

Who is God?

By Kristin Schmidt

The purpose of this Bible Study series is to communicate to youth how amazing and wonderful God is. He is limitless, yet loving; beyond human comprehension, yet wants to know us personally. Each study will concentrate on one or two attributes of God. Students will explore Scripture to identify the meaning of each attribute, and will evaluate how that deepens their awe of and love for our Heavenly Father. They will discuss how God's attributes allow us to recognize who He is, and how we can serve Him with our lives. This series will also concentrate on how God works in and through us, and how we experience His presence in Word and Sacrament.

**Note: activities suggested within each lesson include recommendations for conducting the series virtually, as well as in person.*

Part One: God is Powerful, yet Personal

Lesson Focus: This lesson invites students to contemplate characteristics of God and to consider how those aspects impact their lives. In this study, teens will examine the awesome wonder of God’s utter omnipotence. He is over and above all things, and knows all things. Compared to God, we are but a speck of dust. Yet despite how incomprehensibly huge God is, He still forms us individually and cares about each of us personally. He wants us to seek Him and to love Him, and He demonstrates that through Christ. God brings us into personal connection by giving His Word in Scripture, and the opportunity to draw close through Baptism and Communion. Recognizing that should inspire worship and adoration. (Total Length: approximately 45 minutes.)

Opening Activity: “Will it fit?” (5-10 minutes)

Before beginning, set a table with several everyday items: toys, household utensils, dishes, water bottles, etc. You will also need several small boxes, bags, or containers.

After students gather and check in, invite them to each select an object from the table. Go around to the students and provide them with a container for their item, but make sure that the container you give them is much smaller than the thing that they have. Once all students are equipped, instruct them to place their items inside the given containers. Ideally (unless you have some sort of creative engineer) no one will be able to do it.

“Make it remote note”: If you are conducting this study online, make this activity a mini scavenger hunt of sorts: give students a brief amount of time to find an item in their house that is particularly large, and a container that is relatively small. Then have students hold up their items, and challenge them to fit the object into the container. You can also do a live demonstration of your own. The point comes across pretty quickly, but it can be fun to over-dramatize. For example, try to put a cat into a tissue box or a hand into a tic-tac container (bonus laughs for getting physically stuck inside, but not recommended).

Ask: What is so challenging about this activity? (*The containers are too small!*) The objects clearly do not fit into the given boxes. Maybe a small part of the object could squeeze in, but not the whole thing.

Explain that, in a small way, this is how our understanding of God tends to be. We can certainly study Him, seek Him, love Him, and serve Him. But God is far greater than our puny human understanding. We will never thoroughly grasp all of who He is, because our “God box” is just too small. We may try to put Him in certain categories or handy Tupperware case-like mental containers, but He is so much more than we can fathom. It would be like a goldfish trying to understand how its owner feeds and runs a household of people... Yet the comforting thing for us is that, even though God is mighty and mysterious beyond our knowledge, He still made each of us and desires personal relationship with us. As we go through these studies, we will consider some characteristics, or “attributes,” of who God is. We will try to learn a bit more about His nature in order to appreciate and love who He is and what He has done for us. We cannot know all things about God, and that is a blessed mystery!

Scripture and Catechism Exploration: (15-20 minutes)

Start the conversation by having students list as many responses as they can come up with to the question “Who is God?” Encourage them to say whatever comes to mind when considering His attributes, and write answers on a white board or large paper, as available. Students may need hints or leading questions, if they are having trouble coming up with characteristics on their own.

Remind teens again that God is more magnificent than anything we can imagine. Sometimes we think we can manipulate God or make Him do our will. That would be like a piece of artwork trying to tell the painter how to hold the brush. Explain that to start, we will focus on some attributes of God related to how powerful He is. This is the God who created the whole universe, after all, but He also created us and wants to know us.

On a board or piece of paper, write four words (*if you are online, write these ahead of time and “share a screen” to demonstrate to students*). Discuss these words with students, explaining their meaning if teens do not already know.

Omnipotent: God is all powerful, reigning over and above everything on Earth

Omniscient: God is all-knowing. Nothing can be hidden from His comprehension

Sovereign: God is in control. He does what He will, working things for good, even when we don't comprehend why.

