



The Attributes of God: What is God Like?

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What is God Like? – Part 1
Introduction to the Attributes of God

MATERIALS NEEDED

The movie, *Finding Forrester*

A VCR and TV

Enough copies of the “Knowing God” Questionnaire for each person in the group

Pencils

THE WORD

Know that the
Lord is God.

Psalm 100:3a (NIV)



THE HOOK

Clip from *Finding Forester* (total length of clip is a little over four minutes).

The clip begins approximately five minutes into the tape when Jamal and his friends are playing basketball. The clip ends right after the lunchroom scene (a little more than 9 minutes into the tape).

Questions:

1. What were some of the misconceptions Jamal and his friends had about “the window?”
2. How did those misconceptions affect their thinking?
3. Tell about a time when you made an assumption about someone but later found out that you were wrong about them?
4. Has someone else come to conclusion about you before without really knowing you? How did that make you feel?



THE LESSON

Just like Jamal and his friends misunderstood “the window”, people misunderstand God more than anything or anybody else in existence. Every person lives with certain misconceptions about what God is really like. When we misunderstand God in this way it can have very negative consequences in our lives. For example, imagine that there is someone that believes that God kills people who mess up and sin a lot. How could that misunderstanding of God have a negative impact on that person’s life?

Have each person fill out a copy of the “Knowing God Questionnaire.” When they are finished, divide into group of three to five with an adult facilitator. In these groups discuss the student’s answers to the questions. At the end of the time, have the students turn in the questionnaires with their names on them. These will help you discern where your students are coming from when it comes to their understanding of what God is like.

For the next several weeks we are going to be talking about what God is really like. Our hope is that if you have made some false assumptions about God, you will learn the truth about God in our times together. The questionnaires you filled out at the beginning are a way for you to begin talking about some of the assumptions that you have about what God is like.

THE BIG IDEA

How we view God affects how we live. We get ideas about what God is like from a lot of different places. Some of our assumptions are correct while others are very much mistaken. Our faulty views of God can have a very negative effect on our lives. Having a correct understanding of God’s character is absolutely essential for everything else we do. This unit is dedicated to helping us accurately understand God’s character.

SO WHAT?

1. What do you think are the main reasons why people misunderstand God? If you are like most people, you may not be sure what God is like in a lot of ways.
2. What are the things about God that seem hard to understand?

Note to leader: Do not attempt at this time to address the things that your students bring up in response to this question. You will want to use this time to simply hear any misunderstandings of God that your youth have so that you can understand them better and understand how they may relate to God.

"Knowing God" Questionnaire

<p>If you had to describe God in <u>five words</u> that a four-year-old could understand, what would they be?</p>	
<p>If you could ask God one question about Himself and have Him answer it, what would it be?</p>	
<p>What scares you the most about God?</p>	
<p>If you could change anything about God, what would it be?</p>	
<p>What do you think God thinks of you?</p>	

Name: _____ Date: _____

What is God Like? – Part 2
Knowing God by His Names

MATERIALS NEEDED

Pencils
Copies of the “Names of God” Scavenger Hunt form
Construction Paper
Scissors
Crayons or markers
Stapler
Glue/tape
Various other items that could be used to make something out of like:
 Paper plates, toilet paper tubes, empty pop cans,
 pipe cleaners, egg cartons, empty milk cartons,
 grocery bags, etc...

THE WORD

Those who know Your
name will trust in
You, for you, Lord,
have never forsaken
those who seek You.

Psalm 9:10

INTRODUCTION

Who here has a nickname?

How did you pick up that name?

What could you assume about someone with the following nicknames?:

Bones – (Skinny) Bullet – (Fast) Scrapper – (Good fighter) Moose – (Big or strong)

Nicknames can tell us something that is true about someone. During Biblical times people’s names were significant in this same way. Someone’s name would tell you something about him or her. (i.e. Moses’ name meant _____; Ichabod means _____; Isaac means _____) Imagine if today we still named people and things in this same way. However, we all know that one name can’t capture all that is true about someone. Imagine if we each had a set of different names that people called us when we showed different parts of our personality. If this were true, what would some of your names probably be?



THE HOOK

Divide into groups of three students. **Explain the following:**

Your job is to use the materials we have here to make your ideal pet dog. You will have 10 minutes to do so. Not only do you have to build your ideal dog but you must give it three to five names that each accurately reflects one part of its character. For instance, you might choose the following as the names for your dog:

You call him “Shredder” when you hear a burglar trying to get into your house

You call him “Slippers” when you want him to sleep on your feet at night to keep you warm.

You call him “Leaky” when he does you-know-what on your mother’s favorite shoes

After ten minutes you will present your dog and explain his various names to the rest of us.



THE LESSON

What we did with these dogs may seem a little strange to us because we are not used to using names in this way. However, one way God has chosen to show us some of the different aspects of His character is through His various names. We are going to talk about some of the names of God and what they mean.

The Old Testament part of the Bible was originally written in a language called Hebrew. The Hebrew language uses many different names for God though in most cases our English Bibles simply translate these names into “God” or “Lord.” However, when we look at these names in their original language and their meanings we can learn a lot about what God is like.

“Names of God” Scavenger Hunt

Prior to the youth arriving, you will have cut the “Names of God Answer Key” into strips and placed one strip in each envelope and hidden the envelopes in various places (don’t hide them too well!). Divide your group into pairs. Give each pair a copy of the “Names of God Scavenger Hunt” form. Instruct the youth to fill out their form as they find the envelopes hidden. Instruct them to leave the envelopes where they found them so that others can find them.

