

God...so what?

KNOWING
WHO
GOD IS
AND WHY IT
MATTERS



CIRCLES

FRIENDS FOLLOWING JESUS TOGETHER

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WEEK ONE

WHAT IS GOD REALLY LIKE?

Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 147:5; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16;
Jeremiah 29:11-13, 33:3

Main Point

God knows everything about your past, present, and future and He loves you.

Opening Doors

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How would it affect your life if you could see the future? What if you knew who would win the Super Bowl or what the winning lottery numbers were?

What if you woke up tomorrow and it was 10 years ago and you were your younger self? Would you change any of your decisions? Can you see that even altering a seemingly small decision might have an enormous effect on your future?

Sometimes, we may regret a decision that we made in our past. We might even wish that we could go back and change some of the things that we did. If we think about it though, even changing the tiniest decision could have tremendous consequences on our future. Someone might wish to study harder, which could lead to getting admitted to the college they wish they attended, but that might mean missing the event where they met their future spouse. We simply do not have the wisdom to see all the consequences of our actions.

God knows everything. Theologically speaking, God is omniscient. God knows everything and He knows the consequences for every decision we make. The comfort of this is knowing that nothing that happens to us, nothing that we do, catches God by surprise. We can trust God and His ordering of all things because He is working all things out for our good.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ HEBREWS 4:13 AND PSALM 147:5

How do these verses make you feel (i.e. anxious, peaceful, confident, sad, etc.)? Explain.

What is the scope of God's knowledge?

Name some things you cannot know that God does.

We learned in this week's message that God knows all about Himself, creation, and history. There is no question He cannot answer, no problem that confuses Him. He's never surprised. He's never shocked. God knows everything.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ PSALM 139:1-6, 13-16

In Psalm 139, we see a God who knows all, loves all, and is actively involved in each of our lives. As you read about God's attention to the details of your life, know this: You matter to God.

What do we learn about God's involvement in our lives from Psalm 139:1-6?

What does it mean to be "fearfully and wonderfully made"? How do these verses confirm the linking of our identity to God as Creator?

David felt blessed to enjoy an intimate relationship with his Creator. The psalm reinforces God's careful, thoughtful work in the creation of each and every person. Because our identity is linked directly to our brilliant Creator God, we can be confident in who He so masterfully created us to be.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ JEREMIAH 29:11-13 AND JEREMIAH 33:3

When faced with a tough decision, do you find it easy to trust God or are you more inclined to lean into the wisdom of "man"?

Recognizing that we are not "all knowing", what does God tell Jeremiah to do when he needs wisdom to make the best decision according to God's plan?

In what area of your life do you need God's wisdom today?

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ PSALM 69:5, PSALM 31:7, PSALM 139:16, MATTHEW 6:31-32 AND MATTHEW 6:1-4

God knows all about your faults and your failures (Psalm 69:5). God knows all your feelings and frustrations (Psalm 31:7). God knows your future (Psalm 139:16). God knows all your fears (Matthew 6:31-32). God knows all about your faithfulness (Matt. 6:1,4). In which of these five areas have you been acting as if God is totally unaware?

In response to those five areas in which God knows everything about us, we were given the following ways to respond: Admit your sins. Give Him your hurts. Ask for God's wisdom. Don't worry. Don't be discouraged. Which of these responses stand out to you as something you need to apply in your own life? How will you do it?



Reflection

Let's take time to share how we applied what we learned last week.

- Which of the five responses from last week's message did you strive to apply in your own life?
- How did learning that even though God already knows everything (the good, the bad and the ugly) about you and loves you regardless draw you closer to Him?

This Week's Main Point

There is never a moment in our lives that God is not with us.

Opening Doors

Some of us enjoy being around people all the time. We enjoy the company of

others and are energized by relationships. Others of us need alone time to feel rejuvenated. However, we all know that no one likes to be alone all the time. Loneliness can be a scary feeling and it oftentimes leaves us feeling insecure and isolated.

Are you a person who gets rejuvenated by being around others, or is your energy level increased by being alone? Discuss.

One of the attributes of God is His omnipresence—His presence everywhere, at all times. Through the Holy Spirit living in us, we are always in God's presence. This is a good reminder for those times when we feel alone.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ PSALM 139:7-12

What does this Psalm say about where God can be found?

On a daily basis, how aware are you of God's presence? (never, only when something bad or worrisome happens, often, all the time)?

Does what you learn about God through this Psalm give you comfort?

One theme of Psalm 139 is God's presence in all places at all times. We are blessed to be able to enjoy an intimate relationship with our Creator. We can see God's careful, thoughtful work in the creation of each and every one of us.

