

# KNOWING GOD

## STUDY 1: GOD IS ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE AND HOLY

*"Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is the standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is."*

A.W. Tozer

Set apart, utterly unique, "other"... this is the basic definition of holiness. In fact, there is none like God so let's consider His unique holiness, His unique immutability, and His unique eternity. None of the attributes of God began to exist and none can ever become more than each already is because God is eternal. "Eternal" is a description of God that is foundational to each of His attributes. None of His attributes began or were added later. Basically, God did not BECOME anything. He did not grow into any of His attributes. Because He, alone, is eternal – all that He is He has always been and all that He is He always will be. So, God did not become merciful when someone needed mercy. He is mercy. God did not acquire power from somewhere outside of himself when power was needed. God is power. God has never needed to become anything beyond who He is. And as we begin to grasp more and more of who God is, we realise that who God is will never change. He is immutable.

### READ TOGETHER:

**Psalms 90:2 (NIV)** "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

**John 3:16 (NKJV)** "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life"

**Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)** "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

**Exodus 15:11 (NIV)** "Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

**Isaiah 6:2-3 (NIV)** "Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

**1 Peter 1:1-2, emphasis added (NIV)** "...To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **through the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: grace and peace be yours in abundance."

**1 Peter 1:14-16 (NIV)** "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"

**Eternal, not just everlasting** (Psalm 90:2; John 3:16) Eternal is one of those words that applies to God while a different word describes humanity. In Psalm 90 we see that God always was and always will be. John 3:16 tells us that through Jesus, when we believe in Him, we will have everlasting life. God is from everlasting to everlasting; God is eternal. And for those who put their trust in Jesus as their Saviour, though we are not FROM everlasting, we will be TO everlasting.

**DISCUSS:** Consider, together, the immensity of God's eternity. Ponder this reality: God has no origin. He IS the origin. He is OUR origin. Take some time to share your redemption stories and your gratitude for God's gift of everlasting life. That we are invited to join him as Kingdom of Heaven People in the "TO everlasting"... that's amazing grace!

**Unchanging One** (Hebrews 13:8) God is unchanging and constant. God is un-alterable. He cannot be impacted by anything that would, therefore, cause him to change His character in any way. God cannot

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improve. He cannot grow. He cannot become. All of God's attributes that we have considered and will consider? He always is all of them. All at once.

**DISCUSS:** *In what ways are you comforted by the truth that God's character never changes? Share the significance of this reality — The One who never changes is at work within us, causing us TO change! The One who cannot be transformed is the great transformer.*

**DIG DEEPER: The many facets of holiness** (*Exodus 15:11*) God's holiness involves wholeness, complete health with no presence of flaws. It involves purity, a morality that is so pure that there is absolutely no presence of any sin or of anything short of perfection. God is pure, not just in His actions but also in His intentions and in His motives. Holiness involves being "other" — distinct and set apart from all that is unholy. And the holiness of God involves a transcendence that is vastly beyond any qualities found in humanity. God's transcendence is a majesty, a glory that places Him far above all false gods, all spiritual powers, all humans, and all of creation. God is absolutely and morally pure while He is absolutely and majestically awesome. *Talk through every aspect of God's holiness. How can we not worship our holy God after considering what that holiness involves? Worship Him, together, through spoken words, songs, silence, whatever works best for your group.*

**God's holy presence** (*Isaiah 6:2-3*) The significance of this repetition of the word "holy" in this passage is unmissable. God is so transcendent in His holiness that the word "holy" does not suffice in our description of Him. He is holy. And holy. And holy. But that repetition is still insufficient so the angels go on to call out that the WHOLE earth is FULL of his glory. That's holy! And then notice that the angels have wings for more than flying: two wings covered their faces and two covered their feet. What a picture of the holiness of our God and our own unworthiness to be in His presence. Even the angels had to protect themselves from looking upon God and from standing on holy ground. That's holy.

**DISCUSS:** *Look at verse 5 of Isaiah 6. In what ways can you relate to Isaiah's response? Discuss other times in scripture when someone, confronted by the holy God, responds in a way that shows awe in the presence of our holy and transcendent God.*

**DIG DEEPER: Human holiness in history** (*1 Peter 1:1-2, 14-16*) Here is a portion of what is likely the most quoted writing by John White (from his book, *The Fight*) — "...thinness, hollow eyed gauntness, beards, sandals, long robes, stone cells, no sex, no jokes, hairshirts, cold baths, fasting, hours of prayer, rocky deserts, getting up at 4 a.m., clean fingernails, stained glass, and self-humiliation..." He suggests that it is not to be read with frivolity but, rather, with weeping because of the tragic history of mankind's feeble attempts at the pursuit of holiness. *Together, or on your own, study the times humans sought to be holy in their own sincere-but-misguided attempts. You might want to look into: pelagianism, gnosticism, asceticism, legalism, the Holiness Movement,...* *In what ways do we risk repeating similar errors in our quest to attain holiness by our own, fleshly endeavours? What is the key to holiness in the 1 Peter passages?*

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

- **Book:** J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*
- **Book:** A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*
- **Book:** Sharon Kohring, *Oh My God! Let Me Tell You About Him: A journey through the characteristics of God*
- **Podcast:** The Bible Project, Holiness series: <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/holiness-series/>