THE BIG IDEA

God has various names and each one denotes a different aspect of His character. When trying to discern what God is like, His names are a good place to start.

Note to leader: You may want to debrief with the students at this point. [i.e. gather everyone together; have a big copy of the list of names without the answers (or show it with an overhead projector so all can see). To make the names more concrete, have kids give the correct answers, PLUS add their own interpretation of what that means, or a parallel meaning from their culture today.

SO WHAT?

1. Based on what you discovered, what name for God means the most to you personally? Why?
2. What are some of the things you learned about God's character from looking at the meaning of some of his different names?

THE "NAMES OF GOD" SCAVENGER HUNT

God has many names in the Bible. The following is a list of some of them. Find the meanings of these names of God in the hidden envelopes. Fill in the answers as you find them.

Adonai	
El	
Elohim	
El-Elyon	
El-Olam	
El-Shaddai	
Immanuel	
Jehovah	
Jehovah-Jireh	
Jehovah-Mekaddesh	
Jehovah-Rohi	
Jehovah-Rophe	
Jehovah-Shalom	

ANSWER KEY¹

Adonai – Lord or Master, denoting ownership
(the image of bond servants)

El – A generic term for God or deity

Elohim – The strong, faithful One; the only
true God

Names and meanings taken from and/or adapted from Bill Bright's book, *God: Discover His Character*, New Life Publications, 1999. Pages 323-324.

El-Elyon – The Exalted One and all others are below Him; the Most High God

El-Olam – Eternal, perpetual, everlasting; The God that lasts forever

El-Shaddai – Most powerful in strength; the Almighty God

Immanuel – God with us
[Jesus (God) gave up heaven (and all that is implied in some of these other names, like Shaddai & Elyon), and “put on the limitations of humanness”]

Jehovah – I AM, or self-existence; God exists without anyone creating Him.

Jehovah-Jireh – The Lord our provider

Jehovah-Mekaddesh – the Lord who sanctifies (or purifies and makes clean)

Jehovah-Rohi – To tend as one cares for sheep; the Lord our Shepherd

Jehovah-Rophe – God our healer
[doctors are “practicing medicine”, but God
created/invented it]

Jehovah-Shalom – the Lord our Peace

God is a Personal Spirit
What God is Really Made Of

MATERIALS NEEDED

A Twinkie®
A can of biscuit dough
A jar of baby food
A can of dog food
Twelve small paper plates
A few napkins

THE WORD

God is spirit, and
those who worship
Him must worship in
spirit and truth.

John 4:24



THE HOOK

This is a game called “What is It?” Have three volunteer contestants leave the room (send an adult with them to insure that they cannot see or hear what is going on in the room).

While they are out of the room, have your other students help you put an equal sample of each item on the plates (three plates of Twinkie, three of biscuit dough, etc. When you are done, you should have four plates for each contestant, and each plate should contain one sample.

Have the first of the three contestants return to the room blindfolded. Hand them the plate with the Twinkie sample on it. First, ask them to feel it with their fingers. Ask them to guess what it is. If they get it exactly right, they get three points and you can go on to the next sample. If they don't, tell them they can smell it. If they guess correctly after smelling it, give them two points and move on. If they don't, then tell them they can taste it. Do this with all the samples but stop them before they actually taste the dog food (let the audience *think* you are going to let them taste it though). If they guess correctly after tasting it, give them one point.

Do the same with all three contestants one by one and reward the best guesser with a prize (perhaps an unopened can of dog food).



THE LESSON

It can be difficult sometimes to tell what something is or what something is made of (especially when you are blindfolded!). What are you made of? (Answers here will likely include: blood, skin, a soul, bones, nerves, etc...) Have you ever wondered what God is and what He is made of? If you had to guess what God is made of, what would you say?

We are going to look at what the Bible says God is at the very most basic level.

Set up the scripture passage with the following:

One time Jesus was traveling and had to go through some enemy territory to get where he was going. The Jewish people did whatever they could to avoid traveling through this area and if they had to go through it they would certainly avoid talking to anybody there.

As you know, Jesus was different from everybody else. He took his disciples through there. Jesus hung out by a well while the fellas went to town to get some food. Not only this but while he was there, he talked to someone. Not just any “someone” either. He talked to a woman who had been with a lot of men. What might we call a woman like that today? Jesus started talking to her about getting a drink but brought the conversation around to talking about God. That is where this passage begins.

Have someone read John 4:20-24.

Q: What is the woman’s concern in this passage?

A: That she wasn’t worshipping God in the right place because she did it on the mountain rather than at the “Church” or as they called it. The “Temple” in Jerusalem.

Q: What was Jesus response?

A: That she is supposed to worship God in spirit and in truth because God is spirit.

In the end Jesus was saying that because God is spirit He can be everywhere at once. He not only lives in the Temple, but He lives on the mountain as well. Likewise, God not only is present at your church on Sunday morning, but He is there in your classroom at school or there at the movies when you are on a date. Because He is spirit He can be everywhere.

Because He is spirit, no one can see Him. **1 Timothy 6:16** tells us that no person has seen or can see God. There are times in the Bible when people saw God’s glory, His angel or some human representation of Him. However, no one has ever seen Him because He is spirit and is therefore invisible.