Self Sufficient: God needs nothing. He is lacking in nothing. Nothing created God. He IS.

Split students into pairs or groups, depending on how many there are total. Give each crew a verse or two, and have them read the verses. *If you are working via computer conference, assign each student a verse or two, and provide a few minutes for them to look up their passages. If you have a large group, consider splitting students into “breakout rooms” if possible, and allow them to discuss their Scripture selections as they read through them.*

Encourage students to consider the theme of each verse, and what attribute it might relate to. A few potential verses to contemplate include:

- Isaiah 46:9-10 (nothing compares to God's POWER and sovereignty)
- Job 42:2-6 (God is sovereign; we cannot fathom or direct Him)
- Psalm 147:5 (God is beyond comprehension)
- Psalm 139:13-18 (God formed us and made us; He is above our thoughts, but cares for us)
- Jude 24-25 (God is self-sufficient, outside of time constructs)
- Jeremiah 29:11 (God's plans for us are for our good)
- Luke 15:1-7 (God loves each of us; He will seek us when we stray)

Additionally, consider the Apostles Creed and its explanation in the Small Catechism. Of particular note, examine the nature of God as creator, which we see in the First Article (especially questions 116, 117, and 123). Also review how that relates to Christ, and how the immensity of the Creator is revealed to us through the person of Jesus (Catechism questions 160 and 161).

Have students share with the others what their verses focused on, and which attribute of God connects to the verse. Encourage them to see if they can come up with additional passages that relate to God's power. After discussing the Scripture, have students think about why it is important to study who God is.

Discussion and Application: (10-15 minutes)

“How deep is the ocean?” Challenge students to consider extremes in the universe...how deep is the sea? Very few people have actually probed the ocean's floor. The average depth of the ocean is over two miles. The deepest point is the Mariana Trench, seven miles below sea level. For a lot of us, that is outside of comprehension. Think about the opposite direction: outer space. When we think for a moment about the universe, we realize how small we are. Even Earth itself shrinks in comparison with the vastness of sky,

space, galaxies...it is mind-boggling. Yet God is deeper, and higher still. He created all of that. He put it all into motion. It seems absurd to imagine how He could care for each individual being...

He does care for each of us, though. He who formed all things from nothing knit us together as well. All that we are and all that we have come from God. He can make or take things in a breath. Yet He loves us enough to become one of us and die for our sake, so that we can have communion with Him. He seeks us out like lost sheep. He knows us better than we know ourselves. So as we study God, we do so not as a mere academic exercise, but as a way to deepen our love for Him. Invite students to consider some questions for application:

- In other languages, there are multiple words for the term “to know.” In Spanish, for example, the word *saber* refers to knowledge about something, while the word *conocer* is knowing someone in a relational sense. How can we pursue both when it comes to knowing God?
- The Bible talks about fear of the Lord...in fact, when we consider the Catechism, Luther often opens explanations with “we should fear and love God so...” What kind of “fear” is this, and how does it relate to love?
- What should be our response when we think about how immense and powerful God is? (*Praise and worship!*)
- How do we learn more about God? (*Through His Word and Sacraments*)
- How do we know that God wants a relationship with us? (*He sent Christ to redeem us and restore our relationship with Him*).
- What relationship did God have with man before the fall? (*Adam and Eve walked with Him in the Garden.*)
- How should we feel knowing that, though God is all-powerful and all-knowing, He forms us and loves us as individuals? (*It is comforting and astounding*)
- When we face a crisis, is it more comforting to think of God as all-powerful or as personal? (*Likely the personal aspect is more comforting, but answers may vary*).
- How does an understanding of God as all-knowing help when we are dealing with uncertainties, like the current COVID-19 situation?

Conclusion: God is mighty and powerful beyond anything we can know or understand. He has the ability to do anything we can imagine and then some. This can make God feel austere and even vague or impersonal. Yet He loves us personally, creates us individually, and wants our love. He will not force it, and allows us to choose. Our response should be worship and praise to the Almighty, and humility in His presence. We rejoice that He allows us to draw near through Holy Communion, and promises forgiveness for our daily sins.

