

THRIVE

High School Small Group Guide

Session 8

The Attributes of God:

Self-Existent, Omnipresent, Sovereign, and Holy

- Last session, we talked about some of the incommunicable attributes of God, which are the attributes that only God can possess. Today, we're going to continue talking about some of the incommunicable attributes and then dive into some of the communicable attributes too. We're going to start by discussing how God is self-existent!

Self-Existent

Read the following passages, and highlight, circle, or underline words and verses that stick out to you.

Read Psalm 90:1-2, Acts 17:28, John 1:1-4, and John 5:26.

Psalm 90:1-2 - "A prayer of Moses, the man of God. Lord, you have been our refuge through all generations. Before the mountains were born, the earth and the world brought forth, from eternity to eternity you are God."

Acts 17:28 - "For 'In him we live and move and have our being,' as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'"

John 1:1-4 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race."

John 5:26 - "For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself."

- God is completely self-existent. He was not created but exists by His power alone. There was never a moment when God did not exist. The attribute of God's self-existence is one that surpasses our understanding. With created and finite minds, we try to understand a self-existent and infinite God.
- The uncreated one created all things. Humans grow weary, feel lonely, and are needy. God feels none of these things, because he is fully self-sufficient and self-existent! God is our creator and our sustainer. Without Him, we would not exist! All things flow from God, and all things were made to glorify him!
- Philippians 4:19 reads: "My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." This means that because Jesus himself is both self-existent and self-sufficient, he needs no one to depend on, and he can be the one thing that we depend on!
- God...
 - Has the power to sustain our lives and fill our lungs with breath. (Acts 17:28)
 - "For 'In him we live and move and have our being,' as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'" (Acts 17:28)
 - Alone has the power to fulfill the desires of our hearts!

"All our problems and their solutions are theological." A.W. Tozer

Here are a few things we can learn from this quote:

1. All of our solutions are rooted in God, because all things are rooted in God!
2. Without God, there would be nothing!
3. Gifts like medicine, rain for crops and food are all gifts that flow from a loving father to all his creation, regardless of whether they acknowledge him or not!
4. Because God is self-existent and made all things, we can look to Him and the things that he created for solutions!

Reflect and Discuss:

1. What does God's self-existence teach us about Him?
2. In what ways are you tempted to live as though you are self-existent?
3. How does what we learn in the Bible free us from this thinking?

Omnipresent

Read the following passages, and highlight, circle, or underline words and verses that stick out to you.

Read Psalm 139:7-10, Jeremiah 23:23-24, Colossians 1:15-20, and 1 Kings 8:27.

Psalm 139:7-10 - "Where can I go from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol, there you are. If I take the wings of dawn and dwell beyond the sea, Even there your hand guides me, your right hand holds me fast."

Jeremiah 23:23-24 - "Am I a God near at hand only—oracle of the Lord—and not a God far off? Can anyone hide in secret without my seeing them?—oracle of the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth?—oracle of the Lord."

("Oracle of the Lord" can also be translated as "declares the Lord.")

Colossians 1:15-20 - "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross, whether those on earth or those in heaven."

1 Kings 8:27 - "Is God indeed to dwell on earth? If the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain you, how much less this house which I have built!"

Discuss: Which verse stuck out to you and why? What can we learn from these verses?

- The attribute of God's omnipresence leaves us in awe. Omnipresence means that God can be in all places at once, and it's an ability no other living thing can have. This attribute belongs to God alone. He is everywhere in all of creation, yet he chooses to draw near to his children. The God who holds the world together is also Immanuel, God with us. God's omnipresence is far too great for our finite minds to comprehend, and yet it's one of the greatest comforts for us.
- There is no place outside of the scope of his presence (Psalm 139:7-10). He is there, he is here, he is near. We are limited, but God is not. There is no such thing as secret sin. We may hide our sin, shame, and flaws from others, but we cannot hide anything from an

all-present God. The great comfort of his presence is also a shining spotlight on our sinfulness and need.

- The omnipresence of God also means that we are never alone because God's presence is not limited to a single location. We do not need to be within the four walls of a church in order to worship him or talk to him. God is just as present in our high school gym and our biology classroom as he is in the stillness of a quiet church sanctuary.
- To understand the omnipresence of God more, let's read this Scripture passage found in Matthew that talks about the Incarnation of God.

Look up and read Matthew 1:22-23 and the accompanying footnote.

Discuss: What is this verse saying? What can we learn from this verse?

- Here is a definition of "incarnation": The union of the divine nature of the Son of God with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. The Son of God assumed our flesh, body, and soul, and dwelled among us like one of us in order to redeem us. Basically, it means that Jesus, who is divine, took human form.
- Through the incarnation, Jesus drew near to mankind to make us aware of His presence with us. Jesus took on flesh and blood. He walked and ate. He felt the weariness of exhaustion and the dust on his feet. He came near to show us that God is with us, near us, and for us!!!
- When we were alone in our sin, God drew near and died on a rugged cross in our place!

Reflect and Discuss:

1. What does God's omnipresence teach us about Him?

2. In what ways are you tempted to live as though you are omnipresent? Do you ever over schedule yourself and then feel exhausted?
3. How should God's omnipresence change the way that we live? Why should it comfort us?

Sovereign

Read the following passages, and highlight, circle, or underline words and verses that stick out to you.

Read Job 23:13, Romans 9:14-16, and Ephesians 1:7-14.

Job 23:13 - "But once he decides, who can contradict him? What he desires, that he does."

