

THRIVE

High School Small Group Guide

Session 9

The Attributes of God:

Loving, Wrathful, Gracious, and Truthful

- Today is the last session of our series Attributes of God. Today, we're going to talk about more of God's Communicable Attributes, which are qualities that God and humans both possess. We're going to start by discussing how God is loving!

Loving

Read Isaiah 54:10, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, and 1 John 4:19.

Isaiah 54:10 - "Though the mountains fall away and the hills be shaken, My love shall never fall away from you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you."

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

Romans 5:8 - "But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."

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

- God is loving. God is eternally, enduringly, steadfastly loving, and affectionate. He does not forsake or betray his covenant love. The Bible is a story about God and His love for his own. The love of God is central to his essence.
- And there is perhaps no more comforting truth in all of Scripture than the message of God's love. "Jesus loves me this I know, for

The Bible tells me so” is more than a children’s Sunday school song; it is the message to a world in need of the love that only God can give.

- God’s love was not born with the creation of the world, but it existed long before. Love was present in the Trinity for all of eternity between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Love is a choice, and God has chosen to love his children. The love of God is not in opposition to his other attributes! Love is the cornerstone of the Bible’s story.
- Love...
 1. Propelled God to send his one and only Son to die on a cross for our sins. (John 3:16)
 2. Is seen throughout Scripture, through God’s patience with his people even when they rebel and turn to idols. It is seen in his mercy. It is seen in His grace. And finally, it is seen in Jesus!
 3. Is the reason that we love others, because He loved us first! (1 John 4:19)

Reflect and Discuss:

1. Which verse sticks out to you and why?
2. How would you describe the love of God?
3. Have you experienced God's love through other people?
4. How has God’s love changed or impacted your life?
5. How should God’s love for you change how you live?
6. In what ways can you show God's love to other people?

Take a moment to listen to this song: Reckless Love by Cory Asbury

Listen to the first 2 minutes and pay close attention to the lyrics:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xx0d3R2LoU

Reflect and Discuss:

1. Which lyrics stood out to you and why?
2. Cory sings, "Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God... Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the 99." How do you feel when you hear "it chases me down and fights until I'm found"? What does that mean?
3. What is Cory referencing when He says that God "leaves the 99 to find us"? (To find the answer to this question, read Matthew 18:12-14. God cares about each and every one of us individually. He pursues us when we walk away from Him because He loves us so much.)
4. Cory also sings, "When I was Your foe, still Your love fought for me." What does this mean? (Again, God loves us no matter what... even when we see Him as our "enemy." We are always His children and He will fight for us even when we don't deserve it.)
5. Later in the song, Cory sings, "There's no shadow You won't light up, Mountain You won't climb up, Coming after me... There's no wall You won't kick down, Lie You won't tear down, Coming after me." Give an example from real life or a movie when somebody did something extreme to help or save another person. Or name two characters who would do anything for each other because of their close relationship.
6. How does it make you feel knowing that God will do anything to save you and help you because He loves you so much?

Wrathful

Read John 3:36, Romans 1:18, and Matthew 21:12-13.

John 3:36 - "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him."

Romans 1:18 - "Punishment of Idolaters - The wrath of God is indeed being revealed from heaven against every impiety and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness."

Matthew 21:12-13 - "Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all those engaged in selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he said to them, 'It is written: 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of thieves.'"

- Our God is wrathful. In His divine will, He has declared what is good and righteous, and He stands in opposition to all that is evil. He bases His wrath on the foundation of His holiness, righteousness, and justice. When people do evil, God is not happy about it.
- When you see on the news that there was a mass shooting, you probably get angry and sad. Being angry about evil is a good thing as long as we know how to properly respond to our anger.
- We read in Matthew that Jesus was angry with people who were misusing the temple. Jesus was angry without sin, and he stands as an example of how we should have wrath toward evil and desire to glorify God's name amid a sinful world.
- Jesus' wrath teaches us that wrath and anger are not sin, but often we allow them to cause us to sin, or we are filled with anger for selfish reasons.

