

King's Online Bible School
Doctrine 101: Learning about God

Study Guide 6 Answers

Charles Hodge makes the following distinction in his *Systematic Theology* (Vol. I, p. 383):

The infinitude of God, so far as space is concerned, includes His immensity and His omnipresence. These are not different attributes, but one and the same attribute His *immensity* is the infinitude of His being, viewed as belonging to His nature from eternity. He fills immensity with His presence. His *omnipresence* is His infinitude, viewed in relation to His creatures. He is equally present with all His creatures at all times and in all places.

1. To what particular fact about God's omnipresence does the word "immensity" refer?

As infinite Spirit His presence more than fills the immense universe and He is fully present at every point of infinite space and time.

2. How is the word "omnipresence" slightly different in its emphasis? It is focusing especially on His constant and full presence, relating to each of His creatures.

3. In Jeremiah 23:23-24 the Lord asks three questions. Write out each question and indicate whether it is referring especially to His immensity or His omnipresence.

"Am I a God Who is near and not a God far off?" This is an issue of omnipresence, because the idea in nearness is with reference to people.

"Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" = omnipresence

"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" = immensity

4. When we read that "God is fully present in every place" how do we know this is not just a way of referring to His size?

- He is spirit and has no measureable properties or dimensions.

- Nowhere is His presence only a partial presence: the word "fully" requires that we not imagine Him as spread out across the universe.

5. Is it accurate to think of God as a physical being? No.

6a. Please read 1 Kings 8:27. On what occasion does Solomon say these words?

at the dedication of the temple that has just been completed

6b. With what words does he declare God's immensity?

"Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee."

6c. How does the question Solomon asks just previously reveal his understanding about God's presence in the temple? He asks, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" and then answers his question, acknowledging that God is so much greater than being able to be confined to the earth. Solomon is expressing his awareness that God's presence in this temple is one particular expression of His presence everywhere throughout the universe, and that it is for the purpose of confirming His identification with the nation of Israel.

7a. In trying to help us think about what it means for God to be everywhere, Sproul makes the following statement (chap. 14, para. 2): "To meet God, there is not a "where" to go or a "when" to occur."

7b. Do you think you can meet God whenever you want? Why or why not? No.

God relates to each of His creatures constantly according to His will. That relationship may be to hide Himself. He is there, but you will not be immediately aware of His presence.

He relates to us with unfailing love on His terms. His ways are higher than our ways. Our relationship with Him is not on our terms or in our control. But this does not mean that it is ever right for us to not seek Him. "You will seek Me and find Me," He promises, "when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).

Knowing that He decides makes fellowship with Him precious and something most to be desired.

8. Is God always being in your presence the same as you being in His presence?

Please explain. Reasonably, it must be the same. But the way we speak and think of "being in His presence" usually refers to being aware of Him, and this is not always the case.

9. If God is always present, why do Christians talk about "coming into His presence"?

They are referring to their own alertness to Him, as with faith they set their focus on the reality of His nearness and on Him.

10. Do you ever experience "coming into His presence"?

Yes, at two different levels of experiencing:

There are instances when God's presence becomes evident to our senses in an unmistakable way. At such times our experience is greater or clearer.

But even when there is no such evidence, we have experienced coming into His presence by accepting and acting on the truth of His omnipresence. We relate to Him by faith.

11. Is there something you can do to experience His presence? Please elaborate.

If we mean the same as encountering Him (see #7b above) we do not have control over the outcome or the results, but there is something we can and should be doing: that is, to seek Him.

But if "experiencing His presence" refers to an awareness that He is right there, even though we receive no indications from Him that confirm it, we can experience being in His presence by recalling the truth about Him being present and accepting nothing less than or short of that truth in the way we think about Him.

12. Does knowing that God is always with you and that He is always relating to you help you be more aware of Him? Yes, definitely!

13. Sproul writes that "the wicked in hell are not separated from God, only from His benevolence." How do you think it is best to state the reality Sproul is addressing here?

It is better to say that, while God is present everywhere, His way of relating to the wicked is to be separate from them. They experience His wrath and part of that punishment is separation, though He is present everywhere.

14a. Please read Philippians 1:23. Why does Paul say what he does?

To actually be in the presence of Jesus in heaven is full realization and relationship. "We shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Cor 13:12).

14b. What does this tell you about believers who die? Their conscious spirits and souls immediately enter into the presence of the Lord Jesus.

14c. What is this saying about Christians experiencing God's presence here in this present life? We experience His presence in sufficient and sometimes even glorious ways, but in ways that are always very limited compared to what our experience will be then.

15. Please read 2 Corinthians 5:6-8.

15a. What do verses 6 and 8 express about believers who have died?

They are home with the Lord.

15b. What are they indicating about believers who have not died?

We are absent from the Lord Jesus, Who in His resurrected body is seated at God's right hand. He is there until He returns and we are here until we die. As long as we are present in these physical bodies we are absent from Him. It is just like being a long distance from loved ones.

15c. How does verse 7 explain?

We do not see Him yet physically. Our relationship with Him is awareness of His spiritual presence by faith. He is infinite Spirit and fully present in every place.

16. What light do the words in Psalm 18:25-26 shed on the way we are able to experience God's presence?

My ability to experience God will always be determined to some extent by the attitudes and ways I have adopted as my way of experiencing and relating to life.

17. Read Psalm 139. What statements in this Psalm help explain why God is relating to each person the ways He is?

This psalm makes us aware of the realities that are constantly influencing and contributing to the way God relates to each of us.

vv. 1-3: God's intense interest and constant, penetrating assessment of each person

vv. 5-6: His hand, constantly steering us according to His desire and His perfect knowledge of us

vv. 7-10: His capacity for controlling and directing our lives, regardless of our efforts to escape Him

vv. 11-12: His clear perception of the bewildering impressions and thoughts we experience

vv. 13-15: His designing and creating each person with this relationship in mind

v. 16: His preordained determination as to what we will be and experience

vv. 17-18: His capacity for thinking about each of us infinitely

vv. 19-22: our response out of hearts already being transformed into His character, taking on His values and even His passion, hating what He hates

vv. 23-24: our expressed desire to be transformed into His character completely