

Note to Leader

We intentionally created this study guide with more than enough material so that you can pick the questions that work best for your group. Before your meeting, watch the video, read the study guide's corresponding session, and decide which questions you'd like to discuss. For more information on using this guide in your group, click the three lines in the menu bar and select How to Use This Guide. Thank you for choosing this study and for faithfully leading your group.

Session Goals

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God is the all-powerful, eternal creator and judge who loves us with infinite mercy and grace.

Head Change: To know that God wants us to know him.

Heart Change: To feel awestruck by who God is.

Life Change: To thank God for revealing himself in all his glory to us.

[illegible]

Who is God?

God is the eternal divine Trinity, having unity in substance, glory, and power, yet three in Person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As our creator and redeemer, he has revealed himself to be perfectly good, righteous, just, and loving.

What is it about your friends that makes you want to be around them?

We are drawn to our friends for many reasons. Often, we have similar interests, common experiences, affection for one another, and enjoyment in being together. For many, it can surprise us to learn that God delights in being with us. He wants to be in relationship with us, and he's made a way for us to know him intimately. As we begin this series, Francis explores some of the central characteristics of who God is and why his love is such good news for us.

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Watch

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis Chan's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

How do we know what God is like?

How does God feel about you?

Show Session 1: *Who Is God?* (11 minutes).

[illegible]

Discuss

Francis shared that, when he became a Christian at 14, there were many things about God he did not understand. But he has come to grasp that God's Word leads to life and that following God gives us the life he always designed for us. **When did you first come to believe in Christ as the Son of God? How have you grown in your faith since that time?**

Before we can know how to follow God, we must know him. And God has revealed himself most completely through Scripture. Whatever we think about him must align with the Bible's revelation of him rather than people's opinions. **What have you heard about God from the world around you? To what extent do the opinions you hear correspond to the Bible's teaching? How comfortable are you with the idea that the truth about God comes from the Bible?**

Francis mentioned how the creation story shows the vast difference between God and us. Read Genesis 1:1–5, 9–11, 14, 20, 24, 26–27; 2:7. In these verses, we see glimpses of God’s creative power and design in making the Earth and its inhabitants. He finished by creating humanity from the dust, yet in his image, to be rulers over the world he had just made. **How would you describe God’s power in comparison to our human abilities? In what ways is he not like us?**

[illegible]

In the early church, leaders came together to craft specific wording that reflected the truths about God found in Scripture that would help believers identify false teaching when they heard it. These creeds were memorized and repeated in community and became unifying elements for the church.

I believe in God the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our
Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born from the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day rose again;
he ascended to heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the
Father,
and he will come again to judge the
living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

[illegible]

Francis cited Romans 11:33–36, elaborating on how God’s thoughts are so far beyond ours. We also hear of God’s power and majesty when he spoke dramatically to an exhausted Job, the faithful man who had endured terrible suffering. Read Job 38:1–11, 25–27. After listening to Job and his friends debate his character and motivations, God responded “from the whirlwind” (Job 38:1) with rhetorical questions pointing to the vast difference between himself and humanity.

What possible answer could Job give God after this series of questions? What posture does God expect us to have when we think or talk about ourselves in relation to him?

Read Job 38:31–36. Here, God illustrates to Job that his creative power extends to the highest heavens. Whenever we stargaze or see brilliant telescopic images from deep within the universe, the sky reminds us that we are so very small, and he is so very big. He creates all things, while we are among the created. **Does considering God’s creative power bring comfort or fear, or some other emotion? In what ways does reflecting on the vastness of creation help you better understand God’s power?**

Job finally had a chance to respond to God’s speech. Read Job 42:1–6. Having been confronted with God’s true power, he acknowledged how little he had understood. He repented, apologized, and humbled himself. Job’s story is also meant to help us know God better and respond to him in humility. **What stands out to you in Job’s response? Why? What circumstances, if any, have brought you to a similar place of humility before God?**

As one who can speak matter into existence from nothing, God is intrinsically different from

humans, who are made of the matter God created. He exists eternally, outside of time, while we are mortal with beginnings and endings. As Francis said, “The difference between him and us is massive.” We describe his difference from us as “holy,” or being set apart from everything else. To illustrate: In our homes, we often set meaningful items apart from everyday items. **How do you handle fine china, expensive jewelry, or sentimental objects handed down from generations past? In what ways does your treatment of special items differ from the way you treat everyday things? Since God is holy, or set apart from us, in a much more consequential way, how can we keep his holiness in mind as we speak of, interact with, and think about him?**

