

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

SERMON SERIES

TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, Biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series is exactly what you're looking for.

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete sermon outlines and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

SERIES OVERVIEW FOR *GOD IS*

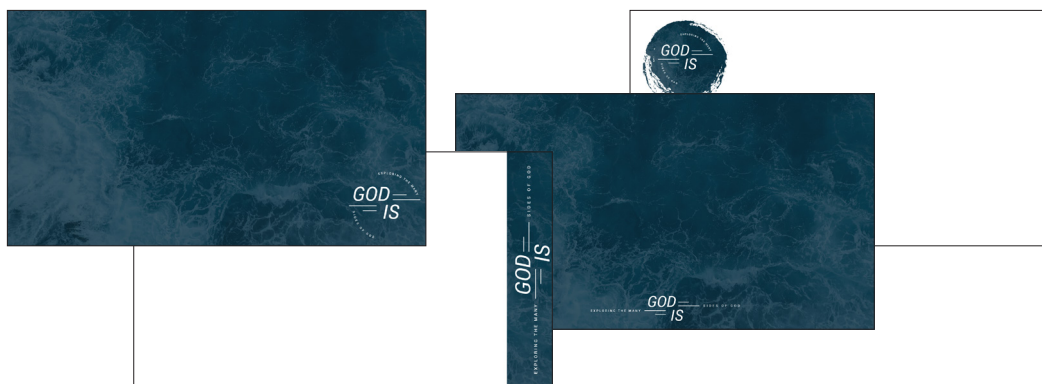
What's the most important thing about you? All of us would answer this question in different ways, but maybe there's something about us as people that's more important than any of these things – how we think about God. If that's true – even partially – then what we think about God is a huge deal. And that's why in this series, we're going to try to find out who and what and how God really is.

- **SESSION 1:** God Is Extraordinary: You'll introduce students to the idea that God is greater than our imagination, and that what we think about when we think about God speaks volumes.
- **SESSION 2:** God Is Ordinary: You'll help students understand that God often subverts our expectations of what we think He should be, and what that means for our understanding of Him.
- **SESSION 3:** God Is Involved: To teach students that God is not a higher cosmic power who isn't interested in what we think of Him. He is affected when He is rejected.
- **SESSION 4:** God Is Set Apart: You'll help students understand that while He loves us, God is so other, so different from us. But we don't need to despair; God is different so He can make a difference.

BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

BACKGROUND AND TITLE SLIDES



PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK



INSTAGRAM IMAGES



LOGO TREATMENT



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

God Is Sermon Series Overview

The Sermon Series Overview is a one-page glimpse of the stuff you need to know to begin preparing to preach.

- **Session 1 Purpose:** You'll help students understand the idea that God is greater than our imagination, and that what we think about when we think about God speaks volumes.
- **Scripture Passage(s):** Isaiah 40:12-18
- **Session Snapshot:** How do you think about God? How do you picture Him? What emotions and feelings surface when you consider Him? God is extraordinary, greater than we can ever imagine, and He is more than what we're looking for.
- **What You May Need:** Optional wigs, sound effects, props, or costumes for "Pictures of God" illustration (may also use images); Optional "What Would You Do for a Klondike Bar" commercial video for "What Would You Do?" illustration; various other images to supplement any optional illustrations.

Details on *God Is* Sermon Series Outlines

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As we look at God from these four different perspectives, students will start to get a better picture of all that God is.

How To Use the *God Is* Sermon Series

This sermon series outline is designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. It provides various elements such as suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you will need to prepare your lesson. It also includes discussion questions that could be used in in a small group following the message, and artwork for promotion or message support.

These sermons are designed to be useful for all types of groups and churches, and you should feel free to make adjustments that benefit your particular circumstance.

I. Optional Intro: Pictures of God

What's the most important thing about us as people? All of us would answer this question in different ways. Your answer might be your height or your heritage or your hobby. Your answer might be your sense of humor or your sense of style or your sense of community. Or your answer might be how you use your talent or how you spend your time or how you plan your future.

