

Week Two: God

Scripture references:

Isaiah 46; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Joel 2:13
Matthew 5:48; John 1:18; I John 4:7-9

Points to take away:

1. God is, and is the creator of all things.
2. God is unique, whole, unified, and perfect.
3. God is not knowable in essence, but is knowable through *relationship* and through Jesus Christ.
4. God wants to be *known*, and to be in deep relationship with human beings.
5. God does not merely love, but *is* love (among other things).
6. God wants humans to be "in" *joy*.
7. God is *active* in the world.
8. God is *worthy* of our devotion.



A very few selected resources for further exploration:

The Source: Scripture — the *Bible*. Its greatest contribution: The story of God's everlasting love for God's people.

The Classic: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (1265-1273). His greatest contribution: Demonstrating that God can be known through reason (*rather than just by divine mystical revelation, or not at all*), and so God may be known by any rational being.

Aquinas' work is foundational for Western theology. A good summary may be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14663b.htm>; the entire *Summa* is online at <http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/home.html>.

Four Reformers: John Wesley, *On the Omnipresence of God* (sermon, 1788). His greatest contribution: Insisting that the essence of God is encompassing, suffusing, urging, saving, grace-filled, personal Presence. Wesley's sermon may be found at <http://gbgm-umc.org/UMHistory/Wesley/sermons/serm-111.stm>.

John Cobb & David Griffin, *Process Theology* (Westminster Press, 1976), based on Alfred North Whitehead's *Process & Reality* (The Macmillan Co., 1929). Their greatest contribution: Discovering that each moment and each being is both concrete and in process, including God, and anticipating quantum physics (*and its mirror on God*) long before science did.

Two Contemporaries: Each of these writers emerges from a different place on the theological spectrum, but arrives at a God who is big, wild, unconstrained, and joyous. Their greatest contribution: Freeing our notion of God from its domestication.

§ Mark Buchanan, *Your God is Too Safe* (Multnomah: 2001)

§ Sara Maitland, *A Big-Enough God: A Feminist's Search for a Joyful Theology* (Henry Holt & Co: 1995)

Books Pastor Elane is currently reading on theology and God: Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*; Tommy Tenney, *Experiencing His Presence* (these are devotionals); Jacobsen & Sawatsky, *Gracious Christianity* (this is a theology).

