



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

“Character of God” Series Lesson 2 – August 7, 2016

Introduction to the Study of God’s Character

I. Lesson Starters:

Today we will continue our series on God’s character by looking at some introductory concepts and scriptures. Last week we covered topics and scriptures that relate to our ability to truly know God and about revelation of himself. Before we start, let’s consider the following ideas:

1. How do we ever begin the break down or develop a process of understanding God’s character
2. Do we have to understand God’s attributes to properly and fully interpret scripture?

II. Classifying Gods Attributes:

When we begin to try and understand or talk about God’s character, we realize quickly that we cannot remotely imagine or describe all that the Bible teaches us about Him. We need some way to decide which aspects of His character to frame, organize and structure to try and get a small grasp of this enormous subject. We need to be able to categorize the attributes of God.

The organization of these attributes is actually very important to establish proper order, understanding and preventing an over emphasis of one attribute over another. We will use the following approach:

- Incommunicable Attributes – Those attributes that God does not share or communicate to others, examples would include:
 - God’s eternity, Unchangeableness, Omnipresence
- Communicable Attributes – Those attributes that God shares or communicates with us, examples would include:
 - Love, Knowledge, Mercy, Justice, Wisdom

While most of us have a good feel and sense for these definitions, the harsh reality is that there are no attributes of God’s that are completely transferable. Wisdom would be a great example. We can only pray and live our lives to get a small grasp of God’s wisdom.

Isaiah 55:8-9

8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

III. The Names of God in Scripture

In the Bible, a person’s name is a description of his or her character. God’s name is equal to all that the Bible tell us about Him and his character. We should address God’s name in such a way that is honoring to Him and accurately reflects His character. Honoring God’s name can be done through words or actions.

Creation is attributed to God:

Lion, Lamb, Hen, Sun, morning, light, torch, fire, rock, fountain, hiding place, shadow, shield, temple

Human experiences are attributed to God:

bridegroom, husband, father, judge, king, man of war, builder and maker, physician, shepherd

Human emotions are also attributed to God:

Joy, grief, anger, love, hatred, wrath

Even though there is no physical body, the human body is used to describe God's activities:
Countenance, eyes, ears, mouth, hand, arms, lips, tongue, fingers

The point in looking at these names and passages is to emphasize that 1) All of creation reveals something about God to us and the higher the creation, the more of God that is revealed, 2) All we know about God from scripture comes to us in terms that we can understand and 3) God made the universe so that it would show forth the excellence of his character and glory. They descriptive events and experiences common to man. God uses language that speaks to us in Human terms so that we can understand.

- If God is going to teach us things where we have no direct experience, He will teach us in terms of what we do know
- We do have to be careful about overemphasizing one attribute since we could easily misunderstand or be imbalanced; possibly develop an inadequate picture of who God is
- Each description of one of God's attributes must be understood in the light of everything else that scripture tells us about God. If we fail to do this, we will inevitably misunderstand God and be wrong.

Psalm 148

1 Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights above. 2 Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts. 3 Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. 4 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created, 6 and he established them for ever and ever— he issued a decree that will never pass away. 7 Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, 8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, 9 you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, 10 wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, 11 kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, 12 young men and women, old men and children. 13 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. 14 And he has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his faithful servants, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord.

- As we learn about God's character, it will open our eyes and enable us to properly interpret creation and scripture.
- Scripture does not tell us everything about God; For this reason, some theologians have said "God has many names, yet God has no name"

IV. Group Questions:

1. Discuss the terms incommunicable and communicable. Are God's attributes really broken down this easily or is a better term "less shared" and "more shared"?
2. Can the communicable attributes such as love, knowledge, mercy and justice be completely shared?
3. Discuss the starter question "Do we have to understand God's attributes to properly and fully interpret scripture? Why or why not?"
4. Why did God use human experiences, words and situations to describe Himself? Does using so many different words and situations described in scripture make it harder or easier for us to understand His attributes?
5. With God being "infinite" but yet providing creation, stories and scripture for us to learn about his attributes; Does the Bible fully describe God? Have you ever thought about that concept, that the Bible is only containing a small fraction of who God really is or His attributes?