



9

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 4:7–10

Objectives

Students will be able to:

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



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will practice placing all the books of the New Testament 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: Find the Attributes

page 7

Students will find and color the hidden attribute words in the picture.



Activity 2: Memory Verse Review

page 9

Students will use Memory Verse strips to practice the memory verse, Psalm 119:89–90.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- If you did not do this last week, print and cut the Books of the New Testament cards for every 3–5 students from the Resource DVD-ROM, Lesson 2. Store in envelopes or other container.

- Books of the New Testament cards—one set for each group of 3–5 students



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.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Lesson Board Work outline



FIND THE ATTRIBUTES

- Print one Find the Attributes sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Find the Attributes sheet for each student
- Crayons



MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

- Print 1–3 sets of Memory Verse strips (depending on the size of your class) from the Resource DVD-ROM onto cardstock, or mount the strips onto cardstock after cutting them into sections.

- Memory Verse strips—at least one strip for each student
- Poster putty



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.

► **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 envelopes containing Books of the New Testament cards for groups of 3–5 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.

Maybe have those children who have a brother or sister stand and read the names of the books aloud.



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 the creation.

- ? But where would we need to go to find out all that God wants us to know about Him? Is there a book we can look in? *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.

Today, let's turn to Exodus 34:4–8. Exodus is the second book of the Bible. Here we will read some things that God says about Himself! *Write on the board, "God is:"*

Listen while I read these verses. *After children have found the passage, read it to them, emphasizing attributes of God which are mentioned.*

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.

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.*
- ? What did Moses take with him? *Two tablets of stone.*
- ? Who came down and stood with him on top of the mountain? *The Lord.*

MERCIFUL
GRACIOUS

(Refer to Attributes poster.)

Now let's read the things that God says about himself! First, He says He is merciful. Write on the board, "Merciful."

- ? What does merciful mean? Look at the Attributes of God poster. Can someone read that for me? See if anyone feels confident enough to read it. If not, read it yourself.

- ? Next, he says He is gracious. Write on the board, "Gracious." And what does gracious mean? Have someone read that from the Attributes of God poster.

So God is merciful and gracious. Can you say those words with me? *Merciful and gracious.*

Next, God says He is 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 have lots of something. When it rains and rains and rains, we are "abounding" in water.

Well, God is "abounding" in goodness and truth. He has lots and lots of goodness, and lots and lots of truth. That is why we can trust His Word. He is good and He always tells us the truth. Write on the board, "Good" and "True."

God continues to tell Moses important things about Himself. In verse 7 it says God is "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.

Longsuffering:
endlessly
patient

Abounding:
overflowing
or full

? Who are the guilty ones? *Allow for answers.*

Guilty people are sinners who have not asked for God's forgiveness.

As loving and kind and merciful as God is, He does not ignore sin. He will not skip over the sin of people who have not asked Him for forgiveness.

Write on the board, "Does not ignore sins."

Discover the Truth

OK. Let's review all of these wonderful attributes of God. Can you say **these words with me?** *Read through the list of attributes you've written on the board starting each with "God is": God is merciful, God is gracious, God is longsuffering—patient, God is good, God is true, God forgives sin, God does not ignore sins.*

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



Find the Attributes

MATERIALS

- Find the Attributes sheet for each student
- Crayons

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the Find the Attributes sheets. Students are to color the shapes containing the six attributes of God to reveal a message. They can then color the rest of the picture if desired.

These are all attributes of God. Let's say them together! Gracious, merciful, good, forgiving, truthful, patient.

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 these words and many more throughout the Bible to describe Himself. We can only know who God is by reading and learning what the Bible, God's true Word, has to say about Him. God is so amazing 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 should always start with the Bible when we want to know more about God.



READ THE WORD

1 John 4:7-8

We're going to find out about another attribute of God. Turn to 1 John 4 and we'll begin reading there. Listen while I read verses 7 and 8. *After children have found the passage, read 1 John 4:7-8, emphasizing the word "love."*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What is John talking about here? *Love.*
- ? He says that God is what? *Reread the verse and allow them to answer from the text. Love.*

This is another attribute of God! God is love!

Now listen while I read 1 John 4:9. Find it in your Bibles. *Read the verse after everyone finds it.*

So, what did John mean here? He said that God manifested His love toward us. It means that God showed His love to us. Manifested means to show.

- ? How did God show His very special love for us? Does anyone know? You can find the answer in 1 John 4:9. *Allow for answers.*

The Bible says that God sent His only Son into the world so we might live through Him.

- ? Who is God's only Son? *Jesus.*
- ? And how does He give us life? *He died to pay for our sins so we could have forgiveness and eternal life.*

God could not overlook, or skip over our sin. We learned He does not clear the guilty. But He loves us and wants us to be with Him. So He provided a way. He sent His Son into the world to die for our sins so we could have forgiveness and eternal life.

Isn't that amazing? God is holy but He is also love. So He found a way for our sins to be paid for. He sent Jesus to live a perfect life, and then die on a Cross. His death was not to pay for His own sin, because He was perfect, but to pay for our sins. When Jesus suffered on the Cross, He was taking the punishment on Himself for sinners. And everyone who believes and trusts in Him is saved from the punishment they deserve.

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.

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

LOVE

(Refer to Attributes poster)

1 John 4:9

Manifested:
showed

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. 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 will become children of God.



Memory Verse Review

MATERIALS

- Memory Verse strips
- Poster putty

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students read through the memory verse together. Then distribute at least one Memory Verse strip to each student. As you read the verse, have the child with that section come up and place the strip on the wall. You may do this with two sets if you have a large class. Another option is to allow the children to work together to put the verse on the wall in the proper order themselves.

When complete, have the class read the verse together again.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God’s Word is the most important thing for us to hide in our hearts.

? 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 many areas—and it all 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. *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.

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

? 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.*

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.

? God's very good world didn't last very long. What changed it? *Adam and Eve sinned; disobeyed God.*

That's 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 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.