

Topic

Reality of God

Theme

God is the ultimate reality.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will think and act according to a Scriptural understanding of Who God is.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 3

Scripture Focus

Exod. 3; 14; 15; Acts 17:28; Heb. 11:1, 6

Summary

Learning the Biblical reality of God is vitally important to living in the real. God is the ultimate reality. As such, He is self-defining. This lesson will focus on Who God is. It covers God's self-existence, eternity, holiness, omnipotence, sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipresence.

Outline

I. God Is Real

- A. God is the ultimate reality (Heb. 11:1, 6)
- B. God is self-defining (Acts 17:28)

II. God Is Revealed in His Word

- A. God is self-existent and eternal (Exod. 3:13–17)
- B. God is holy (Exod. 15:1–5, 11; Is. 6:1–3; 1 Pet. 1:13–16; Rev. 4:8)
- C. God is omnipotent and sovereign (Exod. 14:1–12; 15:2, 6)
- D. God is omniscient and omnipresent (Exod. 14:19, 20; 15:13, 17; Phil. 4:6, 7)

Memory Verse

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

GETTING STARTED

Selective Memory

ASK: What is the connection between how a person treats others and what he thinks of himself? *What a person thinks about himself influences how he treats others.*

ASK: Why might a person ignore the likes, dislikes, and preferences of someone he interacts with regularly? *Because he thinks highly of himself and wants to reserve the right to make decisions based on his desires.*

Sometimes we ignore what we know about a person because we don't want to alter our lives to accommodate the person. We want to be in control of our decisions even if they negatively affect others. For example, a husband might continue to make strong coffee even though he knows his wife likes it weaker. He ignores her preferences to retain the decision-making power and to please himself.

We all are prone to do this with others and even with God. We ignore what we know is true of Him and make decisions according to our own desires. Sometimes we even attempt to change the reality of God to fit our own desires.

This lesson will concentrate on Who God is. The next lesson will focus on what God is like. Learning and properly responding to the Biblical reality of God is vitally important to living in the real.

“The Social Media Me”

ASK: What do you think is meant by the phrase “the social media me”? *It is the person people perceive you to be by your social media pages and posts.*

ASK: Why might social media pages not be a good place to go to determine what people are like? (Q2) *Their posts and comments on their Facebook page might not reflect who they really are. They want people to think they are happier, wealthier, wiser, and smarter than they actually are.*

People are easy to fool. But God cannot be fooled. We could say the “God me” is the person we really are—the person God sees and knows perfectly. God wants to change our “God me” into the image of His Son. Understanding the Biblical reality of God is a crucial step in that process. This lesson will concentrate on Who God is. The next lesson will focus on what God is like.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. God Is Real

A. God is the ultimate reality (Heb. 11:1, 6)

God gives us Biblical realities for life so that we might live in the real. The Biblical reality of God is where we must begin. God is the ultimate reality. All attempts at

a reality outside of God fail. The reality of God includes Who God is and what He is like. This lesson looks primarily at Who God is.

READ: Hebrews 11:1, 6. **ASK:** How would you describe “faith”? (Q3)

The writer of Hebrews provides a description of faith. Faith is trusting that God is real. A person of faith orders his life according to the belief that everything about God is true, including all His promises and attributes. The “things hoped for” in Hebrews 11:1 are the future rewards God promises the believer. The “things not seen” (11:1) are God’s attributes. God’s self-existence, eternality, holiness, omnipotence, sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipresence are all included in the “things not seen.” This lesson focuses on those attributes so we might better understand Who God is.

A person with genuine faith accepts what is true about God without attempting to alter or change that truth. It takes genuine faith to please God (11:6). No one can claim to please God by believing his own reality of Who God is. He can’t create his own definition of God and “rules” for pleasing God. God won’t accept his terms. He must believe that God “is,” period.

As a believer, learning about God takes diligent study of His Word. God rewards those who “diligently seek him” and discover what He is like and what He expects of them (11:6). Lazy study of God’s Word leads to bad theology, a weak faith, and a shallow spiritual life. We can’t expect to grow in our understanding of and relationship with God by plopping open our Bibles and reading until we find something that inspires us or makes us feel better. And we can’t treat God’s Word as just an academic textbook to master.

We must commit to knowing God as He is and resist the temptation to define God to our liking. He is the ultimate reality, and He defines Who He is and what He is like.

