



# DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT MONTH

## Theology 1: Knowing God

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### The Attributes of God

Week 3 || January 21, 2024

#### 1. The Significance of Knowing God

“What comes into our mind when we think of God is the most important thing.”

- A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, P. 1

- a. Knowing God determines:
  - What we think
  - How we think
  - How we act
  - What we believe
  - How we worship
  - How we live
  - High views of God leads to a greater worship of God.
  - Low views of God leads to ungodliness/unholiness.
- b. What are attributes?
  - Characteristics of a person that uniquely defines them.

c. God's Attributes.

- Refer to His character.
  - His essence or nature
- His attributes are His perfections.

**Isaiah 6:3**

And one called out to another and said,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His glory.”

- God is always, all of His attributes, all of the time, and all of His attributes are always working together in perfect harmony.
- God's attributes are not divisible into parts.
  - He is wholly unified in His essence.

**2. The Attributes of God Categorized.**

- Theologians typically separate God's attributes in to two categories:
  - a. God's Incommunicable Attributes.
    - God's incommunicable attributes refer to those attributes that exclusively belong to God alone.
    - Those that He does not share with His creatures.
  - b. God's Communicable Attributes.
    - God's communicable attributes are those attributes that He shares with His creatures.
    - As image bearers we have these attributes in part.
    - We tend to respond to the circumstances of life with an inordinate focus on one attribute at the expense of others.
    - And when we do, we do not do it perfectly like our God does.
    - For instance: we don't always love others as God does.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

c. See Exhibit 1 at back of the notes for more detail.

### 3. **God's Sovereignty: An Example of an Incommunicable Attribute**

- God's sovereignty described in the Book of Jonah.
  - The sovereignty of God refers to His unhindered and absolute control over all that He has made (Eph. 1:11).

“His absolute independence to do as He pleases and His absolute control over the actions of all His creatures. No creature, person, or empire can either thwart His will or act outside the bounds of His will.”

- Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, p. 36

- a. Sovereign over Jonah's missionary Call (Jonah 1:2).
  - Arise | Go | Speak.
    - Imperatives/Commands.
    - Not optional.
- b. Sovereign over the elements (Jonah 1:4; 15).
  - God “causes” the wind.
  - Recall Jesus in the boat.
    - He spoke to the elements and they obeyed Him instantly (Matt. 8:23-27).
    - Personal application to consider:
      - What is your heart's posture to Jesus' Lordship over your life?
      - Do you obey His commands immediately like the elements? Or....
      - Do you flee His commands like Jonah?
- c. Sovereign over creation/creatures (Jonah 1:17; 2:10; 4:6-8).
  - “Appointed” the great fish.
    - Verb – “assigning,” with the nuance of something given a responsibility.
  - God has absolute power—sovereignty—over His creation. (Ps. 62:11; Rom. 1:20)

#### **Psalm 62:11**

Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this:  
That power belongs to God;

- “Appointed” the plant, the worm, and the east wind.

- Personal application to consider:
  - What is your heart's posture towards God sovereignly appointing the various trials in your life?
  - Grumbling and complaining; accusing and being angry at God like Jonah? Or....
  - Do you see trials as God orchestrating opportunities for you to change—to become more like Christ?

d. Sovereign over salvation (Jonah 3:5, 10)

**Romans 3:29**

Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?  
Yes, of Gentiles also

**4. God's Goodness: An Example of a Communicable Attribute**

- God's goodness is that quality of His essence that makes Him profoundly generous to His creatures.
  - The term "good" when used to describe God, describes His essential disposition to bring benefits and advantages to His creatures.
- a. God's goodness is described according to the following characteristics:
- God is inherently good.
    - God is the standard of goodness.
  - God is infinitely good.
    - His goodness defines all of His attributes.
  - God is immutably good.
    - God is good all the time; His goodness never changes.
- b. God's goodness does not mean He denies Himself in order to exercise judgment.
- His judgement is good.
    - He is patient toward sinners.
    - He offers the free gift of salvation to anyone who wants it.
    - And, He exercises righteousness in discipline and judgement.

c. What God's Goodness Demands from us.

- Believe that God is good.
- Accept that all God's ways are good (Ps. 84:11).
- Respond to God's manifold goodness with gratitude (Ps. 100:4–5; 103:1–2; 106:1; 116:12–14; 136:1; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:16–18; Heb. 13:15).
- Reflect God's goodness in your own life (Prov. 3:27; Matt. 5:44–45; Rom. 12:21; Gal. 6:9–10; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 5:22; 2 Thess. 3:13; 1 Tim. 6:18; Heb. 13:16; 3 John 11).
- Seek God as your highest good.

**5. God's Perfected Attributes: Bringing It All Together**

- It is not just that God is sovereign. Or that He is good. He is sovereignly good.
- God is wholly unified in all of his attributes all of the time.
- It is overwhelming to contemplate God—His essence—in the totality of all His perfections.
  - Simple enough for a child to accept; yet infinitely complex and multifaceted.
  - It is knowable; and yet incomprehensible.

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**Recommended Resources:**

Kevin Zuber, *The Essential Scriptures*, 2021.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 2017.

Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 2014.

Steven J. Lawson, *Show Me Your Glory*, Ligonier Ministries, 2020.

A.W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, 1993.

A.W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God*, 2007.

Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, 2008.

Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, 2019.

