

Hope Community Church

Week 3 - Statement of Faith: God the Father

Learning Objectives

- To understand God's love in contrast and complement to His holiness
- To understand that God is thoroughly infinite yet also thoroughly personal
- To think about how these truths impact our daily lives as children of God

? Think of some words that describe your parents or those who raised you. Write them down below:

? Now do the same with God. What are some attributes or descriptors that come to mind when you think about God (especially personal attributes)?

? Circle the ones that are the same. What do you notice about the common words? What about those that are not shared?

? What other words did you write that describe God alone, more than any other earthly father?

God as Loving and Holy

From Hope's Statement of Faith:

We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. Luke 10:21,22; Matt. 23:9; John 3:16; 6:27; Rom. 1:7; 1 Tim. 1:1,2; 2:5,6; 1 Peter 1:3; Rev. 1:6

1 John 4:7-21 (NIV)

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our

sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

? How do we see God's love, according to the passage?

Possible answers: Jesus' death for our sake, our love for one another, a lack of fear when we have accepted Christ.

? What made the action of sending Jesus for our sake so loving?

Possible answers: God did the work we couldn't do, without obligation. Jesus was humiliated even worse than what most humans, his creation, go through; and for our sake. It was the fullest action required, leaving nothing left that we need to do save and accept the gift!

Read aloud to the group: The Bible is covered with statements from God and about God, that He is holy. Often we are commanded to "Be holy, because [God] is holy." Holiness is a state of being set apart, other than, special. Below is one of many passages that more explicitly say this about God.

Isaiah 43:11-15 (NIV)

¹¹ I, even I, am the Lord,

and apart from me there is no savior.

¹² I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—

I, and not some foreign god among you.

You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God.

¹³ Yes, and from ancient days I am he.

No one can deliver out of my hand.

When I act, who can reverse it?"

¹⁴ This is what the Lord says—

your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

"For your sake I will send to Babylon

and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians,

in the ships in which they took pride.

¹⁵ I am the Lord, your Holy One,

Israel's Creator, your King."

? What are the different ways God is made distinct from all others in this passage? What does this passage say about God?

Possible answers: He is holy, our only Savior, ancient, powerful, the Redeemer, willing to ransom us and seek us out.

? How does God's love demonstrate His holiness? How does God's love for us contrast with His holiness?

Possible answers: this is God as holy, as very "other" and "above." It is a wild thing to think that such a powerful, world-shaping creator would bother with us. Even though God is set apart, He knows us and seeks us.

God as Personal and Infinite

Isaiah 55:1-9 (NIV)

¹ "Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;

and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,

and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor.”

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the Lord.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

? Based on the passage, how is God available to people?

Possible answers: He invites us. There is language that makes it clear He reaches beyond Israel, too, to the other nations. God has mercy, and “he will freely pardon.”

? Based on the passage, what makes God infinite? How can you describe this in other words? Or, in what other ways is God infinite?

Possible answers: answers will vary. Higher thoughts, higher ways; this is a promise to the world (infinite love); wealth for all peoples. God is infinitely powerful, patient, wise.

? Are there other contrasting ideas about God that you have wrestled with or wondered about?

Possible answers: answers will vary.

Leader’s note: don’t feel an obligation to ease any tensions discussed here! This question is meant to get people thinking about how complicated God is, and you can feel free to simply allow this question to sit in peoples’ minds for some time before moving on.

? How would these attributes of God impact your Bible-reading and prayer life, your time at church, or your time here in a small group?

Possible answers: answers will vary.

For Discussion and Accountability

? How have these passages and the discussion impacted your view of God?

? Is there any kind of doubt or hurdle about who God is that prevents you from accepting what these passages show?