

**Review:**

**Did you gain any insights as you read through the Gospel of Luke 1-12?**

Last week we discussed that God is Holy, meaning he is morally pure and completely set apart from creation. When we stand before his holiness we become shamefully aware that we are sinful and finite (limited by our humanity), yet it is also comforting to know that God can never do anything that is wrong or evil.

Are there any questions with regard to God's holiness that have been raised in your mind as a result of last week's study?

**We have discussed the holiness of God but there are also a few other characteristics that we want to look at in order to help us better understand our relationship with him.**

**1) God is Just**

***Psalms 9:8 (NIV)***

*He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice.*

**What does it mean to say God is just?**

God will always give the appropriate (correct) response in every situation and will judge according to his holy standard. God can never turn a blind eye to evil and ultimately, will only allow righteousness to prevail.

**Imagine a judge who is presiding over a case that proves a man maliciously raped and murdered a young girl.**

**How do you want that judge to react to such a crime?**

**How would you feel if the judge simply put the man on probation?**

We want a judge who: hates injustice, gets angry with wrong doing and who will ultimately deal with evil in such a way that it is removed from our presence, so it will not harm us again.

**If God is just, then what are the implications with regard to our sin?**

God needs to declare us guilty and give a proper reaction to our sin.

***Job 10:14 (NIV)***

*If I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished.*

What is a proper response to sin from God's perspective?

**Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)**

*It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.*

**Genesis 2:16-17 (NLT)**

*<sup>16</sup>But the Lord God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden... <sup>17</sup>except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."*

**Romans 6:23 (NIV)**

*For the wages of sin is death,*

**God is HOLY    Good News:**    God is morally pure and can do no evil.

**Bad News:**    If we have sin in our lives we are eternally separated from God.

**God is JUST    Good News:**    God will always judge rightly and respond appropriately to evil.

**Bad News:**    If we have sin in our lives, the appropriate penalty God must deal out is death.

How do you respond to these truths?

Fortunately there are other characteristics of God that come into play that bring us hope.  
God is not simply HOLY and JUST, he is also LOVE.

## 2) God is Love

**How is God's love different from our love?**

Our love is almost always "conditional".

I love you because of how you treat me or because of how you make me feel. Perhaps the closest we might get to God's kind of love would be the love of a parent with their brand new baby – but even then we discover that love is very conditional. I love my child – not yours. The parental love for the child is "conditional", based on the fact that it is "my" child. If I had unconditional love for a baby, I would have to have that same love for every baby – and not just babies – but everyone. Otherwise the condition I have set is that it must be a baby and it must be mine.

What is God's love based on if it is not based on our performance?

**1 John 4:10 (NLT)**

*This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

**Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**1 John 4:8 (NIV)**

*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

God is love. He doesn't simply act lovingly...**he is love.**

Any love we experience originated in, and flowed from, his character. It is rooted in who he is.

Therefore, when God loves us, it has **nothing to do with us**, but everything to do with him. His love for us, therefore, is not based on our performance, but in **his character**.

God's love is **not an emotional reaction** to us, but is in fact, a choice - he chooses to love us – we call that grace. We receive love from God even when it is not deserved or earned.

What sort of things might I do that would cause God to love me less?

Nothing!

What can I do to ensure God will continue to love me, or to love me more?

Nothing!

How do you feel about the fact that you can't increase or diminish God's love for you?

There is one more characteristic of God we want to quickly touch on.

### 3) God is Sovereign

Nebuchadnezzar was a very effective and powerful ruler over the Babylonian Empire (605 - 562 BC). It was he who conquered Israel and led many of the Israelites from captivity back to Babylon. Because of his tremendous military and political success, Nebuchadnezzar grew extremely proud and considered himself accountable to no one. Despite warnings from God through the Prophet Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar continued to revel in self-glory.

#### **Daniel 4:29-33 (NIV)**

*<sup>29</sup>Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, <sup>30</sup> he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" <sup>31</sup>The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. <sup>32</sup> You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." <sup>33</sup> Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.*

#### **After 7 Years Nebuchadnezzar repents and acknowledges the sovereignty of God**

#### **Daniel 4:34-35 (NIV)**

*<sup>34</sup>At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"*

#### **What do we mean when we say God is sovereign?**

He is in absolute control over the affairs of heaven and earth. He has determined the course of events of life and nothing happens without his permission or outside his ultimate purposes.

#### **In what ways might it bother us to confess that "God is sovereign"?**

It is easy to look at the world and question whether or not God is in control.  
It makes one wonder why God would allow all the evil that happens?

One of the great challenges to belief in God is the question, "If God exists, why does he not do something about all the evil in the world?"

This perspective raises a tension between his character and what appears to be:

God's inability to do something about the evil	His sovereignty
God's acceptance of evil	His holiness
God's unwillingness to stop or judge evil	His justice
God's indifference to people's suffering	His love

Which of these attributes of God do you find you struggle with the most?

Which of these attributes do you find the most reassuring?

The goal of this series is to show you that God does have a plan, he is working it out, and that you are a part of it. God is approaching things the way he does *because* he is holy, just, loving, and sovereign.

In what ways is it comforting to know God is in control?

**Romans 8:28 (NLT)**

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

He is holy and can only do what is absolutely right  
He is just and will judge evil in his perfect timing  
He is love (his followers only experience things which he allows, so they will be more like him).  
Nothing can catch God by surprise; nothing can stop his purposes from being carried out.

If God is truly sovereign and in control, how might that affect how you approach this next week?

Free from stress or anxiety  
Prayerfully dependent on him to provide everything I need for life  
Confident  
Obedient  
Humble  
Etc.

## HOME STUDY:

Read: The Gospel of Luke: Chapters 13-24