Close with a word of prayer. Consider praising God for His attributes and recognizing them within prayer. Thank Him for His love and care for us.

Part Two: God is Immutable and Immanent

Lesson Focus: In this portion of the study, students will consider how God is unchanging and forever faithful. There was never a time before God, and after the world is gone God will remain. Through that, though, God does not change. He is a God of many wonders and many attributes, but He is always the same. He is eternal and infinite beyond our grasp, and yet He is present with us every moment. This presence should bring comfort to our souls as we recognize that He loves us and is always ready to hear our prayers. (Total time frame: 45 minutes)

Opening Activity: “Days Gone By” (Suggested timing: 5-10 minutes)

Here are a couple of introductory activity suggestions to consider how most things in life change greatly over the years. Choose one of these, or do them both with students, depending upon time constraints and the kids you work with. You will need a bit of “prop preparation” for either one:

- “Who’s that kid?” Print out (or show on display) pictures of several celebrities, as babies or kids. You could also include a few photos of church staff or youth group parents, at younger ages. See if the teens can guess who each picture is, and share a recent picture to compare.
- “What does this do?” Show students a series of items that have gone out of use. Pictures of the items will do the trick, as well. Consider things like a juke box, rotary phone, cassette tape, ViewFinder, etc. See if teens of today recognize the items or know what they might have been used for in bygone days.

Scripture Exploration: (15-20 minutes)

As discussed previously, God is beyond our complete understanding—and that’s a blessing. Remind students that there are elements and attributes of God that are quite mind-boggling for us to wrap our heads around. One of these things we may not utterly grasp is how God is timeless. We only know a fixed and linear concept of time. Events take place one at a time, one after another, in a given location. As much as we would wish, we cannot be in two spots at once. We have to choose how to budget our time, and we are limited in the hours of our days and the years of our lives.

God is not held by such constraints! Everything we know in life is subject to change, but God will never change. He is not bound by deadlines or timelines. He always wants to hear from us and He is always in control.

Discuss a few attributes related to God’s unchanging nature:

Omnipresent: God is constantly present, not limited by space, size, or time.

Immutable: God does not change. His nature, attributes, and rules are constant.

Faithful: God keeps His promises and fulfills His plans.

Eternal: God will never end, just as He never began

Infinite: God is not defined by a quantity, but is limitless.

Split students into pairs or groups, depending on how many there are total. Give each crew a verse or two, and have them read the verses. Encourage students to consider the theme of each verse, and what attribute it might relate to. If you are conducting this study online, assign each student a passage to explore. If your group is smaller, display verses on the screen one at a time, and invite the students to read along with you and consider what each verse indicates.

A few potential verses to contemplate include:

- Genesis 1:1, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16 (The Trinity is timeless: in the beginning, God was; the Word-Christ- was with Him; all was made through Him)
- Exodus 3:13-15 (God is self-sufficient; He IS—Yahweh)
- Deuteronomy 7:9 (God is steadfast, faithful, and never-changing)
- Psalm 90:2 (God exists before and outside of creation, from everlasting to everlasting)
- Psalm 139:7-18 (God is everywhere, in all times and places)
- Isaiah 57:15 (God inhabits eternity)
- Habakkuk 1:12 (God is “from everlasting”)
- Malachi 3:6 (God declares that He does not change)
- Hebrews 13:6-12 (Christ is the same yesterday, today, forever)
- James 1:17-18 (all things come from God, who does not change)
- Revelation 1:4-8; 17 (God is the first and the last)

Have students share what their verses focused on, and which attribute of God connects to the verse. Encourage them to see if they can come up with additional passages that relate to God’s presence. After discussing the Scripture, have students think about why it is important to study who God is, and how He comes to us through the blessing of Sacraments. Consider examining Luther’s Small Catechism, particularly notes on the benefits of the Sacrament of the Altar (questions 362-363). In Communion, we reflect on Christ and His promise to be with us *always* (Matthew 28:20). We know that we have the blessing of participating in worship services where we delight in God’s presence both now and in the promise of the life to come. We do not always know what God’s timeline is, but we trust that He has control and positive plan, now and forever.

