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What Is God Like?

Key Themes

- God reveals His character in the Bible.
- God's Word is always our starting point.

Key Passages

- Exodus 34:4–8; 1 John 4:7–11

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that we must start with the Bible to understand what God is like.
- List at least three attributes of God and explain what they mean.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will place bookmarks at Exodus 34 and 1 John 4.
Students will practice placing all the books of the Bible in order.



Studying God's Word

page 5

God's attributes are demonstrated and described in Scripture. In order to learn about Him, we need to start with the Bible—it should always be our starting point.



Activity 1: God's Character & Attributes Word Search

page 7

Students will review the lesson by doing the God's Character & Attributes word search.



Activity 2: Memory Verse Review

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Memory Verse strips will be used to practice the memory verse, Psalm 119:89–90. This could be a team activity.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- Cut strips of paper for each student to mark Exodus 34 and 1 John 4 in their Bibles.
- Pass out the Books of the Bible cards. See the template on the Resource DVD-ROM, Lesson 3.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print the Lesson Board Work Outline from the Resource DVD-ROM.



GOD'S CHARACTER & ATTRIBUTES WORD SEARCH

- Print God's Character & Attributes word search from the Resource DVD-ROM—either one per student or consider allowing them to do it as teams of 3 or 4. Keep the answer key for your own use.



MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

- Print one set of the Memory Verse strips from the Resource DVD-ROM onto cardstock.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Strips of paper for each student
- Books of the Bible cards—one set for each group of 3–5 students
- Optional: minute timer or stopwatch

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Lesson Board Work Outline

- God's Character & Attributes word search for each student (or teams of students)
- God's Character & Attributes word search answer key
- Pencils

- Memory Verse strips set
- Poster putty



Memory Verse

Psalms 119:89–90 Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

In order to prepare your heart and mind for this lesson, read Exodus 34:4–8; 1 John 4:7–21; Romans 5:8.

What is God like? How can we presume to answer this question? Our God is nothing but incomprehensible—He can never be fully understood. In fact, as believers we anticipate an eternity of discovering new things about Him.

David said of Him, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable” (Psalm 145:3). And, “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all” (1 Chronicles 29:11). We can’t say it any better than the Apostle Paul, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (Romans 11:33)! The glimpses of God we observe from His Word are far, far from complete.

Question 4 of the historic Westminster Catechism, penned in the 1640s asks, “What is God?” The answer? God is Spirit (John 4:24), infinite (Jeremiah 23:24), eternal (Psalm 90:2), and unchangeable (Malachi 3:6) in His being (James 1:17), wisdom (Romans 11:33), power (Revelation 19:6), holiness (1 Samuel 2:2), justice (Psalm 7:11), goodness (Psalm 107:8), and truth (Deuteronomy 32:4).

When the Lord descended in the cloud to speak with Moses, He gave testimony to His very character—He proclaimed Himself as merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness, always truthful, forgiving, and at the same time, just—not clearing the guilty (Exodus 34:6–7).

Knowing God and knowing that He is perfect in every one of His attributes is imperative to maturing in the Christian faith. That is why we have incorporated teaching these attributes as part of this Bible curriculum. So the next generation will know, love, honor, revere, and fear the God of all creation!

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Because there is no way to comprehend the vast depth of our holy God, we are at risk of conjuring up in our minds what we want Him to be. This is not acceptable. We can only begin to know who God is by the revelation of His Word.

God is all-loving (1 John 4:7–21). But this attribute has been skewed by many Christians and non-Christians alike. The tendency of many is to make God a type of butler—one who waits at our beck and call and exists in order to answer our demands for blessing and comfort. We seldom witness the awe and wonder His very name deserves in our world today.

