

ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 1: Who is God? (Acts 17:16-34)

Deuteronomy 29:29 states, *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law”*.

As we commence this series of topical studies on who God is, this verse reminds us of three important truths.

Firstly, there are some things about God that we will never fully know – *“the secret things belong to the LORD our God”*. As we acknowledge that God is so much bigger and greater, wiser and more wonderful, than we can ever think or imagine we are to grow in our humility before him.

Secondly, this humility should not lead to despondency. Although we can never know all things about God we are able to know God and be known by him – *“the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever”*. God has graciously made himself known to us through his Word and through his Son and therefore we are able to think about the one true God and to make accurate statements about him.

Thirdly, and finally, considering who God is can be a dangerous activity if we are merely doing it for academic purposes; to grow in our knowledge of him simply for knowledge’s sake. As our verse concludes, this knowledge of God is revealed ... *“that we may follow all the words of this law”*. God reveals himself to us so that we might respond in repentance and faith, worship and obedience.

J. I. Packer captures these sentiments well in the following quote. *“We should never forget that theology is for doxology: the truest expression of trust in a great God will always be worship, and it will always be proper worship to praise God for being far greater than we can know”*.

In light of the comments above, spend some time committing each other and this upcoming series of studies to the Lord.

If you were to ask people the question, ‘Who is God?’, what responses do you think you might receive?

Read Acts 17:16-34.

We are told that Paul is “greatly distressed” by what he sees in Athens (v 16). How does he respond to these feelings of distress?

What are some of the different reactions that Paul receives?

Why do you think the people might have reacted in this way? What is Luke's explanation in verse 18?

Paul then addresses this meeting of the Areopagus and makes known to them the "unknown God".

From verses 24-29, and using a whiteboard or butcher's paper, have the group summarise what Paul says about who God is.

How do verses 30-31 help us to understand Paul's distress over idolatry?

What responses does Paul receive after he finishes his speech?

Think back to the responses we shared at the beginning of the study and also look at the responses on the whiteboard/butcher's paper. What are some of the differences between how people often think of God and who God actually is?

In what ways is Paul a good model for us as we seek to respond to people with different views?

Look at the whiteboard/butcher's paper again. What corrections do you personally need to make in terms of your own view of God?

See Appendix 1 – 'Theology to Doxology' and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – Theology to Doxology

Each week, as a lead-in to finishing the study with a time of prayer, a suggested song has been included. You can either sing it together as a group, listen to a version online, or simply read out the lyrics. The suggested song is intended to be a creative way of informing our prayers as your group reflects on what they have seen in God's Word.

Given that this week's study introduces our series entitled 'Behold our God', the suggested song is 'Behold our God' by Sovereign Grace.

If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrli3Lkf58>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

Who has held the oceans in His hands
Who has numbered every grain of sand
Kings and nations tremble at His voice
All creation rises to rejoice

Chorus

Behold our God seated on His throne
Come let us adore Him
Behold our King nothing can compare
Come let us adore Him

Verse 2

Who has given counsel to the Lord
Who can question any of His words
Who can teach the One who knows all things
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds

Chorus

Verse 3

Who has felt the nails upon His hand
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal humbled to the grave
Jesus Savior risen now to reign

Chorus

Bridge

You will reign forever (Let Your glory fill the earth) (REPEAT 4X)

Chorus

CCLI Song # 5937510

Jonathan Baird | Meghan Baird | Ryan Baird | Stephen Altrogge

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Sovereign Grace Worship (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)

ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 2: God is Three, God is One (John 13-16)

When you hear the phrase, ‘God is three and God is one’, or the word ‘Trinity’, what thoughts and feelings do you experience?

Last week we commenced our series of studies by reading Deuteronomy 29:29 ...

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law”.

As we come to this study, it is especially important that we remind ourselves of the truths that we drew out from this verse. In line with this, Jensen and Payne make the following helpful comments about the Trinity:

“Christians have too often been defensive and negative about the doctrine of the Trinity. We feel the need to apologise for believing something for which we can find no parallels or analogies in life ... We should not be embarrassed. It shouldn’t surprise me that God turns out to be greater and more complex than anything I know of in this world. There are many things in this world that I find difficult to comprehend, so I should not be surprised that I cannot completely fathom the Creator of the universe. This is not to say that the Trinity is an impenetrable mystery that I cannot understand in any fashion at all. We must not confuse knowing everything with knowing something. I can know that God is three persons and one God” (The Blueprint, p 28).