B. God is self-defining (Acts 17:28)

Our culture prizes personal views and opinions. So people accept and even celebrate personal definitions of God. The only view of God they don’t accept is the view that claims exclusivity. Society doesn’t like a view of God that excludes all other views. Of course, the Bible presents an exclusive view of God because the Bible presents truth, not just another personal view. Society consistently attacks both the Bible and believers because of the Bible’s exclusive view of God.

ASK: When has someone rejected you because your belief in God does not allow for contrary opinions? (Q4)

While the specific personal opinions about God are too many to list, most opinions about God fall into three categories. The first category is that **God is a distant, impersonal being**. Those who hold this view believe God doesn’t communicate or interact with people. He is uninterested in what people do. He doesn’t care if they are good or bad. They believe God’s role was to get the earth spinning, but since then He has been indifferent to the affairs of the world. Proponents of this view see themselves as *free from* God.

In a second category is the belief that **God is an ogre** waiting to punish people

Unitarian Universalists believe every religion has the same God and that He will save all people in the end. They denounce the ideas that God has only one name and one holy book. Unitarian Universalists are unified around a personal search for meaning and truth as well as loving others as they would have others love them.

for doing wrong. Those who adopt this view of God believe people should live in fear that at any moment God will bring trouble into their lives. From this perspective, living with God is like living with a grump. Everyone has to be careful not to do anything to upset or anger God. So, those who hold this opinion of God are characterized by *fear of God*.

In a third category is the belief that **God is a celestial Santa Claus**. When those who hold this view ask God for favors, they believe He will grant the favors as long as they have been good. They expect God to always do what *they* think is best. They expect nothing bad to happen to them if they are in good standing with God. Thus those who hold this opinion of God are characterized by seeking *favor from God*.

Society generally accepts that Who God is to one person can be different than Who God is to someone else. But both are right even if the two people call God by different names and describe Him as two completely different persons. God, however, defined Himself. His truth necessarily triumphs over all contrary opinions. He told us His definition of Himself in His inspired Word.

Living in reality centers around the truth about God. The apostle Paul addressed a group of Athenian pagans on Mars Hill while he was on one of his missionary journeys. Paul introduced them to God as the One in Whom “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). We exist because God is real. We could not live without Him. And we certainly don’t have the right to define God based on a personal view or opinion. *Faith in God* should characterize our relationship with God, rather than living free from God, being afraid of God, or seeking favors from God.

II. God Is Revealed in His Word

God’s revelations of Himself to the Israelites as they left Egypt and established themselves in the wilderness provide informative settings for learning about God. The Israelites knew little about God even though they were called to be His people. So God used crises and triumphs to reveal Himself to them.

The Red Sea crossing was one of the most furtive learning experiences for Israel (Exod. 14). Consequently, it became an important event in Israel’s history. Decades after the Red Sea crossing, the people of Jericho talked about it in fear as Israel prepared to conquer the Promised Land (Josh. 2:8–10). When Israel did enter the Promised Land, Joshua put memorial stones up in the Jordan and in Gilgal to remind generations to come about the crossing (Josh. 4:21–24). And Ezra and Nehemiah spoke about the Red Sea crossing nearly a thousand years later as they led a remnant of Jews in a spiritual renewal (Neh. 9:9–12). God intended for Israel to always remember what they learned about Him through the Red Sea crossing.

A. God is self-existent and eternal (Exod. 3:13–17)

God called Moses to be His leader in preparation for the Exodus and Red Sea crossing.

READ: Exodus 3:13, 14.

Moses wanted to know what God’s name. God’s “name” (3:13) represents Who

God is and what He is like. God answered by telling Moses that He is “I AM THAT I AM” (3:14). That name sounds confusing in English. Moses heard it in Hebrew and understood it clearly. The name reveals God’s self-existent nature. He needs no one. He didn’t even need Moses. God is complete without anyone else. He never feels lonely nor suffers deficiencies on His own.

ASK: What are some implications of God’s self-existence? (Q5) *There is no authority over God. God is not dependent on anyone else. God does not answer to anyone else. God never had a beginning, and no one could bring God to an end.*

The fact of God’s self-existence gave Moses and the Israelite slave nation hope in a most insurmountable predicament. Egypt had long established itself as a military juggernaut with trained horses and strong chariots. The thought of escaping such a powerful enemy was laughable. But with the I AM on their side, Israel’s escape was sure (3:16, 17).

