**First Step – Teacher’s Guide**

Who is God and what is He like?

**The Lord is with you!**

Knowing who God is and what He is like unlocks truths in our life and shapes the way we approach imperfect situations.

**Introduction:**

Welcome back everyone!

Today’s topic is on What is God like?

**MAIN RULES:**

**1. Respect each other’s privacy**

**(Please do not ask for contact number, no business transactions)**

**2. Honor the vision of this church**

**(Please do not promote or invite to other church events and programs)**

**3. Humility and Order**

**(Be humble despite disagreements. Other questions can be discussed after the class)**

Aren’t you curious about today’s topic?

**Attempt:**

Is it possible to define God?

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. Can you describe or define God?
2. What is your understanding of God?

Psalms 90:2

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. NIV

**Failure:**

A **definition** of God in strict sense of the term is impossible. All attempts to define Him result, therefore, simply in descriptions of Him. These descriptions can never be **complete**, since God is **infinite**. *Joseph Stump, The Christian Faith, A System of Christian Dogmatics*

God is the Infinite, Perfect, Eternal Self-existing Personal Being.

**He is Omniscient** (all-knowing), **Omnipotent** (all-powerful) and **Omnipresent** (present everywhere). God is **present** everywhere but is also a **personal** God. (Immanence and transcendence).

Firstly,

* + - * 1. Who Is God?

Nehemiah 9:6

You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest 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. NIV

**Explanation:**

Luther - indulgence

1. He is outside of time, space and matter (Eternal Self-Existing Being)

God is not created. He is outside of time, not limited by space, time and matter.

Evolution is the process whereby species are supposed to develop over millions of years to become more complex species.

Evolution says that you are alive because of the survival of the fittest. And there is no purpose in life.

Whereas with God, He says we are created on purpose for a purpose and when we die, we will be with Him.

2. He is All-Knowing (Omniscient)

Psalms 139:1-7

1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. NIV

God knows all the things that are happening. He is not caught by surprise at distresses, hurt and pain in the world.

He knows how the world is

He knows all about you and has a plan for you.

3. He is Present Everywhere (Omnipresent)

Psalm 139:7-10

7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. NIV

God is present everywhere but is also a personal God, (immanence and transcendence).

4. He is All-Powerful (Omnipotent)

God is not limited by space, time and matter.

Mark 10:27

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." NKJV

5. He is a Triune God

This brings us to the doctrine of trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There is one God who coexist eternally in 3 distinct persons. Each is fully God. Not one God revealing Himself in 3 forms or modes.

There are many instances of God described in the plural in the original Hebrew:

Ecclesiastes 12:1, Psalms 149:2, Josh 24:19, Isaiah 54:5, Isaiah 6:8, Gen 20:13, Gen 35:7.

Jesus is attested as God in the Old and New Testament. He is fully God and fully man.

The Holy Spirit is God. He witnesses to us, helps us in our weaknesses, He speaks and He grieves.

We worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence.

Questions – so tough – no one can answer

Clear – we didn’t study enough

Choice – complete – sign name – get an A

 At the end of his evangelism course he would distribute the exam with the caution to read it all the way through before beginning to answer it. This caution was written on the exam as well. As we read the test, it became unquestionably clear to each of us that we had not studied nearly enough.

The further we read, the worse it became. About halfway through, audible groans could be heard through out the lecture hall. On the last page, however, was a note that read, "You have a choice. You can either complete the exam as given or sign your name at the bottom and in so doing receive an A for this assignment."

Wow? We sat there stunned. "Was he serious? Just sign it and get an A?" Slowly, the point dawned on us, and one by one we turned in our tests and silently filed out of the room.

When I talked with the professor about it afterward, he shared some of the reactions he had received through the years. Some students began to take the exam without reading it all the way through, and they would sweat it out for the entire two hours of class time before reaching the last page.

Others read the first two pages, became angry, turned the test in blank, and stormed out of the room without signing it. They never realized what was available, and as a result, they lost out totally.

One fellow, however, read the entire test, including the note at the end, but decided to take the exam anyway. He did not want any gifts; he wanted to earn his grade. And he did. He made a C+, but he could easily have had an A.

This story illustrates many people’s reaction to God’s solution to sin. Some people look at God’s standard--moral and ethical perfection--and throw their hands up in surrender. Why even try? they tell themselves. I could never live up to all that stuff

Others are like the student who read the test through and was aware of the professor’s offer but took the test anyway. Unwilling to simply receive God’s gift of forgiveness, they set about to rack up enough points with God to earn it.

