



Connect to God

Leader's Guide

Week 2

Topic: Who is God?

Pework Summary: Before class, read the leader's guide and watch the teaching video and testimonial videos. Notice the time for both videos and plan the use of your time accordingly to allow good discussion.

Script *****

Speaker: Pastor Mark Danzey

Who is God? This is a huge concept to try to tackle, but of all the things we could say about God, we are going to focus on two key themes: God is love, and God is compassionate.

How would you describe God? One theologian said, "We don't see God as He is, we see God as we are." When you think about that, it makes us believe that we may all describe God in different ways. Some of us would see God as a judge on a throne with a gavel, and others would see God as a loving grandfather type of figure. Hollywood has given us images of God from George Burns to Morgan Freeman, but when you think about God, think first that God is love.

John the Disciple was the youngest of the original twelve disciples. He was an eyewitness to the love of God. He experienced the miracles and the teachings. He witnessed the gruesome death and miraculous resurrection, and he would spend the rest of his life sharing what he experienced and learned about God. He would write one of the Gospels, three letters, and the book of Revelation to describe God. He landed on this one key theme in 1 John 4:8 which says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

The word "love" is often watered down in our language. For instance, if I say, "I love my wife" and "I love tacos", you know that I am talking about two totally different things.

So, in the English language, we have one word for love, but in the Greek language, they had four. They had the word, Storge, which is a family love, and Eros, which is more of an erotic romantic love. There is the word Phileo, which is brotherly love, but then there is also this word, Agape, which is unconditional love. This love is the love which John describes as the type of love that God has for us.

John described this love in 1 John 4:7-21. It says,

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

John is explaining that God does not simply have love or show love, but that God is love. His DNA, His motives, His thoughts, and His intentions are all pure love. We find in 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-8 the best description of love that the world has ever known. You have probably heard it at weddings, but listen to it again:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others. It's not self-seeking. It's not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

So, when you think about this scripture that really describes to us what love is, wouldn't it be great for you and I to love the way that God loves? If somehow, we could take this love that God has for us, receive it, and extend it to the world, then we would truly be sharing the love of God with our brothers and sisters. This love is what the world desperately needs.

Another aspect of God that we want to talk about is that God is compassionate. Now the apostle Paul was not always the apostle Paul. He was a man named Saul, who was persecuting the church. He met Jesus on the road to Damascus and it changed his life forever. He went from persecuting the church to planting churches all over the known world. He would write two thirds of our New Testament, and a lot of our theology comes from those letters that Paul wrote to the churches that he planted.

One main aspect of the way that God is described by Paul is a God of compassion. Listen to what he said in 2 Corinthians 1:1-7:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

We have a compassionate God that sits with us and brings comfort in our own difficult situations. This is proof that God is with us in our pain and difficulties. God is not desiring that we have all kinds of pain and difficulties in this world because He knows that because we live in a fallen world we will have those challenges. We will have persecution, pain, struggles, but we also have a compassionate God. God chooses to come and sit with us in our pain and to ride with us on the roadway of life as we seek out His will for our lives. He goes with us as we experience the beauty that God has prepared for us.

Why does God do this? God is love, and God is compassionate. His presence with us is the best gift we have ever received. Many of us would like to have a roadmap of the future. We would like for God to just tell us what's going to happen and how to get there, but God has a better plan. Instead of giving us a roadmap to the future, He wants to ride and walk along the road with us. This is the best way to live! It is comforting knowing that the God of compassion is walking with us, step by step, day by day, through all the experiences of life. Then, we can share His compassion and we can also comfort others. Jesus promises his followers in Matthew 28:20, *"I'll never leave you."* And also, *"teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you. And surely, I'm with you always, to the very end of the age."*

I hope and pray that when you are asked the question, "Who is God?", or if you try to describe God, or when you have thoughts of God, that you don't see God as a cosmic judge. God is not mad at you! God loves you and God has compassion on you as a loving Father. I don't know your situation with your earthly father. You could have the best father in the world, or a sorry excuse for one... I just don't know. But when you think about your heavenly Father, remember God is love. As Paul said, God is compassionate. What you and I think when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

Key Scriptures to Review:

1 John 4:7-21

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

Matthew 28:20

Romans 5:8

Psalm 145:8-9

Psalm 86:15

Tough questions prep:

Question #1 Why does a loving God allow Bad things to happen?

