

# We Believe in God

RESOURCES

STUDY GUIDES BY SECTION



WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 1.1  
Lesson 1: What We Know About God  
Section 1: Revelation and Mysteries

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Revelation and Mysteries

A. Divine Revelation

1. Basic Concept
2. Types

B. Divine Mysteries

1. Basic Concept
2. Types

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the doctrine of God sometimes called?
2. What does it mean that God is "transcendent"?
3. Divine revelation is "God's self-disclosure, always given in \_\_\_\_\_ terms, and most fully given in Christ."
4. When the Bible talks about God's eyes, ears, and emotions, these are examples of what is called \_\_\_\_\_ revelation, speaking in metaphorical terms so that humans can understand.
5. What is a "theophany"?
6. According to the lesson, is all revelation "anthropomorphic"?
7. God has revealed Himself most fully in \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What is "general revelation"?
9. What is "natural theology"?
10. According to the lesson, what is the proper attitude toward "natural theology"?

11. Does general revelation show the way of salvation in Christ?
12. What is "special revelation"?
13. Does special revelation show the way of salvation in Christ?
14. Which kind of revelation is explained in Romans 1:20? General or special?
15. Which kind of revelation has taken the form of dreams, visions, auditions, and the person of Christ Himself? General or special?
16. What are "divine mysteries," as explained in the lesson?
17. What does the lesson teach about whether we can truly know things about God?
18. According to the lesson, why should the following doctrines be considered "divine mysteries": The doctrine of the Trinity, the fact that Jesus was truly God and truly man, and the fact that God is totally sovereign, but man is also responsible.
19. What are temporary divine mysteries?

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. What do you expect to learn in this course?
2. Note some areas of the doctrine of God that you would like to understand better.
3. What attributes of God shown in the person of Jesus Christ most amaze you about your Creator? How does the person of Jesus Christ help you avoid fashioning a concept of God in your own image?
4. How did you personally come to know God? How did God use his special revelation to bring you to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? How does this impact the way you minister to those around you?
5. What kinds of things have you learned about the world around you from what God has revealed in nature apart from Scripture? Has God's revelation through creation made a difference in your daily life? Does it help you sense God's presence? Explain your answer.
6. Think of someone you know who refuses to believe that God exists. What are some possible reasons why someone might deny God's existence? How might general revelation refute this disbelief?
7. In what ways can you grow in your understanding of God and in your personal closeness to Him?

WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 1.2  
Lesson 1: What We Know About God  
Section 2: Attributes and Works

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

II. Attributes and Works

A. Divine Attributes

1. Basic Concept
2. Types

B. Divine Works

1. Basic Concept
2. Types

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. "The ' \_\_\_\_\_ ' of something is the unchanging reality that underlies all of its outward, changing manifestations."
2. What do each of the following illustrate about God, as used in the lesson?  
  
A mysterious nebula in outer space.  
Stained glass windows around the nebula.  
A system of stars and planets around the stained glass windows.  
A more distant system of stars and planets.
3. According to the lesson, has God revealed His divine attributes?
4. List some the eternal attributes of God mentioned in the lesson.
5. What are God's "incommunicable" attributes?
6. List the "incommunicable attributes" of God mentioned in the lesson.
7. Do the Scriptures call humans to imitate both God's incommunicable attributes and His communicable attributes?
8. What are God's "communicable" attributes?
9. Ephesians 1:11 says, "Him who works out \_\_\_\_\_ in conformity with the purpose of his will."
10. What does it mean that God is the "first cause" of all things?

11. What are "second causes" of events?
12. Explain the difference between a "first cause" and "second causes"?
13. What is the meaning of God's "providence"?
14. According to the Scriptures, is it valid in some cases to say that God was the author of evil?
15. Does anything happen outside the will of God?