God continued revealing Himself to Moses. He emphasized His eternity, an attribute tied to God’s self-existence.

READ: Exodus 3:15.

God identified Himself as the same God who called Abraham to the Promised Land. He added that He wasn’t going anywhere because He has been and always will be the I AM forever. There has never been a time when God was not the I AM, and there could never be a time when God would cease to be the I AM.

ASK: Why is thinking of God’s self-existence and eternity so troubling for our minds? (Q6) *We all had a beginning. We think in finite terms. We can’t fathom what it means to never have a beginning. Living forever is equally challenging for our minds.*

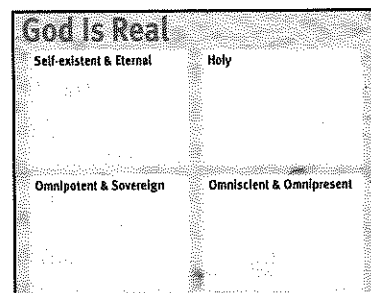
RESOURCE: Display resource 3. **ASK:** How should the reality of God’s self-existence and eternity impact our lives? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q7) *We should be confident God will always be, that He will never have His plans thwarted, that He will not change, and that He will always be trustworthy.*

B. God is holy (Exod. 15:1–5, 11; Is. 6:1–3; 1 Pet. 1:13–16; Rev. 4:8)

Other aspects of God’s self-revelation are captured in the song Moses wrote after the crossing of the Red Sea. Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and riders were drowned as they attempted to chase after the Children of Israel (15:1–5). Some of the dead Egyptians washed up on the shore of the Red Sea as evidence of God’s great deliverance. Israel was free at last. This caused a Moses-led celebration of God. Moses focused on God’s holiness by including two rhetorical questions in his song.

READ: Exodus 15:11. **ASK:** What point do these rhetorical questions make? (Q8) *God is like no other in character and actions.*

God is truly unique. No one could even imagine a god comparable to the one true God. None could ever be like Him. God is “glorious,” or majestic, in His holiness. Holiness speaks to God’s perfect nature. He is absolutely free from sin. His



separation from sin causes Him to be so majestic and bright that no one could look on Him and live (Exod. 33:20).

Isaiah and John both saw heavenly scenes where the holiness of God claimed central focus.

READ: Isaiah 6:1–3; Revelation 4:8.

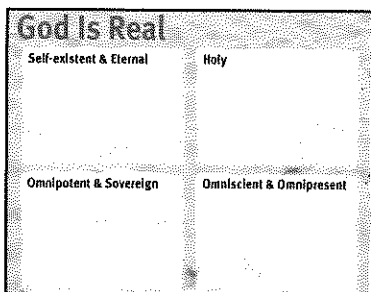
The continuous repetition of “holy, holy, holy” speaks to the perfection of God’s holiness as well as the wonder of it. God’s holiness so compelled the angels that they could not help but talk about it.

God’s holiness was later given to Israel as the standard for their lives (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7). They were to be holy because God is holy. Peter repeated this command for believers today.

READ: 1 Peter 1:13–16. **ASK:** What parts of our lives should emulate the holiness of God? (Q9) *All parts—actions, thoughts, and motives.*

ASK: How should God’s holiness affect our perspective on the seriousness of sin, particularly any sins we don’t consider bad enough to offend God? (Q10) *God’s holiness excuses no sins. We should recognize all sins as an affront to His nature.*

As believers we should seek every day to be holy, or separated from sin unto God. Practical holiness requires our reliance on God to renew our minds through His Word (Eph. 4:17–24). Though we will not be completely free from sin in this life, we know that one day we will be. When Christ returns for His church, we will receive glorified bodies and be forever free from our sin nature (Phil. 3:20, 21).



RESOURCE: Display resource 3. **ASK:** How should the holiness of God impact our lives? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q11) *We should praise God for His holiness. We should strive to live holy lives by being in God’s Word and obeying it in the power and control of the Spirit. We should take sin seriously, guarding our hearts from sinful influences.*

C. God is omnipotent and sovereign (Exod. 14:1–12; 15:2, 6)

God led the Children of Israel from Egypt to Pi Hahiroth, an inescapable place next to the Red Sea. He told Moses that He wanted them to camp there on purpose so He could use their position to lure Pharaoh from Egypt and destroy his army. Moses even told the people that God was leading them to Pi Hahiroth for the purpose of destroying Pharaoh’s army (Exod. 14:1–4). As planned, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. The Egyptian king, unaware of God’s sovereign plan, came out with his best forces to capture Israel (14:8).

