

## 1. WHAT IS GOD LIKE? DOCTRINE OF GOD INTRODUCED

### Do some thinking while we wait to begin...

*The Church Council were discussing a forthcoming preaching series on the character of God. Things were not going according to plan...*

“We ought to start with the idea that God is love,” said Flora Nettles (the local florist).

“And why don’t we have a vast display of red roses in church on February 14, to show that we’re God’s Valentine.”

“Sentimental twaddle,” said Mr Birch (a local headmaster). “God’s pretty demanding. He hates sin – and all that. I see us starting off with the church mocked up as a courtroom and the entire congregation in the dock.”

“But the Bible tells us God is love, love, love, love, love,” said Flora Nettles, hurling a nearby vase across the table.

“But what about Psalm 5:6 – don’t give me that “God hates the sin, but loves sinners” bilge,” retorted Mr Birch, launching a hardback Psalter in return.

“What do you think, vicar?” he added, turning to the chairman of the Council. But apparently the Senior Minister had quietly left the room on an urgent pastoral matter...

- How would you advise the Church Council?
- “God is... \_\_\_\_\_ “. How would you finish that sentence? From your knowledge of the Bible write down as many words as you can.
- Does God have a “core” attribute or characteristic? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

## 1. INTRODUCING THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

- **Why study God?**

Cotton Mather: "to restore the throne & dominion of God in the souls of men."

Isaiah 40:9, "Behold your God"

- **Why doctrine / systematic theology / dogmatics?**

- **From Trinity to the "attributes" of God – "how" and "what"**

"There is but one living and true God, ever-lasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." *Article 1 of the 39 Articles of Religion*

- **The plan today...**

## 2. GOD IS HIS ATTRIBUTES – GOD DOES NOT HAVE ATTRIBUTES

- **Illustration: pizza base and toppings...**

- **Explanation:**

e.g. God *is* holy (Isaiah 6:3). NOT that God *has* holiness.

- **Biblical evidence:**

1. God IS love, light, holy etc

1 John 4:8, Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

2. God swears by Himself – for there is nothing greater

Genesis 22:16 “and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son...”

(Also Ex 32:13, Isa 45:23, Amos 6:8)

3. Rightly, we praise God’s attributes – and thus are praising Him

Ephesians 1:6,12,14, “to the praise of his glorious grace... to the praise of his glory... to the praise of his glory...”

### **3. GOD’S ATTRIBUTES CANNOT BE DIVIDED OR REMOVED**

- **God is “simple”:** explanation and illustration

- **Implication: God can’t lose an attribute and still be God**

- Truthfulness is essential – God cannot lie (e.g. Hebrews 6:18)

- God’s life is essential – God cannot die (e.g. Exodus 3:14, “I AM...”)

- God cannot change – either to worsen or improve (e.g. Ps 102:26ff, Isa 40:7-8, Mal 3:6-7, James 1:17)

- **Implication: No one attribute can “trump” another**
- **WARNING!!! The simplicity of God – it’s not popular!**

**Think:**

Why might we want God to lose an attribute or two?

Which of God’s attributes might we want to remove or diminish?

- **Implication & application: God’s attributes qualify each other**

**Think:**

Take 5 attributes of God – holiness, justice, wisdom, love and truth. Place them in pairs and in threes, and use them to praise the Lord (e.g. “Lord, I praise you for your holy goodness”). See what begins to happen to your doctrine of God!

**BONUS EXTRA! WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM (1647):  
ON GOD’S BEING AND ATTRIBUTES**

**Question 4: What is God?**

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

**Question. 5. Are there more Gods than one?**

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

**Question. 6. How many persons are there in the Godhead?**

A. There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.