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Write down some of the attributes of God that are most important to you personally. Explain why they are important to you.
2. What concepts were new to you in this lesson?
3. As we learned in this lesson, "God works all things according to his eternal purposes." How does this reassure and strengthen you when you are suffering through trials and facing temptations? How can you use this truth to reassure and strengthen others? Give an example.
4. The doctrine of God's providence tells us that he is always at work in our lives. When have you been most tempted to think that God is not at work in your life? What Scripture verses might call you back to a right understanding of his constant care and provision for you?
5. What is the most important thing you learned in this lesson?
6. Fyodor Dostoyevski

On his deathbed, the famous Russian author, Fyodor Dostoyevski, summoned his wife and his children. He asked his wife to read the story of the prodigal son from the Bible. Then he said:

“My children, never forget what you have just heard. Have absolute faith in God, and never doubt his forgiveness. I love you profoundly, but my love is nothing compared to the love of God. Even if you commit a horrendous crime and feel only bitterness, do not stray from God. You are his children. Humble yourselves before him as before a father; plead for his forgiveness, and he will rejoice in your repentance, as a father rejoiced in his prodigal son.”

...In a few minutes, he died.

[See Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), and Ruth Bell Graham, *Prodigals and Those Who Love Them* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Focus on the Family, 1991), pp. 119-126.]

What does this tell you about Dostoyevski?

What aspects of God did Dostoyevski emphasize in this moment?

Do you feel the same way about God? Do you trust that He loves you profoundly?

Have you ever behaved like a "prodigal son"? Have you repented and accepted His forgiveness?

Why is it important to you to know that God is your Father? What does this mean for you personally?

WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 2.1  
Lesson 2: How God is Different  
Section 1: Identification

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Identification

A. Biblical Foundation

B. Theological Variety

1. Augsburg Confession
2. Belgic Confession
3. Westminster Shorter Catechism

C. Biblical Perspectives

1. Divine Transcendence
2. Divine Immanence

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The topic of lesson two is God's \_\_\_\_\_ attributes.
2. Name the source of each of the following quotes.

"There is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness."

"There is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God ... he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good."

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

3. Do the Augsburg Confession, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism mention totally different things about God's incommunicable attributes?
4. Explain the meaning of each term.

Omnipresence  
Omniscience  
Omnipotence

Aseity  
Sovereignty

5. What does it mean when we speak of God's "transcendence"?
6. What does it mean when we speak of God's "immanence"?
7. Explain the meaning of each term, as it refers to God's incommunicable attributes.

Infinite  
Eternal  
Unchangeable

8. Since God is eternal, does He ever wait to react to human obedience and disobedience?
9. Since God is unchangeable, does He really respond to prayers?
10. Some Christians stress divine immanence to such a degree that they reject God's \_\_\_\_\_ attributes.

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Write down the incommunicable attributes of God that are most important to you personally. Why are they important to you?
2. How do the following attributes affect the way you pray? His omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, sovereignty, unchangeableness.
3. How do those same attributes affect other aspects of your life?
4. God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. How do these three perfections shape your understanding of God's nature? How might an awareness of these attributes help you to encourage someone who is struggling with their faith?
5. God's sovereignty means he exercises absolute control over his creation. What circumstances might tempt you to doubt God's sovereignty? How can you continue to have faith in God's sovereignty when it's difficult to see his control over your life and circumstances?
6. Do you tend to emphasize God's transcendence or His immanence more? Do you tend to see God as more distant or more near to his creation? Why is it important to maintain a proper balance of these two aspects?



WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 2.2  
Lesson 2: How God is Different  
Section 2: Integration

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

II. Integration

A. Biblical Foundation

B. Theological Variety

1. Augsburg Confession
2. Belgic Confession
3. Westminster Shorter Catechism

C. Biblical Perspectives

1. Being
2. Wisdom
3. Power
4. Holiness
5. Justice
6. Goodness
7. Truth

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do theologians mean when they speak of the "simplicity" of God?
2. According to the lesson, what is indicated by the fact that in all three documents, the Augsburg Confession, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism, adjectives such as "perfectly," "infinite," "eternal," and "unchangeable" are applied to other terms such as "wisdom," "goodness," "power," and "holiness"?
3. What do theologians mean when they say that God's being is infinite, eternal and unchangeable?