This attitude reeks of misunderstanding the holiness of God. His holiness demands that He despise each and every sin committed. Knowing His frightful hatred for sin should bring us to a reverent and godly fear of the One who is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28–29). Only true fear of the Lord will bring knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

It is not until we fear God for who He is that we will humbly begin to understand the depths of His love—which is beyond all love. It is amazing that He would love us so much to send His only Son to die a horrible death in order to provide forgiveness to all who would believe (John 3:16). Because of the depth of His love, He was willing to offer the life of the One who committed no sin, yet was made sin for us—despicable sinners—so that we could be made the righteousness of God (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

God is love, yes. But His definition of love goes way beyond the scope of ours. His love is demonstrated in the gospel—that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). It is only through our sincere and reverent fear for the holy, sinless God that His amazing love through the free gift of salvation can finally be appreciated.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What is God like? We have settled the question that He is beyond explanation—but His Word does give us a hint of the vast dimension of His character.

Historically this is what we know. In the beginning, when God created Adam and Eve in the very good world, they saw God clearly. Scripture tells us that God talked with Adam and Eve, and He walked with them in the garden (Genesis 3:8). It is understood that before their disobedience, Adam and Eve enjoyed sweet fellowship with their Creator. They knew what God was like.

But sin entered the world through one man’s disobedience (Romans 5:19). They were no longer welcome to walk with God (Genesis 3:23–24) because God cannot dwell with evil or wickedness (Psalm 5:4).

Since then, man has wondered about God but has not been allowed to see Him as Adam and Eve did.

Moses was once bold enough to ask to see more of God (Exodus 33:18). Although God is compassionate and gracious, He would not allow Moses to see His face lest Moses die. God instructed Moses to hide in the cleft of the rock while His glory passed by (Exodus 33:22–23).

In Jesus, we know of God yet have not seen Him, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). And Paul recorded to Timothy, “[God] who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:16). So for now, God keeps Himself in unapproachable light—masked to us until He is ready to be revealed.

But what a day that will be when His children will be like Him for they will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2)! How we long for the day we will once again see God, talk with Him, and enjoy the fellowship that was originally intended—but broken because of sin. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Father God, holy Creator of the universe, how can I presume to know what you are like? Your perfection, your character, your essence is beyond my understanding. Please humble me and help me, Lord, to give this lesson some justice as I try to impress on these young minds something of what you are like. And, Lord, as they continue to learn more about who you are, open their minds to the truth of your gospel—the salvation that you offer through your perfect, spotless Son. Thank you, Lord, that the light of the world has shone in my heart. Please bless these children in the same way. Have mercy on them, Lord, and make them your own.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Provide strips of paper to mark Exodus 34:4–8 and 1 John 4:7–11.
- Provide envelopes containing cards with the names of the books of the Bible for groups of three to five students. Students are to place the books in the proper order. They can use the Books of the Bible poster or their own Bibles to confirm the right order. If time allows, have them do it a second time without looking at the poster or their Bible. You may want to time them and determine who finishes first.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

We are going to ask another very important question today. What is God like? Wow! What a question. The Bible tells us that we can know a little about God from creation.

- ? But where would we need to go to find out all that God wants us to know about Him? Where would we find that information? *The Bible.*

That's right. When we want to learn more about God, the Bible is where we go. We are so blessed to have Bibles to read and learn from. And nothing else is more important than learning what is in this book.

With that in mind, turn to Exodus 34:4–8. You should have a bookmark there. This event occurred between holy God and Moses. Moses went to the top of the mountain, Mount Sinai. God told him he must come alone. Moses was about to get two new stone tablets with the laws of God. He broke the first ones earlier because the people had turned away from God in sin, and in his anger, Moses threw those tablets on the ground.

- ? Who would like to read for me? *After all the children find their place in Exodus, assign readers.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Let's see how these verses will answer our question, "What is God like?"

Exodus 34:4–8

► Print the Lesson Board Work Outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for easier planning.