But today we want to suggest that there's something about us as people that is more important than any of these things. That something is what we think about God. A writer named A.W. Tozer said this: "What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us . . . The most important fact about any man is not what he at any time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."

Maybe you agree with Tozer, or maybe you don't. But even if he's only partially right, what we think about God is a huge deal. So what do you think about God? Maybe you picture Him something like this:

[Tip: Be creative with how you use the following examples. You might want to have a student represent each type with costumes and wigs. You could utilize sound effects and props if possible. If you're limited on resources, you might find images that give a visual representation of each idea. Add a personal touch by considering times when you've seen God in these characters and how it impacted your faith.]

God as distant grandfather: In this picture, God is an aloof old man who is not interested in our daily activities. He's grumpy, keeps to Himself and does not want to be bothered. The distant grandfather picture paints God as disconnected from our lives.

God as vending machine: In this picture, God is an open resource who gives us whatever we need or want. God is there for us so we can get from Him what we want at our convenience. He is a vending machine that caters to our needs and desires. We call the shots in this picture.

God as angry police officer: This is a picture of God on the prowl. He rides around in His cop car just waiting for one of His children to mess up. This perception is of a God with a mean and unloving spirit. He does not care about the well-being of His children. His primary interest is to punish anyone who disobeys His law.

God as paramedic: This is the God who's there when we call 911. He is there strictly for emergencies. When we face tragedy or trouble, we call the paramedic, and He saves us. He is always on call but only needed in emergencies. He is not involved in our daily lives.

God as teddy bear: The picture of God as teddy bear is full of love, kindness, warmth, cuteness, and innocence. This God makes us feel good about ourselves. He would never think of saying anything about our shortcomings or faults. He is there to cuddle and make us feel safe. He is gentle and gives us something warm to snuggle with.

Do you see your own view of God in these descriptions? If so, maybe God's not who you think He is. Perhaps He's not a teddy bear or a paramedic or any other picture we might create. After all, just because we think God is something doesn't mean He really is like that. So it's vital that we find God as

He is and not as we think He should be. It's crucial that we think about God correctly. Whatever God is, it's worth the journey for us to try to discover Him.

That's what we're going to try to do in this series. We're going to try to find out who and what and how God really is. And as we do, we'll discover that He's both extraordinary and ordinary and that He's both close to us, involved in our lives, and completely other than us. As we look at God from these different perspectives, we will start to get a better picture of all that God is. This is a journey worth taking, so let us start thinking about what God is by seeing how God is greater than our imagination.

Let's discover why.

II. Background

Isaiah is an Old Testament book of prophecy, and it can be broken up into two sections. Chapters 1-39 deal with the judgment Israel faces because it has turned away from God. Chapters 40-66 deal with the comfort of being God's people who will eventually be restored. These two remarkably different sections, then, focus on two different facets of who God is.

Chapter 40, which is where we're focusing today, begins the new tone in Isaiah's message. It begins as Isaiah speaks comfort for Israel even as the nation was held captive by the Babylonians. As he prophesied about this comfort, Isaiah told the Israelites that they could trust that the pain and suffering they were experiencing were not the end because their God was extraordinary.

III. Explanation

[Read Isaiah 40:12-18.]

God is extraordinary. He is so big and so powerful that it's impossible to describe Him fully. That's why Isaiah chose to use pictures here. We get the picture of God holding up His hand and measuring the entire universe between His fingers. This picture tells us that God, who created everything, controls it all too. That means that all the accomplishments of all the nations are just a drop in the bucket compared to what God has done and can do. The power of God is extraordinary.

But that's not all. In verses 13 and 14, Isaiah uses rhetorical questions to remind us that none of us can tell God what to do. None of us can teach God anything. Most of all, none of us can completely understand the way God thinks or acts. The mind of God is extraordinary.

Isaiah sums it all up in verse 18 with one more rhetorical question: "To whom, then, will you compare God?" The answer is that God is beyond comparison. He is extraordinary, and no picture we use – not even the pictures Isaiah used – can fully imagine our God. Our extraordinary God is greater than our imagination.

IV. Optional Illustration: Blue Whales and Red Giants

[Tip: Find images of massive things that show their scale comparatively. Scroll through them as you talk.]

