

## *Introducing Our Faith: The Living God*

### Worksheet for Week 3

#### Portraits of Holy God, Part 1 – Holy God as Creator, King, Personal Revealer, and Priest

In weeks 3 & 4 of this course, we are going to take a look at eight biblical portraits of God: Creator, King, Personal Revealer, Priest, Judge, Father, Redeemer, and Shepherd. These worksheets will introduce you to the material we'll talk about in class each week and provide you with a structured set of daily Bible readings related to these portraits.

#### *Portraits of God*

Allan Coppedge, a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, has done a great service for the Church. In his recent book, *Portraits of God*<sup>1</sup>, Coppedge lays out a biblical presentation of eight portraits or roles of God that are woven throughout the Old and the New Testament. The Bible portrays God as the creator, as the king, as the good shepherd, as the loving father, and more. Appreciating all these portraits and images is necessary to reach a better understanding of God in all God's fullness. Too often, Christians have gotten off track by overemphasizing one of these portraits at the expense of the others. For example, we might understand God solely as a loving father, forgetting that God is also our high priest and powerful redeemer. We might overemphasize God's transcendence (God's "other"ness) as creator, forgetting that God also is personal, revealing himself to us intimately in his desire to build a relationship with his free creatures. The various portraits all work together to give us a full and rich understanding of God.

#### *The Holiness of God*

*Holy* is one of those bible/church words that I suspect most of us use without ever being sure exactly what we mean. In the simplest sense, holiness is what makes God, God – and makes us not God! Gerhard Vos writes, "He is holy in everything that characterizes Him and reveals Him, holy in His goodness and grace, no less in His righteousness and wrath." Aulen writes, "Holiness is the foundation on which the whole conception of God rests. . . . Every statement about God, whether in reference to his love, power, righteousness . . . ceases to be an affirmation about God when it is not projected against the background of his holiness." In other words, God's righteousness is his holy righteousness. His mercy is holy mercy. His wrath is holy wrath. But this still doesn't get us very close to what we mean by holy.

Just as it takes many differing portraits to adequately portray God, so it takes several ideas to try to capture what we mean by God's holiness. Coppedge suggests that holiness has six major components: separation, brilliance, righteousness, love, power, and goodness. I find this to be as good a working list as any and we'll look at each as we consider the portraits. For example, the biblical portrait of God as creator tends to emphasize the separateness of God as a key aspect of his holiness, while the portrait of God as a shepherd emphasizes holiness as goodness.

Through it all, we'll need to remember that God is holy (Lev 11:45; 1 Peter 1:15-16) and the holiness of any creature, such as you or me, or any place, or any building is derived from God. Our own holiness (in which we are to grow!) has meaning only in relationship to God!

#### *God's Transcendence and God's Immanence*

You don't have to do much reading about God before you'll run into two very important words: transcendence and immanence. To speak of God's transcendence is to speak of what separates God from us – he is creator, we are not; he is omnipotent, we are not; he is eternal, we are not; he is God, we are not. To speak of God's immanence is to speak of "God with us," caring and active, involved and personal, intimately and relentlessly pursuing us. We make a mistake when we overemphasize either aspect of God. If we tend too much toward God's transcendence, God can seem to be a distant, uninvolved, even scary, supreme being. For too many people, this is the image of God they hold. If we overemphasize God's immanence, we can make God our buddy and pal, making him less than God, failing to hold God in the reverence due him.

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<sup>1</sup> Coppedge, Allan. 2001. *Portraits of God: A biblical theology of holiness*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press

## Bible Readings for Week 3

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage. What do you find most surprising in these readings? What do they tell us about God's nature?

<p><b>Day 1</b> Genesis 1:1-2:3 The story of creation emphasizing God's transcendence.</p>	<p><b>Day 2</b> Genesis 2:4b – 3:24 Another telling of creation, emphasizing God's immanence.</p>
<p><b>Day 3</b> Isaiah 6 God, the King, in his heavenly throne room</p>	<p><b>Day 4</b> John 1:1-18 Jesus is the Word of life, through whom God makes himself known.</p>
<p><b>Day 5</b> Hebrews 2:16-3:6; 5:1-5:10 Jesus is the High Priest</p>	<p>Weekly Prayer Concerns</p>