

Behold Our God
Session 6: The Omniscience and Omnipresence of God
(Select Scriptures)

Introduction:

Before we start tonight, I want to share with you something that really struck me in my time with the Lord yesterday.

I read John 1. In this chapter we see the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the calling of His first disciples. In John 1:43, Jesus finds Phillip in Galilee and tells him, "Follow me." Do you know what Phillip did after he was called by Jesus to follow Him? He went and found his friend Nathanael and told him that he had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael responds by asking Phillip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" and I love Phillip's response: "Come and see."

One of my pastor friends recently shared a survey that was conducted by churchgrowth.org. Churchgrowth.org simply asked the question "Why do people start attending church?" Here's their findings:

- Advertisement: 2%
- Organized Visit: 6%
- Invite from a Pastor: 6%
- Invite from a Friend: 86%

I am in the schools on a regular basis. I have invited unchurched students to come to church on multiple occasions. I am still waiting for the first student to accept my invitation. The reality is that your invitation means far more than mine. All I'm calling you to do is what Phillip did with his friend Nathanael: invite your unchurched friends to "Come and see." Come and see Jesus. I promise you, if they come, they will see Jesus in His Word.

In regard to Winter Retreat, we have 6 spots open. We can fill those spots. In regard to Wednesday nights, we have many empty chairs. We can fill those chairs. Invite, invite, invite. The worst they can say is "No."

Recently, I picked up a copy of Walter Isaacson's new biography of Elon Musk. It's the story of Elon Musk's life up to this point. Elon Musk is one of the most fascinating people alive today.

He is the CEO and/or the co-founder of several huge companies: SpaceX, PayPal, Twitter, Neuralink, OpenAI, The Boring Company (Infrastructure [especially tunnels]), and of course, Tesla. He is also the world's wealthiest person, with a net worth of \$264.2 billion; many believe that he will be the world's first trillionaire.

The more of his biography that I have read, the more convinced I have become that Elon Musk is one of the most brilliant people to have ever lived. He has no ordinary intellect; even as a child, he read the Encyclopedia for fun. Who does that? He has an incredible amount of knowledge about so many different things: rockets, cars, social media, artificial intelligence, you name it, he probably knows more about it than you do. He also has an incredible capacity to lead several large companies at the same time. It's almost like he can be in more than one place at the same time.

The reality is that as impressive as Elon Musk is, he has his limits. Even though he is incredibly intelligent, he doesn't know everything. Even though he is able to lead several big companies at the same time, he can't be everywhere at once.

Tonight, you are in for another two-for-one special. We have gotten a week behind in our series, so this evening, we'll be studying two attributes of God: His omniscience and His omnipresence.

Just like in previous weeks, we will answer the following three questions:

- 1) What does it mean for God to be omniscient and omnipresent?
- 2) Where does the Bible teach that God is omniscient and omnipresent?
- 3) What difference does God's omniscience and omnipresence make in our lives?

Take Home Truth: God is omniscient and omnipresent.

I. What does it mean for God to be omniscient and omnipresent?

A. Omniscience

1. Just like we did with God's omnipotence, let's break down the words omniscience and omnipresence to see what they mean.
2. Two Parts:
 - a) Omni
 - (i) Once again, this is the latin word for "all"
 - b) Scient (Science)
 - (i) "knowing"
3. So put it all together, omniscience means "all knowing".
4. This is exactly what we mean when we say that God is omniscient; He knows everything."
5. Listen to how AW Tozer explains it: "To say that God is omniscient is to say that He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn. But it is more: it is to say that God has never learned and cannot learn."¹
 - a) He goes on to say:
 - (i) "God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits,

¹ AW Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 55.

all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.”²

6. God is the only true “know it all” (and I mean that in the absolute best way).
7. God is infinite in knowledge. He knows everything about everything.
 - a) Try to wrap your mind around that.

B. Omnipresence

1. Two Parts
 - a) Omni
 - (i) “All”
 - b) Present
 - (i) “To be in a particular place”
 - (ii) “Here”
2. So put it all together, omnipresent means “All here” or “All present”
3. God is the “all present” God.
 - a) He is everywhere
4. As Tozer writes, “God is everywhere here, close to everything, next to everyone.”³

Application:

So God knows everything and He is everywhere. This is what we mean when we say that God is omniscient and omnipresent.

Any questions so far?

Of course, just like His omnipotence, God’s omniscience and omnipresence are incommunicable attributes. There is no other being that can claim these two attributes: only God.