4. Which of the following terms refers to God's infinite, eternal and unchangeable wisdom?

omnipresence  
omnipotence  
omniscience

5. Which of the following terms refers to God's infinite, eternal and unchangeable power?

omnipresence  
omnipotence  
omniscience

6. What is the fundamental meaning of the term "holy"?

7. "God's justice is most often associated in Scripture with the judgments of His \_\_\_\_\_."

8. What is God's "indirect" goodness?

9. Is there a measure of goodness that God must meet outside of himself?

10. What do systematic theologians highlight when they speak of the "truth" of God?

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How do God's attributes of holiness, justice, goodness and truth affect the way you make decisions and live your daily life? Maybe it would help to think how things would be if God did NOT have these attributes. What difference would it make?

2. Reflect for a moment on God's goodness and the love he displayed toward his Son. How does this shape your understanding of God's love for you? How can you share God's goodness with those in your sphere of influence?

3. The indirect goodness of God means that he will bring about good even through suffering and trials. Describe a time when God produced good from your trials. How might you use this experience to reassure others who are in the midst of suffering?

4. What was the most important thing you learned in this lesson?

5. Other views of the world.

The biblical view of God as creator, separate from His creation (transcendent), but lovingly taking care of it, is an essential doctrine of Christianity, in obvious contrast with the views of many other philosophers and religions. Many believe in some form of monism, that all is one. This can lead to some serious practical problems.

a) Heraclitus

For example, the early Greek philosopher, Heraclitus (535-475 B.C.), believed that all the world is one, and that everything is constantly changing. He said the following:

"All things are one."

"You cannot step twice in the same river, for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you."

This led him to deny the difference between good and evil.

"Good and evil are the same."

["Heraclitus of Ephesus," <http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/heraclitus/herpate.htm> (Sept. 19, 2013). See also Herbert Granger, "Heraclitus of Ephesus," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Borchert, vol. 4, s.v.]

What is your opinion? How would this affect your life if you believed this?

b) Hegel

More than two thousand years after Heraclitus, Georg W.F. Hegel (1770–1831 A.D.) proposed that all is one dynamic Spirit. Everything, even truth and religious thought, is in a process of constant development, like a plant. He called it the "dialectic."

[See Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), p. 105, and Frank Thilly and Ledger Wood, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1959), pp. 478–84.]

What is your opinion? How would this make you feel?

c) Stephen Hawking

Other examples of monism come from eastern religions, and from atheistic versions of the theory of evolution.

While some believe that everything has always existed, others such as the famous physicist, Stephen Hawking, have held the view of a spontaneous beginning. He proposed that we don't need God to explain the universe. According to him, given the existence of gravity, the universe could have created itself from nothing.

[Richard Allen Greene, "Stephen Hawking: God didn't create universe." <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/09/02/hawking.god.universe/index.html>]

What would be your response to Stephen Hawking?

d) Cabanis

The belief that everything is just physical matter has led some to disconcerting conclusions.

For example, one philosopher named Cabanis asserts:

"The brain secretes thoughts in the same way that the liver secretes bile."

[Quoted by James Sire in *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 98.]

How would this make you feel?

J. B. S. Haldane points out the self-contradiction of materialism:

“If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”

[J. B. S. Haldane, *Possible Worlds and Other Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1937), quoted by C. S. Lewis in *Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), p. 22.]

What do you think? Do you agree with Haldane's criticism of materialism?

What difference does it make to you personally to know that God created everything, but that He is separate from the creation, taking care of it?

WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 3.1  
Lesson 3: How God is Like Us  
Section 1: Biblical Foundations

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Biblical Foundations

A. Basic Strategies

1. Way of Negation

2. Way of Causation

3. Way of Eminence

B. Outlooks on Humanity

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. This lesson focuses on which kind of attributes of God?
2. Medieval Scholastic theologians used three formal strategies for discerning truths about God from nature. Briefly describe each one.

negation  
causation  
eminence

3. In what aspect of creation can we learn most about God?
4. What are the three main areas theologians have used to categorize man's attributes that he has in common with God, but in a lesser degree?
5. Genesis 1:26 says, "Let us make man in our image, in our \_\_\_\_\_."