Not only is God spirit but God is personal. In other words, He is not the sun or moon, a statue, some kind of positive energy, or just a force, which are merely things that cannot interact with us and have relationships with us.

THE BIG IDEA

It is confusing to understand exactly what or who God is. Many people throughout history have come to different conclusions. Some have said that God is a statue made by human hands, others say that God is a force (like in Star Wars), others say God is nature or something in nature like the sun or moon, and still others say he is a kind of positive energy.¹ The Bible, however, tells us the truth about God and reveals to us that He is a personal spirit.

SO WHAT?

1. Knowing that God is spirit and goes everywhere you go, how do you think the way you live every day might change?
2. Knowing that God is not some big force or energy, but rather is personal, how will that change how you interact with Him?
3. How is your understanding of what God is like different now than it was before this lesson?
4. How will this difference change the way you live?

¹ Bill Bright, *God* (Orlando: New Life Publications, 1999), 25-26.

God is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient
The Go-Anywhere, Do-Everything, Know-It-All God

THE WORD



THE HOOK

Begin by dividing everyone into three groups. Tell the groups that just for one night, their group has a special ability. Beyond this ability, however, they have normal human capabilities in every other area (this will be an important point for this activity later on).

The Go-Anywheres: This first group has the ability to be everywhere in the world a once. In other words, they would be able to see what was going on absolutely anywhere at any time.

The Do-Anythings: The second group can accomplish everything and anything they want to. If they want to put Jupiter where Venus is or make food for everyone that is hungry in the world, they can.

The Know-It-Alls: This group has the ability to know absolutely everything. There is nothing that has been done or will be done that they do not know about.

Give them two minutes to talk within their groups and give three to five reasons (provide them with pen and paper) why their special ability is better than the special ability of the other two groups. Remind them that they cannot use their own ability to be what one of the other groups is. For example, group number three cannot say because they are all-powerful that they are going to multiply themselves by billions so that they can be everywhere at once like group number one. When the five minutes is over, ask the groups to each present their case and let them dialogue about it for a few minutes (not too long).

After that, present the following scenario to them:

All the world's elephants have suddenly and mysteriously become ill with a deadly disease. They are beginning to sneeze on all the other animals of the world and get

Am I God who is only in one place?" asks the LORD. "Do they think I cannot see what they are doing? Can anyone hide from Me? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" asks the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:23-24 (NLT)

"How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!"

Psalms 147:5 (NLT)

them sick as well (humans are immune from it). If they don't get help in four hours, all the animals of the earth will die. Your job is to make sure that none of the animals (including the elephants) dies. How would you use your special ability to solve this problem?

Let them discuss this within their groups for three minutes and then present their answers. Your job is to point out how their plan would not work because they are in need of one of the other groups' abilities to carry it out. For example, the All-Knowing group could come up with a cure for the disease but could not get it to all the animals of the earth within four hours unless they were present everywhere on the earth or all-powerful. There will be similar holes in each of the plans.



THE LESSON

Even though each of these abilities would be an incredible one to have, you can see how they need each other in order to be absolutely perfectly able to handle all things. That is what makes God perfect. He possess all three of these attributes. The name of each one starts with the prefix “**omni**” which basically **means** “**all**.” God is present everywhere all at once – this is called His omnipresence. God knows everything there is to know – this is called His omniscience. God can do anything He wants to do – this is called His omnipotence.

Because **God is omnipresent**, He can be with you wherever you go. Have someone read Jeremiah 23:23-24 (other verses are 1 Kings 8:27, Psalm 139, Acts 17:27-28).

Because **God is omniscient**, He knows the solution to every [problem you might have]. He also knows what you are thinking. When you pray, you can be honest with Him because He knows the truth anyway (Psalm 147:5, Psalm 139:4 and 16, Proverbs 3:19-20).

Because **God is omnipotent**, He has the power to do anything He wants. So not only is He with you, not only does He know the answer to your problems, but He is also powerful enough to take care of everything that concerns you (2 Corinthians 2:18, Isaiah 40:28, Matthew 19:26, Luke 1:37).

Important points for the teacher to be aware of --You may choose to incorporate the following points into the Bible study if appropriate for your group:

1. When we say that God can do anything, it is probably more accurate to say that God can do anything He determines to do. God cannot do anything that contradicts His character. For example, because God is completely truthful in character, He cannot lie or break a promise. Because God is, by nature, eternal, He cannot die. Because God is perfect and Holy, He cannot sin. However, He can do anything He determines to do and He will not determine to do something that is contrary to His character.

2. The following questions might come up: Can God create a rock He cannot move or can God create two mountains without a valley between them? These questions are nonsensical in nature because they are deemed impossible by the very definitions of the words used. It is similar to asking if God can create square circles. The answer is, of course, “no” because by definition, circles cannot be squares. The best way to answer these questions is to say that God can do anything but He can’t do a “nothing” (which is what these questions make themselves out to be by definition).¹
3. In discussing omnipresence, it is important to note that God’s presence everywhere does not make Him indistinguishable from everything else. He is a distinct being. God is present on a mountain but is not the mountain. God can be working in the ocean but He is not the ocean. To take such a view would be pantheism and is error. A good way to make this distinction is speaking of God as being near to all things. There is no place, person, or thing out of the reach or presence of God.

THE BIG IDEA

We serve the go-anywhere, do-anything, know-it-all God. He is the only God. These things should give us great comfort. God is present in every place at all times and because of that, we can know that He is always with us no matter where we go or what we do. And He not only knows all things but is also able to do whatever He promises to do.