Discussion and Application: (10-15 minutes)

Invite students to consider the following quotes by noted Christian authors:

“Almost certainly God is not in time. His life does not consist of moments one following another...Thirty-- and every other moment from the beginning of the world--is always Present for Him. If you like to put it this way, He has all eternity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames.”

-C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

What might this mean? People often wonder how God can be in all times and places all at once, or how He is able to hear the prayers of all individuals. This is one potential solution to the question. C.S. Lewis wrote rather extensively on the idea that God’s concept of time is distinct from ours, and His existence is in a sense outside of time itself. His theory was that God, being eternal, is outside of our understanding of time and does not necessarily view events linearly as we do. A year to us might only be a second to Him.

Note, this exact idea is not something we can know with certainty and is not specified in Scripture. People have proposed many ideas and theories about the nature of God and time, and we must weigh these against what the Word of God describes. However, as observed in the Bible passages studied, we do know that God existed before time began and that He occupies all times and places.

Another important thing to note is that God’s timing is certainly not our own. We may have desires and make requests, and sometimes God says “wait.” We must recognize that He is still present and in control, even when it doesn’t seem to fit our personal plans.

Now, consider a word from noted theologian and writer Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“The blessedness of waiting is lost on those who cannot wait, and the fulfillment of promise is never theirs. They want quick answers to the deepest questions of life and miss the value of those times of anxious waiting, seeking with patient uncertainties until the answers come. They lose the moment when the answers are revealed in dazzling clarity.”

We can become impatient, wanting things to happen within our timeline, and to happen fast. God’s timing is not ours. We may not even understand what happens this side of Heaven, but we trust His providential care and knowledge. His laws do not change, but it also means that His love stays the same. God is faithful, and His promises are valid and true. He is our real, present God (shout out to NYG 2019!). God will always be present, whether or not we acknowledge or appreciate that.

Invite students to consider some questions for application:

- What is something in your life that has changed in a difficult or frustrating way?
- How can you recognize and appreciate God’s presence on a day by day or a moment by moment basis? (*We daily rise recognizing our Baptism and who we are in Christ; when we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we experience His presence now and rejoice in the future of His re-united presence one day.*)
- Have the restrictions of quarantine altered your perception of time? For example, do days seem to go by more slowly or more quickly? Do you find yourself forgetting what day of the week it is? How has this been challenging?
- What evidence do we have that God will fulfill His promises to us? (*Biblical examples: prophecies came to fruition; the promised Messiah came.*)
- How do you think God’s infinite and eternal nature interacts with our prayer life? (*This could be a challenging question, and may not have a specific answer.*)
- Some of these concepts are especially difficult for us to wrap our heads around. How can we trust in the Lord even without fully understanding His ways? (*We recognize that “His ways are higher than ours”, as Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us. We believe that He has our best interests in mind and acknowledge that His will ultimately will be done.*)
- How does knowing that God never changes give you hope? How can you call this to mind when other things are challenging for you?
- How would you connect God’s unchanging nature with other attributes that we have discussed, like omniscience or omnipotence?

Conclusion: God is the one thing in our lives that we know will never change. He promises that He IS from age to age, beginning to end and beyond. It is impossible for us to fully grasp how God can be in all places at once, or how He cares for us individually. We belong to present moments of time, but we can be certain that God is present with us in each moment. We certainly can pray for an appreciation of this reality and of God’s constant nearness. We can take hope in God’s faithfulness and His love.

Close with a word of prayer. Thank God for His presence, His closeness, His promises, and His unwavering faithfulness.

References:

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Part Three: God is Mighty, Yet Merciful

Lesson Focus: This lesson visits a dual element of God’s nature that is often misconstrued or misrepresented. God is fair and just, but He is also benevolent and gracious. Sometimes we hear people speak of the “God of the Old Testament” as completely distinct from the “God of the New Testament.” God does not change. He is always just, and always merciful. This lesson will review the difference between grace and mercy, and will look at how God demonstrates both towards us. The dynamic of justice and mercy mirrors our understanding of Law and Gospel. God gave the Law, demonstrating His truth and fair standards. But because on our own we fail to keep the Law, we proclaim the Gospel of Christ for forgiveness. Knowing that God is mighty and powerful makes it all the more remarkable that He forgives us completely. (Total time: approximately 45 minutes.)