Answer: *God create us out of love and desire for relationship. That relationship was broken when sin enter the world through the fall of mankind. See Genesis 3. The fall demonstrates to us the concept of "Free Will". Mankind can choose to live their life anyway they want, for self or for God. Living for God brings the blessings of God, living for self brings destruction. The instruction is clear through all the Bible and God loves us enough to give us a choice or Free Will. Bad things still happen to God's people because we live in a fallen and broken world that has yet to be fully redeemed. It will and believers/followers of Jesus will ultimately receive full healing and redemption for eternity. C.S Lewis said "The question is not 'why do we suffer' but 'why don't we suffer more?'" All in all, God is good!*

Question #2 Why does a loving God send his children to Hell?

Answer: *The short answer is God does not send His children to Hell. This assumes that every human is a child of God. Every human has the potential or right to become a child of God, yet some refuse God's goodness and invitation to receive eternal life. John 1:12 states, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Others may have not heard of the goodness of God and to this we believe that God in all His ability, reveals himself in some way to those we have yet to reach with the good news of Jesus. Yet the responsibility and privilege is upon us to share God's love with those we encounter.*

Class Timeline:

	Estimated time
1 Introductions	15 min
2 Teaching Video	Pastor Mark Danzey 12 min
3 Discussion Questions	20 min
4 Testimony Video	Esther Kariuki 2 min
5 Attributes of God activity	10 min
6 Takeaways	1 min
7 Prayer	1 min
8 Invitation for next week	1 min

1. Introduce the content and video for this class (say in your own words):

What a huge topic to consider in a one week gathering! Trying to conceive the infinite God in our finite brains and conversation is a life time endeavor. The-ology is "The study of God" and theologians have written volumes on this study but for our purposes we are going to focus on two aspects of God's nature and character. God is Love and God is compassionate.

2. Play the teaching video (12:05 minutes).

3. Discussion questions (pages 8 & 9):

1. How would you have described God to someone when you were a child?
2. How would you describe God now as an adult? How have your views changed?
3. What is the biggest barrier for people to study theological questions like, "Who is God?"

4. Play the short personal testimony video (Esther Kariuki 2:13 minutes). Discuss, if time remains: *Ask if anyone has an intimate or favorite name for God like "Father", "Abba"? Share if you have a name that makes God feel personal to you.*

5. Attributes of God -- Fun activity as time allows (page 10):

List the attributes of God until the group cannot think of anymore. Attribute = characteristics. Start them off with examples like "God is good".

6. Closing / takeaways in your own words:

What you think about God is the most important thing about you. Studying the Bible, Theology and seeking God is important. There is Truth and we have the privilege of finding it. The Truth is God is Love. The Truth is God is compassionate toward you - wherever you are, whatever you're going through in life, and He always will be. His love endures forever.

7. Prayer:

Instead of including a lesson devoted to how to pray, class leaders will model how to pray each of the six weeks of Connect to God. Before you close in prayer, briefly explain P.R.A.Y. method prayer (praise, repent, ask and yield) and lead participants through this format. Then pray over them.

Example: *Father, we praise that you are loving and compassionate. Please forgive us when we forget who you really are and think less of you. Father, all good things come from you. Please help us to seek and follow you. We trust you and desire to know you more.*

PRAISE	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
REPENT	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
ASK	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
YIELD	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

8. Invite them back next week to learn about 'Who is Jesus'.

Fellowship after class.