

The  
Character  
of God

CLASS WORKBOOK

# THE CHARACTER OF GOD – CLASS WORKBOOK

## WEEK ONE | INTRODUCTION

A.W. Tozer once wrote, *“We wonder why we don’t have faith; the answer is, faith is confidence in the character of God and if we don’t know what kind of God God is, we can’t have faith.”*

### DESCRIBING THE INDESCRIBABLE

The character (or attributes) of God is an attempt to put the essence and nature of God into human language. St. Augustine wrote, *“God is beyond all description, yet within every description.”* How do we reconcile what God says through the prophet Isaiah?

- *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* – Isaiah 55:8-9

The character of God is what makes God unique among all other gods. Consider:

- *“So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.” Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. Elijah took*

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*twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name," and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time." And they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time." And they did it a third time. And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water.*

*And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God." And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there."*

– 1 Kings 18:20-40

### REVELATION | GOD MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN

In order to best, even inadequately, describe God then God must reveal Himself for us to know anything about Him.

1. General Revelation
2. Special Revelation

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### LOOKING TO JESUS

1. Holiness
2. Righteousness
3. Goodness

### ELEVATING ONE CHARACTERISTIC OVER ANOTHER

If who God is shapes who we are and what we do, then idolizing one characteristic of God over another can have profound effects on our identity and activity.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Is the character of God intimidating for you? Why?
2. Is the character of God encouraging to you? Why?
3. What are some other implications or consequences to idolizing one characteristic of God over others?
4. How can we, as Christians, avoid idolizing one characteristic of God over others?
5. How does the character of God shape the way you worship Him and walk in Him?

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### WEEK TWO | KNOWABILITY AND INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

*“As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean, as a finite creature to comprehend the Eternal God. A God whom we could understand would be no God. If we could grasp Him, He could not be infinite. If we could understand Him, He could not be divine.” – C.H. Spurgeon*

#### GENERAL & SPECIAL REVELATION

1. *“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” – Romans 1:19-20*
2. *“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.” – Romans 2:14-15*
3. *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” – Hebrews 1:1-2*

#### KNOWABILITY

1. *“Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.” – Jeremiah 9:23-24*
2. *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest”. – Hebrews 8:10-11*
3. *“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” – 1 John 5:20*

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### INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

1. *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.”* – Psalm 147:3-5
2. *“these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”* – 1 Corinthians 2:10-12
3. *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”* – Romans 11:33

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. We will never be able to know everything about God. What does this indicate about our eternal relationship with Him?
2. What are some errors that we can encounter if we deny God's existence, His knowability or incomprehensibility?
3. If people suppress the knowledge of God that is available through general revelation, what good is it?
4. If you had the opportunity to, would you like to know God exhaustively? Why or why not?

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### WEEK THREE | HOLINESS

*"If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct member, holiness would be the soul to animate them. Without holiness His patience would be an indulgence to sin, His mercy a fondness, His wrath a madness, His power a tyranny, His wisdom an unworthy subtlety. Holiness gives decorum to them all." – Stephen Charnock*

#### MAJESTIC

1. *"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?..." – Exodus 15:11*
2. *"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.'" – Isaiah 6:1-7*

#### SET APART

1. *"Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" – Exodus 3:5*
2. *"There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God." – 1 Samuel 2:2*
3. *"The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he!" – Psalm 99:1-3*

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### MORALLY PERFECT

1. *“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” – 1 John 1:5*
2. *“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” – Proverbs 6:16-19*
3. *“For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” – Ephesians 5:5-6*

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How does a proper understanding of God’s holiness lead to a greater appreciation for His saving work?
2. Scripture is often referred to as “Holy Scripture.” How should a richer understanding of God’s holiness affect how we read Scripture?
3. People often state, “Why would a holy (morally perfect) and loving God create hell to send people there.” How would you interweave your answer with the gospel?
4. In 1 Peter, Peter quotes Leviticus 11:44, which reads, “be holy, for I am holy.” Read 1 Peter 1:13-21 and discuss how God’s holiness ought to influence our manner of living.



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### WEEK FOUR | IMMUTABILITY

*“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 only He is pure being and not becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called the Rock.” – Herman Bavinck*

#### UNCHANGABLE IN CHARACTER

1. *“Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.” – Psalm 102:25-27*
2. *“So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” – Hebrews 13:6-8*
3. *“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*

#### UNCHANGABLE IN WORD

1. *“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?”  
– Numbers 23:19*
2. *“Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants.” – Psalm 119:89-91*
3. *“For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” – Matthew 5:18*

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### Unchangeable in Plan

1. *“The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.” – Psalm 33:10-11*
2. *“declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.” – Isaiah 46:10-11*
3. *“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” – Romans 8:29-30*

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. If God never changes, how is it that our relationship with Him changes over time?
2. How can Christians affirm God’s immutability considering the incarnation of the Son of God? Did the Son not change when He became man?
3. How does God’s immutability with respect to His Word inspire confidence in your study of Scripture?
4. How should reflection on the immutability of God’s plan, including His plan for your life, lead you to thanksgiving when things go well and comfort for when they do not?