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STUDIES
FOR LIFE

™

BEYOND BELIEF

EXPLORING THE CHARACTER OF GOD



FREDDY CARDOZA

Social Media



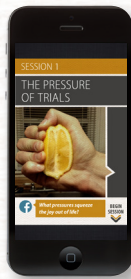
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Subject Heading: GOD--ATTRIBUTES

Eric Geiger

Vice President, Church Resources

Ronnie Floyd

General Editor

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Gena Rogers

Sam O'Neal

Content Editors

Philip Nation

Director, Adult Ministry Publishing

Faith Whatley

Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to: Content Editor, *Bible Studies for Life: Adults*, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or make comments on the Web at www.BibleStudiesforLife.com

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Start by believing. Then go beyond belief.

The digital age has produced huge amounts of information that have radically advanced human learning. The amount of knowledge available to us is mind-numbing. In fact, information is multiplying so rapidly that textbooks, how-to manuals, and even daily newspapers seem perpetually outdated. But what do we know about God? Are we advancing as rapidly in our knowledge of Him?

People have used the explosion of social media primarily to inform friends and others about themselves and their lives. Therefore, we know more *about* one another, but do we really *know* one another? There's a big difference between the two. The same is true when it comes to our relationship with God. We can learn more and more about God by studying His Word, but we also need to know Him in order for our lives to be changed.

That's why this study, *Beyond Belief*, is so important. *Beyond Belief* seeks to help us increase our knowledge of God by studying His character and moral attributes. But we don't want to just know about God; we want to know Him more intimately.

We could spend a lifetime studying the character and attributes of God revealed in the Bible and still only begin to scratch the surface of understanding the sovereign God of all creation. Therefore, the sessions in this study will focus on six major attributes of God: God's holiness, God's love, God's justice, God's forgiveness, God's wisdom, and God's faithfulness.

As we begin to understand what God is like and how He works in our lives, we will not only know God more, but we will also learn about ourselves and who we are in Christ.



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contents

- 
- 4 **Session 1: God Is Holy**
 - 14 **Session 2: God Is Loving**
 - 24 **Session 3: God Is Just**
 - 34 **Session 4: God Is Forgiving**
 - 44 **Session 5: God Is Wise**
 - 54 **Session 6: God Is Faithful**
 - 64 Conclusion: Christ, Community, Culture
 - 66 Leader Guide

SESSION 1

GOD IS HOLY



When have you seen or experienced something you would describe as one-of-a-kind?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLholy

God's holiness calls me to be holy.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

If you love walking through a museum, you're not alone. Tens of millions of people visit museums every year. What draws us to these places? Unique, novel, or beautiful items. There are museums devoted to cars, abstract paintings, Star Trek, and even asphalt.

The world's most prestigious museums also have one-of-a-kind pieces in their collections. There is after all only one *Starry Night*, one *Mona Lisa*, and one Rosetta Stone. We value these items because of their rarity, beauty, or historical significance. Some of these pieces are even considered priceless.

But what is truly beautiful is that we don't have to visit a museum to interact with something that is one-of-a-kind. What is truly beautiful is that there is only one God, and He loves His creation with a one-of-a-kind love. God alone is set apart and like no other. The Bible wraps all this up with one word: holy.

In this session we'll see that God calls us to be like Him—set apart for His glory.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Psalm 99:1-9 (HCSB)