Opening Activity: “Paying for Crime” (5-10 minutes)

Invite students to come up with a list of the worst criminals they can think of. These could be historical examples, or more modern-day villains. Feel free to provide a couple of pictures or hints, if students are having trouble. You might also have them come up with specific crimes that are particularly offensive. What kinds of punishment would seem fitting for such things? Discuss what retributions might have been covered in history, or have students brainstorm what they believe might suit different crimes.

Additionally, you might also have teens identify rewards or blessings that they would consider appropriate for celebration of particularly excellent actions (like medals for sports, bonuses for work promotions, etc.). If you have introduced your topic at all, students will likely catch on to where the illustration is going. In our society, we have a system of rewards and punishments designed to establish justice. This is certainly necessary to maintain peace and motivate following the laws of Earth. What would you think if a criminal was just set free, or even given a reward?

In some way, this happens to us. We know that the consequence of our sin should be death. We deserve to be punished, yet through God’s mercy, we don’t receive that. By grace, we are instead given the reward of Heaven, through faith in Christ.

Explain to teens that they will be examining how God is both just and merciful. He is good and righteous, but He is also loving and gracious.

Scripture Exploration: (15-20 minutes)

It’s important to emphasize that God is not compartmentalized. He does not cease to be just and good when He demonstrates mercy, and His righteousness does not prevent His grace. Throughout the Bible, God exhibits love and compassion. Consider how often the people of Israel turned away from God, resulting in punishment, only to repent and receive chance after chance. There is not an “Old Testament” and “New Testament” God, but one God who always and equally displays various characteristics. Often we hear complaints about God’s anger or wrath, when it comes to things like the flood, the Passover, or modern-day wars and natural calamities. Due to sin, death and disaster take place. In the Bible, there are events that demonstrates justice for sin. Sometimes we don’t understand all of the details of how God acts. However, the passages to be explored here are more prominent in their depictions of God’s mercy and grace. He has compassion and love. His love is always greater than His wrath, and we can take confident comfort in that truth.

“How is it possible for a just and holy God to declare sinners righteous?” (Small Catechism, Question 206)
God has placed our sins upon Christ, and as His death satisfies the need for punishment of sin, His resurrection credits us with righteousness.

Briefly describe and discuss God’s attributes as both just and merciful:

Just: God will ultimately put all things right.

Jealous: God’s jealousy is not an immature coveting of what isn’t His, but a divine desire to keep what is rightfully His.

Righteous: God is good. His law is good, His ways are good, because HE is good.

Merciful: God does not give us what we deserve (Hell; punishment for sin)

Gracious: God grants us what we do not deserve (forgiveness; Heaven)

Compassionate: God cares deeply about us and for us, because He is love.

Split students into pairs or groups, depending on how many there are total. Give each crew a verse or two, and have them read the verses. Encourage students to consider the theme of each verse, and what attribute it might relate to. *If you are conducting this study remotely, screen share brief themes or descriptions of each verse passage, without the reference attached. Assign students verses to look up, and see if they can identify which theme correlates with their given passage.*

If students feel extra creative and time allows, you may even have them draw a picture to accompany their passages. A few potential verses to contemplate include:

- Deuteronomy 4:23-24 (God is a jealous God and a consuming fire)
- Psalm 86:8-13, 15 (God is slow to anger and abounding in love)
- Psalm 103:6-13 (God does not punish our inequities; He makes our sins as far away as east is from west, and has compassion as a loving Father).
- Isaiah 45:21 (God is righteous and just)
- Micah 7:18-19 (God will have compassion on us)
- Romans 3:22-24 (all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory, and all are justified by His free gift of grace)
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 (God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God)
- 1 John 1:9 (God will be gracious and faithful, when we confess our sins)
- 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 (God’s desire for us is salvation through Christ)
- Ephesians 2:4-10 (God has saved us by grace through faith in Christ)
- Romans 5:12-21 (The ultimate act of grace was Christ being sent to die in our place)

Consider also the significance that the gift of forgiveness is FREE. We cannot possibly earn it, and we don’t need to! “Our righteousness before God is this: God forgives our sins out of pure grace, without any work, merit, or worthiness of ours preceding, present, or following. He presents and credits to us the righteousness of Christ’s obedience (Romans 5:17-19). Because of this righteousness we are received into grace by God and regarded as righteous” (FC Ep III 4). We can be sure that nothing we do will add to or detract from Christ’s sacrifice. When we participate in worship, in acts of service, or in obedience to the law, it is not out of intention that we might earn salvation. Rather, it is out of gratitude and love for what God has already done through Christ.