God’s holiness includes many characteristics that make him different and high above us in every way. **Read Exodus 34:6–7.** In this first recorded instance of God describing himself, he leads with his compassion and grace. He was already known as the powerful creator, and he wanted his people to know of his “faithful love and truth.” **When you first read God’s self-description, what was your reaction? In what ways does your understanding of God’s character adjust after reading his own words about himself?**

To help you remember God’s self-definition, see Practice 1 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

Ancient Voices: Augustine

The church fathers also help us clarify our understanding of God. For example, St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354–430) said:

“The Trinity, one God, of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things. Thus the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and each of these by Himself, is God, and at the same time they are all one God; and each of them by Himself is a complete substance, and yet they are all one substance.”

(*On Christian Doctrine*, Book 1, Ch. 5.5)

[illegible]

Knowing the depth of God’s love and capacity for forgiveness might cause us to assume we can act however we wish. But God is also just, a judge of all that is unrighteous. Read Romans 2:4–6. The apostle Paul warns his readers not to presume upon God’s kindness but to remember that God will not let evil go unanswered. **In what ways do you appreciate God’s justice? Do you find it difficult or easy to believe that God’s justice and love complement one another? How does knowing that God is just affect the way you deal with evil?**

All of God’s character qualities are wrapped up in his goodness. In his kindness to forgive, he is good. In his desire and ability to see wrongs made right, he is good. In the way he reveals himself to us, he is good. Read Psalm 145:3–9. **What qualities of God is the psalmist praising? How has God shown his goodness to his people? As you consider your life, which circumstances would you include as you praise God for his work?**

Francis ended with a reminder that we call the Bible “good news” because it explains how God is merciful and good to us despite our sin against him. He loves us and wants to know us. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes . . .” The word translated “gospel” means “good news”—it brings life, salvation, to all who believe it. Francis said at the beginning of the session that the message of the Bible would lead us to life—knowing and following our good God. **What did you learn about God’s character in this session that stands out to you? If you are a Christian, how can reflecting on God’s character impact your everyday life?**

Last Word

Francis introduced a complex yet crucial topic to start our series, helping us know who God is. Though far beyond understanding completely, we know our Trinitarian God is infinite and holy. He has revealed himself to us through his Word, the Bible. In it, we learn how he demonstrated his almighty power through creating and sustaining the world and all that is in it. He assures us of his goodness, mercy, and love, and his perfect sense of justice, which will not allow wrongdoing to flourish. The good news of God's grace is that he wants to know us and be known by us. And the more we know him, the more we will worship him. Let's prioritize time reading his Word regularly so we can continue to know him better. The Deeper Walk section offers several ideas for applying what you learned in today's session.

SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

Who is God?

God is the eternal divine Trinity, having unity in substance, glory, and power, yet three in Person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As our creator and redeemer, he has revealed himself to be perfectly good, righteous, just, and loving.

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This section is designed to help you practice different ways to interact with God and reflect on what you've learned in this session. Pick at least one activity to try before the next session.

Memorize Exodus 34:6, “The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth. . .”

Prayer is just talking to God and listening for his response. Set aside a few minutes each day to focus your attention on him. Some prayers focus on praise and thanksgiving, acknowledging his goodness and his work in your life. Other times you will need to confess unrighteous behaviors and attitudes, confident of his forgiveness. God also welcomes your prayers seeking his help for yourself and others' needs.

The next time you are in a church service, let the hymns and worship songs lead you to praise God for his goodness and love. Worship him as your creator and judge who desires abundant life for you.

Discuss with a friend or family member what you're learning about the characteristics of God. Let the conversation be exploratory, not attempting to argue an opinion. Perhaps reference some of the Bible passages covered in the session, such as Psalm 145:3–9.

As a group, list out different characteristics of God using the following passages (and any others you

[illegible]

may think of).

- Job 11:7–8
- Isaiah 40:28
- Genesis 18:14
- Daniel 4:35
- Jeremiah 23:23–24
- Psalm 139:7–12
- James 1:17
- 1 Peter 1:15–16
- 1 John 1:9
- Ephesians 2:4–5
- 1 John 4:8

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What Is a Christian? STUDY GUIDE

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