In light of the above, as well as your interactions during the ‘Discussion Starter’, spend some time praying for each other as you look at God’s Word together.

Bible Reading

The truth that God is one God and yet three persons can be seen throughout the Scriptures. However, it is in Jesus – God with us – that this truth is made known to us most clearly. Therefore, we will restrict ourselves in this study to some of the richest teaching that Jesus himself provides – his words of farewell to his disciples in the upper room on the night before his death.

Read John 13:31-14:11.

Activity

Split your group into pairs/triplets and hand out a print-out of Appendix 1 to each small group. Instruct each pair/triplet to work together and fill out on the first table what we discover in this passage regarding the relationship between God the Son (Jesus) and God the Father.

God the Son (Jesus)	↔	God the Father
	13:31-32	
	14:1-4	
	14:7-9	
	14:10-11	

Bring the pairs/triplets back together again to share with each other what they have discovered.

What do we find out from those verses in terms of the relationship between God the Son and God the Father?

Was there anything that you found new, interesting or thought-provoking?

Jesus' words in John 14:6 ("*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*") have rightly become well-known. Spend some time together unpacking each aspect of Jesus' claim.

Bible Reading

Read John 15:26-16:15.

Activity

Once again, split your group into pairs/triplets. Using the second table on the same handout as before (Appendix 1), instruct each pair/triplet to work together and fill out what we discover in this passage regarding the relationships between God the Son (Jesus), God the Holy Spirit (the Counsellor) and God the Father.

God the Son (Jesus) → ← God the Holy Spirit (the Counsellor) → ← God the Father
15:26
16:7
16:12-13
16:14-15

Bring the pairs/triplets back together again to share with each other what they have discovered.

What do we find out from those verses in terms of the relationships between God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the Father?

Was there anything that you found new, interesting or thought-provoking?

In John 16:8, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgement. How would you explain how he does this, in your own words?

Application Questions

Imagine if Jesus was not God. How would that change your day-to-day life?

Imagine if the Holy Spirit was not God. How would that change your day-to-day life?

Gregory of Nazianzus – a famous Christian from the 4th century AD – stated, “*When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit*”. Why is it that we rarely think this way? What are some of the problems that result from our wrong thinking in this regard?

Close + Prayer

See Appendix 2 – ‘Theology to Doxology’ and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – God is Three, God is One

Table 1

God the Son (Jesus)	↔	God the Father
	13:31-32	
	14:1-4	
	14:7-9	
	14:10-11	

Table 2

God the Son (Jesus) ↔ God the Holy Spirit (the Counsellor) ↔	God the Father
	15:26
	16:7
	16:12-13
	16:14-15

Appendix 2 – Theology to Doxology

For this study, there are two options for our ‘Theology to Doxology’ section. You could use either song, or even both of them, for your group.

Firstly, if you would like to listen to a highly-recommended and fun song that does an excellent job at capturing the truths of this study, try:

Colin Buchanan, *Rev Master-T's Trinity Mashmix* (‘God Rock’ album).

The lyrics are printed below:

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Three names
The Trinity

Every time I think of the Three
My mind is drawn to
Drawn to the One

And every time I think of the One
My mind is drawn to
Drawn to the Three

And I think Gregory expresses that brilliantly
Gregory Nazianzus
Gregory expresses that brilliantly

In terms of the Trinity
There is a point at which one
Has to stop speculation

And simply
Bow down and worship
Bow down and
Bow down and
Bow down and worship

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
God is Three and God is One
The Trinity

CCLI Song # 5977855
Colin Buchanan
© 2011 Wanaaring Road Music

Instead, or as well as, Colin Buchanan's song you could use *'Praise the Father, Praise the Son'* by Chris Tomlin to sing together or listen to.

