

God the Father

Introduction

I. Outline of our Statement of Faith

1. God's Word
2. God the Father
3. God the Son
4. God the Holy Spirit
5. Humanity and Salvation
6. The Church

II. What is your view of God?

- A. Most Americans believe in God, but when people hear the word "God," they think of many different things
- B. Our view of God is central to our lives and it affects the way we think, feel, and respond to life's circumstances

III. Today is just a tour of the landscape

We can't possibly define God and set boundaries around Him. All we can do is simply go down a few trails that offer helpful perspectives on different aspects of who He is, but He is bigger than any of our definitions and classifications.

IV. "All good theology leads to doxology"

Our study of God and thinking about God should lead to our praise of God

The Passages

Statement of Faith, Section B.3: "We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He has sovereign dominion over His creation, that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of humanity, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ."

I. What kind of a being is God?

- A. "Spirit" (John 4:24)
 1. God the Father doesn't have a physical body
 2. He reveals Himself to us physical creatures in physical forms (a man on a throne, a burning bush, a still small voice, etc), but in His essence, He does not have a body
- B. "Infinite" = Not bound by the space-time continuum
 1. Infinite in time: eternal (Psalm 90:1-2)
 2. Infinite in space: omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10)
This is both a terrifying and comforting reality
- C. "Personal"
 1. He is a person = He is a "someone" not a "something"
 - a. He has a consciousness, He can make decisions, think, feel, and be in personal relationship with other persons

- b. He is NOT some impersonal life-force, or universal energy
- 2. It's an amazing reality that we can have a personal relationship with someone who is infinite spirit.

II. What are some of God's key attributes?

- A. "Perfect in Holiness" (Leviticus 11:44)
 - 1. Holiness = set apart, distinct, unique, sacred
 - 2. Holiness = set apart from sin, and therefore pure, perfect
 - 3. Holiness = no tolerance of sin
 - 4. Combine these three and you get a sense of awe, wonder and even fear in response to one who is utterly pure, perfect, and intolerant of sin
- B. "Power" (Jeremiah 32:17)

Imagine the power to be able to create the universe simply by speaking it into existence and then the power to constantly sustain all things moment by moment (imagine how big and detailed the universe is!)
- C. "Wisdom" (Romans 11:33-34 and Psalm 139: 16-18)

Creation was not just an act of power but of infinite wisdom

Imagine the wisdom needed to create a reality that works in all its diversity and beauty

Book of Job: God confronts fallen and limited human wisdom with the wisdom He had before the creation of the world
- D. "Love" (1 John 4:8-10)

Creation was also an act of love

Every flower, sunset, dog, etc is an act of love
- E. The cross is the historical event where we see God's holiness, power, wisdom, and love come together most fully

IV. What are some of the key ways He interacts with the world?

- A. "We believe that He has sovereign dominion over His creation" (Eph 1:11)
 - 1. The One who constantly sustains every molecule is in total control of the events of history
 - 2. "Open theism" is a view that holds that God is open to the future; the future is unknown to Him; and he is growing and learning as time goes on. We don't believe this is a Biblical view of God
 - 3. God is somehow involved even in painful events such as Hurricane Katrina.
 - 4. While God's sovereignty can raise difficult emotional issue for us, it can also bring great comfort during times of pain because we can be assured that God is in control and will work all things to bring about our ultimate good.
- B. "We believe that He hears and answers prayer" (Psalm 34:15)
 - 1. God hears our prayers and He actually responds to them, so that when we pray, we can pray assuming our prayers actually make a difference
 - 2. All the great people of God in Scripture prayed with the assumption that their prayers actually make a difference.

3. It's important that we don't run with one quality of God and create a theological system that excludes other qualities of God
 - a. Example 1: it would be easy to run with God's sovereignty and then conclude that prayer doesn't make a difference.
 - b. Example 2: it would be easy to run with God's love and conclude that he would never judge people
 - c. We have to talk the way scripture talks, and if that means holding different qualities of God in tension, so be it.
- C. "We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of humanity" (Exodus 34:6-7)

The story of the Old and New Testaments is consistently a story of God's unending mercy: of Him not treating His people the way their sins deserve
- D. "We believe that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ" (John 3:16)
- E. Again, the cross is the historical event where these four actions of God in the world come together most poignantly

Conclusion

- I. Do I have a view of God that is accurate and faithful to Scripture?

Spend time with the statement of faith and prayerfully consider: which aspects of God resonate with me, and which aspects do I have a hard time embracing?
- II. Does my theological understanding of God lead me to praise and worship?
 - A. The danger of becoming a moralist: life is simply about good behavior.

Our deepest danger is not a failure of behavior, but rather a failure of worship
When our hearts grow numb and callous to God's greatness, we fail to see him as the greatest treasure, and then we start running around pursuing other treasures
 - B. This week: how can I cultivate a sense of wonder and awe for who God is?

Discussion Question

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. How did the conversation about God as "an infinite, personal spirit" impact, change, or deepen your view of God?
3. What characteristic of God mentioned on Sunday do you resonate with the most? Which do you have the hardest time embracing? Why?
4. Regarding God's sovereignty, it was argued on Sunday that comments like, "God had nothing to do with Hurricane Katrina" are ultimately not Biblical. Do you agree? How

do you understand God's involvement (or lack of involvement) in deeply painful events such as Hurricane Katrina?

5. What is the best way for you to cultivate a sense of wonder and awe for who God is? What practical ways have you found to do that in your life?