Next, let’s explore where the Bible teaches that God is omniscient and omnipresent.

II. Where does the Bible teach that God is omniscient and omnipresent?

A. God’s Omniscience

1. God’s Understanding (Knowledge) is Unsearchable (Ps. 147:5; Rom. 11:33)

² AW Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 56.

³ *Ibid.*, 74.

- a) Psalm 147:5: Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.
 - (i) The psalmist declares that God’s knowledge can’t be measured (it’s “beyond measure”)
 - (a) In other words, His knowledge is infinite
 - b) As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 11:33:
 - (i) Romans 11:33: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
 - (a) The depth of God’s knowledge is vast beyond all measure.
2. The Bible gives us multiple examples of God’s knowledge that is beyond measure. Here’s just a few:
- a) The Bible says that God has never learned anything (Isaiah 40:13-14):
 - (i) Isaiah 40:13-14: 13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? 14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?
 - (a) Of course, the answer to Isaiah’s question is no one.
 - (b) God has never had a teacher or needed a teacher.
 - (c) Listen to Tozer comment on this truth: “He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything”⁴
 - (i) I don’t know about you, but I feel like I learn new things every single day.
 - (a) I’m surprised all of the time. I discover new things all of the time.
 - (b) Not so with God.
 - (c) Why is this the case? Because His knowledge is beyond measure.
 - b) God knows everything about the past, present and future (Isaiah 46:8-11)
 - (i) Isaiah 46:8-11: 8 “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ 11 calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.”

⁴ AW Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 56.

- (a) He is the God who declared the end from the beginning.
 - (b) Everything that has happened and will happen, God already knows about it.
 - (i) In fact, it's all part of His eternal plan
 - (c) How is this possible? God is omniscient
- c) God knows everything about His creation
 - (i) As an example, He knows all of the stars in the universe by name
 - (a) Psalm 147:4: 4 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.
 - (i) As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, when we studied God's omnipotence, there are approximately 200 sextillion stars (200 billion trillion) in the universe, and the Bible says He knows them all by name
 - (ii) That's amazing!
 - (ii) But the main focus of the Bible, as it relates to God's knowledge of His creation, is His infinite knowledge of all of His image bearers
 - (a) The truth is that God knows everything about every single human being (This includes you and me)
 - (i) He knew you before you even existed
 - (a) Psalm 139:13-16: 13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.
 - (i) In eternity past, He saw you and He knew you
 - (ii) In His book He wrote the days that were formed for you.
 - (iii) Then He knit you together in your mother's womb

- (iv) You are intricately woven together by God, fearfully and wonderfully made
- (v) No one has known you and loved you for longer than God.
- (ii) He knows everything that you have ever done
 - (a) Psalm 33:13-15: 13 The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; 14 from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, 15 he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.
 - (i) He sees you
 - (ii) He observes all of your deeds
- (iii) He knows every thought that you have ever had
 - (a) 1 Chronicles 28:9: 9 “And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.
 - (i) He searches all hearts
 - (ii) He fully understands every plan and thought you have ever had
- (iv) He knows every secret and every sin that you have ever committed
 - (a) Psalm 90:8 (a prayer of Moses): 8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.
 - (b) There are no secrets with God.
 - (b) He knows you better than you know yourself.
 - (c) His knowledge of you is perfect. Why? Because He is omniscient.
- (iii) So the clear teaching of the Bible is that He is omniscient. But what about His omnipresence?

B. God’s Omnipresence

1. God’s presence can’t be contained (2 Chron. 2:5-6)

- a) **2 Chronicles 2:5-6: 5 The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods. 6 But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him?**
- (i) **This is Solomon, near the beginning of his reign**
 - (ii) **His desire was to build the temple, where God's presence would dwell**
 - (iii) **But Solomon recognizes that God's presence can't be contained in a temple, because His presence can't even be contained by the highest heaven.**
 - (iv) **Why? Because He is omnipresent!**
2. **God's presence fills the heavens and the earth (Jer. 23:23-24)**
- a) **Jeremiah 23:23-24: 23 "Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? 24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.**
- (i) **God declares two glorious truths about Himself and His presence in this passage: He is Transcendent and Immanent.⁵**
 - (a) **He is Transcendent**
 - (i) **The Bible teaches that there is a Creator/Creation distinction**
 - (ii) **God is exalted, above all of His creation**
 - (iii) **His transcendence speaks of His control and authority over everyone and everything⁶**
 - (iv) **He is the self-existent, self-sufficient, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God who not only fills the heaven and the earth, but is over the heaven and the earth as well.**
 - (b) **He is Immanent**
 - (i) **As God says of Himself in v. 23, He is a God at hand.**
 - (ii) **He is a God who is near and present with His creation, especially His covenant people.⁷**
 - (iii) **While God is transcendent, He isn't distant.**
 - (a) **He isn't like the God of the Deists, who simply sets things into motion and lets everything be**

⁵ J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT, 501.