If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpyIc7aR8BQ>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

O sov'reign God O matchless King
The saints adore the angels sing
And fall before the throne of grace
To You belongs the highest praise

Verse 2

These sufferings this passing tide
Under Your wings I will abide
And ev'ry enemy shall flee
You are my hope and victory

Chorus

(Oh) praise the Father praise the Son
(And) praise the Spirit Three in One
Clothed in power and in grace
The name above all other names

Verse 3

To the valley for my soul
Thy great descent has made me whole
Your word my heart has welcomed home
Now peace like water ever flows

Chorus (x 2)

Bridge

Yours is the kingdom Yours is the power
Yours is the glory forever
Yours is the kingdom Yours is the power
Yours is the glory forever

Final Chorus

Praise the Father praise the Son
And praise the Spirit Three in One
Clothed in power and in grace
The name above all other names
The name above all other names

CCLI Song # 5203251

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash

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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 3: God is Glorious (Exodus 33-34)

What are some things that we might describe as being “glorious”?

or

Split your group into pairs/triplets. Provide each sub-group with a sheet of paper and some coloured pencils/crayons/textas. Instruct each group to draw things that come to mind when they hear the word “glorious”.

Spend some time praying together before you look at God’s Word.

Our main Bible passages for this study come from towards the end of the Old Testament book of Exodus. To set the scene, God has rescued his people from slavery in Egypt through the event of the exodus (Chapter 12). He is in the process of leading and guiding his rescued people to the Promised Land. Along the way he has brought them to Mt Sinai to instruct them in how they are to live as his rescued people (Chapter 19). Despite God’s constant and gracious provision, the Israelites have shown themselves to be a discontent and rebellious people, culminating in the incident of the Golden Calf (Chapter 32).

Read Exodus 33:12-23.

What is Moses’ request in verse 18?

What are some of the different ways in which God *could* have shown Moses his glory?

What is interesting about God’s response in verse 19?

Why do you think God places a restriction on his display of glory?

Read Exodus 34:1-8 and 34:29-35.

In verses 5-7 God makes good on his earlier promise to show Moses his glory. How does he do that?

What effect does this display of glory have on Moses?

What other effect is emphasised at the end of the chapter?

How have these passages challenged you to think differently about God's glory?

Split your group into three smaller groups. Have them reflect on one of the following three passages and the related questions.

Group 1 – John 1:14, 18

Read John 1:14 and John 1:18. What is John's claim concerning Jesus? Why is this so significant, given what we have seen from Exodus?

Group 2 – John 14:8-9

Last week in Study 2 we read some of Jesus' words in John 14. Have a look again at John 14:8-9. Given what we have seen from Exodus, what is so significant about what Jesus says here?

Group 3 – Hebrews 1:1-4

Read Hebrews 1:1-4. How is the Son, Jesus, spoken of in these verses? What is the significance of what is said here, given what we have seen in Exodus?

Bring the groups back together to briefly share with each other what they discovered.

Sometimes as Christians we can look at spectacular passages like Exodus 33-34 and feel like we have missed out. Together, read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. How does this passage speak into those feelings?

See Appendix 2 – 'Theology to Doxology' and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1

Group 1 – John 1:14, 18

Read John 1:14 and John 1:18.

What is John's claim concerning Jesus?

Why is this so significant, given what we have seen from Exodus?

Group 2 – John 14:8-9

Last week in Study 2 we read some of Jesus' words in John 14. Have a look again at John 14:8-9.

Given what we have seen from Exodus, what is so significant about what Jesus says here?

Group 3 – Hebrews 1:1-4

Read Hebrews 1:1-4.

How is the Son, Jesus, spoken of in these verses?

What is the significance of what is said here, given what we have seen in Exodus?

Appendix 2 – Theology to Doxology

For our *'Theology to Doxology'* in this study, Geoff Bullock's song *'Oh the mercy of God'* has been selected. If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZXI2Iw502A>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

Oh the mercy of God, The glory of grace
That You chose to redeem us, To forgive and restore
And You call us Your children, Chosen in Him
To be holy and blameless, To the glory of God

Chorus

To the praise of His glorious grace
To the praise of His glory and power
To Him be all glory, honour and praise
Forever and ever and ever, Amen

Verse 2

Oh the richness of grace, The depths of His love
In Him is redemption, The forgiveness of sin
You called us as righteous, Predestined in Him
For the praise of His glory, Included in Christ

Chorus

Verse 3

Oh the glory of God, Expressed in His Son
His image and likeness, Revealed to us all
The plan of the ages, Completed in Christ
That we be presented, Perfected in Him

Chorus

CCLI Song # 1930937

Geoff Bullock

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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 4: God is Holy (Isaiah 6)

At different times the Bible speaks of people relating to God as they would relate to a friend. For example, in Exodus 33 (just before the passage we looked at last week) we read, “*The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend*” (Exodus 33:11). The book of James mentions that Abraham was “*called God’s friend*” (James 2:23). Jesus says to his disciples, “*You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you*” (John 15:14-15). We even sing the song, “*What a friend we have in Jesus*”.