Have students share with the others what their verses focused on, and which attributes of God connects to the verses. Ask what they think of these attributes, and see if there are elements that are still confusing. If

time allows, invite students to brainstorm biblical characters who exemplify God's hand of mercy. Consider figures like Jacob, David, Rahab, Saul, Peter, and many others who were forgiven for sinful behaviors. After discussing the Scripture, consider a few questions to review these concepts of justice and mercy.

Discussion and Application: (10-15 minutes)

How is it possible for God to be both just and merciful? Invite students to consider a few life analogies and answer questions regarding God's amazing grace...

- Consider the role of a parent...does anyone have parents who always give them anything they ask for? (*Hopefully not!*) Parents sometimes must discipline their children, but out of love they also give them what they need. God does the same...He demonstrates justice, but His love overwhelms us in the balance.
- Think about the COVID-19 pandemic. How would you respond to someone who claims that God cannot be loving and fair if He allows so many people to die of illness? (*God is still in control and is just; we cannot always understand why some die and others do not, and it's still painful to struggle through. But death is a result of sin. Through Christ, it is not the end, and we hope in that.*)
- Some people have claimed the pandemic is a punishment of sorts, to "get our attention" and turn people back to God. Do you think this is an accurate representation of who we know God to be? (*This could be a tricky question...God's will is for all to know Him and be saved. He allows crisis situations to take place and is still present, but is still merciful and gracious. He is not waiting to "pick on people" or cause disaster on specific people.*)
- A courtroom judge must be focused on the law and establishing just punishment for crimes. On the other hand, a friend or loved one might err more on the side of mercy. How does God ultimately reveal both of these aspects? (*Through Christ! Sin necessitates punishment, and Jesus took the punishment for us.*)
- There is a lot of talk about the idea of "social justice." Do you think that we as Christians have an obligation to look out for the needs of others in the world? (*Yes! God cares for each person, and wants us to care, as well.*)
- Which do you think is more prominent in the Bible: God's justice or His grace? (*Hopefully by now students recognize that both are present, but grace is stronger.*)
- What does God's justice tell us about our desire to get revenge? (*We should not seek revenge, because that is God's business! Romans 12:19.*)
- Consider the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18). What should be our response to recognizing what God has done for us through Christ? (*We should consider providing grace to those around us.*)
- Think about the element of the Law...how does the Law act in our lives? (*It is a guide, a mirror, and a curb, showing us where we go wrong and keeping us in line.*) How is God's justice reflected in the Law? What balances that? (*The Gospel! We proclaim Christ, who saves us from the burden of the Law.*)
- How can we be sure that we are forgiven and saved? (*God says so! We receive the Gospel as declared in the Word, in Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. These are constant reminders of God's faithfulness and forgiveness, and our eternal life in Jesus.*)

Conclusion: God is a judge who establishes and sets the Law, but also fulfills it. He sits in the seat of judgment sentencing a criminal, but then takes the criminal's place and takes the punishment Himself. Re-visit the fact that God is both powerful and personal, because He exhibits His might, but longs for relationship reconciliation. Sometimes in life, things do not seem fair. Well, things are not fair, and thank goodness for us that they're not! We might not deserve a job loss or illness. Jesus did not deserve the cross,

but took it for our sake. Our sins were heaped upon Him, and His blood cleansed them. For that, we give our humble thanks and our entire lives to God. We proclaim the Gospel to others and seek to share it to the ends of the Earth.

Close with a word of prayer. Thank God for His grace and mercy, and for the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Praise God for allowing us to draw near to Him, and for the benefits of His word, His church, and the mystery of His presence in the Sacraments.