Romans 9:14-16 - "What then are we to say? Is there injustice on the part of God? Of course not! For he says to Moses: 'I will show mercy to whom I will, I will take pity on whom I will.' So it depends not upon a person's will or exertion, but upon God, who shows mercy."

Ephesians 1:7-14 - "In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory."

Discuss: Which verse stuck out to you and why? What can we learn from these verses?

- God is sovereign. He is in complete control of all things, and He rules over all things. There is nothing that happens in our world outside of his sovereign control. He not only has the power to do all things but also has the authority. He is the sovereign King and the Lord of all heaven and earth.
- God's sovereignty is often demonstrated in Scripture through the title of "Lord." It describes our God as the Lord of all (1 Corinthians 10:26) and the one who is in control of all things (Isaiah 45:7).
- The same God who set his presence in the tabernacle is also the same man who came in the person of Jesus to be Immanuel, God with us. The sovereign Word became flesh and came to dwell among us and in us (John 1:14)
- A few things to remember...
 - Knowing that God is sovereign can comfort us when life doesn't go the way we expected.
 - We are called to seek God's will for our lives because He knows what's best for us.
 - Knowing He is sovereign can help us trust Him and His will.
 - We are called to pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:10) (We do this in the Our Father we say at Mass!)

Communicable Attributes

- For our final attribute this session, we're going to talk about a communicable attribute: God's holiness. Remember, communicable

attributes are the qualities that both God and humans can possess. First, let's go over all of the communicable attributes.

- Holy: God is pure. He is sacred and set-apart from the rest of humanity.
- Loving: God is a steadfastly and eternally loving and affectionate God.
- Good: God is pure, and there is no defilement in him. He is unable to sin, and all he does is good.
- Truthful: God is our discernment of what is fact. By Him we are able to discern true and false.
- Just: God governs in perfect justice. In Him, there is no wrongdoing or dishonesty.
- Wrathful: God stands in opposition to all that is evil. He enacts judgement according to his holiness, righteousness, and justice.
- Merciful: God is compassionate, withholding from us the wrath that we deserve.
- Gracious: God is kind, giving us gifts and benefits we do not deserve.
- Jealous: God desires the affection he rightly deserves.
- Patient: God gives ample opportunity for people to turn to Him.
- Wise: God is infinitely knowledgeable and is judicious with His knowledge.
- Faithful: God is loyally devoted to his plan and purpose. God will never fail us or abandon us.

Holy

Read Exodus 15:11, Leviticus 19:2, Isaiah 6:3, Psalm 29:1-2, and Ephesians 1:4-6.

Read the following passages, and highlight, circle, or underline words and verses that stick out to you.

Exodus 15:11 - "Who is like you among the gods, O Lord? Who is like you, magnificent among the holy ones? Awe-inspiring in deeds of renown, worker of wonders."

Leviticus 19:2 - "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.'"

Isaiah 6:3 - "And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

Psalms 29:1-2 - "Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness."

Ephesians 1:4-6 - "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

Discuss: Which verse stuck out to you and why? What can we learn from these verses?

- God is holy. He is sacred, set apart, pure, and undefiled. This attribute proclaims the very nature of God. God is holy in all that he is and all that he does.
- This attribute, also like some of the other characteristics, influences all of His other attributes. His love is a holy love. His wrath is a holy wrath. And his justice is a holy justice. Holiness is who God is.

- The attribute of God's holiness is significant because it is often used to describe God. It appears more than 600 times throughout the Bible. The holiness of God and His name is foundational to His character.
- The holiness of God sets Him apart from all other things. He is distinct from all creation. All that he does, and all that he is is pure. It is at the cross that we see the holiness of God on display.
- Remember...
 - Holiness is an attribute that God calls us to as well.
 - God is making us more and more holy throughout our lives. (Sanctification)
 - In Christ, we see the exact imprint of the holiness of God. (Hebrews 1:3)
 - Jesus helps us become more like himself.

Reflect and Discuss:

1. How would you define God's holiness or the word "holy" in general?
2. What do you think it means that "God calls us to holiness"?
3. What is your biggest takeaway from today? If you could only remember one thing from this session, what would it be?
4. Has studying the attributes of God changed the way you view God? If so, how?

Growing in Holiness Challenge

Journal about the following questions (or discuss it with someone): **In what practical ways can you grow in holiness this month?** After brainstorming a bit, choose one way you will grow in holiness this month, and then report back to the group how it went next session! For

example, you can attend Mass every weekend (if they don't currently), pray for 5 minutes every day, read the Bible for 20 minutes a week, go to Confession, try Lectio Divina once a week, memorize a Bible verse every week, etc.

Everybody's commitment will look different. If somebody already prays for 10 minutes a day, maybe they can learn a new prayer to add to their regular prayer time. If somebody else hardly ever prays, maybe they can start by saying one Our Father each day or by telling God what they're thankful for each day.

Session Challenges

- Jeremiah 9:24 is our theme verse for this week. It's a bit longer, but you have a bit of time to memorize it. Since it's longer, if you memorize it your name will be put in a raffle and the winner gets a \$10 Target gift card!

In the NABRE translation, the verse is Jeremiah 9:23!!! The NIV translation is easier to understand, so the Bible verse cards have the NIV version on them. If you look up the verse in your Catholic Bible, it is a different reference (it's verse 23, not 24).

Jeremiah 9:24 - "But let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord."

- Now for our challenge: This month, take time to listen to the following songs that relate to what this session covered:

1. Great are you Lord by All Sons and Daughters
2. Worthy of it All by Christ For the Nations Worship
3. What a Beautiful Name by Hillsong Worship
4. I Can Only Imagine by MercyMe

Listen to the lyrics and then say a prayer praising God for who He is.