This is a precious truth. However, what are some of the dangers if we only think of God in this way?

Spend some time praying together before you look at God’s Word.

The book of Isaiah opens with his nation in serious trouble. Uzziah, Judah’s strong king for half a century, was dying. Assyria, the evil empire to the East, was restless and threatening. In Chapter 6, Isaiah receives a vision of God.

Read Isaiah 6:1-7.

Split into groups of three or four. Provide blank sheets of paper and coloured pencils/textas/crayons. Have each group draw the scene depicted in verses 1-2 of the passage. Have each group share their drawing with the other groups. What stood out to you as you sought to capture this scene?

or

Have the group list each of the descriptions in verse 1 of the vision. Pause at each point and briefly discuss what that particular aspect communicates about God.

In verse 3 the seraphs call out to each other. What might be the significance of their repetition?

What effect do their voices have?

If this is the effect that *their* voices have, what does that say about the One that they worship?

Is this the way you often view God? Why/why not?

Why does Isaiah respond in the way he does?

Do you often feel like Isaiah does here? Why/why not?

Clearly there are significant problems created when a holy God comes into contact with people or things that are unholy. What is the way ahead suggested by the seraph's actions in verses 6 and 7?

This passage from Isaiah is just one of many in the Bible that reveal to us that God is a holy God. In fact, in the Old Testament the adjective "holy" is attached to God's name more often than any of the other adjectives put together. Although this is the case, what causes us to forget or minimise this aspect of God's character?

A French critic of Christianity once said, "The good God will forgive me; that's his job (or his speciality)". Why can't God just forgive our sin?

Read Romans 3:21-26.

How is it possible for us as unholy people to relate to this holy God?

How can we remain filled with awe at God's holiness and yet also filled with thankfulness for what he has done for us at the cross?

See Appendix 1 – 'Theology to Doxology' and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – Theology to Doxology

For our *'Theology to Doxology'* in this study it is appropriate that we use the classic hymn, *'Holy, holy, holy'*. If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCnRYj3lMIQ>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

Holy holy holy
 Lord God Almighty
 Early in the morning
 Our song shall rise to Thee
 Holy holy holy
 Merciful and mighty
 God in three persons
 Blessed Trinity

Verse 2

Holy holy holy
 All the saints adore Thee
 Casting down their golden crowns
 Around the glassy sea
 Cherubim and seraphim
 Falling down before Thee
 Who was, and is,
 And evermore shall be

Verse 3

Holy holy holy
 Though the darkness hide Thee
 Though the eye of sinful man
 Thy glory may not see
 Only Thou art holy
 There is none beside Thee
 Perfect in power
 In love and purity

Verse 4

Holy holy holy
 Lord God Almighty
 All Thy works shall praise Thy name
 In earth and sky and sea
 Holy holy holy
 Merciful and mighty
 God in three persons
 Blessed Trinity

CCLI Song # 1156
 John Bacchus Dykes | Reginald Heber
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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 5: God is Love (1 John 4)

Split your group into pairs/triplets. Give each pair/triplet one or two of the following descriptions of love and get them to think through what is being communicated in terms of what love is.

“A single text from you can change my mood at any moment”

“Meeting you was fate, becoming your friend was a choice, but falling in love with you was beyond my control”

“You see me at my absolute worst, and you love me anyway”

“To love is nothing ... To be loved is something ... To love and be loved in return is everything”

“They say that love is the key to happiness. You must have unlocked my heart because I am so happy with you”

“Never love anybody who treats you like you’re ordinary”

“Love is easy and natural when you do it with all your heart”

“Love the person who deserves it, not the one who requires it”

“Love is the only thing that everybody needs”

“When love is not madness it’s never love”

“Love is the absence of judgement”

“Love is like a magic key that opens the door to happiness”

Bring the groups back together and get them to briefly report back to each other from their discussions.