Once the Israelites saw the horses and chariots pursuing them, they became very nervous. They had nowhere to turn but to God. They cried out to Him (14:10), but their subsequent words to Moses revealed their lack of faith. They claimed they would have been better off if they had stayed in Egypt as slaves (14:11, 12). In reality, they did not trust God to keep His word. They did not believe He was sovereignly in control of Pharaoh and his army. They soon learned otherwise as God protected them, powerfully parted the Red Sea, and then destroyed the Egyptian army.

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Egyptian army, Moses focused on God's omnipotence and sovereignty in his song to God. "Omnipotence" means "all-powerful," while "sovereignty" refers to God's absolute control.

READ: Exodus 15:2. **ASK:** How might our lives be affected by meditating on Scripture about God's omnipotence and sovereignty? (Q12) *We would develop a deeper trust in God and depend on and appreciate God's awesome power.*

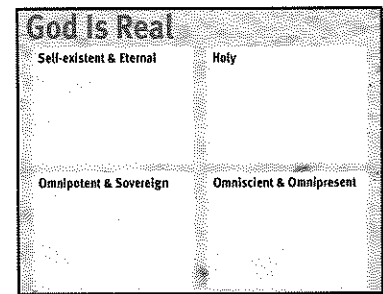
The salvation God gave Moses through His power and leading caused Moses to rejoice and sing. Moses recognized that God had sovereignly led them and then delivered them by His strength. He was amazed by God.

Moses went on to sing that God's right hand became "glorious in power" (15:6). The word "glorious" has the idea of "wide" or "broad." Moses was pointing out how illustrious God's power is. It amazed him.

We know God's power is real, but when we personally benefit from it, our understanding of it grows. It becomes awesome. We should live every day with a deep appreciation of God's omnipotence and sovereignty.

ASK: What in your life has caused you to have a broader understanding of God's power and sovereignty? (Q13)

RESOURCE: Display resource 3. **ASK:** How should the omnipotence and sovereignty of God impact our lives? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q14) *We should trust God fully. We should pray about the trials and challenges we face. We should never worry nor fret. We should anticipate God's power in our lives with rejoicing and peace.*



D. God is omniscient and omnipresent (Exod. 14:19, 20; 15:13, 17; Phil. 4:6, 7)

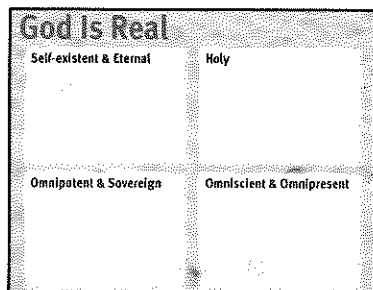
God made obvious His presence with Israel as they camped by the Red Sea and awaited the encroaching Egyptian army. Israel watched as God's pillar of cloud and fire, the object of His presence, moved from before them to behind them. In essence God said, "Don't worry. I'm here. I know the danger you are in. I will protect you with My presence." The pillar darkened the night for the Egyptians and provided comfort and light for the Israelites (Exod. 14:19, 20).

READ: Philippians 4:6, 7. **ASK:** How do the truths that God is all-knowing and everywhere present at all times help you understand this passage? (Q15) *We can have peace in the midst of worrisome circumstances because we know God is with us, is fully aware of our situation, and is in control.*

The Israelites needed to understand their God is omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (present everywhere) as they made their way to the Promised Land.

READ: Exodus 15:13, 17.

Moses anticipated God's presence with Israel and sang about God leading and guiding them to His "holy habitation" (15:13). Moses expressed his confidence that God's presence would "bring" the Israelites into the Promised Land (15:17).



Years later, after Israel had settled in the Promised Land and had divided into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom of Israel again showed their desire to define God. King Jeroboam had two golden calves made for his kingdom (1 Kings 12:25–33). He described the calves as representing the gods who brought them out of Egypt.

