

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

I. Welcome

- Tonight's Goal
 1. Doctrine – Wayne Grudem (ch.2) "*What is God Like?*" – The Doctrine of God
 2. Discipline – Don Whitney (ch.2) "*Bible Intake: For the Purpose of Godliness*"
- Tonight's Plan – Combination of Lecture and Discussion

II. Doctrinal Discussion – "*What is God like?*" – The Doctrine of God

A. Open Discussion Question

- How would you describe God? – What would you say about Him?
- What attributes are you quickest to highlight? – What attributes are you quickest to skip?
- Why is it critical to have a full understanding of who God is?
- Why is it critical to NOT highlight or prioritize one attribute over another?
 - Great Example – The Love of God vs. The Justice of God
 - Cross is the place where perfect justice and perfect mercy are seen side by side!

B. God Exists

- Scripture simply assumes that God exists – in fact, the Bible starts with this assumption.
- **[Genesis 1:1]** – "*In the beginning, God...*" – He's just there.
- All people everywhere have a deep, inner sense, that God exists
- Scripture also tells us that God created us, hard wired us, so that we might know that God exists and that He is worthy of our worship – **[Romans 1:18-20]** "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*"
- Therefore, the existence of God is a truth that we all internally and instinctively know.
- In fact, we have to lie to ourselves and then believe the lie in order to convince ourselves that God doesn't exist – **[Romans 1:21-23]** "*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*" – **[Psalm 14:1]** "*The fools says in his heart, 'There is NO God.'*"
- Nature proves that God exists – **[Psalm 19:1-2]** "*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.² Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.*"

C. God Is Knowable

- Not only does God exist, but He exists in such a way that we can know things about Him and we can come to know Him personally. We will, however, never fully know God. He is infinite and we are finite. His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His greatness is unsearchable – too great to ever be known.
- Knowable – **[John 17:3]** "*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*"

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

- Knowable – [John 1:1, 14] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*
- Knowable – [Hebrews 1:1-3] *“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”*
- So Far Beyond Our Comprehension – [Romans 11:33-36] *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him & through Him & to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”*
- Incomprehensible – [Psalm 145:3] *“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable!”*
- Combination – [Isaiah 55:6-9] *“Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way; And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.”*
- Read (p.22) – Communicable and Incommunicable Attributes of God

III. Incommunicable Attributes – Ways in which God is NOT like us!

A. God Is Independent

- God does NOT need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy – sometimes called the self-existence of God.
- [Acts 17:24-25] – Paul’s Sermon on Mars Hill – *“So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. ²³ For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist.”*
- Crazy to think about – God does NOT need anything – And yet, created us!
- Worst torture for mankind – Solitude – Have you seen the show “Alone”?

B. God Is Unchanging

- God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

- [James 1:16-18] *“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”*
- [Hebrews 13:8] *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*
- **What about when Scripture says that God changes His mind?**
- Example – Jonah preaching to Nineveh – God sees the wickedness of Nineveh and sends Jonah to proclaim, *“Yet 40 days, and Nineveh will be overthrown!”* [Jonah 3:4]. The possibility that God would withhold judgment if the people repented is NOT explicitly mentioned in Jonah’s proclamation as recorded in Scripture, but it is of course implied in the warning – the purpose for proclaiming a warning is to bring about repentance. Once the people repented, the situation was different, and God responded differently to that changed situation – *“When God saw what they did, how they had turned from their evil ways, God repented [or changed His mind] of the evil which He had said that He would do to them; and He did NOT do it.”* [John 3:10].
- These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God’s present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment. If the situation changes, then of course God’s attitude or expression of intention will also change.

C. God Is Eternal

- Definition: God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in His own being, and He sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.
- [Psalm 90:1-2] *“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”* – OR – [Revelation 1:8] *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

E. God Is Omnipresent – God Is All Places

- Definition: God does NOT have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with His whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.
- [Psalm 139:7-14] *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, ¹⁰ Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. ¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,” ¹² Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You. ¹³ For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. ¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.”*

F. God Is Unity

- Definition: God is NOT divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times – this attribute is also called God’s Simplicity.
- When Scripture speaks about God’s attributes, it never singles out one attribute of God as more important than all the rest. There is an assumption that every attribute is completely true of God and is true of God’s character.