Spend some time praying together before you look at God’s Word.

Read 1 John 4:7-21.

Twice in this passage John makes his famous statement, “*God is love*” (verse 8 and verse 16). But as we saw at the beginning of our study, there are many different definitions of love. How has God shown his love?

The quality and quantity of love can be seen both in terms of the one giving the love and also in terms of the one receiving the love. Verses 9 and 10 tell us a lot about God's love and it is worthwhile considering the various parts in detail.

John says that God "*sent his one and only Son*" (v 9). What does this tell us about God's love?

From verse 10, what did Jesus do when he was sent into the world?

What does this tell us about God's love?

How are those who receive God's love described?

What does this tell us about God's love?

From the rest of the passage, what should our response be to God's love?

Give people five or ten minutes to spend on their own in personal reflection. They may use the following questions to guide them in this.

If God is love, how does this truth help me when I feel discontent in my circumstances or resentful of others?

If God is love, how does this truth help me when I am feeling distrustful or fearful?

If God is love, why do I become half-hearted or cold in living for him?

If God is love, can people see this truth in the way that I love those around me?

As group members feel comfortable, have them share some of their thoughts from the time of personal reflection.

See Appendix 3 – ‘Theology to Doxology’ and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – Discussion Starter

“A single text from you can change my mood at any moment”

“Meeting you was fate, becoming your friend was a choice, but falling in love with you was beyond my control”

“You see me at my absolute worst, and you love me anyway”

“To love is nothing ... To be loved is something ... To love and be loved in return is everything”

“They say that love is the key to happiness. You must have unlocked my heart because I am so happy with you”

“Never love anybody who treats you like you’re ordinary”

“Love is easy and natural when you do it with all your heart”

“Love the person who deserves it, not the one who requires it”

“Love is the only thing that everybody needs”

“When love is not madness it’s never love”

“Love is the absence of judgement”

“Love is like a magic key that opens the door to happiness”

Appendix 2 – Activity: Personal Reflection

If God is love, how does this truth help me when I feel discontent in my circumstances or resentful of others?

If God is love, how does this truth help me when I am feeling distrustful or fearful?

If God is love, why do I become half-hearted or cold in living for him?

If God is love, can people see this truth in the way that I love those around me?

Appendix 3 – Theology to Doxology

For our *'Theology to Doxology'* in this study the song, *'Here is love'*, has been selected. If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTOP304FOG0>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

Here is love vast as the ocean
Loving-kindness as the flood
When the Prince of Life our Ransom
Shed for us His precious blood
(REPEAT)

Chorus 1

Who His love will not remember
Who can cease to sing His praise
He can never be forgotten
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days

Verse 2

On the mount of crucifixion
Fountains opened deep and wide
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide

Chorus 2

Grace and love like mighty rivers
Poured incessant from above
Heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love

Misc 1

(Bridge)
No love is higher no love is wider
No love is deeper no love is truer
No love is higher no love is wider
No love is like Your love O Lord
(REPEAT 4X)

Misc 2

(Ending)
Yes here is love
Vast as the ocean
Yes here is love
Vast as the ocean
(REPEAT)

CCLI Song # 3287884

Matt Redman | Robert Lowry | William Rees

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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014

Behold our God

Study 6: God is Merciful in Discipline (Hebrews 12)

Think about a time in your life when something didn't go according to plan, or when you experienced some kind of difficulty. What can God seem to be like during those times?

Spend some time praying together before you look at God's Word.

Read Hebrews 12:1-13.

In verses 5 and 6 the author quotes from Proverbs 3. What are two possible responses to discipline that we are to avoid?

How might the truths in verse 6 help us to respond rightly?

Why do we find it difficult to have this perspective?

Split your group into a few smaller groups consisting of between two and four members in each. Read out the following instructions and provide time for each group to complete the Activity.

In verses 7-10 the author picks up on the family image from Proverbs 3 and provides more detail. Compare and contrast what is said in these verses by filling out the table below.

Verse(s)	Human fathers	God as Father

--	--	--

Bring the groups back together.