Discuss:

1. Why do you think that this is an attribute of God that is often skipped? Why have you been tempted not to think about this?
2. Why can be grateful for God's wrath?
3. How can we reflect this attribute of God without sinning?
 - The concept of God's wrath is hard to understand. If it's something that you are still struggling with, talk with a trusted adult or someone you are close with who may be able to help you understand this topic! Always feel free to stay and ask questions after our sessions too.

Gracious

Read Psalm 103:8-14, Ephesians 1:3-8, and 2 Peter 3:17-18.

Psalm 103:8-14 - "Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger, abounding in mercy. He will not always accuse, and nurses no lasting anger; He has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our wrongs deserve. For as the heavens tower over the earth, so his mercy towers over those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. For he knows how we are formed, remembers that we are dust."

Ephesians 1:3-18 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. 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."

2 Peter 3:17-18 - "Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

- God is gracious, giving us gifts and benefits that we don't deserve. Grace is a beautiful expression of the steadfast and enduring love of God that pulls us from the depths of our sin. We do not and cannot earn the grace of God. It is bestowed upon us while we are still sinners without ever asking for it, wanting it, or desiring it. God's grace comes to undeserving sinners not because of anything good they have done but because of who God is. He is a God of grace.
- In mercy, God withholds from us the punishment that we deserve, and Jesus takes the punishment for us. God lavishes us with goodness and blessing that we did not earn.

Truthful

Read Numbers 23:19, Isaiah 45:19, John 14:6, Hebrews 6:18-19, and 1 John 5:20.

Numbers 23:19 - "God is not a human being who speaks falsely, nor a mortal, who feels regret. Is God one to speak and not act, to decree and not bring it to pass?"

Isaiah 45:19 - "I have not spoken in secret from some place in the land of darkness, I have not said to the descendants of Jacob, 'Look for me in an empty waste.' I, the Lord, promise justice, I declare what is right."

John 14:6 - "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Hebrews 6:18-19 - "So that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge might be strongly

encouraged to hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil."

1 John 5:20 - "We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us discernment to know the one who is true. And we are in the one who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."

- God is truth. God is our measurement of what is true and factual, and it is by Him that we can discern truth and falsehood. God is the standard for truth in the world, and His Word is fully true and trustworthy. God cannot lie, and He always keeps His word.
- The word of God, and the God of the Word are our standards for truth. The battle between good and evil has always been a battle between the truth of God, and the lies of the enemy. The lies of the enemy and the sin in our hearts have caused humanity to run from the God of truth to the lies of the world. God has already set the standard for good and evil. There are moral absolutes God has set before us.
- Much of our modern culture embraces the idea of moral relativism... the idea that each person determines individual truth. This is not the case with God. Only God can establish truth, and all truth is his truth.
- Also, the Bible tells us that the human heart can be deceitful. This means that we can't always follow and rely on our own understanding and interpretation of right and wrong. Therefore, we must go to God and His Word for wisdom.
- Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."

Reflect and Discuss:

1. How does knowing that God is always truthful impact your relationship with Him?
2. When have you been untruthful? When have you been tempted to lie but then chose to tell the truth? What helped you (or can help you) make the right decision?
3. Have you heard about the idea of "moral relativism"? What do you think about it?
4. What moral issues are common in society today? How can we tell right from wrong regarding these issues? How can we know the truth and what is best?
 - Remember that we can trust God's judgment and wisdom and that He always knows right from wrong. God and His Word have the answers to society's moral questions and issues.
5. What will help us identify the "lies of the enemy" - lies about ourselves, others, and the world that the devil wants us to believe?

Session Challenges

- Our theme verse for the week is probably the most famous Bible verse: John 3:16... "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." If you already have it memorized, great! Recite it daily as a form of prayer this week. If you don't, work hard this week to memorize it.
- Now for our challenges: This week, listen to Cory Asbury's song Reckless Love again and say a prayer afterward thanking God for His love. Also, try to complete the prayer, fasting, and almsgiving challenges of the week from the Lent Challenges.