How might Jeremiah 23:24 give you courage to travel into unknown or unfamiliar places?

What in this passage in Acts gives you evidence of God's immovable presence in your life? How does that truth make you feel?

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

Of the four common experiences we talked about this week, in which has God revealed Himself to you? In which one have you struggled to sense God's presence?

- When I'm lonely, God is my companion.
- When I'm worried, God is my confidence.
- When I'm tempted, God is my counselor.
- When I'm discouraged, God is my comforter.

In this week's message we also learned three secrets to recognizing the presence of God:

- Invite Jesus into your life if you haven't already
- Be quiet
- Develop a habit of praise

Which of these do you realize you need to incorporate in your daily life? Explain.



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WEEK THREE

THE POWER OF GOD

Isaiah 40

Reflect on Last Week

As you think back over the last week, have you become more aware of God's presence in your life? How so?

Of the "three secrets to recognizing the presence of God", which did you lean into this week?

Main Point

God is all-powerful, he rules over all of creation and is far greater than our most difficult circumstances. As such, He will not fail to strengthen those who trust in Him.

Opening Doors

Have you ever stood before a building, object, or scene that made you

feel tiny and insignificant? Describe this experience.

Have you ever felt exhausted from the challenges of life or dwarfed by an obstacle in front of you which you perceived to be insurmountable? Have you ever made a decision that led to a difficult circumstance from which you didn't feel you could recover? Most likely every one of us would have to answer 'yes' to at least one of the questions above.

In this week's conversation, we are going to look at how God reveals His power and magnificence to us. God's intent of revealing His power is not for intimidation or to trigger the "fear factor" but rather so we can find hope and redemption in the Creator of the universe.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ ISAIAH 40:1-10

We all know that life is short; how does the truth of this influence what you value in life?

How do we witness God's power in these verses?

The Bible is all about God. Each verse proclaims and extols His character. What we see in this small portion of Scripture is that God is both powerful and comforting, strong and gentle, exalted and humble. There is no one like God so we proclaim His matchless name to all who will listen.

ASK SOMEONE READ ISAIAH 40:12

In what ways have you seen the power of God revealed through creation?

Will we ever have a true perspective of God without a true perspective of ourselves? Explain.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ ISAIAH 40:13-14

Who is wisest person you have ever known? Even with all their perceived wisdom, did you trust the things they said to you? Why or why not?

How have you personally experienced the power of God through His wisdom?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ ISAIAH 40:15-23

Does our culture place more hope in the rulers of our nation than in the Creator of the Universe? Explain.

In light of the truth of these verses, how are God's people to behave? How might this truth help us to bring hope to people who feel hopeless?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ ISAIAH 40:29-31

According to this text, when are we most likely to receive power from God? Why is this important to understand?

How does this understanding give us hope?

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

God wants to give us the power to get started and the power to keep going. Of the two, which do you need the most right now? How does this week's conversation speak to you?

Consider the following four ways to consistently appropriate God's power in our lives: admit your lack of power, believe in faith, speak in faith, and act in faith. Which is most difficult for you to do? How can your circle of friends help you?



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WEEK FOUR

GOD NEVER CHANGES

Malachi 3:6; Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 40:8, 14:24;
Hebrews 6:17-18; James 1:17

Reflection:

After last week's conversation, were you more aware of God's power around you?

How did this awareness affect the way you lived?

Main Point

The immutability of God, his unchanging character, brings stability to our daily lives.

Opening Doors

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When you think of change, do you tend to think positively or negatively? Why? What are some examples of what you consider to have been a good change? A bad change?

What is one of the most significant changes you have experienced in your life? How did this impact you?

Change is a significant part of life. Change can be good or bad, it can comfort or unnerve us. When it comes to God, however, we should find comfort in the fact that He never changes; His goodness and character stay constant always and forever. This never-changing nature of God is known as the doctrine of immutability.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ MALACHI 3:6

Do you know someone who is constantly changing their mind? Do you find it difficult to trust or believe this person?

Why is it important to understand that God does not change?

Knowing that God never changes, we can trust his promises. We can trust that He will never leave us and will continually work for our good.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ JEREMIAH 31:3, ISAIAH 40:8 AND ISAIAH 14:24

Do you ever struggle to believe that God's love or purposes for you never change? Explain.

Our world changes fast which can cause stress in your life. Is there a particular verse that you hold onto, one that gives you stability, in changing situations? What is it?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ HEBREWS 6:17-18 AND JAMES 1:17

God's faithfulness and goodness are connected with His immutability. How is this concept both comforting yet difficult to comprehend?

