



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

“Character of God” Series Lesson 7 – September 11, 2016

Incommunicable Attribute of Unity

I. Lesson Starters:

Last week we looked at the Incommunicable attribute of Omnipresence. God is present everywhere and there is nowhere that someone can escape God’s presence. God has no spatial dimensions and cannot be contained. Today we will look at Unity. God’s Unity can be defined as follows:

God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times. None of God’s attributes are more important than the others. Every attribute is completely true of God and is true of all of God’s character.

John said that “God is Light” (1 John 1:5) and later says that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). There is no suggestion that part of God is light and part of God is love; God himself is wholly both. One is not above the other.

II. God’s Being is not a Collection of Attributes Added Together:

Exodus 34:6-7

6 The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

We would not want to characterize these attributes as only characteristic of some part of God, but rather they are characteristics of God himself and characteristics of all his being. We should not think of God as a collection of attributes that need to be added together for the whole:

- Justice, Holiness, Love, Blessedness, Truthfulness, Mercy, Jealousy, Knowledge, Omnipotent, Eternity, Wrath, Omnipresence, Wisdom, Independence,

God is entirely each one of the above attributes. Each attribute is true of all of God’s being and defines his total character. God himself is unity and infinitely perfect in all of these attributes.

III. Why Study Different Attributes of God?

If everything is Unity, why then does the bible attempt to teach and speak of different attributes of God? One possible reason would be for our understanding of God’s character since otherwise it would be so hard to impossible to grasp, one little bite at a time. Different ways of looking and studying the totality of God’s character.

Practically speaking, we should not tend to look at God as a loving God at one point in history and then just a wrathful God at another point in history. He is the same God always, and ***EVERYTHING HE DOES IS CONSISTENT WITH ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, thus Unity.*** Again, it would be incorrect to say that God was a God of justice in the Old Testament and a God of Love in the New Testament. God is always and has always been the same.

While it is true to say that particular actions of God show certain of his attributes. It is impossible to find one attribute of God that is not reflected at least to some degree in any of his acts of redemption.

The ***Doctrine of the Unity of God*** should caution us against attempting to single out any one attribute of God as more important than all of the others.

- When people try to view one particular attribute as most important to the exclusion of others that are “less palatable to them”, are misconceiving God as a collection of attributes at best or at worst trying to develop an incorrect Doctrine of who God really is
- What does “most important” attribute really mean anyway?
 - Is someone trying to say that some actions by God are not fully consistent with some or other attributes?
 - God certainly is not inconsistent with His own character.

In summary, it is God himself in his whole being, including all attributes in unity who is supremely important. It is God himself in his whole being that we seek to know and love, not a God that is made up or shaped as we might “wish him to be” from selectively picking only the attributes which we “like” or “wish to accept”.

IV. Summary of God’s Incommunicable Attributes:

- Independence
 - *God does not need humanity or anything else in creation, yet we and the rest of creation need God to the fullest and are here on earth to glorify and bring him joy*
- Immutability
 - *God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, will and promises; yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations*
- Eternity
 - *God has no beginning, end or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally and vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.*
- Omnipresence
 - *God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with this whole being*
- Unity
 - *God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times. None of God’s attributes are more important than the others. Every attribute is completely true of God and is true of all of God’s character.*

V. Group Questions:

1. In thinking through the “Unity of God” doctrine of God always being the same; how would do some denominations or groups support the idea of “The God of the Old Testament” being justice and wrath verses the “The God of the New Testament” being love and loving all people?
2. Why is it so dangerous for us to separate or focus on only certain attributes in our belief of who God is and what He represents today?
3. Can you think of certain groups, churches or even whole denominations that have developed their doctrines around only parts of God’s attributes and leaving wholly out others?
4. By looking back at the past lessons in section IV, which attribute do you consider the hardest to grasp and understand? Why or why not?