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How does knowing that all people are the image of God affect your attitude toward those who are different from you, such as beggars, drug addicts, poor people, and people from other countries, or even other religions?
2. How does thinking of God's communicable attributes help you worship God or pray to God?
3. What have you learned about God's character, considering how he has revealed Himself through his creation?

4. Scripture serves as eyeglasses to enable us to see God's character. Choose two narratives, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, that you find most striking in their display of God's character. What do these two narratives reveal to you about God?

WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 3.2  
Lesson 3: How God is Like Us  
Section 2: Theological Outlooks

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

II. Theological Outlooks

A. Processes

1. Technical Terms
2. Theological Propositions

B. Historical Documents

1. Augsburg Confession
2. Belgic Confession
3. Westminster Shorter Catechism

C. Organization

D. Implications

1. Expectations of God
2. Imitation of God

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. "To create faithful syntheses of biblical teachings about God's attributes, theologians have adopted \_\_\_\_\_."
2. "The goal of evangelical systematic theology is to create faithful summaries of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture, not to mimic the diverse vocabulary of Scripture."
3. How does the lesson define a "theological proposition"?
4. "Systematic theologians have had to infer theological propositions of God's attributes from every biblical \_\_\_\_\_."
5. List the communicable attributes of God mentioned in the Augsburg Confession, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism.
6. Do the Augsburg Confession, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism mention totally different communicable attributes of God?

7. God is always powerful, but does He always display His power?
8. God is always good and loving, but are these attributes always plain to see?
9. Do the Scriptures call us to imitate God's communicable attributes?

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Note some of the communicable attributes of God that are most important to you. Why are they important to you?
2. How does it encourage you in your Christian walk to know that we can become more like God in his communicable attributes? How does it challenge you?
3. What communicable attributes of God indicate areas in which you especially need to grow?
4. Because we are all created in God's image, John Calvin noted in his Institutes of the Christian Religion, that we cannot know ourselves until we know God. What do you think he meant? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
5. What is the most important thing you learned in this lesson?
6. "The Switchman"

Juan José Arreola, a Mexican author, has written a fascinating short story called "The Switchman" ("El guardagujas" in Spanish). A man arrives at a train station with his ticket in hand, hoping to soon catch the train to "T." But nobody is there except for an old man with a lantern, calling himself the switchman, who explains that his train may or may not come. Furthermore, even if he gets on a train, he may not arrive at his destination, or he might even have to stay on the train until he dies!

[Juan José Arreola, "El guardagujas," in *Cuentos Hispanoamericanos*, ed. Mario Rodríguez Fernández (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1998), pp. 235-242]

While it may not necessarily be the main point of the author, the bizarre story illustrates what life would seem like if we did not believe in an all-powerful God who is governing everything.

What do you think? What does the story teach us about life without a transcendent sovereign God who is also immanent, involved in His creation?

#### 7. Psalm 139

Read Psalm 139. Which aspect of God is emphasized in this Psalm, transcendence or immanence?

8. Which aspect of God do you tend to emphasize most, transcendence or immanence?



WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 4.1  
Lesson 4: God's Plan and Works  
Section 1: Plan of God

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Plan of God

A. Biblical Perspectives

1. Divine Immanence
2. Divine Transcendence

B. Theological Propositions

1. Extreme Outlooks
2. Centrist Outlooks

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What theological term is used to refer to the fact that God condescends and fully engages his finite, temporal and changing creation?
2. Does the lesson teach that God sometimes makes historical plans that are meant to be open to change as He interacts with His creation?
3. What is God's "prescriptive will"?
4. Can God's prescriptive will be disobeyed by man?
5. Which aspect of God are we highlighting we say that He works out everything according to His will, and that His plan cannot be changed?
6. What is God's "decretive will"?
7. What name is given to the theology that explains everything in terms of God's transcendent plan, without taking into account that He also interacts with creation?
8. What name is given to the theology that explains everything in terms of God's immanence, affirming that God's plan depends entirely on history and the choices of spirits and human beings, without taking into account that He has an eternal, unfailing plan?
9. What name is given to the theology that maintains both that God has an eternal, unfailing plan for history, and that He also interacts with His creation regarding some plans that are limited in scope, temporal and changeable?