⁶ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/divine-transcendence-immanence/>

⁷ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/divine-transcendence-immanence/>

- (iv) No, God is immanent, intimately involved and present with His creation.
 - (c) Because God is both Transcendent and Immanent, there is no man or woman who can hide from God.
 - (i) God sees us at all times.
 - (ii) His presence is inescapable (just listen to King David)
3. God's presence is inescapable (Ps. 139:7-10)
- a) Psalm 139:7-10: 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.
 - (i) David asks, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?"
 - (ii) His response in vv. 8-10 makes clear that the answer is nowhere.
 - (a) You can't escape the presence of the omnipresent.
 - (iii) If you ascend to heaven, God is there.
 - (iv) If you make your bed in Sheol, God is there.
 - (v) From the highest part of the sky, to the greatest depth of the sea, God is there.
 - (vi) He is everywhere!!!
 - b) Now before we move on from this passage, the idea of God being present in Sheol (v. 8) brings up some important theological questions:
 - (i) What is Sheol? Is it the same as hell?
 - (a) Sheol is the Hebrew word for the place of the dead.
 - (b) The Greek NT equivalent is "hades"
 - (c) There are so many unknowns as it relates to "Sheol" or "Hades" but here is what the Bible seems to teach about it:
 - (i) It is the temporary home of the souls of the dead.
 - (a) The keyword here is "temporary"
 - (b) There appears to be a part of Sheol that is referred to by Jesus as "Paradise" or "Abraham's Bosom", where the dead in Christ enter into His presence
 - (c) There is also a part of Sheol where the souls of those who die outside of Christ go, which is described as a place of fire, suffering, and anguish

(see the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31).

- (ii) The Bible teaches that the souls of the dead will remain in Sheol until two key future events:
 - (a) For the dead in Christ, their souls will remain in heaven/paradise until the final resurrection, when Christ returns (see 1 Cor. 15)
 - (b) For those who die outside of Christ, their souls will remain in Sheol until the final, Great White Throne Judgment, during which they will be cast into hell (see Rev. 20:11-15)
- (d) So let's not confuse Sheol for Hell.
 - (i) The Bible uses entirely different words for Hell:
 - (a) Hinnom in the Hebrew
 - (b) Gehenna in the Greek⁸
 - (e) Sheol is the place of the dead, and David makes it very clear that God is present there.
 - (f) But this leads us to ask an additional question....
- (ii) What about hell? Is God present in hell?
 - (a) This is a tough question because if God isn't present in hell, then wouldn't that bring into question His omnipresence?
 - (b) Let's evaluate what the Scripture says about hell and God's presence:
 - (i) 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10: 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.
 - (ii) So it appears that Paul teaches that those who die outside of Christ will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord.
 - (a) It appears from this text that hell is a place where God isn't present.
 - (iii) But then you have Revelation 14:9-11:
 - (a) Revelation 14:9-11: 9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying

⁸ <https://www.gotquestions.org/sheol-hades-hell.html>

with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

(b) The Apostle John seems to indicate that the eternal punishment that those who die outside of Christ will endure will take place in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb.

(i) And of course, who is the Lamb? Jesus Christ

(c) So in Revelation 14, it appears that God is present in hell, whereas, in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 it appears that God isn't.

(i) So what gives? How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

(c) I believe that there is no contradiction at all. This is an example of where our English translations don't necessarily do justice to the original language.

(i) In 2 Thessalonians 1:9 the Greek word “prosopou” (προσώπου) is translated, “the presence”⁹

(ii) Whereas in Revelation 14:10, the Greek word “enopion” (ἐνώπιον) is translated, “the presence”

(iii) “Prosopou” and “Enopion” are two very different Greek words with different meanings (though they are translated the same in our English Bibles, which is a mistake!)