From these verses (vv 7-10), how would you summarise what God is like?

From these verses (vv 7-10), how would you summarise how we are to respond to God?

In what ways is verse 11 both realistic and hopeful?

In our last two studies we have concentrated on the truths that 'God is holy' and 'God is love'. How do these two truths come together in what we have been considering in this study?

Share of an occasion in life where you feel that you experienced the Lord's discipline.

How were you tempted to either treat it lightly or to lose heart?

As you look back, in what ways did you experience some of the truths that we've seen in this study?

See Appendix 2 – 'Theology to Doxology' and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – Activity

Verse(s)	Human fathers	God as Father

Verse	Human fathers	God as Father

Appendix 2 – Theology to Doxology

For our *'Theology to Doxology'* in this study the song, *'God moves in a mysterious way'*, has been selected. If you would like to listen to a more traditional version online, you can use the URL below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z0e_xSC8to

For a more modern version, you can use this URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtnapVDuPfg>

Please note that if you use this more modern version, verse 2 is omitted and between verses 4 and 5 some Scriptures (from Genesis 50 and Romans 8) are briefly shown. Interestingly, the clip finishes with a reference to Hebrews 12:10.

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm

Verse 2

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will

Verse 3

Ye fearful saints fresh courage take
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head

Verse 4

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
But trust Him for His grace
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face

Verse 5

His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour
The bud may have a bitter taste
But sweet will be the flower

Verse 6

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain
God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain

CCLI Song # 155909
Thomas Tallis | William Cowper
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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 7: God is Triumphant (Romans 8)

1. What makes us doubt God's goodness to us or his control over our lives?

Spend some time praying together before you look at God's Word.

Read Romans 8:28-39.

2. Romans 8:28 has rightly become a well-known and well-loved verse for many Christians. It speaks of God's purpose and assures us that he is working for our good in all things. How does verse 29 help us to understand what God's good purpose is for our lives?

3. Some people describe verse 30 as an "unbroken golden chain". Why might they describe it in this way?

4. Have a look back over verses 28-30. How do these verses help us to see that God is triumphant?

In the rest of the passage (vv 31-39) Paul launches into a series of questions and answers. Split your group into smaller groups of between two and four people (depending on the size of your group) and get them to fill in the table below.

Verse	Question	What might cause us to ask this question?	Answer (Implied or provided in the surrounding verses)
31b			
33			
34			
35			

Bring the groups back together.

5. How do these verses help us to see that God is triumphant?

6. If you were to put a musical soundtrack to this passage, what would it be?

7. *“God is good but he is not in control”*. *“God is in control but he is not good”*. Discuss these statements in light of what we have seen in this passage.

8. How will this truth – that God is triumphant – help you day-to-day?

Close + Prayer

See Appendix 2 – ‘Theology to Doxology’ – and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – Activity

Verse	Question	What might cause us to ask this question?	Answer (Implied or provided in the surrounding verses)
31b			
33			
34			
35			

Appendix 2 – Theology to Doxology

For our *'Theology to Doxology'* in this study the song, *'In Christ Alone'*, has been selected. If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8we1VgKX8Qo>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

Verse 2

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

Verse 3

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

Verse 4

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

CCLI Song # 3350395

Keith Getty | Stuart Townend

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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 8: God is Beyond Compare (Isaiah 40)

1. In verse 27 of our passage, Isaiah writes, “*Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God?’*” What causes us to have the same kinds of thoughts?

2. How do you usually respond in those times?

Spend some time praying together before you look at God’s Word.

The book of Isaiah is set in the time after the kingdom of Israel was split into two – the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah). Isaiah was one of the prophets to the southern kingdom, Judah. His ministry occurred during the lead-up to the Babylonian invasion and the exile of God’s people. Hence, there is much talk of God’s judgement on his people for the sin that has brought this about – particularly in the first half of the book. We saw some of this when we looked at Isaiah Chapter 6 in Study 4. Chapter 40 represents a significant shift in the flow of the book. From this point on Isaiah moves away from speaking of judgement to emphasising the future hope and comfort that God will eventually bring his people.

Read Isaiah 40:12-31.

3. Using a whiteboard or butcher’s paper, have the group identify the various ways in which God is described in these verses.

