

HEALING THE PAST GOD'S WAY
CHAPTER 6 TEACHING NOTES
GOD IS IMMUTABLE; GOD IS FAITHFUL

MEMORY VERSE:

God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent;
Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
Numbers 23:10

“What you believe about God is the most important thing about you.”
from a sermon preached by James MacDonald

The brush strokes of this lesson continue to grow our understanding of the Otherness of God. Allow the individuals in your group to linger over the truths of God's incommunicable attributes (not transferable, not duplicated in His creation).

I love to use the descriptions from A.W. Tozer's book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. If you have another method that you'd prefer – use it. Focus them on the gulf between us and God.

WHO DOES GOD SAY HE IS: PERSPECTIVE SHIFT

In its struggle to free itself from the tyranny of the natural world, the human heart must learn to translate upward the language the Spirit uses to instruct us.

It is spirit that gives significance to matter and apart from spirit nothing has any value at last. A child strays from a party of sight-seers and becomes lost on a mountain, and immediately the whole mental perspective of the members of the party is changed. Rapt admiration for the grandeur of nature gives way to acute distress for the lost child. The group spreads out over the mountainside anxiously calling the child's name and searching eagerly into every secluded spot where the little one might chance to be hidden.

What brought about this sudden change? The tree-clad mountain is still there towering into the clouds in breath-taking beauty, but no one notices it now. All attention is focused upon the search for a curly-haired little girl not yet two years old and weighing less than thirty pounds. Though so new and so small, she is more precious to parents and friends than all the huge bulk of the vast and ancient mountain they had been admiring a few minutes before. And in their judgment the whole civilized world concurs, for the little girl can love and laugh and speak and pray, and the mountain cannot. It is the child's quality of being that gives it worth. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (pgs. 69 & 70)

We place higher value on the child than the mountain - for the child, though created as is the mountain, bears on her being the mark of the image of her Creator.

Just as our perspective shifts in the mountain vs. child scenario, our perspective must again drastically shift as we turn our gaze towards God.

GOD IS IMMUTABLE

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE: the *essential* God

Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms. We want to get Him where we can use Him, or at least know where He is when we need Him. We want a God we can in some measure control. We need the feeling of security that comes from knowing what God is like, and what He is like is of course a composite of all the religious pictures we have seen, all the best people we have known or heard about, and all the sublime ideas we have entertained. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

GOD IS INFINITE: the *unimagined* God

God is always nearer than you may imagine Him to be. God is so near that your thoughts are not as near as God; your breath is not as near as God; your very soul is not as near to you as God is. And yet God, because He is God, His uncreated Being is so far above us that no thought can conceive it nor words express it. A. W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God: Volume One*

GOD IS TRANSCENDENT: the *otherness* of God

Yet we must not compare the being of God with any other as we just now compared the mountain with the child. We must not think of God as highest in an ascending order of beings, starting with the single cell and going on up from the fish to the bird to the animal to man to angel to cherub to God. This would be to grant God eminence, even pre-eminence, but that is not enough; we must grant Him transcendence in the fullest meaning of that word. Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. The caterpillar and the archangel, though far removed from each other in the scale of created things, are nevertheless one in that they are alike created. They both belong in the category of that-which-is-not-God and are separated from God by infinitude itself. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (pg. 70)

GOD IS IMMUTABLE: the *unchanging* God

The doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in Him alone, for He is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called the Rock. . .Herman Bavinck (a Dutch theologian)

NAMES IN THE PSALMS THAT COMMUNICATE GOD'S IMMUTABILITY:

ROCK

FORTRESS

STRONG TOWER

SHIELD, STRONGHOLD, DELIVERER, ETC.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IS WHO HE IS, NOT WHAT HE DOES

The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself. 2 Timothy 2:11 – 13

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IS THE DEFINING MEASURE OF HIS CHARACTER

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Proverbs 30:5

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. James 1:17

FAITH IS THE DEFINING MEASURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Hebrews 11:6

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIMSELF

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12 – 13

Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. Hosea 6:1 – 3

GOD IS GOD; THEREFORE, I CAN LEARN TO WAIT ON HIM

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23

When we can't see or understand God's intentions or purposes, we must obey, putting our faith in the promise of His Word, the promise of who He is!

That is the nature of walking by faith. It is not by sight (in the seen); it is by faith (in the unseen).

Abiding faith in the God of unbreakable, unshakable, unyielding faithfulness. His promises to us are forged in His character, spoken by His Word and fulfilled without hesitation.

Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. Lamentations 3:19 – 26

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

What Name(s) would you give God to describe His faithfulness and unchanging character?

How have you experienced God's faithfulness in your life this week?