MERCIFUL
GRACIOUS

(Refer to Attributes poster)

Longsuffering:
endlessly
patient

Abounding:
overflowing or
full

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? Where did this take place? Look in verse 4. *Mount Sinai.*
- ? Great! And who is on Mount Sinai? See verse 5. *Moses and the Lord.*
- ? How did the Lord appear to Moses? *In a cloud.*
- ? Now onto verse 6. What are the first two words God used to describe Himself? *Merciful and gracious. Begin writing a list. Write on the board "God is:", "Merciful", and "Gracious."*
- ? What does merciful mean? Look at the Attributes of God poster. Someone read that for me. *Assign a reader.*
- ? Great. And what does gracious mean? *Have someone read that from the Attributes of God poster.*
- ? And what is the next word in verse 6? *Longsuffering.*
- ? Do you know what that means? Longsuffering? *Allow children to answer.*
Longsuffering means endlessly patient. God is slow to anger. *Write on the board "Longsuffering—patient."*
- ? What is the next way that God describes Himself? *He is abounding in goodness and truth.*
- ? What do you think abounding means? We don't use that word too often. *Allow children to consider and answer.*
It means to be full of or to overflow. So God is full of goodness and truth. He is overflowing with them. That is why we can trust His Word. He is good and He always tells us the truth. *Write on the board "Good" and "Truthful."*
- ? God continues to tell Moses important things about Himself. What does God tell us in verse 7? *Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.*
These are some big words. But what this means is God is merciful or loving. And He forgives our sin. The words iniquity, transgression, and sin all mean the same—it is sin—disobedience to God. *Write on the board "Forgives sin."*
- ? There is one more thing listed. What does God do with the guilty? Still in verse 7. *He by no means clears the guilty.*
- ? Who are the guilty ones? *Sinners who have not asked for God's forgiveness.*
Yes. And God will not ignore the sins—or clear the sins—of those who refuse to ask forgiveness and receive God's grace. *Write on the board "Does not clear or ignore sins."*

Discover the Truth

OK. Let's review all of these wonderful attributes of God. We'll read these together as we answer our question, "What is God like?" *Read through the list*

of attributes you've written on the board. God is merciful, God is gracious, God is longsuffering—patient, God is good, God is truthful, God forgives sin, God does not clear or ignore sins.

These are all truths about God. All of these words tell us who God is. God is absolutely amazing, and no one will ever be like Him.

? Where did we come up with this list of words about God? *Exodus 34; the Bible.*

That's right—the Bible. And when we ask ourselves or hear questions like “What is God like?” we need to start with God's Word. It tells us so much about God. And because God is truthful we know we can trust His Word. There is so much to God that we could study His Word every day, all day, for the rest of our lives—and we would still be learning new things about Him.

We need to remember that we should start with the Bible to find out about Him. That is where we can go to get a better understanding of our amazing God.



God's Character & Attributes Word Search

MATERIALS

- God's Character & Attributes word search—either one per student or consider allowing them to do it as teams of 3 or 4.
- God's Character & Attributes word search answer key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the God's Character & Attributes word search. You may want to divide the class into teams to work together and see which team comes in first. If you don't have time, send the sheets home with the children.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

There is no one like our God. In the book of Exodus, God described Himself to Moses and to us. God used the words on this word search to describe Himself.

? Someone tell me one of the attributes on your sheet and what it means. *Have the children read from their list (or off the list you made on the board) and tell you the meaning of the attribute from the Attributes of God poster or based on what you discussed in class.*



READ THE WORD

We're going to find out about another attribute of God. Turn to 1 John 4 and we'll begin reading there. Let's read verses 7 and 8 now. *Assign readers to these verses.*

1 John 4:7-8

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? What is John talking about here? *Love. Write on the board "Love."*

1 John 4:7–11

- ? What does he say about love in these two verses? *We should love each other, love is of God, if we love we are born of God and know God.*
- ? These verses are about us loving others. But the next two verses tell us the amazing way that God showed His love for us. Does anyone know how God did that? *Allow children to answer.*

Let's read 1 John 4:7–11 and we'll see what God's Word says. *Assign readers or read these verses to the class yourself.*

First, let me explain what John meant when He said that God "manifested" His love. He meant that God showed His love in a way that we can see it.