But God’s grace truly is like the professor’s offer. It may seem unbelievable, but if we accept it, then, like the stunned students who accepted the professor’s offer, we, too, will discover that, Yes, God’s grace truly is free. All we have to do is accept it.

Mal 3:17

They shall be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in that day, I prepare my own treasured possession and I will have grace on them as a man have mercy on his son that serves him. Then you will see the difference, between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve him and those who don’t.

Last days – God will set a **distinction**

– those that serve, sow

Malachi

Supernatural healing & health

Supernatural restoration

Supernatural harvest

**Illustration:**

Body, Soul and Spirit but one being.

The complexity of the human being: soul, spirit and body

The same water molecule that exists in three forms.

Water existing in three forms at the same time

But the trinity is not God existing in three forms

So, this illustration does not fully explain trinity

The triangle, 3 angles but one.

Man – as father, son, husband at one time, but one person.

Many cults deny the divinity or humanity of Jesus or deny divinity of Holy Spirit

 **Application:**

(Teachers, please use your own illustration if you have)

In view of many heresies, the early church fathers have put together a clear description of the doctrines and called them “Creeds”

Some notable ones are: Nicene Creed or Athanasius Creed. These creeds exist to give a foundation to the Christian belief to stand unwavering in the sea of differing doctrines and theories.

Discussion:

Q: If God is in control, why do bad things happen to good people?

Q: How does things change when we believe in God?

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. What proof is there that God exists?
2. Why is it easier to believe in evil spiritual forces than good ones?
	* + - 1. What Is God Like?

Neh 9:6

You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest 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. NIV

– lost presence of God

**Explanation:**

1. He is perfectly Holy

Isa 6:3

And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" NKJV

The definition of holy is : to be pure, set apart, sacred and uncommon.

What is the holiest place in the world?

What is the holiest place in Israel?

What is the holiest place in the temple?

What is the holiest place in the Ark of the Covenant?

It would be the mercy seat where the OT priests would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on it.

This would mean:

The center of His Holiness is His mercy.

2. He is love

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. NIV

He does not just have the characteristics of loving or able to love but He is love itself.

While the bible talks about Him having wrath, wrath is not a part of His nature but a response to sin. Love is a part of His nature.

The world is made up of imperfect people and imperfect situations because of sin. However, God did not send evil. Instead, He is in the process of reconstruction.

Sin tore apart the relationship between man and God but Christ death on the cross restored us back to Him.

The root cause of misery is that we have lost the presence of God when really, we need God to enjoy His creation.

We were made for Eden. We were made to be in communion with God, to be in relationship with Him.

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Supernatural healing & health

Supernatural restoration

Supernatural harvest

**Illustration:**

(Teachers, please use your own illustration if you have)

Think about it, if there is a road accident, how many of you would go to the road transport minister and complain why they allow the accident?

You may have the best highways but the people that are on the road are the ones having the responsibility, not the road transport minister.

**Application:**

(Teachers, please use your own illustration if you have)

Understanding what God is like helps shape the way we view the world and how we live.

For example, when bad things happen, sometimes we immediately assume that it is because of something bad we have done and God is punishing us when actually, it is the devil that is in the business of doing bad things and destroying lives.

So a better way to approach bad times is to understand that God did cause the bad things to happen. Instead, He can still work all things for good and He can still work a good plan in your life.

Your image of God greatly matters.

Discussion:

Q: How can we receive God’s love in a practical way?

Q: Why is our image of God so important?

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. What are the limits for God’s love?
2. Is it hard to believe that God is loving and merciful?
	1. Benediction

Num 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord cause his face to smile on you and be gracious to you;

the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.’

* 1. Article I

How Do I Know God Exists?

**i. Looking at His work – Cosmological Evidence**

**ii. Looking at our heart – Ontological Evidence**

**iii. Looking at His hand – Historical Evidence**

**v. Looking at His Word – Bibliological Evidence**

**vi. Looking at His Person – Christological Evidence**

* 1. Article II

What Is The Trinity?

The Bible plainly teaches that God is one; but at the same time, it describes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as God. This doctrine called the Trinity (Latin: Trinitas), or Three in One. This doctrine is a **mystery** which the both the OT and the NT reveals. The Bible does not attempt to **explain** it but just describes it.

There is **one** God but coexist eternally in **three distinct Persons**: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

 (Persons with ***personality***, not just modes, **forms** or mere manifestations.)

Each one is fully God and fully divine. But there is not three gods but **one God**, one substance, one essence or nature.

* + - * 1. The Old and New Testament describes the Trinity

Often, nouns and adjectives used in speaking of God are plural.

