
The Attributes of God

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INTRO

Can we know God?

Incomprehensibility of God (Psa. 139:6,145:3; Job 26:14; Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33,34)

Knowability of God

(Jer. 9:23,24; 1 Cor. 2:2; Heb. 8:11,12; Phil. 3:10; 1 John 4:7,8)

Colossians 2

²*My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

John 17

³*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."*

Means of Revelation	Examples
actions	creating, judging, redeeming
names	"LORD"; "God Almighty"; "Master, Lord"
images	Father, Rock, Husband, Shepherd
attributes	holiness, goodness, love, grace, wrath

THEOLOGY PROPER: ATTRIBUTES

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) - Chapter 2.1 (*Of God, and of the Holy Trinity*)

"1. There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal, most just, and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."

Attributes which are Incommunicable (not shared with humanity)

- **Independence** (Acts 17:24-25; Psalm 50:10-12; John 17:5, 24; Exod. 3:14)

God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy. This attribute of God is sometimes called his self-existence or his aseity.

- **Immutability** (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Psalm 33:11; Eph. 1:4; Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29)

God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

- **Eternity** (Revelation 1:8; Psalm 90:2,4; 2 Peter 3:8)

God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.

- **Omnipresence** (Psalm 139:7-10; Jerem.23:23-24; Col. 1:17; Acts 17:28; Isa. 66:1,2)
God is unlimited with respect to space. God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.

Attributes that are Communicable (shared with humanity)

Spirit – John 4:24	Jealous – Exod. 20:5; Isa. 48:11,
Knowledge (omniscience) – 1 Jn 3:20; Heb. 4:13	Wrathful – John 3:36; Rom. 1:18
Wise – Rom. 16:27; Job 9:24	Free – Psa. 115:3; Prov. 16:9
Truthful – Jer. 10:10; Col. 3:9,10	Sovereign (omnipotent) – Jer. 32:7; Matt. 19:26
Good – Luke 18:19; James 1:17	Perfect – Matt. 5:48
Love – 1 John 4:8	Blessed – Gen. 1:31
Holy – Psa. 99:9; Isa. 6:3	Beautiful – Psa. 27:4
Righteous & Just – Deut. 32:4; Rom. 3:25,26	One - Deut. 6:4

THEOLOGY PRACTICAL: IMPLICATIONS OF ATTRIBUTES (ESV STUDY BIBLE)

Attribute	Scripture	Implication
Independence: God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy.	“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24–25; cf. Ex. 3:14; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:9–12; 90:2).	God never experiences need, so serving God should never be motivated by the thought that he needs us. He is the provider in everything.
Immutability: God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, although as he acts in response to different situations he feels emotions.	“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6; for “being,” cf. Ps. 102:25–27; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; for “purposes,” cf. Ps. 33:11; Isa. 46:9–11; for “promises,” cf. Num. 23:19; Rom. 11:29).	God can always be trusted because he always keeps his word, and is never capricious or moody.
Eternity: God has no beginning or end and is in no way bound by time, although he sees events and acts in his world in time, which is in fact one dimension of the created order.	“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Ps. 90:2; cf. Ex. 3:14; Job 36:26; Ps. 90:4; Isa. 46:9–10; John 8:58; 1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Pet. 3:8; Jude 24–25; Rev. 1:8; 4:8).	Those who trust the God of eternity can know peace, rest, and comfort in the busyness of life and in spite of impending death, for God keeps them in safety and joy forever.
Omnipresence: God does not have spatial dimensions and is present everywhere with his whole being, though he acts differently in different situations.	“Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23:23–24; cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7–10; Isa. 66:1–2; Acts 7:48–50).	God can be sought anywhere regardless of place. Believers should never feel lonely, and the wicked should never feel safe.

Attribute	Scripture	Implication
<p>Holiness: God is absolutely and uniquely excellent above all creation (majesty) and without sin (purity).</p>	<p>“And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” (Rev. 4:8; for “majestic holiness,” cf. Ex. 15:11; 1 Chron. 16:27–29; Isa. 57:15; for “moral holiness,” cf. Isa. 5:16; 6:1–8; Acts 3:14; Heb. 7:26).</p>	<p>God should be feared and obeyed, and his people should earnestly pursue moral purity.</p>
<p>Omnipotence: God is able to do all his holy will.</p>	<p>“Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 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’” (Isa. 46:9–10; cf. Ex. 6:3; Job 37:23; 40:2; 42:1–6; Ps. 24:6; 33:10–11; 91:1; Dan. 4:34–35; Matt. 28:18).</p>	<p>God's ultimate will is never frustrated by evil, so there is peace and confidence in the face of suffering for those who trust God.</p>
<p>Sovereignty: God has absolute rule over creation as King and total control and determination over all that happens.</p>	<p>“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” (Dan. 4:34–35; cf. 1 Chron. 29:11–13; Ps. 22:28; 24:1; 47:7–9; 103:19; Prov. 16:19, 21, 33; Dan. 4:25; 7:1–28; 12:1–13; Matt. 6:13; 10:29; Acts 17:26; Eph. 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:15; James 1:13–15).</p>	<p>Mankind should obey and submit to God as humble subjects of his kingdom.</p>
<p>Omniscience: God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible—past, present, and future.</p>	<p>“Whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:20; cf. Job 28:24; 37:16; Ps. 139:1–3; 147:5; Isa. 55:8–9; Matt. 10:29–30; Rom. 11:33–34; 1 Cor. 2:10–11; Heb. 4:13).</p>	<p>All God's thoughts and actions are perfectly informed by perfect knowledge, so he is perfectly trustworthy.</p>
<p>Wisdom: God always knows and chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals. Wisdom is a moral as well as an intellectual quality.</p>	<p>“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might” (Dan. 2:20; cf. Job 9:4; 12:13; Ps. 104:24; Rom. 11:33; 16:27; 1 Cor. 1:21–29; Eph. 3:10–11).</p>	<p>God's wisdom is not always clear to us, but it is great, deep, valuable, and should be highly desired and sought, and we should not doubt its reality even in circumstances that upset us.</p>
<p>Love: God freely and eternally gives of himself. The ultimate</p>	<p>“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of</p>	<p>God is eager to extravagantly give of himself</p>

<p>historical demonstration of God's love is seen in the cross of Christ.</p>	<p>God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:8-10; cf. John 3:16; 15:13; 17:24; Rom. 5:8; 8:31-39; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16; 4:16).</p>	<p>to meet the needs of lost sinners, so they should flee to him with confidence (cf. Rom. 8:32).</p>
<p>Wrath: God intensely hates and responds with anger to all sin and rebellion. God hates every threat to what he loves.</p>	<p>"Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb'" (Rev. 6:15-16; cf. Ex. 34:7; Rom. 1:18; 2:4; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Pet. 3:9).</p>	<p>God should be greatly feared. Unbelievers should fear his judgment and turn to Christ for salvation. Believers should fear God's fatherly discipline. The God who loves us is also the holy God who hates sin (1 Pet. 1:17).</p>