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

- For example, John can say that “*God is light*” [1 John 1:5] and then a little later say also that “*God is love*” [1 John 4:8]. There is no suggestion that part of God is light and part of God is love, or that God is partly light and partly love. Nor should we think that God is more light than love or more love than light. Rather, it is God Himself who is light, and it is God Himself who is also love.
- [Exodus 34:5-7] “*The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. ⁶ Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”*”

IV. Communicable Attributes – Ways in which God is like us!

A. Categories to Describe God’s “Communicable” Attributes

- Attributes Describing God’s Being – [#1] Spirituality – [#2] Invisibility
- Mental Attributes – [#1] Knowledge – [#2] Wisdom – [#3] Truthfulness
- Moral Attributes – [#1] Goodness – [#2] Love – [#3] Mercy – [#4] Holiness – [#5] Peace [#6] Righteousness – [#7] Jealousy – [#8] Wrath
- Attributes of Purpose – [#1] Will – [#2] Freedom – [#3] Omnipotence
- “Summary” Attributes – [#1] Perfection – [#2] Blessedness – [#3] Beauty – [#4] Glory

B. Spirituality

- People have often wondered, what is God made of? Is He made of flesh and blood like ourselves? Certainly not. What then is the material that forms His being? Is God made of matter at all? Or is God pure energy? Or is He in some sense pure thought?
- [John 4:24] “*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*”

C. Knowledge – Omniscience – God is All Knowing

- Definition: God’s knowledge may be defined as follows – “*God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.*”
- [Job 37:16] “*Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, The wonders of one perfect in knowledge.*”
- [1 John 3:19-20] “*We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him ²⁰ in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.*”
- [Psalm 139:1-6] “*O Lord, You have searched me and known me. ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. ³ You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all. ⁵ You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.*”

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

D. The Goodness of God

- Definition: The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval and glory and honor and praise!
- Just think about creation – [Genesis 1:31] *“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the 6th day.”*
- [Luke 18:19] *“No one is good but God alone.”*
- [Psalm 106:1] *“O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!”*
- [Psalm 34:8] *“O taste and see that the Lord is good!”*
- [Illustration] – Just think about the reality that God is both sovereign and good – Best example that I can come up with is 2 oaks and a hammock – the 2 oak trees are God’s attributes of being sovereign and being good – if that’s true, then we can rest in them!

E. God is Love

- Definition: God’s love means that God eternally gives of Himself to others.
- [1 John 4:8] *“God is love.”*
- [1 John 3:16] *“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*

F. Justice of God

- Definition: God’s righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right.
- [Deuteronomy 32:4] Moses speaking about God says, *“All His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He.”*

G. Omnipotence – God is All Powerful

- [Isaiah 40:12-31] – Read from the NASB

V. Discussion – What is God Like?

A. General Questions

- Which of God’s attributes seem most amazing to you?
- What have you learned about God through this attribute?
- What are some attributes that God most clearly shares with us?
- What are some attributes that God doesn’t share with us?
- What one attribute of God would you like to imitate more fully in your daily life? Why?
- What one attribute would you like to study more? Better understand?
- Can you tell what some of the dangers would be in considering one of God’s attributes more important than all the others?

B. Specific Questions

- As you think of God’s incommunicable attributes (independence, unchangeableness, eternity, omnipresence, and unity) which one is most overwhelming to comprehend?
- Why is it so helpful to know that God is all-knowing and all-powerful?
- With regard to the circumstances of your life, will God ever make a mistake, fail to plan ahead, or fail to miss an unintended consequence? How this a blessing in your life?
- Do you really believe that God is working wisely today in your life? In the world? If you find this difficult to believe at times, what might you do to change your attitude?
- What attributes of God are clearly seen in the cross of Jesus Christ?

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

VI. Lecture – Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life – (chs. 1-2)

A. The Spiritual Disciplines... For the Purpose of Godliness (ch.1)

- Main Point → Disciple without direction is drudger!
 - Illustration → 6 year old Kevin who's parents enrolled him in music lessons
 - Doesn't appreciate the benefit of practice – Or where he'll be as an adult
 - The same can be true for Christians – What's the point of all this?
- Don Whitney is arguing that there's a logic to his book!
 - [#1] We must understand what we shall become – [Romans 8:29] “And we know that all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” – so we are to become more like Jesus – But what does that look like? – What does it mean to be conformed to the image of Christ?
 - [#2] It means that we are to be holy, godly, and righteous – [1 Peter 1:13-16] “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” – or another helpful verse – [Hebrews 12:14] “Pursue peace with all men, and the holiness [sanctification] without which no one will see the Lord.”
 - [#3] So we are to be conformed to the image of Christ – which means we are to be holy, but how does that happen? How do we become holy and godly and righteous? How do we become holy, like God is holy? – [1 Timothy 4:7] “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness!” – in other words, if your goal is godliness, then this passage says that you must discipline yourself in order to reach that goal. Another helpful passage is [Philippians 2:12-13] “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
- Spiritual Disciplines – What are they?
 - [#1] – The bible prescribes both personal and interpersonal spiritual disciples.
 - [#2] – Spiritual disciplines are activities, not attitudes – things you practice!
 - [#3] – Book focuses on the disciplines given to us in the bible – so biblical.
 - [#4] – Spiritual disciplines found in the bible are sufficient – [2 Timothy 3:16-17]
 - [#5] – Disciplines are practices derived from the gospel NOT divorced of the gospel.
 - [#6] – The spiritual disciples are a means, NOT and end unto themselves.
- Great Danger of Neglecting the Spiritual Disciplines – What is it?
 - (p.16) – Don Whitney says, “The greatest danger of neglecting the Spiritual Disciples is the danger of missing God – forever; not because of personal piety earns anyone a place in heaven, but because it characterizes those who are on their way.”
- Great Result of Practicing the Spiritual Disciplines – What is it?
 - (p.18) – Don Whitney says, “The freedom of godliness is the freedom to do what God calls us through Scripture to do and the freedom to express the character qualities of Christ through our own personality. This kind of freedom is the “reward” or result of the blessing of God upon our engagement in the Spiritual Disciplines.”

