

SESSION 1

Holy



QUESTION 1:

When have you seen something that would be considered “one of a kind”?

THE POINT

God is distinct from and above absolutely everything else.

THE PASSAGE

Isaiah 40:25-31

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“You are one of a kind!”

Depending on who says it, that statement can be a compliment or an insult. When my nanna said it to me, it was always a good thing. She would say, “You’re not like your brother or your mother. Boy, you are unique!” And I have always believed her.

It applies to you too. No one is exactly like you. When you put all the pieces together—your physical makeup, your personality, your temperament, your interests—you are truly unique. And God is big enough to put a different print on the fingers of each individual in all of human history!

But you are also somewhat interchangeable. You can donate blood and even certain organs that keep another person alive. Knee and hip replacements are proof that our parts can be replaced. And because of broken bones, many people have metal screws and plates. Many parts of our bodies are interchangeable and replaceable.

Only One is totally unique and completely unlike any other being in all of creation. It is the One who created all things. God is truly distinct.

Isaiah 40:25-26

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

When my kids were young, they loved playing with Play-Doh®. Molding and shaping that squishy stuff, they would form it into the weirdest of shapes and come up with the most extravagant names for their creations. What I thought was just a blue stick or a yellow ball would end up as a main character in their make-believe story; each one had a name, a job, and a role to play in their narrative. And then they would ask me to play. “Daddy, make something with us.” The only thing my finite brain could come up with was a ball and bat.

I could never come up with things as imaginative as they could. My creative juices flowed more like clumpy old motor oil. But my kids always came up with wildly original things. On an infinitely larger scale, the things we “create” are nothing compared with what God creates. Our God is so creative and unique that He is totally unlike and far above anything we could ever think to create.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God asked two foundational questions: (1) Who is like me? and (2) Who is equal to me? If we attempt to answer those rhetorical questions with anything but the obvious answer “No one,” then we have not set apart God as holy. We have erroneously set as equals two distinctly differing beings.

Consider who is asking these questions: “the Holy One.” The word *holy* describes someone or something that is devoted or set apart. For example, at the end of creation, God declared the seventh day

was holy, meaning it was set apart and different from the other six days (Gen. 2:2-3). “Holy” certainly applies to God, because He is totally separate and unique from anyone and anything else.

Our God is so holy and set apart that Jewish people will not pronounce the covenantal name God told Moses: *Yahweh* (Ex. 3:13-14), which essentially means “I AM.” Instead, they will substitute *Adonai*, which means “Lord.” Even in most English translations, “Yahweh” is replaced with the word *LORD* in caps (or lower caps). (See Isa. 40:27.)

If anyone wants to know what makes Him unique, the Holy One says: look and see for yourself. No one but God can bring out the stars, number them, and call them all by name. No one. The majesty of the stars screams of God’s holiness, power, and glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Ps. 19:1). Because of God’s great power and mighty strength, not one of the stars is missing.

No other being could have named and known each star. And certainly no one could have made a single star, yet God made each one. God stands alone in this, highlighting just how holy He is. His holiness is unmatched in creativity and cannot be undone by anyone or anything.

God’s declaration really puts our own fallible and finite nature into perspective. Our own attempts to be creative look like preschool Play-Doh games alongside God’s creative power. In fact, God created the very elements in the Play-Doh we used to make our childish creations. The Master Creator did not need to gather materials together before He created; He created out of nothing by simply speaking. Only one who is all-powerful could do that.

He is the Creator. We are the created. If we can keep that in perspective, then we set Him apart in our hearts as holy and acknowledge Him as Master and Creator.

QUESTION 2:

In what settings do you find yourself in awe of God?

ENGAGE

In the space below, draw a picture that captures what you see when you think of God's holiness. Then write a prayer of praise to the One who alone is holy.

My Prayer:

Isaiah 40:27-28

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

God used the prophet Isaiah to speak these words of comfort to the Jews. The cause of their grumblings and murmurings may have been that the Assyrian army was at the door threatening to attack. They didn't know what to do.

We also have times when we don't know what to do. It is easy for us to complain when we're scared or don't know what the future holds. We grumble in our uncertainty and search for answers—but we do so with no clear direction of where to look for the right answer. Too often we have more than enough voices offering us an answer, but we lack the wisdom to hear the correct response above all their noise.

We have only one voice worth listening to: God. God is set apart from all other voices because He is the only One who knows all things and has wisdom about the right course of action. He is holy in His wisdom. His knowledge is unmatched in all the world.

Notice the refrain that opens verse 28. “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?” The prophet already asked this question in verse 21, but it bears repeating to remind us of the power and presence of God. We tend to forget His words and, much like the children of Israel, we ask, “*What have you done for me lately?*” But almost sarcastically, God reminds his people, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard” God is enough?

