You Believe About God (Theology)

means that God is an individual entity with the attributes of **individuality, consciousness, self-consciousness, and the ability to reason and express morality and will**. *(RE-READ this to assure people understand what personhood means, and that it doesn't mean that God is human).*

Ask Having heard this definition of personhood, how does it impact you to think of God having personhood? *(Answers will vary but should reflect understanding that God's personhood also gives insight to His purposefulness, intent, His rationality, morality, and goodness.)*

Of first importance, we have learned that God is not a "what," but is a "who." From this, we can begin to understand and address this first question of who God is.

Ask What are some of your answers to the question, "Who is God?" *(God is a being. God is the creator. God is bigger or more than His creation).*

Say From this initial question and its answers, we can also begin to explore the second question:

Question #2: What is God like?

Say The term we use to describe what God is like is God's "attributes." An attribute is a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something. Again, God has determined to self-reveal His attributes so we can not only know, but grow in our understanding of both who He is, and what His attributes are. In fact, it is impossible to know anything about what God is like apart from what He has self-revealed. Here's an incomplete list of what God has self-revealed about His nature, His character, and His being: *(Have the group read through this list, with each person reading an attribute, each taking a turn)*

Some of God's Attributes

- He is omniscient (all-knowing) *Psalm 139:1-6*
- He is omnipotent (all-powerful) *Genesis 18:14; Psalm 91:1-2; Matthew 28:18*
- He is omnipresent (ever-present, everywhere, always) *Proverbs 15:3; Psalm 121:3*
- He is omnibenevolent (all good, always) *Psalm 106:1; 145:9*
- He is immutable (unchanging) *Psalm 102:25-27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Romans 11:29*
- He is incomprehensible (we cannot fully comprehend Him) *Job 11:7; 26:14; Romans 11:33*
- He is eternal & everlasting (has no beginning, not limited by time, space, or anything else) *Deut. 32:40, Isaiah 57:15*
- He is self-existent (depends on nothing else to exist) *Exodus 3:14; John 5:26*
- He is self-sufficient (needs nothing, and we cannot give him anything that is not already His) *Acts 17:24-25*
- He is transcendent (He pervades His creation totally) *Isaiah 55:8-9*
- He is sovereign (He reigns over everything) *Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11*
- He is holy (morally excellent, defining perfection) *Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 6:3*
- He is righteous (He always does right) *Psalm 119:142*
- He is just (He is fair in all His actions) *Numbers 14:18; Psalm 89:14*
- He is merciful (He is actively compassionate toward those who offend Him) *Psalm 62:12; 116:5*
- He is patient (He is incredibly slow to anger) *2 Peter 3:9*
- He is wise (His understanding is inscrutable) *Isaiah 40:28; Daniel 2:20*
- He is loving (He expresses love perfectly not based on worth or merit) *Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8*
- He is wrathful (He hates all evil) *Exodus 34:6; Romans 1:18*
- He is truthful (Everything God reveals is true) *Psalm 31:5; Titus 1:2*

Ask Rather than pick one attribute out of this list, how does it make you feel that God is all these things, simultaneously, always? *(answers will vary, but may speak to God's magnitude and infiniteness)*

Say In addressing what God is like, we must also address a fundamental aspect of His personhood, unique to Christianity and revealed in the Scriptures. That is that God is *triune in nature*. This means He expresses Himself as three distinct persons in His singular being. He is one God in three persons. As such, they are the same in substance, equal in power and glory. They are revealed in the Scriptures as God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. As one God, the Father is not the Son nor the Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father nor the Son. They are one God, indivisible, in perfect relationship eternally.

While the Bible doesn't ever use the word "Trinity," the doctrine of the triune nature of God is clearly and consistently revealed in Scripture. The attributes we looked at earlier are *always* true of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Read

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17)

Ask:

- Where do you see evidence of the Triune God in these Scriptures?
- What questions do you find yourself asking about the Trinity? *(answers will vary, and resist the urge to answer the questions. Instead, affirm that the Trinity is a profound concept, and provokes many questions. Encourage group members to write down their questions and to seek answers in the Scriptures)*

Say We could spend our time together for the remainder of our days exploring the triune nature of God, and still fall short of fully comprehending Him. However, we can *apprehend* enough of an understanding to keep building and progressing. So, in the rest of our time together, we are going to begin to answer the third question:

Question #3: What does God do?

Say Like the Trinity itself, there isn't enough time to completely answer this question. We can only scratch the surface, but it's worthy of our effort to do so because there are two big things that God has done and is doing that are vital to our understanding of Him.

Know What You Believe About God (Theology)

First, God created. The Scriptures revealed that God created everything, including you. He created by the power of His spoken Word, and all of creation flourished under His loving care:

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. . . . (Genesis 1:31)

Ask Why do you think it matters that God created everything, including you, and that it was good? *(answers may include: God's creation reveals that He is a good God, that He is all powerful, and loving; that creation was perfect in its original design)*

Second, God related. God created for the purpose of relating with His creation. He is not distant, nor disconnected, from His creation:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Ask Why do you think it matters that God determined to relate with His creation? *(God's determination to relate with His creation affirms His goodness, and begins to reveal the purpose behind His creation)*

Say In the weeks to come, we will talk more about what God does, and it all starts here with the reality that God created and God related.

Review:

Say In our time together, we explored three big questions about God:

First, we looked at the question of Who is God? And we saw that God is real and personal.

Next, we asked the question of What is God like? And we talked about some of the vital attributes of God, including the key attribute of His triune nature.

Third, we asked the question of What does God do? And we saw that two important things that God has done is that He created us and He has related with us.

Ask What has been significant to you or has challenged you from what we've discussed? *(answers will vary)*

Say In our next time together, we will take a look at Jesus: The Father's Son, and God in the flesh.

Close in prayer with and for one another, making sure to attend to the needs of your group, planning for serving together, or other details relevant to the group. Confirm your next time and location to meet.