RESOURCE: Display resource 3. **ASK:** How should the omniscience and omnipresence of God impact our lives? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q16) *We should be honest with God for He knows us as we are. We should ask Him for understanding when we lack wisdom. We should rest in His caring presence.*

After celebrating God, the Israelites camped at Mount Sinai. There they revealed their desire to define God for themselves despite God’s miraculous revelation of Himself. While Moses was on the mountain conversing with God, God’s people had Aaron create a golden calf to represent the god who brought them out of Egypt (Exod. 32:1–4). By creating the calf, the Israelites claimed the right to determine what their god expected of them and found acceptable. Sensuality and drunkenness were at the top of their list of acceptable practices. They partied as they danced around their god (32:19). Ironically, the one true God was in the middle of giving Moses the Ten Commandments, the beginning of the law that would define for Israel what God expected of them as His covenant people.

We, like the Israelites, want to control and define God. Instead, we must put our faith in Him and believe that He “is” (Heb. 11:6).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Reality Check

ASK: What does your life reveal about what you actually believe about God? (Q17)

Encourage your learners to think beyond what others think of them and concentrate on who they really are. This is an important step in seeing change in your learners’ lives. They need to prayerfully consider what they believe about God and how their belief affects their lives practically.

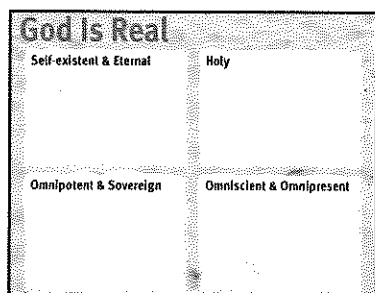
Right Responses

RESOURCE: Display resource 3. **ASK:** Which of the responses to God’s person are true of your life? Which ones do you need to have? (Q18) Give the learners opportunities to list more responses as they think of them.

ASK: What are the consequences of continuing to have wrong beliefs about God? (Q19) *We miss the opportunity for fellowship with God. Our lives don’t bring glory to God. We will be ill-equipped to handle circumstances in a godly manner. Our testimony will be weak or even harmful.*

ASK: What steps will you take to adjust your beliefs about God? (Q20) *The steps should include a daily dose of Scripture memory and Bible study. Otherwise, our flesh will fill the vacuum in our thinking with its own lies about God.*

Remind your learners about the previous lesson on waking up to reality. The reality of God is an important Biblical reality they need to grasp. They cannot

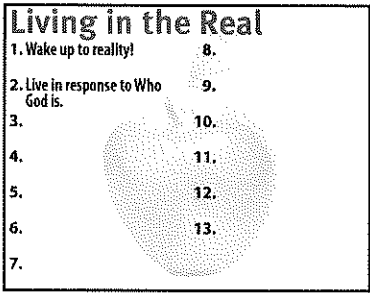


please God if they don't believe God is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

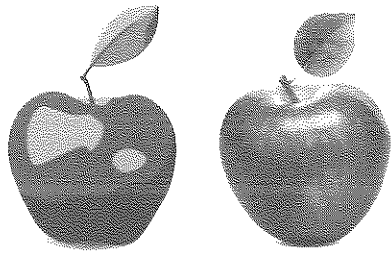
Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 2 or use the following: Live in response to Who God is.

Encourage learners to memorize Hebrews 11:6. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.



God Relates



Topic

God's person

Theme

God is a person Who relates to humanity according to His holiness.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will align his understanding of God's person with Scripture and will respond accordingly.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 4
- Slips of paper

Scripture Focus

Gen. 3; 12:1–3; Neh. 9; Jer. 31:3; Lam. 3:22, 23; John 3:16; Rom. 3:21–26; 5:17–21; 8:38, 39; 1 John 1:9

Summary

God continued to be faithful to Israel throughout the nation's history. After a remnant of Jews returned from captivity, a group of Levites led the Jews in covenant renewal. They offered a prayer prior to the nation's renewal. The prayer records God's faithfulness in His relationships. It communicates that God relates to humanity according to His holiness.

Outline

I. God Is the Creator and Sustainer

- A. God is a person (Neh. 9:5, 6)
- B. God is relational (Gen. 3; 12:1–3; Neh. 9:7; John 3:16; Rom. 5:17–21)

II. God Is Faithful in His Relationships

- A. God is righteous and just (Neh. 9:8, 33–35; Rom. 3:21–26; 1 John 1:9)
- B. God is gracious and loving (Neh. 9:7–27; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 8:38, 39)
- C. God is merciful (Neh. 9:19, 27, 28, 31; Lam. 3:22, 23)
- D. God is patient and slow to anger (Neh. 9:29, 30)

Memory Verse

"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Nehemiah 9:6).