If God has the wisdom to create the whole earth, the wisdom to create an ecosystem that keeps nature in balance, and the wisdom to create the human body with all its intricacies, He certainly can handle all of our questions and concerns. We need to be more like toddlers, asking questions freely and constantly. Instead, we're too often like teenagers, no longer asking anything because they think they know it all.

The great thing about bringing questions to God is that “[He] fainteth not, neither is weary ... there is no searching of his understanding.”

How can God know all that is going on in my life and the direction my life is heading? When such questions arise in our

minds, we're doing what the Jews did when they wondered if God had forgotten about them or had no direction for them. At that time they asserted: "My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God." Even when we are experiencing those "dry seasons" when we wonder if God has forgotten about us or has any direction for us, God is present, He knows us, and He knows what we need. That is why He is God and we are not. We cannot even begin to fathom His understanding. He never tires or grows weary of our question and needs. God is without equal in His knowledge, and His infinite wisdom points to His holiness.

QUESTION 3:

When have you felt that God was unaware or uninvolved in your circumstances?

Isaiah 40:29-31

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

When I was in my early twenties, I thought I was invincible. In my physical prime, I lived much of my life outside doing some sort of physical activity. The problem is, now that I'm pushing forty, I still feel like I'm in great shape. Recently we went rock climbing as a family. We suited up, locked into our harnesses, and began racing to the top. In the beginning, I was in first place by a mile, but then

halfway up, I had to stop and take a breather. I was gasping for breath and my hands were cramping up. Before I realized what was happening, my thirteen-year-old daughter was far above me, ringing the bell to indicate that she had reached the peak. To me, the sound of that bell was saying, “Hey Dad, I’m in better shape than you!” It’s moments like these that humble us and remind us of our own weaknesses.

Facing our weaknesses is not limited to physical limitations. We can struggle spiritually. We can feel weak when it comes to maintaining good relationships, struggling with temptation, or enduring difficulties at home or work. We may want to do the right thing, but we can’t stand on our own. Thankfully, God can sustain us. In fact, God is the only One who can sustain us. To sustain means to strengthen or support mentally or physically. And we all need to be strengthened and supported, even when we are young. No one can sustain himself nonstop; we all have limits.

QUESTION 4:

When have you felt especially sustained or supported by God?

But we don’t have to remain held down by our limitations. We can renew our strength when we confidently look to God and His Word to fill us. We can rest in the truth that God is all we need. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”

Verse 31 gives the meat to the promise of God’s sustaining power: “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.” The Hebrew word *qavah*, translated *wait*, is a rich word. It captures the idea of a sure confidence that what God says will happen. Waiting is a confident and eager expectation that God will come through. Waiting is fully leaning on His Word.

So when we wait on and trust God to sustain us, we not only renew our strength, but we rise to new heights. We “shall mount up

with wings as eagles.” We don’t just *survive* in this life; we *thrive*. All this happens because of the God we serve. God is holy in that He is the only One who can sustain us and provide what we need at just the right time and in just the right measure. He truly is without equal, and we can stand when we rest in His holiness.

QUESTION 5:

How can God use our group to help us soar, run, and walk in our spiritual journey?

DIGGING DEEPER**THE EAGLE: A SYMBOL OF STRENGTH**

Every culture embraces certain animals as symbols of human strengths. We acclaim the lion as the king of the beasts. Like the lion, we view the eagle as a symbol of strength and authority, which is why our country embraced it as our national bird.

From Babylon to Rome, the eagle was a common military and royal symbol in the ancient world. Often the writers of the Old Testament applied the imagery of the eagle to the conquering armies of Babylon (Jer. 48:40; 1:8) and Persia (Isa. 46:11) that came against God’s people.

As you examine the various qualities of the eagle you see

what captured the imagination of the writers of Scripture. The most common characteristic of the eagle is soaring. The eagle’s ability to stay aloft was a thing of mystery to the wise men (Prov. 30:19), as well as a picture of divine protection (Ex. 19:4). Another major characteristic of the eagle is its ability to strike a killing blow (Deut. 28:49; Job 9:26; Jer. 48:40; 49:22; Hab. 1:8). Coupled with its striking ability is the quality of speed (2 Sam. 1:23; Jer. 4:13; Lam. 4:19).

What keeps us young and renews our strength—regardless of our biological age—is God’s commitment to us and our relationship with Him.

Rick W. Byargeon, “The Eagle: A Symbol of Strength,” *Biblical Illustrator*, Winter 2012-13, 47-49.

LIVE IT OUT

In light of the holiness of God, how will you live this week?

- ▶ **Thank Him.** Thank God for His uniqueness and holiness. Thank Him for His incredible power, infinite wisdom, and gracious sustaining work in your life.
- ▶ **Trust Him.** Only God has the power and wisdom to save you, help you, and sustain you. Consider any areas of life where you might have questioned Him or relied more on yourself. Commit to trusting Him with all your life.
- ▶ **Be holy.** God is holy, and He calls us to follow Him and be holy as well. Commit to living a life set apart for Him. Memorize 1 Peter 1:15-16: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