SO WHAT?

1. How will knowing that God is with you wherever you go change the way you live?
2. What are some of the difficulties you are facing right now? How does knowing these three attributes of God give you comfort about these difficulties?
3. Why do you think it is important to pray even if God knows everything about you, everything you think, and everything you are going to say?
4. What is the one thing from this lesson you are going to think about this week and ask God to change in your life?

¹ Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1996), p.239.

God is Loving, Merciful, and Compassionate
Whatever It Takes

MATERIALS NEEDED

Two bags of Hershey's Kisses
Two pieces of paper
Two small trash cans
Two jars or glasses

THE WORD

The LORD is merciful
and gracious; He is
slow to get angry and
full of unfailing love.

Psalm 103:8 (NLT)



THE HOOK

Divide the students into two groups. Assign an adult leader to each of the groups as the "Love Giver." Have each group make a single file line on the opposite side of the room from the other group. Put a trash can about 15-20 feet away from the front of each of the groups (make sure it is far enough away that they will miss at least part of the time). Tell the groups that the object of the game is to wad up their piece of paper and shoot it into their baskets. Only the person in front of each line can shoot. Once they have shot, each person will quickly retrieve the paper wad and hand it to the first person in line. They will then return to the back of the line and wait for their next shot. Tell them that the Hershey's Kisses you have are little doses of love. If you put one in their "Love Jar (or cup)" you are showing them that you love them. The object is to see which team can accumulate the most love.

DO NOT explain the following to the students:

The key to this game is the "Love Giver."

For group "A," the Love Giver will put one piece of candy in the jar every time someone shoots whether they make or miss the shot. The Love Giver for group "A" should be very encouraging and excited no matter how the shooters are doing saying things like "Good Try!" or "That's OK you'll get it next time". They should make sure that group "B" can see and hear what they are doing for group "A".

The Love Giver for group “B” on the other hand will give two pieces of candy for every shot made and will be very encouraging. However when someone misses, they must clearly show their disapproval and say things like “Come on!”, “What in the world!”, or “What was that?” They also must remove 4 pieces of candy (or whatever is left if it is less than four) from the groups love jar whenever they miss a shot, and announce that they are doing so, (“I have to take back 4 Hershey Kisses for that miss!”)



THE LESSON

Group “A”, I have a question for you. How loved do you feel after playing that game? How in the world did you end up with so much love in your love jar?

Group “B”, how did you feel when you noticed how the other group was being treated? You got twice as much love when you did good. Why then is your love jar so empty?

Group “A” just experienced what we call “unconditional love” while group “B” experienced “conditional love.” Unconditional love is, of course, love that is given without condition. No matter how you do, you are loved. We could call it “No Matter What” love.

Conditional love on the other hand, is love that has strings attached. It is what you might call “if” love. “I’ll love you IF you make that shot.” “I’ll love you IF you don’t get in trouble at school.” “I’ll love you IF you keep making money for our family.” “I’ll love you IF you sleep with me.” Now these exact statements are not usually communicated verbally. However, you know when someone has attached strings to the love they given you.

Who here has experienced this “if” kind of love? What are some of the “ifs” that you experienced?

Who here has experienced the “no matter what” kind of love? Who here has given that same “no matter what” kind of love to someone else? Please tell us about it.

Unfortunately, **“no matter what” love is nearly impossible to find.** Because we are sinful, we tend to withhold love from those who let us down and disappoint us. It is very hard to love someone with “no matter what” love.

However, **one of God’s attributes is this very kind of love.** Let’s look at **John 3:16.** Have someone read this verse:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:16 (NIV)**

It is “no matter what” love that enabled God to send His only son to die on a cross for people that hated Him and didn’t want to have anything to do with Him. It is God’s “no matter what” love that still is willing to be our friend when we do things to disappoint Him or even embarrass Him.

Another attribute that is related to God’s love is **His mercy**. Mercy is when deserved punishment is withheld. For example, let’s say that you are goofing around with some friends in the house when your mom has already told you to knock it off, and you put a hole in your mother’s new sofa. What would the deserved punishment be for something like that at your house? Mercy would be if your mom decided to let it go even though you deserve to be punished. Sin is disobedience to God and deserves punishment. However, God exercises His mercy by withholding this punishment (hell) so that we might have the opportunity to take Jesus up on His offer to take our punishment for sin for us. If you have not yet placed your trust in Christ, the fact that you are still alive and have the opportunity to receive Christ is evidence of God’s great mercy on you. Every day you wake up is another day of mercy on you and another chance to make the once-for-all decision to give your life – and your sin – to Christ.

A third attribute related to God’s love is **His compassion**. He sees your needs and wants to take care of them. He doesn’t like to see you hurting and because of His compassion He will comfort you. Who can share an example of how God has taken care of you, given you what you needed or wanted? Not only does He show you compassion, He wants to demonstrate His compassion to others through you. There are people with needs all around us. Whether it is a homeless person you see on the street or it is a person at school who just lost a close family member, there are people with needs that God wants to meet through you. He wants to demonstrate that He cares for these people by using you to meet their needs. Who can share with the group a need that they have seen in others that they believe God wants to use them to meet?

THE BIG IDEA

God loves unconditionally. Related to this “no matter what” love are His attributes of **mercy and compassion**. Mercy withholds consequences that are deserved and compassion cares tenderly for every need. Understanding the love, mercy, and compassion that God has for us enables us to exhibit these same attributes to those we come into contact with.