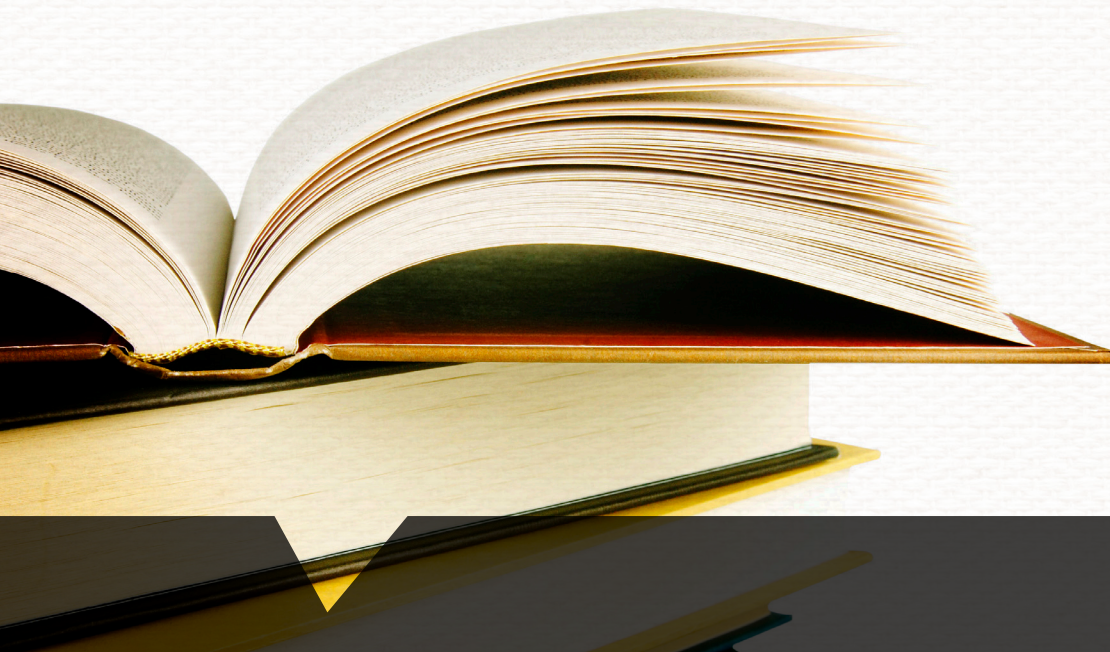
- 1** The LORD reigns! Let the peoples tremble. He is enthroned above the cherubim. Let the earth quake.
- 2** Yahweh is great in Zion; He is exalted above all the peoples.
- 3** Let them praise Your great and awe-inspiring name. He is holy.
- 4** The mighty King loves justice. You have established fairness; You have administered justice and righteousness in Jacob.
- 5** Exalt the LORD our God; bow in worship at His footstool. He is holy.
- 6** Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those calling on His name. They called to Yahweh and He answered them.
- 7** He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud; they kept His decrees and the statutes He gave them.
- 8** LORD our God, You answered them. You were a forgiving God to them, an avenger of their sinful actions.
- 9** Exalt the LORD our God; bow in worship at His holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

Key Words

Cherubim (v. 1)—Cherubim are angelic creatures who serve God. Two golden images of cherubim sat atop the ark in the most holy place of the temple.

Holy (vv. 3, 5, 9)—The term refers to someone or something set apart from life's common aspects. God is set above creation and is perfect in every way.

Pillar of cloud (v. 7)—God sometimes made His presence known to His people as they journeyed with a pillar of cloud. Here He spoke from such a cloud.



Psalm 99:1-3

God is not a part of it. God is neither a human nor superhuman. God is over all. He is completely and totally separate from everything or everyone we could imagine.

As human beings, we are created in God's image, which means God breathed a spirit into us. Each of us possess a spirit that was intended for a unique relationship with Him. We were created to live forever with Him. But that's where the similarity stops.

Though we are like God, God is not like us. We are created in His image; He was not created in ours. God exists independently and without reliance on any other beings or forces. God is absolutely sacred, above criticism, incorruptible, and invincible. He is holy.

Consider these elements that point to God's holiness:

- ▶ **The reign of God.** The psalmist understood the distinction, glory, and authority of royalty, and he exalted God to His rightful place. The psalmist invited others to acknowledge the reality of God's sovereign rule over all people and things.
- ▶ **The name of God.** The psalmist used God's holiest name: Yahweh. Yahweh calls attention to God as the Ancient of Days. He is the one and only God, and it was in His name and by His power that the Israelites were able to enter the land and establish their nation. Because of the holy fear the psalmist had for the awe-inspiring name of God, he called upon all of God's people to give praise, glory, and honor to the only true God.

God is truly different from us—and from anything else. And that's why we are told to praise Him. God invites us to carefully consider Him in order to discover His greatness and grandeur. When we do, we will realize that He is worthy of all praise and glory.

When was a time God's holiness became real to you?

QUESTION #2

PICTURING HOLINESS

*Choose one of the images.
Record what it means to strive for holiness in that specific area of life.*



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Psalm 99:4-5

The problems of life may seem great, but they are not greater than God. There is nothing that can keep our great and awesome God from working His fairness, justice, and righteousness in our lives.

Those are three important concepts that contribute to God's holiness:

- ▶ **Fairness.** Though life isn't always fair, God is. He is the source of fairness, for He established it. Unfairness can make life feel uncertain, but because God has established fairness, Christ followers can live with confidence despite any inequities we see or experience. God will act in righteous wisdom as He oversees our lives.

Is God fair to forgive a mass murderer? Is God fair to forgive me? He is still fair in that He dealt with our sin, but He dealt with it through the death of Jesus. Grace is God's generous favor on our lives in spite of our actions. Mercy is His withholding what is fair (our punishment) in order to cover our wrong actions with compassion and forgiveness.

