

attributes of *God*

WEEK 1 — INTRODUCTION & THE UNITY OF GOD



PSALM 145

¹ I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

² Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

³ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

⁷ They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

¹⁰ All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you!

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,

¹² to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.

¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

¹⁶ You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.

¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰ The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

What is an attribute?

Characteristic or quality of a person or thing

But how we can describe God's characteristics and qualities?

Isaiah 40:25 --- *To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.*

Psalm 145:3 --- *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.*

Psalm 147:5 --- *Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.*

Romans 11:33 --- *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

1 Timothy 6:15-16 --- *"... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen."*

The Bible shows us God's words and actions.

The Bible also describes God for us with His names, images, and attributes.

To try to summarize what we see from the whole Bible about God's nature,
leads us to talk systematically about His attributes.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

"Those qualities or characteristics of the divine being by virtue of which he is distinguished from all created beings and without which he would not be worthy of the worship and service of man"
(W. T. Conner)

Studying the attributes of God should lead us to worship & service

“It is vitally important that we should think soundly about God. Since He is the foundation of all our religious beliefs, it follows that if we err in our ideas of God, we will go astray in everything else.”
(A. W. Tozer)

Jeremiah 9:23-24 --- *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.*

Colossians 1:9-10 --- *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...*

“Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God’s attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. As he is the subject of our study, and our helper in it, so he must himself be the end of it. We must seek, in studying God, to be led to God. It was for this purpose that revelation was given, and it is to this use that we must put it.” (J. I. Packer)

How are we able to know these things about God?

God has revealed Himself to us in Scripture.

How are we going to organize our study of God’s attributes?

Incommunicable attributes ---

Communicable attributes ---

Remember, there are no negative attributes of God.

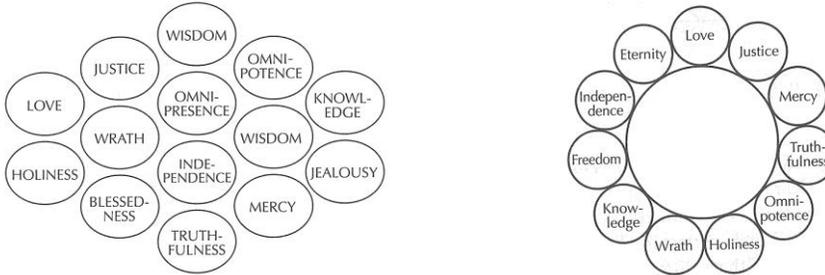
“No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it.” (Charles Spurgeon)

ATTRIBUTE 1 --- THE UNITY OF GOD

Attribute defined = “God is not divided into parts”

Sometimes called God’s “simplicity”

That means God’s attributes are NOT like the following diagrams (from Wayne Grudem):

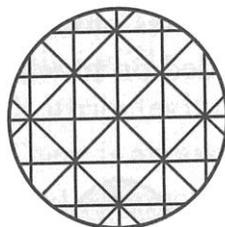


What is wrong with those representations of God’s attributes?

Instead: Every attribute of God is completely true of all of God’s character all of the time

Exodus 34:6-7 --- *“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”*

“We must remember that God’s *whole being* includes all of his attributes: he is *entirely* loving, *entirely* merciful, *entirely* just, and so forth. Every attribute of God that we find in Scripture is true of *all* of God’s being, and we therefore can say that *every attribute of God qualifies every other attribute.*” (Grudem)



This truth means:

1. None of God's attributes compete with or quarrel with each other.
2. None of God's attributes can be separated from each other.
3. No attribute is more important than the other attributes.
4. It is God Himself in His whole being whom we seek to know, worship, and serve.

These truths can be hard to grasp for us because we do not have such unity.

“God has no parts any more than a diamond has parts. God is all one God, and everything that God does harmonizes with everything else that God does perfectly because there are no parts to get out of joint and no attributes to face each other and fight it out. All God's attributes are one, and together.... Everything that God is and does harmonizes with everything else that God is and does. I probably should not even use the word ‘harmony,’ for harmony requires at least two that get together and for a time become one. But there is nothing like that in God; God just is!” (A. W. Tozer)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jeremiah 9:24 says, “but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD.” What does it mean to understand and know God?
2. Is it possible to know a lot about God but not know God?
How can we turn our knowledge about God in studies like this into knowing God?
3. Have you ever considered that for all eternity you will never stop learning more about God? How does that truth change our view of heaven and longing for it?
4. Can we have confidence that when we get to heaven, we won’t suddenly realize everything we thought about God was actually wrong?
5. An ancient scholar once asked of God, “How do you spare the wicked if you are just.” How does the unity of God help us answer that question?
6. Look at the list of attributes we will discuss in the months to come.
Which attributes do you think about the most often? Why?
Which attributes do you not think about as much? Why?
Is there a danger in only focusing on some of God’s attributes?
7. How will a larger view of God affect the way we live?