SO WHAT?

1. Tell about someone who you tend to give “if” love to. What is a way that you can show them “no matter what” love over the course of the next week?
2. Is there anyone who has made you angry and maybe deserves your anger? What is a way that you can reflect to them God’s mercy and withhold punishment that they deserve?
3. Who is one person you can think of that could really use God’s compassion right now? What will you do to show it to them?

God is Holy
CAN GOD GET GREASY?

MATERIALS NEEDED

A clear glass

Bottle of purified water

A bottle of motor oil or vegetable oil



THE HOOK

Get two volunteers. One will hold the bottle of water while the other will hold the motor oil.

This is a clean glass of water. This water represents God. It is pure and perfect. This is oil. The oil represents evil and sin. What happens when we combine oil (sin) and water (God)? It doesn't mix together – the water stays completely separate from the oil. What will happen if I mix them together with a spoon (stir the mixture)? The bubbles mix together but the bubbles of oil are still separate from the bubbles of water. They will still not mix together like Kool-Aid® mix and water do. Why not?

(Have a couple of the students offer answers)

Because of the very way water is made up, it is fundamentally unable to mix with oil. The water did not simply make a decision to not mix with the oil. Because of its chemical makeup it is unable in its very nature to mix with the oil.



THE LESSON

Likewise, God is completely unable because of who He is, to mix with sin. It is not that God has just simply decided not to sin and have evil thoughts. He is unable to. You may say, "God can do anything. Why can't He sin if He wants to?" Remember from the lesson on God being all-powerful we learned that God can do anything he decides to do. However, He cannot do something that is contrary to His character nor will He (or can He) decide to do so. God, by his very character, is unable to sin. **This attribute is called holiness.**

THE WORD

In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty! The whole earth is filled with His glory!"

Isaiah 6:3

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be perfect? Not only that you did everything perfect, but that every thought you had was perfect.

Not only has God never done one sinful thing, He has never even had a sinful thought. He is completely good and has never made a mistake. We never have to be afraid that God will do something that is not ultimately good. He is only capable of doing good things because He is Holy. Even when it seems like something bad happens, we can have faith that God is holy and what He does is always best.

Let's turn to **1 Peter 1:16**? Have someone read it.

... for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Peter 1:16 (NIV)

Is this verse asking us to "become unable to mix with sin" like God is? That would be impossible. As long as we are on the Earth, we will be capable of mixing with sin. However, we can choose to separate ourselves from sin. When we do that, we are choosing to set ourselves apart from everything around us for God. When something is holy it is set apart for God. How could you separate yourself from sin and therefore choose holiness in the following situations:

1. Your Math grade is on the brink of disaster. One of your friends found a copy of the final exam folded up in a text book that your teacher lent to him. Your friend has been passing around copies of it to others in the class and offers you a copy.
2. You have made the decision to honor God in your physical relationships with the opposite sex. Your boyfriend/girlfriend asks you to go on a spring break trip where you will share a hotel room with him or her in order to save money. They promise you that nothing will happen to violate your new physical convictions.
3. You are at the store with a group of friends when one of them challenges all of you to see who can shoplift the biggest item without getting caught.
4. You are walking down the hall at school and you hear someone you already don't like talking about you and one of your sisters in a negative way.

If you were being completely honest, what would it be like for you to choose the way of holiness in these situations? Remember, be honest.

THE BIG IDEA

God is completely separate from evil and is unable to commit evil deeds. He is set apart from evil and cannot tolerate it (Habakkuk 1:13). This is what it means to be holy. We are likewise to be holy and thus set ourselves apart from evil.

SO WHAT?

1. If you had a good friend who lost a parent in a horrible accident, and they asked you how God could do something so terrible, how could you respond in a way that is compassionate but also shares the truth about God's holiness and perfection? ¹
2. What is one area of your life in which you currently allow yourself to mix with sin that you want to begin separating yourself from this sin and be set apart for God?

¹ For a good perspective on this hard question, see *The Case for Faith – Student Edition* by Lee Strobel; Objection #1, page 11-27

God is Faithful and Truthful
Give It to Me Straight

MATERIALS NEEDED

Note cards

Pencils



THE HOOK

This game is called "Two Truths and a Lie." Give each person a note card and a pencil. On the cards ask them to write down three statements about themselves. Two of the statements must be true and one of the statements must be a lie. When everyone is finished writing down their statements, each person must read their three statements. The rest of the group must write on the back of their note card which of the three statements is a lie (one, two or three). After everyone writes their guesses the person making the statements must reveal the lie. Correct guesses earn a point. The person with the most points after everyone has taken a turn reading their statements wins.

THE WORD

God is not a man, that
He should lie. He is
not a human, that He
should change His
mind. Has He ever
spoken and failed to
act? Has He ever
promised and not
carried it through?

Numbers 23:19 (NLT)

Example of the three statements a person might use:

- 1) I have 3 sisters
- 2) I once got a piece of popcorn stuck up my nose
- 3) I got in an accident when I was little and almost had to have my leg amputated.

(Number two in this case would be the lie)



THE LESSON

Is it easy or hard for you to tell a lie?

Why do you think that is?

Is there anyone in your life that can always tell when you are lying? How do they know?

Would you agree with me that God does not lie?

Imagine for a minute what it would be like if God did lie. What are some ways that life might be different if God lied to humans?

How would it affect what you read in the Bible if you knew that God was capable of lying?

