

Study Series: The God Who Is There

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Lesson Title: “The God Who Writes His Own Agreements”
(pp. 36-49)

Session 3

September 17, 2023

The main point of this lesson is: God, not you and I, has established how we can have a relationship with Him.

Focus on this goal: To help adults recognize we neither set nor adjust how we can have a relationship with God

Key Bible Passage: Genesis 12; 15; 17; 22; Acts 17:24-25

To the Leader: Understanding covenant is vital because “The covenant concept is a central, unifying theme of Scripture, establishing and defining God’s relationship to man in all ages.”1

Before the Session

1. Write on a board: marriage license, car/house loan, work contract, church membership. (Step 1)

2. Read the key Bible passages and be prepared to summarize those chapters during the session. (Steps 3-6)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Draw attention to the items written on the board and ask what they all have in common. Ask: How do all these agreements in some way establish a relationship? What amount of say do we have in establishing the relationship in these agreements? Today as we continue navigating our way through Scripture we’re going to see the God who is there writes His own agreements. Read the main point of this lesson statement (p. 47).

Step 2. The God/Human Relationship

State it is essential to understand who this God is and what this God/human relationship looks like. Day One describes three mental models people have of the relationship between God and people.

Guide the group to describe how people regard God as a super-soft grandfather. Analyze what’s wrong with the grandfather model.

Ask participants if they are familiar with the Bette Midler song, “From a Distance,” describing how God looks at people. Determine the mental model of God that song reflects. Consider why people may adopt the deism model. Determine what’s wrong with that model. Discuss Day One, activity 2 (p. 37).

Ask participants what names they might assign to Model 3 (examples: transactional, tit for tat, quid pro quo). Explore what that approach to God looks like. Determine some of the many problems with this mutual back-scratching approach. (Sample responses: What about when you do all the right things and life goes wrong? What about when God doesn’t conform to our notions of how He should behave toward us? What do we do with the book of Job?) Read the last paragraph of Day One (p. 38).

Step 3. Truths from Athens, Part 1

State the apostle Paul addressed that very issue in Athens. Discuss Day Two, activity 1 (p. 39). Consider how the fact the Athenians had a shrine to an unknown god indicates they lived in the transactional model. (They were trying to cover their bases, making sure no god was overlooked and angered.)

Request a volunteer read Acts 17:24. Explore how that truth emphasizes God cannot be manipulated. Ask the volunteer to read verse 25. Consider how the Athenians might have felt about that statement. Ask: How might people, even Christians, feel about that statement today and why?

Invite responses to Day Two, activity 2 (p. 40).

Step 4. Truths from Athens, Part 2

State Paul made an even sharper distinction between God and the false gods of Athens. Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 40). Read and discuss the Day Three Note (p. 41).

Discuss Day Three, activity 2 (p. 41). Invite someone to read the last two paragraphs of Day Three (p. 41-42).

Step 5. Bible Covenants

Urge participants to flip through Genesis chapters 4–11 and state events that occurred after Adam and Eve’s rebellion.

Discuss Day Four, activity 1 (p. 42). Ask: Is God revealing Himself as a soft grandpa, a removed deity, or a mutual backscratcher? What is He revealing about Himself? Briefly describe from Genesis 16 how Abraham and Sarah tried to help God keep His promise.

Request a volunteer read Genesis 17:1-10. Compare these verses with Genesis 12:1-3, determining what’s the same and what’s different. Consider possible reasons for the conditions Abraham had to meet in this covenant.

State we next look at a covenant in Genesis 15 that is not two-sided (bilateral) and conditional but one-sided (unilateral) and unconditional. Discuss Day Four, activity 2 (p. 44).

Read Genesis 15:8. Explain God answered Abraham’s bold question with a covenant-cutting ceremony.

Step 6. Ancient Covenants

Explain the Hebrew term for making a covenant is literally “to cut a covenant.”1 Use remarks under “Ancient Covenants” in Day Five (pp. 44-45) to explain how ancient peoples “cut a covenant.”

Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 15:9-10. Explain Abraham then waited for God to show up in some form so they could walk through the animal halves together.

Request someone read what actually happened (Gen. 15:17-18). Ask: Was this a two-sided conditional, or one-sided unconditional covenant? What leads you to that conclusion?

Invite responses to Day Five, activity 1 (p. 45). State the covenants continue to point to Jesus in a deeper, richer way.

Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 22:1-14. Ask: What should we not infer about God from this account? What can we know about God from this event?Read the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 46).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Request adults consult Genesis 15:6 and read the phrase that indicates the only role we have in a relationship with God. Read the Day Five Note (p. 46). Urge adults to voice that prayer to the Lord every day this week.

Close in prayer.

1. “Covenant,” Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 355.