10. Identify the name of each position according to its postulates.

God never interacts with creation.

God does not have an eternal unfailing plan for history.

God has an eternal unfailing plan, but also has "historical" plans that can "change."

11. What is the difference between God's "eternal plan" and His "historical plans"?

12. Describe each position regarding the order of the eternal decrees.

supralapsarianism

infralapsarianism

sublapsarianism

13. What do most evangelical theologians say about the debate over the order of the eternal decrees?

14. The discussion about the order of the eternal decrees is not about temporal sequence, but about \_\_\_\_\_ sequence.

15. What did Calvin say about the relation between God's foreknowledge and His decrees?

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How does it affect you personally to know that God has an overall plan that cannot be changed? Does it make you feel that you aren't really free? Does it give you peace and comfort? Explain your answer.

2. How does it affect you personally to know that God interacts with creation? How would it be if God simply created everything to run like a huge machine? Explain your answer.

3. Think of a time when you or someone close to you disobeyed God. What were the immediate consequences? What effect do you think this disobedience has had, or will have, on God's plans for you or your loved one?

4. Has this lesson changed your view of God's foreknowledge and decrees? Explain.

WE BELIEVE IN GOD  
STUDY GUIDE 4.2  
Lesson 4: God's Plan and Works  
Section 2: Works of God

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

II. Works of God

A. Creation

1. Invisible Dimensions
2. Visible Dimensions

B. Providence

1. Importance of Second Causes
2. God and Second Causes

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that God created all things "ex nihilo"?
2. Describe each religious view:

polytheism  
pantheism  
dualism

3. The primary biblical term for the invisible dimension of creation is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What is in heaven?
5. Were all heavenly spirits first created good?
6. Since their fall into rebellion, can Satan and other evil spirits still participate in the heavenly court?
7. The Westminster Confession of Faith says, "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of \_\_\_\_\_, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
8. Describe the meaning of each term as used in the Westminster Confession of Faith regarding the way in which God may use second causes to work out His plan, and give an example of each.

"necessarily"  
"freely"

"contingently"

9. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, does God frequently use means to work out His plan?
10. What is "theodicy"?
11. What does the Bible say about whether God causes evil?
12. Describe the meaning of each phrase as it refers to the way God sometimes works out His plan.

without means  
above means  
against means

#### QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How does knowing that God works through second causes affect your attitude toward the events in your life? How does it affect your attitude toward tragedies?
2. The Scriptures teach that God foreknows everything and that He has foreordained everything, including eternal salvation. What do you believe is the basis for God's decrees? Are they based on his knowledge of our future choices or simply on his will? If this is true, why should we evangelize unbelievers? Why should we pray?
3. Are you personally satisfied with your understanding of why God allows evil? If not, how do you plan to deal with the issue?
4. What is the most important thing you have learned from this lesson?
5. What is the most important thing you have learned from the whole course?
6. "Blessed Be Your Name"

In order to make theology more of a heart matter, and not just an intellectual matter, it is helpful to listen to good Christian songs, such as "Blessed Be Your Name" by Matt Redman. You can watch the video using the following web address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTpTQ4kBLxA>

Some of the lyrics are given here below. Try to discern the theme of the song.

Blessed Be Your Name  
In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow  
Blessed be Your name

Blessed Be Your name  
When I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness  
Blessed Be Your name

Every blessing You pour out  
I'll turn back to praise

When the darkness closes in, Lord  
Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name

How would you describe the theme of this song?

How does it express some of the teachings of this course?

© 2018 by Third Millennium Ministries. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, Third Millennium Ministries, Inc., 316 Live Oaks Boulevard, Casselberry, FL 32707 USA.