Have someone read **Numbers 23:19**.

This verse touches on two different ideas that are related to one another: **Truthfulness** and **faithfulness**.

The first idea is truthfulness. Truthfulness is communicating what is true. “Grass is green” or “Bricks will not float in water” are examples of true statements. Because scripture is God’s word, when scripture tells us something, we can know that it is true because God does not lie. That is how we even know what the different attributes of God are. He has told us through His word and we know that what He says is trustworthy.

The second idea is faithfulness. Faithfulness is when someone does what they say they will do. If you tell your mother or father that you will take out the trash and then you go and do it, you are being faithful. Sometimes we are not faithful to do what we say we will do either because we don’t want to do it or because we simply forget to do it. However, God will always do what He says He will do. Let’s look in the Bible for some of the promises of God.

Have different students look up the following verses and read them to the rest of the group. After each one is read ask the other students to describe the promise that God is making in that verse:

I John 1:8-9 (NIV)

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

II Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV)

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

I Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Knowing that God is truthful and faithful should have two effects on our lives. First, it should help us to trust Him and what He has shown us through His word.

Imagine for a minute that you have two friends that you spend a lot of time with. One of them is a little forgetful and doesn't always remember to do something you ask them to do. They borrow stuff and don't return it. However, the other friend always calls when they say they will and brings certain CDs to school the next day when you ask to borrow them. Now let's say you have an important project to hand in at school one day, but you wake up sick that morning and cannot go to school. Which friend are you going to call on to hand your project in for you?

Ask: "How has God shown you that He is true to or faithful to what He says in the Bible?"

It is for the same reason that as we get to know God better and experience his truthfulness and faithfulness we begin to trust Him with more and more important parts of our lives. Finally when we realize that He will NEVER let us down and will NEVER break a promise, we learn to give all of our lives to Him.

The second effect that understanding that God is truthful and faithful will have on our lives is that we will see how important it is that we ourselves become truthful and faithful.

Have someone read **Ephesians 5:1**.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children . . . **Ephesians 5:1 (NIV)**

God wants us to imitate Him. Because of that we should seek to tell others the truth and to do the things we say we will do.

THE BIG IDEA

God is completely truthful and does not lie. As well, he is faithful in that He will always do what He promises to do. Because of this, we can completely trust what God says. We can also imitate God's character by being truthful with others and by doing what we say we are going to do.

SO WHAT?

1. What is one promise of God that we talked about today, or one that you know of from Scripture that you need to focus on this week? What is a creative way that you can make sure you will see this promise of God several times a day?
2. Which do you struggle with more: telling people the truth (truthfulness) or doing what you say you will do (faithfulness)? What are some examples of how you struggle with it?
3. What is one way you could get someone else in your life to help you with your struggle in this area?

God is Just

Judge Judy, Judge Joe Brown, and God: The Great Judges of Our Time

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A table or desk
- Something resembling a gavel (a hammer or mallet)
- A block of wood (to bang the gavel against)
- A robe (black will be most realistic but your fuzzy pink bathrobe will do just fine)
- A row of chairs lined up to right of the judge's "bench"

THE WORD

All He does is just
and good, and all His
commandments are
trustworthy.

Psalm 111:7



THE HOOK

Ask for three volunteers. Assign one of the volunteers to be the judge. Have them wear the robe, give them the "gavel" and have them sit behind the table. One of the other volunteers will be the defense lawyer and the other will be the prosecuting lawyer. If you have enough people you can have two more volunteers be a plaintiff and a defendant. They can act out the scenario below as you read it out loud. Inform the rest of the students that they are the jury, and have them sit in the chairs to the right of the bench.

Give them the following scenario:

On March 27th of last year the plaintiff was sitting at McDonald's enjoying lunch when the defendant walked over to the plaintiff's table, picked up the plaintiff's Big Mac and licked the outside of the bun and the hamburger patties just for fun. The defendant then put the Big Mac back down on the plaintiff's table and walked away. The entire incident was captured on video cameras and there were 7 eye witnesses. The defendant has admitted guilt in this case. The plaintiff is asking to be awarded one million-four-dollars and ninety-three cents. The four dollars and ninety-three cents is for the cost of the meal. The one million dollars is for emotional damages caused to the plaintiff.

The job of the prosecuting attorney is to convince you in no more than three minutes that you should award the plaintiff the entire \$1,000,004.93. The job of the defense lawyer is to convince you in no more than three minutes that the defendant lives in a free country and can do whatever he or she wishes and therefore should not have to pay a single penny. The job of the judge and jury is to come up with a just punishment for the defendant. In other words, you must come up with a punishment that fits the crime – one that is fair.

During the trial you will want to ensure that each attorney gets three minutes of uninterrupted time to present their case. The jury may not say anything until it is time to discuss with the judge what the punishment should be (that's if there is a punishment).



THE LESSON

What were the things that made it most difficult to come up with a decision that was fair or just?

What were the things you had to consider in making a just judgment?

Do you think it is possible for a human judge to give perfectly just, 100% correct, judgments each time they hear a case? Why or why not?

The Bible tells us that God is completely just, 100% correct, and is able to always make the right decisions. From what you see in the world around you, is that easy or hard for you to believe? Why?

God's justice means a couple of important things for us:

God must punish sin. Imagine if all of our judges decided to stop punishing anyone who committed murder. What would our world be like? In the same way, if God did not punish sin, He would no longer be just. That is why Jesus had to die on the cross. Why?