Gen 1:26

God (Elohim - plural) said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion … NKJV

over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."NKJV

**Elohim** is in the plural.

Eccle 12:1

Remember now you creator …” (Literally: creators)

Psa 149:2

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker. (Literally: makers)

Josh 24:19

He is a holy God.

(Literally: holy Gods.)

Isa 54:5

For your Maker is your husband … (Literally: makers, husbands.)

The pronouns are in the plural.

*So it is not just the plural of majesty.*

Isa 6:8

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." *NKJV*

Cf 3:22, 11:7, Isa 6:8

Notice the pluralverbs

Gen 35:7

13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

NKJV

And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. *NKJV*

Cf Gen 20:13

See occurrences which **distinguish** between God and God. God is talking to God!

Psa 45:6-7

Your throne, **O God**, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. 7You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore **God**, **Your God**, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows. *NASB*

Gen 19:27

27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD.NKJV

Cf Psa 110:1

Note the ‘Compound Unity’

Deut 6:4 *(The Shema)*

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is **one** LORD! *KJV*

Echad: Composite unity, the idea of many that make up one.

The word “Yahid” is not used which would mean “absolute oneness.”

Root *echad*: to unify or collect together, a united one.

Cf Gen 2:24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one (echad) flesh.

Cf Gen 11:6

*This oneness in this verse obviously does not mean that they physically unite into a single being. They retain their personal identity. The word "one" here implies a "compound unity."*

Jesus is attested as God.

We see clearly in **Lesson 2** that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in both the Old and New Testaments.

The Holy Spirit is God.

The Bible clearly reveals the Holy Spirit is a **Person**, and is not simply a **power** or **influence** of God.

He is described by the **masculine** pronoun (John 14:16, 26; 16:13-14).

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you **another** Helper, that He may abide with you forever – *NKJV*

***Another*** * allos: Another of the same kind in contrast to heteros.*

The Holy Spirit relates to us in a **personal** way.

He **bears witness** with our spirit (Rom 8:16), He **helps** our infirmities (Rom 8:26), He **speaks** (Rev 22:17), and He can be **grieved** (Eph 4:30).

His deity is expressly asserted by Peter in rebuking Ananias (Acts 5:3, 4), and follows from the very fact that He is the Spirit of God. His eternal existence follows from His deity.

* + - * 1. The Creeds of the Early Church Fathers

In view of many heresies, the early church fathers have put together a clear description of the doctrine.

An extract of the Nicene Creed, 325 AD

*From the City of Nicaea, modern day Iznik, Turkey*

We believe in one God, **the Father**, the Almighty, Maker of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one **Lord, Jesus Christ**, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial of one Being with the Father.

Through Him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the **Holy Spirit**, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. …

An extract of the Athanasius Creed, 500 AD

We worship **one God in trinity** and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a **distinct** person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another.

But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is **one**, their **glory equal, their majesty coeternal**.

* + - * 1. The doctrine of the Trinity brings out the amazing majesty and greatness of God

Even as the human person is **complex** (body, soul and spirit), so also is the Divine Person complex - but much more so.

It is humanly incomprehensible. If we can fully understand the doctrine we are greater than God!

The truth of the Trinity is the best we can come up with in our understanding concerning God as revealed in the Bible. For in the Bible we find the evidence of three distinct persons who are said to possess the very nature of God and yet there are not three Gods but one God.

Some illustrations that help you understand a little more:

All these illustrations are **good** but are still **inadequate** to fully describe the TRINITY. If we can fully understand or explain the Trinity, we are greater than God!

The complexity of the human being

Human beings consist of one soul, one body and one spirit but yet it is not three beings, but one.

Water existing in three forms

Solid, liquid and gas, yet in every state it is still the same ***H2O***.

The triangle

There are three sides in a triangle, yet it is not three but one triangle.

Our roles

A man can be a father, a son and a husband.

Many deny either Christ’s divinity or humanity. We must be firmly convicted that Christ is fully God and fully man.

* + - * 1. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract concept but it brings immense blessings in our daily life

We are **baptized** in that name:

Matt 28:19

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the **name** of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**. *NIV*

1 Pet 1:2

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the **Father**, in sanctification of the **Spirit**, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus** **Christ**: **Grace** to you and **peace** be multiplied. *NKJV*

2 Cor 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. *NIV*

God the Father created, chose, called, loved us and gave us His Son.

God the Son became Man to redeem us from our sin and curse by His Blood.

God the Holy Spirit reveals Christ, sets us apart (sanctify), empowers us to receive the blessings of the Cross, and leads us to an intimate relationship with God.

Chose