God is always Himself, and He always acts according to His whole character. Understanding who God is should lead His people to worship His greatness. Furthermore, we can have confidence that He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

Based on today's passages, what are some truths you can remember that will bring stability to your life when you are under stress?

What is a situation you're currently facing where you need to remember that God will never stop loving you, His Word is always right, and that His purpose is bigger than your problems?

How is the unchanging nature of God a refreshing contrast to our ever-changing world?



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WEEK FIVE

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Psalm 86:15; Isaiah 30:18; Ephesians 1:7-8, 2:8-9;
2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Reflection:

During this past week, did you find yourself in a situation where you needed to lean into God's Word for stability?

As you reflected on last week's conversation, what did you sense God saying to you?

Main Point

It is God's nature to give grace to undeserving people.

Opening Doors

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever received a gift that was above and beyond your expectations?

How do you approach gift-giving to the people in your life? Do you grab whatever is on the shelf or do you search high and low to find exactly what you're looking for?

When we give presents to others, the anticipation of them opening the gift is often as rewarding as searching for the gift. God, in His infinite goodness, offers the ultimate gift, the most extravagant gift, the gift of grace to His people.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ PSALM 86:15 AND ISAIAH 30:18

What do you learn about God from these verses?

Do you find it easy to extend grace to someone who has deeply offended you?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ EPHESIANS 1:7-8 AND 2:8-9

Is it hard to grasp that salvation is a free gift to us? Explain.

Where in your life have you been working to earn God's approval, whether consciously or subconsciously?

The redemption of God's people is completely His doing and not by our own works. This eliminates boasting, because we can't earn nor do we deserve God's amazing grace. When we give up boasting, we can be used by God to show His love to others as we remember and acknowledge that only by His grace are we forgiven.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

What is the one thing Paul was willing to boast about himself? Why?

How might a lack of understanding about grace make it difficult for a person to admit weakness?

The apostle Paul reminds us in this passage that weakness is the canvas God uses to showcase His infinite power. We need not be afraid of being weak. We need only to submit our weaknesses to Him and let the power of Christ rest upon us.

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

In this week's conversation we talked about how some people may try to earn salvation by sincerity, subtraction, service, and comparison. Have any of these been a tendency of yours? What has helped you accept God's grace rather than trying to earning it?

Of these three kinds of grace—saving grace, strengthening grace to reshape your life, and sustaining grace to relieve your hurt—which do you need most right now?

God wants you to be gracious to other people. What steps can you take to do that this week?



Reflection

From our recent conversations, is there an attribute of God which you have come to rely upon?

Is there one you are still having difficulty with?

Main Point

Reflecting on God's sovereignty reminds us that He is in control of our lives.

Opening Doors

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is one area of life you feel like you always need to be in control?
Why?**

Would those around you call you a 'control freak'?

When is a time when you feel most out of control?

We all like to feel as though we are in control of our lives. We plan, we strategize, and we fight to maintain control of our work, our children, our health, our finances, and so on. The feeling of being out of control in any given situation can be terrifying; there are so many “what ifs” and worst case scenarios that inevitably enter into our minds. But the truth is we are not in control of our lives, no matter how in control we may feel. There's great news, though. Even though we're not in control, God is!

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ 1 CHRONICLES 29:11

Why is God's sovereignty (control) a reason to adore Him?

In this week's message the question was asked, "If God is in control of everything, do I even have a choice?" How would you answer someone who asks that question?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ JAMES 4:13-16

Why does James compare our lives to a mist or a vapor? Why is this truth an important reality to keep in mind?

Have you seen someone make plans only to have God intervene and suddenly change those plans? Have you experienced this personally? How did you respond to the change? Did you learn anything from the experience? Discuss.

In regard to our plans, the wrong attitude is presumption. The right attitude is cooperation. How do you need to apply these two truths to your current circumstances?

ASK SOMEONE TO READ 1 PETER 1:6-7

Have you ever looked at trials around you, whether it's happening to you or to someone else, and concluded that God must not be in control? Why?

What is God doing in the hearts and lives of believers as He lets them face trials?

How does it comfort, encourage, or challenge you right now to know that your problems have a God-given purpose?

The scripture says that trials show the proven character of our faith. God allows us to go through trials in order to draw us closer to Himself.

Has there been a time in your life where you saw God do more than you imagined possible?

How should it impact your prayer life to believe that God can do more than you ever dreamed or asked?

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

Identify one specific way you can align your thoughts, words, or actions with God's plan this week.