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16, 17 NIV

Because God is just He had to punish our sin. Jesus came to take that punishment on Himself. That way, God is still just but we no longer have to endure the punishment in hell for our sin. Jesus took it all for us.

A Parable:

The kingdom of God is like the murderer who was brought before the righteous judge. The righteous judge pronounced the murderer guilty and sentenced him to death. Then to everyone's surprise (and without the murderer's request), the judge decreed that he would take the murderer's place in the electric chair so that the murderer would go free without cost. In addition, the judge rewrote his will and made the murderer the sole beneficiary of all his vast wealth.

Romans 3:25a says, "For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins" and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us.

God hates it when people are treated unjustly and defends their cause. Have two people look up James 5:4 and Psalm 140:12 and read these verses to the group.

Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the LORD Almighty.

James 5:4 NIV

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.

Psalm 140:12 NIV

Human sin is responsible for the oppression and injustice that you see around you.

What are some examples of this that you have seen in your own lives where some people suffer because of the sin/selfishness of other people?

God wants to address these injustices. Not only that, but He wants to address them through you. Because, God is just and we want to imitate God, we need to treat people justly. The next time you come across someone who is hungry, what can you do to help secure justice for them?

THE BIG IDEA

God is absolutely just, 100% fair. In other words He always does what is right. Because of this **we know that eventually He will make everything just as it should be.** Because God is completely just, He hates injustice and wants each of us to represent Him in the world by fixing unjust situations and helping those who have been treated unjustly.

SO WHAT?

1. What are some of the unjust things you see around you? Who are the people you know that are treated unfairly.

[Leaders need to have several good examples prepared:

- child labor in third world nations (story of wounded child bleeding on the white sneakers, and the foreman cauterizing the wound with a piece of hot metal to protect the shoes);
- public schools that don't reach kids the basics, (i.e. students can graduate without having ever read an entire book), or students that "hate math" because they have never been shown what it means in the context of their lives.]

2. What can you do to be God's agent of justice to those people?
3. When do you think God will right all things that are wrong and make everything just again? (*when Jesus returns*)
4. Why do you think He might be waiting until then? (*Read 2 Peter 3:7-13*)

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved or fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. The day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 3:7-13 NIV

God is Sovereign
It's All Under Control

MATERIALS NEEDED

Sixteen pennies, nickels, or quarters
A watch with a second hand
Two desks or tables
A rock



THE HOOK

Ask for two contestants. Ask another student to be the “timer”. Ask each contestant to stand behind one of the desks or tables. Make sure that their table cannot be touched by anyone else in the room (especially their opponent). Give each of them an equal number of coins (eight per person should be more than enough). Ask another adult to help you judge the competition.

Explain the following:

I have placed you in charge of these coins and you have a very important job. You must keep as many of these coins spinning as possible. When I say “Go!” you will begin spinning your coins. If your coins fall on the floor during the forty-five seconds you may pick them up (ensure that no one else in the room picks coins up for the contestants). When there are fifteen seconds remaining, our timer will give the fifteen second warning. After the forty-five seconds is up I will say “stop” and you must stop touching your coins at that point. We (you and the other adult) will then quickly count how many coins each of you have that are still moving on the desk. The person with the most coins still moving wins.

You can repeat the contest with as many people as want to do it. You might consider having a “tournament” to see who can keep the most coins spinning.

THE WORD

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.

Romans 8:28 (NLT)



THE LESSON

Out of the people that competed in this game, who was the one who seemed to be the most frantic? How about the one that stayed the most calm?

For those of you that participated, how did you begin to feel when you heard the fifteen second warning?

Staying in control of more than one thing at a time can be overwhelming. Some are better at “multi-tasking” than others are. However, have you ever wondered what it would be like to stay in control of every person, every prayer of every person, every plant and animal, every star in the solar system, every aspect of the weather everywhere in world, every single event that takes place and every meteor in the universe all at the same time?

We probably don’t think about it much, but that is what God does all the time. Not only that, but He is never EVER frantic about it. God’s ability to keep things under control is called His SOVEREIGNTY. There are two aspects of His sovereignty that we are going to discuss: **preservation and government.**¹

First of all, **preservation is God’s ability to keep things operating as he created them.**

Let’s look at **Nehemiah 9:6**. Have someone read this verse.

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship You.

God is constantly watching over all things that He has made. He is the one that ensures you can breathe your next breath. By giving you your next breath He is preserving you.

[Have the rock handy] Or **take this rock for instance.** God preserves the properties of this rock so that it carries the same properties it did when it was first formed. If you threw this rock at your friend’s head one thousand years ago, it hurt just the same as it would hurt if I threw it at your head right now. If nothing else in creation interacts with it to change it, it will be hard one thousand years from now.² God preserves His creation in predictable ways so that rocks do not unexpectedly turn into oatmeal and water does not unexpectedly turn into gold. God’s preservation of his creation is one part of His ability to keep all things under control (sovereignty).

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 315.

² Ibid., 317.

Note to Leader: A student may point out that a chemical reaction will turn something into something else and wonder if that means that God has not preserved the original ingredients. Preservation does not mean that things cannot change into other things. It merely means that God's creation will act in predictable ways that are consistent with the properties it was created with. In other words, a chemical reaction will produce the same results every time if all the factors remain the same. A melting ice cube will not produce water today, but somehow produce milk tomorrow.