Manifested:
showed

- ? So how did God manifest, or "show," His love toward us? *He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.*
- ? Take a look again at verse 9. Why did God send Jesus to the world? *So we might live through Him.*
- ? And what about verse 10. Why did God send Jesus? *God loved us and sent Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins.*

That is a big word—propitiation. But it is a very special word and it has an amazing meaning. *Write on the board, "propitiation."*

Propitiation:
satisfied the
punishment
for sin

Because God is holy, He must punish sin—He hates sin. So, since we are all sinners, we all deserve God's just punishment. But God provided a way for us to be saved—and not be punished—through Jesus. He made Jesus to be a "propitiation" for our sins. That means that Jesus, when He suffered on the Cross, was taking the punishment for sinners. And everyone who believes in Him is saved from the punishment they deserve.

Because Jesus was perfect, His suffering satisfied God's demand that sin be punished. And if we turn from our sins and believe in Jesus, God will accept Jesus's suffering as payment for our sin—and He will forgive us.

- ? One more very important thing. How should we act when we consider this great love God has for us? Look at verse 11. *We should love each other.*

Discover the Truth

OK. I want you to remember this. God is love. And He showed us the most perfect act of love when He sent Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for our sins. Jesus was perfect. He never sinned—not even once. He did not deserve to die that terrible death. But we do, because we are all sinners.

And that's where God's amazing love comes in. Please think about this. Jesus died so that we could be forgiven of our sins and go to heaven. That is the greatest love that anyone could have.

While Jesus was here, He told us that no one could get to the Father except by Him. He said that if we receive Him, believe in His name, and repent of our sins, then we would become children of God.



Memory Verse Review

MATERIALS

- Memory Verse strips
- Poster putty

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students read through the memory verse together. Then distribute the seven Memory Verse strips and ask students to place the strips in the proper order on the wall, allowing students to check with the Memory Verse poster.

When complete, have the class read the verse together again. Then distribute the strips to different students. Remove the Memory Verse poster to make it more challenging.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God's Word is the most important thing you can hide in your heart by memorizing it.

? We talked about knowing God better today. Where can we go to learn more about God? *The Bible.*

That's right. The Bible is our starting point for knowing who God is. We can trust His Word to guide us in so many areas—and it tells us something about who God is.

These verses tell us that God's Word is settled forever! His faithfulness lasts to all generations. He is the Creator. In just two verses we see all of this about God. His Word is the only place to go to find out who He is.

Refer to the Memory Verse poster while you discuss these points.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God is not like anyone we know. His attributes are amazing and we can only really know God by studying His Word—the Bible.

This is where we need to start—the Bible—whenever we have a question about who He is or what He is like. It should always be our starting point.

We have talked about many of God's attributes. *Refer to the list on the board. Show the Lesson Theme poster. Refer to the Attributes of God poster.*

Someone read one of God's attributes off the Attributes of God poster and its meaning. *Assign a student to read one attribute. You may want to allow each student or several students to read one attribute from the poster.*

One attribute we talked about in 1 John is love. In fact, the Bible says that God is love.

LOVE

(Refer to Attributes poster)

? What is the greatest act of love ever shown on the earth? *God sending His Son Jesus to die on the Cross for sinners.*

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

We serve a wonderful, powerful, gracious, merciful God. And we can only know Him the way He wants us to know Him by studying His Word.

? What if someone says to you that he just doesn't think God is all that great. After all, look at all the bad things that happen in the world. Bad weather, violence, wars, sickness, death. If God were so great and really loved us, He wouldn't let things like that happen. What could you tell him? *Allow discussion.*

You need to be ready to answer people who have questions like this. There are a lot of terrible things in the world today. But remember—God didn't cause it to be that way. He created it very good.

? What did Adam and Eve do in the perfect garden that God created? *They sinned; disobeyed God.*

Right. And since then, everyone sins—all of us. The world is the way it is today because of sin—not because of God. God is perfect and He always has been and He always will be.

And you can tell them that God is loving. Even though we all sin and disobey Him, He still offers us a way to forgiveness. When Jesus died on the Cross for sins, God showed the most amazing love ever.

Tell your friends that the Bible tells us who God is. And the Bible tells us why the world seems bad at times. The Bible is your starting point—where you go to find answers.



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 119:89–90 Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for who He is—our almighty, holy God.
- Thank God for His holy Word—where we can learn of Him and Jesus.
- Pray that the children will come to a saving knowledge of God through Jesus Christ and His Word.