The biggest animal in the world is the blue whale. If you were to stand beside one of these, you would look about as big as a peanut. But if you put 100 blue whales in a big basket, dozens of those baskets would fit inside Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. The blue whale is enormous compared to us, but small compared to Mount Everest. As big as Mount Everest is, it is just a speck on the Earth. And as big as the Earth is, it is dwarfed by the sun. As big as the sun is, it is tiny compared to the red giant superstar called Antares. As big as Antares is, it is just a dot in the Milky Way. And the Milky Way is just a fraction of the universe.

As immense as the universe is, God holds it in the palm of his hand. This is one of the pictures Isaiah paints in this passage, and even this picture isn't nearly enough to describe how extraordinary God is.

But God doesn't stop at just being a "bigger-than-we-can-possibly-imagine" giant in the sky. God's ways are higher: there have been lots of very aspirational humans who have lived on Earth, but none of them come close to God (except . . . you know . . . Jesus). God is extraordinary in every possible way.

V. Application

We see in this passage that God is extraordinary – so extraordinary that God is greater than our imagination. It may seem odd at first to think that not being able to imagine God could be a comforting thought. After all, we love to be in the know, and we operate in a society that allows us 24/7 access to news so we can feed that need.

But sometimes we long for something greater than our imagination. Sometimes knowing everything makes things feel too small and too manageable. But God is more than you're looking for. We can never know everything about God, and that's comforting because it means that we haven't made God in our own image. Thank goodness that God is greater than our imagination.

VI. Optional Illustration: What Would You Do?

In the 1980s, there was a weird commercial series for Klondike bars, a square of ice cream, coated in a hard chocolate shell. An interviewer would hold out a Klondike bar to people on the street, and ask them what they would do to get one.

[Tip: If possible or desired, find a version of this commercial on YouTube to show.]

People would act like a chicken, act like a monkey, have knives thrown at them, all in the name of grabbing a Klondike bar. But people get weird about Klondike bars off-screen. In 2012, a man broke into a couple's home, started making an elaborate meal with the lobster and steak he found in their fridge, then made off with a box of Klondike bars. A couple of 16-year-olds were arrested for stealing a box of Klondike bars and a cell phone in 2009. In 2015, a man hit his wife with a coffee mug for eating all the Klondike bars. People love their Klondike bars.

These people probably couldn't fully articulate their love for Klondike bars, and surely you and I can't possibly imagine loving a sub-par ice cream sandwich so much that we hit our spouse with a coffee mug. It just doesn't make sense to our brains. Their love for Klondike bars is so outrageous, so much bigger than we can imagine, it kind of blows our minds. It's beyond our imagination. We can't fully understand it.

In a similar way (well, sort of), we cannot fully understand God. He is greater than our imagination; He is wiser than we hoped, He is more powerful than we dreamed. He is better than any thought we could ever have of Him. It is great news that God is extraordinary.

VII. Closing

What we think about when we think about God is important. And it's equally as important to admit that we cannot fully comprehend who He is, and His greatness. Our brains can only take us so far, but let's give it a shot.

I want you to close your eyes and imagine this God, who does things we cannot understand, who is bigger than time and space and dimension.

Who commands the waves, who pushes life out of seeds and humans, who sets the planets in space.

Imagine a God who can shut the mouths of hungry lions.

Imagine a God who can guide a stone to a giant's head.

Imagine a God who can part the sea.

Imagine a God who measures the heavens with His hands. And then imagine an extraordinary God who is even greater than all this, because God is greater than our imagination.

Small Group Discussion Questions

You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your sermon, or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to help students think critically about the sermon and what it means to them.

1. What picture of God do you most often tend to have? What's right about that picture? What's wrong with that picture?
2. Why is it important that God is extraordinary?
3. What pictures did Isaiah use to describe God? What is extraordinary about each of these pictures?
4. Why do you think Isaiah used these pictures?
5. Do you think Isaiah believed he had completely described God here? Why or why not?
6. Why is it important that God is greater than our imagination?
7. How does the reality that God is greater than our imagination make you feel?