## **Small Group Discussion Questions:**

### **Relational**

1. As you conceptualize God, which of God's attributes do you tend to gravitate towards more than others? Why?

### **Transformational**

2. What would life be like if God's only attribute was His Sovereignty? How about if God was only good? (hint: think about what is lost if God is only good).
3. What difference does understanding God in the totality of all His perfections make in your day-to-day life?

### **Missional**

4. How does joyfully submitting to God's sovereignty open up conversations about God and the Gospel with others?
5. What attribute or attributes of God might you share/discuss with someone who:
  - is grieving the loss of a loved one
  - is struggling with guilt
  - is suffering from cancer
  - is gossiping about someone else,

and why? How does helping someone renew their mind on the truth from God's Word, help them to know God better in and through their difficult circumstances? [Hint: think about how discipleship become relational both horizontally and vertically.]

# Exhibit 1: The Attributes of God

## Incommunicable Attributes

That is those attributes that that exclusively belong to God alone that He does not share with His creatures.

### ➤ **Eternality**

He is not limited by the moments of time

He is without beginning or end

Exodus 3:14, Psalm 102:12, Hebrews 13:8

### ➤ **Immutability**

God does not change He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

God does not change in his essence, character, or purposes.

Malachi 3:6, James 1:17, Romans 11:2

### ➤ **Infinite**

Immeasurable

God has no limits or boundaries in His being or attributes He is Timeless

Psalm 147:5, Ephesians 3:20

### ➤ **Omnipotent**

God has the unlimited power to accomplish anything that can be accomplished.

The things God does are neither difficult nor easy for God; they are only either *done* or *not done*.

Romans 11:36, Ephesians 1:11, Hebrews 1:3, Jer. 32:17

### ➤ **Omnipresent**

God is everywhere present in the fullness of His being.

God is always present in all places.

Proverbs 15:3, Psalm 139:7-10, Jer. 23:23-24, Job 11:7-9, Psalm 90:1-2

### ➤ **Omniscience**

When we say God is omniscient, we mean that He knows all that there is to know there is nothing that is outside the scope of His conception, understanding, or attention.

Psalm 147:5, Eze.11:5, Rom 11:33, 1John 3:20, Hebrews 4:13, Romans 2:16

### **Self-Existent and Self-Sufficient**

“I am that I am”

The attribute of God by which He has existed eternally and will always exist so.

God does not owe His being to any other thing.

Exodus 3:14, John 1:1-5, John 5:26, Col. 1:15-17

### ➤ **Sovereignty**

○ Sovereignty tells of God's divine control over everything that happens.

There is nothing outside the control of His loving Hand.

○ sovereignty accomplishes His providence.

Psalm 115:3, Gen 14:19, Matt 10:29, 1 Peter 3:17

➤ **Transcendence**

- God is unlike any other being in our experience and so no analogy or comparison can come close to perfectly describing Him.
- His ways are so other than our ways that we cannot predict Him, categorize Him, or comprehend Him with any sort of accuracy.
- God is above and beyond his creation, yet also intimately involved with it  
Isa 55:8-9, 57:15, Psalm 113:5-6, John 8:23

**Communicable Attributes**

Attributes that God does share with human beings at least to *some* degree. God's communicable attributes generally refer to His moral attributes, God's goodness, God's justice, His love, mercy, truthfulness, wisdom, and so on.

➤ **Faithfulness**

- God is incapable of anything but fidelity. He is loyally devoted to his plan and purpose.  
(2 Timothy 2:13; Deuteronomy 7:9; Hebrews 10:23)

➤ **Glorious**

- God is ultimately beautiful, deserving of all praise and on honor.
- (Revelation 19:1; Psalm 104:1; Exodus 40:34-35)

➤ **Goodness**

- God is pure, there is no defilement in Him. He is unable to sin, and all he does is good.
- (Genesis 1:31; Psalm 34:8; Psalm 107:1)

➤ **Gracious**

- God is kind, giving to us gifts and benefits which we are undeserving of.
- (2 Kings 13:23; Psalm 145:8; Isaiah 30:18)

➤ **Holiness**

- God is undefiled and unable to be in the presence of defilement.
- He is sacred and set apart.
- (Revelation 4:8; 1 Peter 1:15; Habakkuk 1:13)

➤ **Jealous**

- God is desirous of receiving the praise and affection He rightly deserves.
- (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:23-24; Joshua 24:19)

➤ **Justice**

- God governs in perfect justice. He acts in accordance of justice. In him there is no wrongdoing or dishonesty.
- (Isaiah 61:8; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 146:7-9)

➤ **Love**

- God is eternally. Enduringly, steadfastly loving and affectionate, He does not forsake or betray His covenant love.
- (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:16)



- **Merciful**
  - God is compassionate, withholding us from the wrath that we are deserving of.
  - (Titus 3:5; Psalm 25:10; Lamentations 3:22-23)
- **Patient**
  - God is long-suffering and enduring, He gives ample opportunity for people to turn toward Him.
  - (Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Psalm 86:15)
- **Righteous**
  - God is blameless and upright. There is no wrong found in Him.
  - (Psalm 119:137; Jeremiah 12:1; Revelation 15:3)
- **True**
  - God is our measurement of what is fact. By Him we are able to discern true and false.
  - (John 3:33; Romans 1:25; John 14:6)
- **Wise**
  - God is infinitely knowledgeable and is judicious with his knowledge.
  - (Isaiah 46:9-10; Isaiah 55:9; Proverbs 3:19)