(a) Prosopou (2 Thess. 1:9)

⁹ https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_thessalonians/1-9.htm

- (i) Prosopou comes from the Greek word “prosopon”, which means “face”.¹⁰
 - (b) Enopion (Rev. 14:10)
 - (i) Enopion comes from the Greek word “enopios”, which means “before” or “in sight of”¹¹
- (iv) So I think the ESV’s rendering of Revelation 14:10 is spot on. However, the ESV’s translation of 2 Thessalonians 1:9 misses the mark. It would be better translated....
 - (a) “9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might,
- (v) I’ll go ahead and put my cards on the table: I believe that God in His omnipresence is present in hell, just like Revelation 14:10 teaches.
- (vi) But I believe it is a place where, as Paul teaches in 2 Thess. 1:9, God will turn His face away from those who died in their sin. It will be just like when He turned His face away from Jesus while He was the cross, bearing the sins of all humanity.
 - (a) As Theologian Louis Berkhof suggests, God turning His face away means a removal of God’s favor. Therefore, hell is a place totally absent of God’s favor¹²
 - (b) Hell is a place where God’s face will shine on no one, though He will still be present there.
 - (c) I know this is a lot to grasp; do you have any questions?

Application:

¹⁰ <https://biblehub.com/greek/4383.htm>

¹¹ <https://biblehub.com/greek/1799.htm>

¹² <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-in-hell.html>

So the clear teaching of the Bible is that God is omniscient and omnipresent. He knows everything and He is everywhere. I hope at this point, you would be able to direct others to certain passages of Scripture that teach these glorious truths.

Now, let's briefly consider what difference God's omniscience and omnipresence makes in our lives.

III. What difference does God's omniscience and omnipresence make in our lives?

A. For the believer, God's omniscience and omnipresence are overwhelmingly comforting and encouraging.

1. Consider God's omniscience; He knows everything about you.

- a) As I like to say, He knows the good, the bad, and the ugly.**
- b) And He doesn't just know some of it; He knows all of it, perfectly.**
- c) In fact, He knew all of it, in eternity past.**
- d) Yet, for those who are in Christ, He knew you and set His love upon you:**

(i) Ephesians 1:3-6: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

(a) Knowing all of your messed up thoughts, words, and actions, He decided to make a way for you to be saved.

(i) In Christ, God has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

(ii) In love, He predestined His covenant people to be adopted into His family as His sons and daughters

(a) From His enemy to His child; this is true of you if you are in Jesus Christ

(b) He chose to make all of this possible for you, knowing all of your good and all of your bad.

(c) This is amazing!

2. Consider God's omnipresence: He is with you always.

- a) The same God who has chosen to save you, knowing all of your sins, has also chosen to be present with you as well.**
- b) In fact, He has promised to be present with you, always.**

- (i) God has promised you, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)
- (ii) This is a precious promise that Jesus makes at the very end of the Great Commission:
 - (a) Matthew 28:20: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
 - (b) Notice, Jesus commands us to behold Him and the precious promise of His constant presence with us.
- (iii) And the amazing thing is that we know that not only is He always present with us. He is always present in us, because He has given us His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11).
- (iv) The day is coming when Jesus will return and we will see Him, face to face, and be with Him forever.
 - (a) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18: 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

3. My prayer is that God’s omniscience and omnipresence brings you comfort and encouragement tonight.

a) You should be comforted and encouraged if you are a believer.

B. For the unbeliever, God’s omniscience and omnipresence are overwhelmingly terrifying.

1. He knows all of your sins and if your sins haven’t been dealt with at the cross of Christ, they will be dealt with at the judgment.

2. Unbeliever, if nothing changes, here is your future:

a) Revelation 20:11-15: 11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

3. You cannot escape the wrath of the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God.

4. My plea for you tonight is to repent of your sins and place your faith in Jesus.

Conclusion:

The God who knows everything and is everywhere has invited you into a relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

Application Questions:

- What does it mean for God to be omniscient and omnipresent?
- What specifically does the Bible teach regarding God's knowledge of you, as His image bearer?
 - He knew you before you even existed (Ps. 139:13-16)
 - He knows everything that you have ever done (Ps. 33:13-15)
 - He knows every thought that you have ever had (1 Chron. 28:9)
 - He knows every one of your secrets and He knows every sin that you have ever committed (Ps. 90:8)
- What does it mean for God to be transcendent? What does it mean for God to be immanent?
- Can you think of an example of someone in the Bible who tried to flee from God's presence? What happened?
- How should believers respond to the truth of God's omniscience and omnipresence? How should unbelievers respond?

What is your main takeaway from tonight's message?