Is there an area of your life where you need to let go of control and trust God more fully? What makes it hard for you to let go and trust God in this situation?

What are two steps you can take this week that will help you move toward trusting God in this area?



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WEEK SEVEN

CAN YOU REALLY TRUST GOD?

Joshua 21:43-45; Deuteronomy 7:9;
Psalm 33:4

Reflection

After last week's discussion, did you recognize areas of your life where you need to let go of control and trust God? Were you able to follow through?

Do you find that you are interacting differently with people in your sphere of influence who are not followers of Christ? How so? Why not?

Main Point

God is altogether trustworthy, and the more you know God the easier it is for you to trust Him.

Opening Doors

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who is one person, aside from your immediate family, that you would say you trust the most?

How is trust built over the course of a relationship? What are some things that can undermine trust?

Trust takes time. A person is there when you need them most, they give good advice and keep what you share confidential, they are dependable - all these characteristics build trust. Trust in God is foundational to what it means to be a Christian. Becoming a Christian is often referred to as 'trusting in Christ'. The more we get to know Him the more we trust Him.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ JOSHUA 21:43-45 AND DEUTERONOMY 7:9

Have you seen God deliver on His promises to you? Explain.

Agree or disagree: "Every time I sin, it reflects some measure of disbelief in God's ability to come through on His promises." Talk about your answer.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ PSALM 33:4

For what reasons do some people struggle to trust that God is right and true and faithful in all He does?

God is faithful and trustworthy. He wants to fulfill His promises in our lives, but we must claim them. In this week's message, we looked at six passages that show six guarantees from God that we can count on.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ 1 JOHN 1:9, PROVERBS 3:5-6, ROMANS 12:19, LUKE 6:38, 1 CORINTHIANS 1:8-9 AND HEBREWS 6:10

In each passage, identify the guarantee you can count on.

Which one is the most difficult for you to believe? Why?

Which one stands out to you personally, right now, as reason to trust God? Explain.

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

Is there something in your past that you don't think the Lord has forgiven you? Is there something you think is so big, so bad, that there's no way He will let you off the hook? Are you having a hard time forgiving yourself?

We all have a past, we've all done things that make us feel less than, like we are not worthy of God's love. This week, let your circle of friends help you realize that you can trust God to forgive anything and to love you like no one else. He is waiting for you to let go and trust Him.

Is there someone in your life with whom you are trying to "settle the score"? This week, begin trusting God to give you the desire and strength to let it go.



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WEEK EIGHT

GOD LOVES YOU

1 John 4:7-12, 16-18;
Ephesians 3:17-19

Reflection

Did a situation arise this past week that caused you to question all that you knew to be true? Were you able to place your trust in God in that moment? Can you now see that He worked everything out for your benefit?

How can your circle of friends help you follow Jesus?

Main Point

God's greatest attribute is His love.

Opening Doors

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one food that you would say you “love”?

How many different understandings/interpretations of the word "love" do we have? Example, if you say you love pizza and then say you love your parent or child, should we assume you love pizza just as much?

We live in a culture that is in love with being in love. We use the same word to describe the way we feel about food, sports, pets, celebrities, a spouse or significant other, family members—even God. But generally what we mean when we say we “love” something is that we enjoy the way it makes us feel. The love of God, however, is very different. Rather than loving based on some feeling or personal benefit, God’s love flows from His very nature and has been demonstrated for us through the death of Jesus.

Digging In

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ 1 JOHN 4:7-12, 16-18

John explained that not only is God the source and standard of love, He is love. Love originates with God and He is consistent and perfect in expressing love and supplying to us the love we are to show others. Through the cross of Jesus, we see God’s passionate pursuit of us, His love on display.

Is there a difference between “God is loving” and “God is love”?

How does God’s love for us transform the way we see other people?

What is the danger in defining or quantifying God’s love based on your circumstances rather than the cross?

In this week's message we learned these four truths: God's love is wide enough to include everybody, long enough to last forever, high enough to be everywhere and deep enough to meet our needs.

Are any of these truths difficult for you to believe in your current circumstance?

Would you say you're growing in your understanding of the width, length, height, and depth of God's love? Explain.

Taking It Home

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

Is it hard for you to accept the truth that God loves you deeply? Why or why not?

No matter how old we are or how long we've been following Jesus, all of us need to grow in our understanding of God's love. What are some practical steps you can take to do that?

God expect us to love others as He does. Do you? What can sometimes stops you from loving others as God does?

Review the attributes of God we've studied in this series. What has God taught you about Himself? How will that knowledge impact your life going forward?

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