- ▶ **Justice.** Justice occurs when God brings His divine order to life. God's justice deals out blessings and punishment. God will not let injustice stand. His holiness ensures evil will be punished and good rewarded.
- ▶ **Righteousness.** God always does what is best and what is right. Righteousness has to do with God's moral purity. His innate goodness ensures that He will always do what is right. God can always be trusted.

How does God's justice, fairness, or righteousness impact your daily routine?

QUESTION #3

How should we respond to God's holiness? We "bow in worship at His footstool." The footstool was a symbol for dominion, and God is pictured as a king enthroned in heaven with the earth as His footstool. God's holiness should cause us to live with worshipful trust and submission before Him.

What do these verses teach us about a lifestyle of worship?

QUESTION #4

Psalm 99:6-9

We've already seen that our holy God is involved in our lives through His fairness, justice, and righteousness, but He also desires to speak into our lives. And when God speaks, He wants us to listen and respond. No matter what's happening around us or inside us, God wants us to acknowledge His presence and call on Him. He wants us to recognize His concern and that He answers us.

Because God is fair, just, and righteous, He can be totally trusted. He is the only one who deserves our complete faith. People who walked with God—people such as Moses, Aaron, and Samuel—modeled this trust. God spoke; they listened and trusted.

Like Samuel, Aaron, and Moses, our lives are filled with spiritual victories and sometimes significant defeats. God continues to reveal Himself to us in all these things, seeking to deepen our awareness of who He is and what He is like. And when we realize who God is and respond with humble hearts, He forgives us. As the priests and prophets cried out to Yahweh, He answered them and spoke to them. God works the same way today. **When we call on His name, He will meet us where we are, forgive us, and put us in a right relationship with Him.**

He may not speak to us in a pillar of cloud, but He will make Himself known. When we see God for who He is, we should respond by exalting Him and lowering ourselves. Just as the nation of Israel bowed at the holy mountain, we should humbly submit our lives to our Holy God as a worship offering.

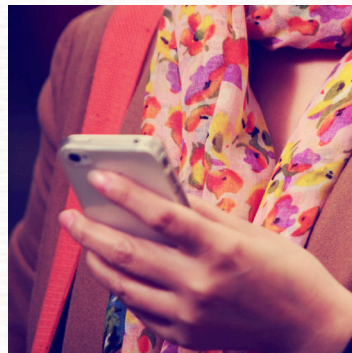
How can we tremble at God's holiness yet still have an intimate relationship with Him?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

God's holiness is not an abstract concept with no practical impact on how we live. We are called to be holy because God is holy (see 1 Pet. 1:16), so consider some practical ways to live a life of holiness:

- ▶ **Surrender.** Submit to God's holiness by placing your faith in Christ for salvation.
- ▶ **Bow in worship.** Be intentional about praising God this week. Set aside a specific period of time and worship Him in response to His holiness.
- ▶ **Unplug and listen.** Choose to abstain from one form of technology this week—social media, texts, TV, and so on. Use that time each day as an opportunity to focus on God.



As we live for the Lord, we become holy like Him. And then, like a precious work of art, we grow into a beautiful masterpiece made by God (see Eph. 2:10).

Waiting Room



I sit in the waiting room. The receptionist took my name, recorded my insurance data, and gestured to a chair. "Please have a seat. We will call you when the doctor is ready." I look around. A mother holds a sleeping baby. A woman with a newspaper looks at her watch, sighs, and continues the task of the hour: waiting. The waiting room. Not the examination room. That's down the hall. Not the consultation room. That's on the other side of the wall. Not the treatment room. Exams, consultations, and treatments all come later. The task at hand is the name of the room: the waiting room.



To continue reading "Waiting Room" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

A series of 15 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

My thoughts

BEYOND BELIEF, INTO RELATIONSHIP

Thanks to the explosion of social media, we know much *about* one another. But do we really *know* one another? There's a big difference between the two. The same is true when it comes to our relationship with God. We can learn more and more *about* God by studying His Word, but we also need to *know* Him in order for our lives to be changed.

Beyond Belief strengthens our relationship with God through studying who He is. We could spend a lifetime studying the character and attributes of God revealed in the Bible and still only begin to scratch the surface of understanding the sovereign God of all creation. Therefore, the sessions in this study focus on six major attributes of God: God's holiness, God's love, God's justice, God's forgiveness, God's wisdom, and God's faithfulness. As we begin to understand what God is like and how He works in our lives, we will not only know God more, but we will also learn about ourselves and who we are in Christ.



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