Part Four: God is Glorious, yet Giving

Lesson Focus: In this study, teens will examine God’s holiness, as well as His love and sacrifice. Sometimes we treat God too flippantly, neglecting how important it is to act reverently and respectfully in His presence. However, it is also possible to focus too much on His grandeur and forget that He cares for us personally and relationally. This lesson aims to explore God’s utter glory, and also offers a reminder of what God has done and continues to do for us. The response of studying both elements ought to be an inspiration to worship and adore our great God. He has made Himself known in the person of Jesus Christ, and He gives us His Word and Sacraments to be present with Him in and out of worship.

(Total time: approximately 45 minutes.)

Opening Activity: “What do you Worship?” (5-10 minutes)

Open the study with thoughts on what it means to worship something, and how we can often give undue attention to things that are less than praiseworthy. Invite students to consider things in their lives that they put a lot of time and effort into, or even people they admire. This could be sports, music, school, celebrities, or other hobbies. Have teens list how much time they spend on those things, and what they need to do in order to pursue them or develop skill in them. If time allows, you might even play a brief clip of what other talented individuals (athletes, musicians) do in order to achieve their goals.

Why do we do such things? Encourage teens to think about the glory given to talented people. We follow them in media, celebrate their successes, and ascribe to be like them. We give ourselves to things that we value, pouring time and effort into practicing or training. Again, why? When we allow things to take over our time and attention, we easily slip into making them an object of worship. We treat sports or grades as something sacred. We are willing to sacrifice in order to improve.

There should only be one thing worthy of our greatest time and attention. It might seem like a “Sunday school answer,” but the only object of worship in our lives should be God. We easily let Him slip to the side, or we treat Him casually and forget how awesome and holy He is. He commands our utter respect and worship, and we often reduce Him to a few seconds before dinner. Yet even when we ignore or neglect God, He loves us and wants us to be with Him. He made the ultimate sacrifice for our sakes. Explain that in this study, we will consider how holy and praiseworthy God is, but also how He gives us all we have, and loves us intensely. “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things” (Small Catechism, explanation of the First Commandment).

Scripture Exploration: (15-20 minutes)

Is water wet? This may sound redundant, but there are bound to be teens who will eagerly debate this question. Water is the very essence of wetness, it would seem, because something that is wet is normally full of water. In the same way, some of God’s attributes are not so much a part of who He is as they are a description that He fully embodies. God *is* love. God *is* holiness. As students review passages of Scripture connected to God’s glory and love, encourage them to consider how Christ has bridged the gap separating us from God. God is above anything we can fathom, but He stoops low to reach us, so low that He took on flesh in the person of Jesus.

Visit and discuss the meaning of God’s attributes of glory:

Holy: Something that is holy or sacred is considered “set apart” for a special purpose. God’s holiness sets Him apart from us. Anything connected to God is holy. Yet He still wants relationship with us as His beloved children.

Wise: God not only knows all things, He knows the best things for our lives. We can trust His judgment, even

if we don't always understand it.

True: Everything God says is true. His Word is true, His promises are true. He is truth.

Provider: God gives us everything that we could need (our "daily bread" includes all things).

Savior: In Jesus, God rescues us and pardons us from our sins.

Love: God cares deeply about us and for us, because He is love. His love does not have conditions, but seeks us wherever we are and sacrifices for us.

Split students into pairs or groups, depending on how many there are total. Give each crew a verse or two, and have them read the verses. *If you are doing this lesson remotely, you may choose the best method of examining the passages. If time allows, look at them as a group, and maybe read them out loud or on a screen with a "fill-in-the-blank" element. Or you can provide a few minutes for students to each take a verse or two and report back. If your timing is shorter, consider assigning these ahead of time, prior to meeting.*

Encourage students to consider the theme of each verse, and what attribute it might relate to. If kids feel extra creative, you may even have them draw a picture to accompany their passages. A few potential verses to contemplate include:

- Exodus 3:1-6 (Moses must turn aside from God's glory, and remove his sandals on the Holy ground of God's presence).
- Exodus 19:16-20 (Example of God's glory on Mount Sinai)
- Joshua 5:13-15 (Joshua removes sandals and falls facedown before the Lord's messenger)
- 2 Samuel 22:31 (All of God's ways are good and true.)
- Psalm 145:1-8; 21 (Everything points to God's greatness and glory; we praise Him in response)
- Matthew 6:25-34 (we need not worry, because God provides all things we need)
- Matthew 27:51 (Some instruction might be needed to explain this one: upon the death of Christ, the curtain separating the temple area from the "Holy of Holies" was torn, indicating that we are now brought into relationship with God.)
- Romans 8:26-30 (The Holy Spirit speaks for us when we are uncertain how to pray)
- 1 Corinthians 2:7-13 (we cannot fully understand the wisdom of God, and only interpret through the work of the Spirit)
- 1 John 4:7-21 (God is love, and we should love one another)

Have students share with the others what their verses focused on, and which attributes of God connect to the verses. Ask what they think of these attributes, and see if there are elements that are still confusing. After discussing the Scripture, invite students to reflect on how it impacts their lives.

Consider, too, the beauty and significance of the Holy Spirit. We examine God's holiness and love, but we see how the Holy Spirit brings us into deeper relationship with and understanding of God. "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" (Small Catechism, explanation of the Third Article). We are not somehow striving to have "strong enough faith" or to believe. HE is doing the work!

Discussion and Application: (10-15 minutes)

Have students consider how we can love and fear God, thinking about His holiness as well as our gratitude for the blessings He bestows.

- Which of the Ten Commandments reflect on God’s holiness? *(Well, all of them, to some extent, since God gives us the law for our own benefit...specifically, the first three commandments especially- God’s name is holy, HE is holy, we keep the Sabbath holy to honor Him.)*
- If Jesus came to bridge the gap between our sinful humanity and God’s holiness, do we still need to offer reverence in God’s presence? *(Of course! He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. We should be all the more respectful of who God is...but we can also dare to approach His throne.)*
- In the Lord’s Prayer, we are invited to ask God for our “daily bread.” How does this remind us that God provides? *(He promises to grant our daily NEEDS. Maybe not exactly as we want, but He will give us what we need for each day.)*
- How can we demonstrate respect for God’s holiness? *(We can return to a continual mindset of worship in our daily lives, and sometimes this includes small actions that remind us of His presence. In church, this includes things like bowing before the altar, or making the sign of the cross. At home, it might involve visual reminders, or bowing to pray.)*
- With restrictions forcing quarantine conditions, it can be challenging to plan for future events and activities. How can we have hope when there is so much uncertainty? *(We know God will take care of our needs. We can live day to day, and understand He will provide what we need day to day.)*
- What is something positive that you are thankful for amidst this tumultuous time, even with the challenges it’s brought?
- When we consider what God has done and continues to do for us, our response should be love, praise, and worship. What does this look like on a practical, daily activities level? *(Regular prayer, telling others about Him, loving one another, giving thanks through tithes.)*

Conclusion: God is worthy of our utter respect and veneration. He is holy and mighty beyond anything we can imagine. We sometimes take His presence for granted, rushing through prayers or treating Him flippantly. Contemplating the majesty and mystery that surround the divine should drive us to our knees, if not our faces. At the same time, however, God is not hovering with holy fire to smite us if we utter His name or forget a Scripture reference. Rather, He loves us and desires communion with us. God promises to provide us with all of our needs, and we can trust the truth of His word. God will take care of us. He loves us so deeply that He became one of us and took our punishment upon Himself. In Jesus, we are brought back into fellowship with the Lord. Recalling this should set our hearts ablaze with wonder and love. We should be driven to worship and praise that the God of the universe listens to our feeble cries and calls us His children. The Holy Spirit intercedes for our confusion and groaning. We are reminded that God has given us His Son to reveal Himself, and that He allows us to daily draw near in Word and Sacrament. We live in thanksgiving, reverence, and joy of these blessings.

Close with a word of prayer. You may have students take turns praying, if they are willing, or offer a general prayer of thanks to God. Acknowledge His utter holiness, but thank Him for His love and for the sacrifice of Christ. Ask for the humility to remain reverent but joyful in God’s presence.