

CHARACTER OF GOD

WHAT IS GOD LIKE? PART I: WHY THEOLOGY MATTERS

Reading Assignment

Have students read Exodus 33-34.

Intro Discussion:

What comes to mind when you hear the word “theology?” What is theology?

- Theology is the study of God. It’s answering the question: what is God like? Who is He? How do we describe His nature, character, and His expectations of us?

What do you think God is like? What words do you use to describe Him?

How can we discover what God is really like?

- God has revealed who He is through the narrative of Scripture. We discover His character through statements, but also in the story of the Bible.

Content:

A pastor and writer named Dallas Willard said: “A thoughtless theology guides our lives with just as much force as a thoughtful and informed one.” Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not? How does theology, or our thoughts of who God is, impact the way we live?

If someone thinks God is an angry tyrant in the sky waiting for people to mess up so He can punish them, how will this impact the way they live?

If someone thinks God is a grandma-like figure, who ignores all our issues, how does this impact the way they will live?

What is your favorite Scripture in the Bible? The most well known in the Old Testament was Exodus 34:6-7. This is the most quoted Scripture within the rest of the Bible. Let’s take a look at it:

- Exodus 34:6-7 (NLT): “Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. 7 I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected— even children in the third and fourth generations.”

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As we read that passage, what are the characteristics of God that stand out the most to you? Why?

Which characteristics of God encourage you the most?

Which ones bother you?

As we try to answer the question: what is God like, we need to keep in mind that we are also supposed to be “imitators of God (Ephesians 3:1).” All these characteristics we read concerning God are also supposed to be reflected in our lives.

Challenge:

Spend time this week meditating on each characteristic of God listed in Exodus 34. Worship God and thank Him for his compassion, mercy, etc..

Which of these characteristics do you think you fall short of the most in your own life? Write them down and began to ask the Lord for the strength to be more merciful, faithful, etc.

Also ask the question, what does this mean to my life? If God is filled with compassion and mercy, what does that speak to how I should live, how I should think, and how I should treat people?

For next week, read Jonah 4.