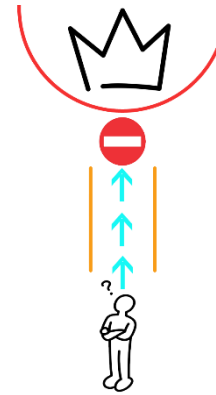


Module One: The Unknowable God- Talk Outline

1 God's grace compels us to evangelise 2 Cor 4:1-2,6

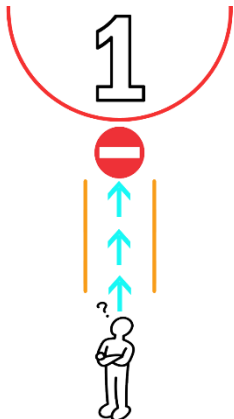
2 Why Eastern Orthodoxy?

3 The Foundation of Orthodoxy



The unknowable God
of Orthodoxy

Negative theology="apophatic" theology=God cannot be truly known



The unknowable "One"
of neo-Platonic thought

Module One: The Unknowable God- Group Time

The Orthodox View of God	What do our Orthodox friends need to hear?
When you ask your Orthodox friends, they may describe God as distant and unknowable.	Discuss what you would say to them

1 God's View of Knowing God

Read Isaiah 6:1-4

1 How does Isaiah's vision support the idea of the separateness and unapproachability of God?

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Read Isaiah 6:5

2 What problem does Isaiah realise he has in being in the presence of God?

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Read Isaiah 6:6-7

3 What is the solution for Isaiah?

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Isaiah has a vision of God who is the separate ruler above all creation. Yet what separates us from him is not distance, but sin. God will welcome those whose sin is taken away by a sacrifice in their place.

For God wants people to know him.

Read John 1:1-5, 14-18

1 By stating that "no one has seen God" verse 18 implies that God is beyond us and our knowledge.

Then how does this Word know about God (v18)? Who must he be?

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2 Why can Jesus be trusted to tell us the truth about God?

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3 We cannot bridge the chasm between the physical universe and God in order to know Him. How does John 1 tell us God solves this problem?

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.....

2 Exercise: Share your Experience

Orthodox people highly value the "experience of God." It will be helpful for them to hear your confidence that you know God truly.

If you have time, in pairs practice explaining to one another how you are certain you know the truth about the God (you could use the above Bible passages)

3 In small groups share the names of your Orthodox friends and pray that God in His mercy would make Himself known to them through His Gospel.

Write them here so you can keep them in prayer.

4 Before Session Two

- Ask your friends what being Orthodox means to them
 - What do they believe?
 - Does God feel distant and unapproachable?
 - Do they think it's possible to know God?
- You can share the passages and questions above with them to demonstrate that though sin separates us from God (Isaiah 6), God has come to us to make Himself known in Jesus Christ (John 1)

Ask them to read *Certainty for Life: An Invitation to those in Eastern Orthodoxy* chapters 1-2 and discuss with them (available at www.certaintyforlife.com)

Recommended Books

A Christian's Pocket Guide to Eastern Orthodox Theology:

An Evangelical Perspective by Panagioti Kantartzis

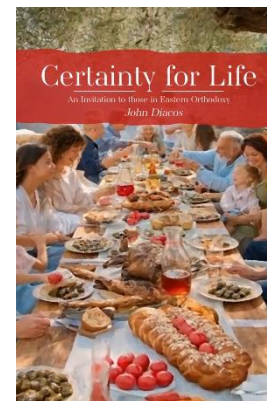
An in-depth examination of Orthodox doctrine with a response from a Reformed perspective. Not a light read but brief and highly recommended

From an Orthodox perspective:

The Orthodox Church or *The Orthodox Way* by Timothy Ware

Clearly written and accessible mainstream explanation of Orthodoxy

Two books to read with your friends:



Certainty for Life: An Invitation to Eastern Orthodoxy

by John Diacos

An evangelistic book directed at Orthodox readers

Available at certaintyforlife.com

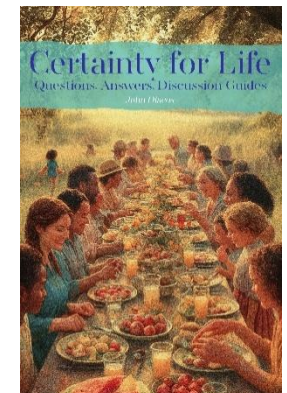


Certainty for Life: Questions, Answers, Discussion Guides

by John Diacos

A companion volume to the above, addressing common Gospel questions asked by Orthodox people

Available free at EEO.net.au



Module One: The Unknowable God – Leader's Notes

The Orthodox View of God	What do our Orthodox friends need to hear?
When you ask your Orthodox friends, they may describe God as distant and unknowable .	Discuss what you would say to them 1. It is true that God is above and outside of creation 2. But the chasm that separates us from God is caused by sin 3. and while we cannot go to God, He comes to us in Jesus

1 God's View of Knowing God

Read Isaiah 6:1–4

1 How does Isaiah's vision support the idea of the separateness and unapproachability of God?

v1– he is on a throne= the ruler; a high throne=above and separate from what he rules – in fact the entire vision is of the heavenly temple– so separate from creation– confirmed by the declaration of the seraphim in v3 that God is the holiest (3x holy= the most holy/holiest)

v3– seraphim declare him glorious– reinforced by smoke in v4– recalls the glory of God cf Ex 40:34, Rev 15:8

v2– God is unapproachable even by the heavenly beings who must cover themselves

Read Isaiah 6:5

2 What problem does Isaiah realise he has in being in the presence of God?

he is in the presence of the King

the title Lord of Armies/hosts = the conquering warrior God evokes the destruction of enemies

Faced with God's glory highlights to Isaiah not only his unworthiness but how much his sin deserves the judgement and utter destruction by God

he also recognises that this is a problem common to his people Israel/Judah, even though they are the people of God

it is a picture of the violent revolutionary who has worked to overthrow a regime who awakes to see that he is captive to their all powerful leader

Read Isaiah 6:6–7

3 What is the solution for Isaiah?

Isaiah needs his sin to be removed

only then is he acceptable to God and fit to serve Him

note

that this is isn't just any coal from a barbeque– but from "the altar" which "atones" for his sin– it is the heavenly atoning sacrifice – a death has had to be died in Isaiah's place for his forgiveness

Isaiah has a vision of God who is the separate ruler above all creation. Yet what separates us from him is not distance, but sin. God will welcome those whose sin is taken away by a sacrifice in their place.

For God wants people to know him.

Read John 1:1–5, 14–18

1 By stating that "no one has seen God" verse 18 implies that God is beyond us and our knowledge.

Then how does this Word know about God (v18)? Who must he be?

v1– was God (reinforced by v3– by definition God is the creator of all things)

vv1–2 with God from the beginning–so precedes & transcends creation as only God does

v18 "No one" has ever seen God, yet Jesus can reveal him because he is himself God

Who must he be?:

v1 – the Word

v3– the Creator

v4–5– life=light

v15,18 the one and only Son

v15 the one about whom John testified

v17 Jesus Christ

2 Why can Jesus be trusted to tell us the truth about God?

as God he *knows* the truth and it is one of his attributes (v14,17) so he what he tells us will be true

i.e. Jesus makes positive statements about God, not just telling what God is not

Jesus is God himself coming to

so while there is more to God than what has been revealed, what has been revealed is true

3 We cannot bridge the chasm between the physical universe and God in order to know Him. How does John 1 tell us God solves this problem?

God comes to us in Jesus

2 Exercise: Share your Experience

Orthodox people highly value the "experience of God." It will be helpful for them to hear your confidence that you know God truly.

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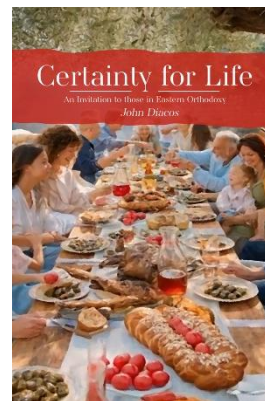
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