The second way in which God keeps all things under his control is called **government**. Now when we say government we are not referring to the president or the congress, though how we mean it here is related to the idea of human government. What is meant by government is that **God has a master plan and He is directing things and using things so that He can accomplish His master plan.**

Let's look at **Romans 8:28**. Have someone read the passage.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to His purpose.

Now this passage says that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Based on this passage, do you think that God uses even the evil things that people do to accomplish His plans? Why or why not?

Can you think of any examples from the Bible?

Some examples include:

Joseph in the book of Genesis – Joseph's brothers hated him and sold Him into slavery. However, God used the evil that Joseph's brothers did to eventually put Joseph in a powerful position that saved thousands of lives.

Esther was a young beautiful girl in the Bible that was forced to marry an ungodly king. However, as a result, God used her influence to save thousands of Jews.

Does anyone remember getting immunization shots as a little kid?

When it happened, did you feel like it was a good thing or a bad thing?

Now looking back and knowing that those shots protect you every day from all kinds of horrible diseases, do you think those shots were a good thing or a bad thing?

How has God used something bad that has happened to you to fulfill His good purpose? How did you feel when the bad thing first happened to you? When did you first realize that God was actually going to use this bad thing for a good reason?

Note to Leader: If no one answers this question right away, have an example from your own life ready to get things started. You may need to help your students see how God *could* use something bad that has happened to them for His good purposes if they cannot think of a way that He has already done that.

THE BIG IDEA

God's ability to both sustain (preserve) creation and direct it toward His good purposes is described as sovereignty. He is ultimately in control of all things and therefore can be trusted in any situation. We can know that no matter what, God is directing all events toward the fulfillment of His "master plan".

SO WHAT?

1. Knowing that each breath God gives you is a gift that is preserving your life on this earth, what are your thoughts about how you would like to spend your time while you are still on the earth?
2. Think about a time in your life when everything seemed really out of control. If you had been able to keep in mind that God is always in control, how would that have changed the situation?
3. When things seem out of control or hopeless what is a way that you can remind yourself that God is taking care of you and "working all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose?"

God is Unchanging (Immutable)
If It's Perfect, Don't Mess With It

MATERIALS NEEDED

Rulers
String (cut into 7-inch pieces)
Pencils
Paper (8 ½ by 11 inches)



THE HOOK

Divide the students into groups of three. Give each group a ruler, a 7-inch piece of string, two pencils, and a piece of paper.

Instruct the groups that they are to use these materials to make a perfect 8-inch circle. Don't give any hints about how to do it. They should eventually come to the conclusion that they must tie the two pencils together with the string, leaving exactly 4 inches of string between them (making a compass). They will then put the point of one pencil in the center of their paper and hold it stationary while they draw the circle around it with the other pencil. As the groups finish, measure their circles to make sure they are 8 inches in diameter and that they are perfect. The first group to produce a perfect 8-inch circle wins.

THE WORD

Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, Who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17 (NIV)



THE LESSON

You have done a great job creating perfect 8-inch circles. Now I would like you to change the shape of your circle in some way but the only catch is that it must remain a perfect 8-inch circle.

They will of course tell you that it is impossible to change its shape and for it to remain a perfect 8-inch circle.

You are right in saying that the shape of your circle cannot be changed in any way and still be a perfect 8-inch circle. It is impossible. If your circle's shape were to change it would no longer be a perfect 8-inch circle. In fact it wouldn't be a circle at all.

God is the same way. He is perfect and cannot change. If he were to change for some reason there are only two conclusions we could come to. What are they?

Either

1) He was perfect before the change and because of the change is now imperfect

OR

2) He is was imperfect before the change and because of the change He is now perfect.

But we know that God is perfect and has never been less than perfect and will never be less than perfect.

If we were to hold the view that God could change then we must be prepared to ask the question, "What might God change into?" He could change from being good and holy for instance into being evil. Or He could change into a dog or even a carrot for that matter. This sounds ridiculous, but there are those that believe God can change but do not think about the logical consequences of such a belief. Every belief about God has a logical consequence.

However, **our belief that God is unchanging is not solely based on what is logical** though that is part of it. Our primary and most important source for knowing what God is like is His Word. Let's turn to **Psalm 102:25-27**. Have someone read this passage.

In the beginning You laid the foundations 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. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end.

Based on this passage:

When will God end? (*Never*)

What does this passage say will change? (*The heavens and the earth*)

What will not change? (*God*)

The question that naturally comes up in discussing this is "If God does not change, then does he treat every person and every situation the same?" The answer is, of course, no. God acts differently in different situations. Because He might choose to do this does not mean that He has changed. It merely means that He has determined that to fulfill His master plan a different course of action is required than was not required previously. God still remains the same in terms of who He is.

THE BIG IDEA

God never changes. All of the attributes that have been discussed in this series of lessons make up who God is. **Nothing about who God is has ever been or will ever be different than it is right now.** God is perfect and for Him to change would make him less than perfect.

SO WHAT?

1. Have you ever been in a dating relationship where things started out good but the other person seemed to make a turn for the worse? How did that make you feel? How did that affect your ability to trust that they would treat you in the right way?
2. What would it be like to start a relationship with someone that is kind, faithful, and treats you with absolute respect and have a 100% guarantee that they would always be like that and never change? To what lengths would you go to pursue your relationship with that person?
3. Knowing that God is absolutely good and wants what is absolutely best for you, how does knowing He will never change in His character and in His commitment to you make you feel about your relationship with Him?