

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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