4. Split the group into smaller groups of at least three or four members. Give people a few minutes to spend on their own, reflecting on what was written on the whiteboard/butcher's paper. After this time of reflection, have each member share with their small group what particularly impacted them in terms of who God is.

5. Bring the groups back together and have a few members share their thoughts with the larger group.

6. What kind of emotional response does this chapter produce in you?

7. Have a look again at the complaint of God's people in verse 27. How do verses 12-26 answer this charge?

8. How do verses 28-31 also answer this complaint from God's people?

Read Colossians 1:15-23.

9. In verses 15-19, Paul focuses on who Jesus is. Given what we read in Isaiah, what stands out to you in what Paul says about Jesus?

10. In verses 20-23, Paul speaks about what Jesus has done. Why is this so amazing?

Close + Prayer

See Appendix 1 – 'Theology to Doxology' – and then close the study with a time of prayer.

Appendix 1 – Theology to Doxology

Given that (apart from the Review Study) this is the last in our series of studies, it is fitting that our final *'Theology to Doxology'* should be *'Behold our God'*. It is also appropriate given that so many of the thoughts expressed in the song, and even the very way in which the lyrics are formed, matches with what we have seen from Isaiah 40.

If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrli3Lkf58>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

Verse 1

Who has held the oceans in His hands
Who has numbered every grain of sand
Kings and nations tremble at His voice
All creation rises to rejoice

Chorus

Behold our God seated on His throne
Come let us adore Him
Behold our King nothing can compare
Come let us adore Him

Verse 2

Who has given counsel to the Lord
Who can question any of His words
Who can teach the One who knows all things
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds

Chorus

Verse 3

Who has felt the nails upon His hand
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal humbled to the grave
Jesus Savior risen now to reign

Chorus

Bridge

You will reign forever (Let Your glory fill the earth) (REPEAT 4X)

Chorus

CCLI Song # 5937510

Jonathan Baird | Meghan Baird | Ryan Baird | Stephen Altrogge

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ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014
Behold our God – Study 9: Review

At the very beginning of this topical series of studies on who God is we read the following verse from the book of Deuteronomy:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

As we saw when we commenced the series, this verse reminds us of three important truths.

Firstly, there are some things about God that we will never fully know – *“the secret things belong to the LORD our God”*. As we acknowledge that God is so much bigger and greater, wiser and more wonderful, than we can ever think or imagine we are to grow in our humility before him. Hopefully this has been the case for each one of us throughout this term.

Secondly, this humility should not lead to despondency. Although we can never know all things about God we are able to know God and be known by him – *“the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever”*. God has graciously made himself known to us through his Word and through his Son and therefore we are able to think about the one true God and to make accurate statements about him.

Thirdly, and finally, considering who God is can be a dangerous activity if we are merely doing it for academic purposes; to grow in our knowledge of him simply for knowledge’s sake. As our verse concludes, this knowledge of God is revealed ... *“that we may follow all the words of this law”*. God reveals himself to us so that we might respond in repentance and faith, worship and obedience.

J. I. Packer captures these sentiments well in the following quote. *“We should never forget that theology is for doxology: the truest expression of trust in a great God will always be worship, and it will always be proper worship to praise God for being far greater than we can know”*. Each week we have sought to be true to this by including a song in our ‘Theology to Doxology’ section to conclude our time together.

1. In this series of studies, we have looked at the following aspects of God’s character:

- God is three, God is one;
- God is glorious;
- God is holy;
- God is love;
- God is merciful in discipline;
- God is triumphant; and
- God is beyond compare.

Which study especially stretched you in your understanding of God?

2. What truths about God did you particularly need to hear at this point in your life?

3. For you personally, which study had the most impact on your faith?

4. What do you think are some of the potential dangers in what we have done in this series?

5. Why do you think doing a series of studies like this is important?

6. We ought to be aware of the dangers of ‘studying God’ and yet we also know that it is vitally important for us. How can we keep growing in our love and knowledge of God in a healthy way?

7. If you used the suggested songs each week, which ones stood out for you personally?

Pray

You can take suggestions for what song(s) to finish this series with.

Spend some time praying together: praising and thanking God for who he is and for making himself known to us, and asking him to continue to grow us in a knowledge and trust that is marked by humility.