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

- (p.19) – Don Whitney says, “The Spiritual Disciplines are never drudgery as long as we practice them with the goal of godliness (that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ) in mind.”

B. Bible Intake (Part 1)... For the Purpose of Godliness (ch.2)

- Introductory Ideas
 - No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is NO healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and the meat of Scripture.
 - [John 17:3] “This is eternal life – to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” – if that’s true – How could we ever know God apart from His Word? – How could we ever know Jesus – who is the incarnate Word – the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us – we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten, full of grace and truth?
 - [2 Timothy 3:16-17] “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
- Bible Intake – Hearing God’s Word
 - [Romans 10:13-17] – ¹³ for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
 - Conclusion – Prioritize the hearing of God’s Word – Sunday morning service!
 - If you read the Word of God during a service – read well – to the glory of God!
- Bible Intake – Reading God’s Word – Statistics
 - Statistics – Don Whitney (p.27) “If you still doubt that Christians need to be exhorted to discipline themselves to read the Bible, consider this: USA Today reported a poll that showed only 11% of Americans read the Bible every day. More than half read it less than once per month or never at all.”
 - (p.27) Only 18% of “born-again Christians” read the bible every day.
 - (p.27) 23% of “born-again Christians” say they never read the Word of God.
- Bible Intake – Reading God’s Word – Encouragement
 - James 1 – God promises that those who read the Word and heed the Word will be blessed. But only those who discipline themselves to do so will receive the blessing.
 - [James 1:21-25] – “Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”
 - **Read John Blanchard Quote – (p.28) – Outstanding!**

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

- Bible Intake – Reading God’s Word – Practical suggestions for consistent success!
 - [#1] – Find the Time – If it doesn’t hit your calendar, it will NEVER happen!
 - You can read through the entire bible in 71 hours.
 - You can read approximately 1 chapter of the bible in 5 minutes – therefore, you can read approximately 3 chapters in about 15 minutes.
 - In no more than 15 minutes a day, you can read through the Bible in a year.
 - [#2] – Find a Bible-Reading Plan that works well for you – that you’re excited about!
 - No Plan, No Success – Plan your work, work your plan!
 - So find a time and find a plan – Then work your plan – “*Slow and steady wins the race!*” – **Personal Testimony!**
 - [#3] – Find at least 1 word, phrase, or verse to meditate on each time you read!

IV. Group Discussion – Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life – (chs. 1-2)

A. Spiritual Disciples – Questions

- What passage of Scripture has been most helpful so far as you think about growing in the Spiritual Disciplines in your life? (Ex. 1 Peter 1:13-16, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Timothy 4:7, Philippians 2:12-13, 2 Timothy 2:16-17, James 1:21-25)?
- Describe a godly person you know who has reached spiritual maturity through disciple. Which practical disciples did that person practice on a regular basis?
- What practical steps are you willing to take this coming week to begin building more spiritual discipline into the normal routine of your daily life?

B. Bible Intake (Part 1) – Questions

- Describe the Bible intake that took place – or didn’t take place – in your home and church as you were growing up? How has that affected your view today?
- What is your current pattern for Bible intake? What does it look like?
- What would you like your future pattern to look like? What goals do you have?
- Do you agree that “*there is NO healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture?*” – Why or why not?
- What is one thing that you can do to improve your intake of God’s word?
- Why is knowing the Bible intimately such a vital part of knowing God and being godly?
- In our busy lives, it’s very easy to become preoccupied with very good things and NOT spend enough time in God’s Word. What thoughts do you have on prioritizing the essential things over the good things?
- Why do you think it’s critical to prioritize the hearing of God’s Word? How is that a very helpful connection with the reading of God’s Word? Why do we need both?
- What are the negative consequences to neglecting the hearing and reading of the Word?
- How much time, on average, do you spend reading the Bible each day? Be honest!
- In the past, have you seen a connection between the time you spend in the Bible, your knowledge of the Word, and the impact on daily life (attitude, decisions, etc.)?
- In what ways might meditating on Scripture deepen your appreciation of God’s Word?
- Do you agree with R.C. Sproul that laziness is the real reason why Christians don’t study God’s Word enough? Why or why not?
- What, in your mind, are the differences between hearing, reading, and studying God’s Word? How do they personally impact you differently?

On-Mission Class #2

Christ Proclamation Church; Sunday, October 22, 2017; Steve Thiel

V. Closing Comments

- Next Meeting – Sunday, November 26th – 6pm-8pm
- Assigned Reading – “*Follow Me*” by David Platt – Entire Book
- Prayer