

INTRODUCTION

What comes into your mind when you think about God?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us....We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God...Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man....That our idea of God correspond as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God.” – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*.

What did you think God was like before you knew him?

Where do people get their ideas about God?

“Imagining God in our heads can be just as real a breach of the second commandment [Exodus 20:4-6] as imagining him by the work of our hands. How often do we hear this sort of thing: “I like to think of God as the great Architect (or Mathematician or Artist)”, “I don’t think of God as a Judge, I like to think of him simply as a Father.” We know from experience how often remarks of this kind serve as the prelude to a denial of something that the Bible tells us about God....At best They can only think of God in the image of man – as an ideal man, perhaps, or a superman. But God is not any sort of man. We were made in his image, but we must not think of him as existing in ours. To think of him in such terms is to be ignorant of him, not to know him....Do we worship the one true God in truth? Or are our ideas of God such that in reality we do not believe in the Christian God, but in some other, just as the Muslim or Jew or Jehovah’s Witness does not believe in the Christian God, but in some other?” – J. I. Packer in *Knowing God*

Do you ever doubt his love, faithfulness, goodness, wisdom, etc.?

Do you tend to lapse into thinking that God’s love is like your love? His faithfulness like your faithfulness? His patience like your patience?

Do you really live as though you believe God is holy, omniscient, omnipresent, etc.?

For each of the following, how does their functional image of God differ from His true image?

Adam & Eve (Genesis 3) , Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5) , Israelites (Exodus 32:1-6)

Can anyone think of other examples from Scripture?

Goals of this study will be to answer the following questions.

1. What does Scripture reveal about God?
2. How should a Scriptural image of God impact how we live?
3. How can common deviations from the Scriptural image of God impact how we live?

INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

What do we mean by the “incomprehensibility” of God?

How does this differ from the common usage of the word “incomprehensible”?

Have you thought about God as being incomprehensible before?

“All the rational conceptions of the minds of men are swallowed up and lost, when they would exercise themselves directly on that which is absolute, immense, eternal, and infinite. When we say it is so, we know not what we say, but only that it is not otherwise. What we deny of God we know in some measure — but what we affirm we know not; only we declare what we believe and adore.” – John Owen in *The Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man*.

What Scripture passages can you think of that would point to God’s incomprehensibility?

Psalm 145:3, Psalm 147:5, Job 11:7-9, Job 26:14, Job 38-41, Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 11:33-34, Ezekiel 1

“The effort of inspired men to express the ineffable has placed a great strain upon both thought and language in the Holy Scriptures...When the Spirit would acquaint us with something that lies beyond our field of knowledge, He tells us that this thing is like something we already know, but He is always careful to phrase His description so as to save us from slavish literalism...For example, when the prophet Ezekiel saw heaven opened and beheld visions of God, he found himself looking at that which he had no language to describe. What he was seeing was wholly different from anything he had ever known before, so he fell back upon the language of resemblance...So, in order to convey an idea of what he sees, the prophet must employ such words as “likeness,” [vv. 5, 22, 26] “appearance,” [vv. 13, 14, 16, 26, 27, 28] “as it were,” [vv. 4, 16, 27] and “the likeness of the appearance.” [v. 28] – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*.

“We are speaking of God. Is it any wonder that you do not comprehend? For if you comprehended Him, He cannot be God. Let this be a pious confession of great ignorance rather than a rash profession of knowledge. To reach to God by any measure in the mind is a great blessedness, but to comprehend Him is altogether impossible. – Augustine in a sermon on John 1:1.

Questions to consider

1. How should a proper understand of God’s incomprehensibility impact how we live?
2. Even if someone says they believe God is incomprehensible, how might a functional disbelief in God’s incomprehensibility show up in the way they live?
3. How might someone take God’s incomprehensibility to an unbiblical extreme?

KNOWABILITY

How do we know God?

In what ways does He reveal himself?

“God...has revealed himself to all men *generally* by creation and providence...*propositionally* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, *personally* in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and *savingly* through the work of his Word and Spirit.” – Robert L. Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*.

GENERAL REVELATION IN CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

Psalm 145:8-9, 13-17, Romans 1:19-23, Acts 17:22-31, Romans 10:13-18, Psalm 19:1-6

What do we mean by God’s “providence”?

What has God revealed about himself in creation and providence? What hasn’t he revealed by these?

“Analogy has been drawn [to] a savage finding a watch upon the sands, and from a close examination of it he infers a watch-maker. So far so good. But attempt to go further: suppose that savage sits down on the sand and endeavors to form to himself a conception of this watch-maker, his personal affections and manners; his disposition, acquirements, and moral character – all that goes to make up a personality; could he ever think or reason out a real man- the man who made the watch, so that he could say, “I am acquainted with him”? It seems trifling to ask such questions, but is the eternal and infinite God so much more within the grasp of human reason? No, indeed. The God of Scripture can only be known by those to whom he makes himself known. Nor is God known by intellect. God is Spirit (John 4:24) and therefore can only be known spiritually...The Holy Spirit has to shine in our hearts (not intellects) in order to give us “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). And even then that spiritual knowledge is but fragmentary. The regenerated soul has to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. “ - A. W. Pink in *Attributes of God*

The necessity for God to reveal himself to us also is seen in the fact that sinful people misinterpret the revelation about God found in nature – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

PROPOSITIONAL REVELATION IN SCRIPTURE

Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Ephesians 3:5

What do we mean by “propositional”?

What does God reveal about himself through Scripture that he does not reveal in his creation and providence?

“Christians should be overwhelmed by the magnitude of this simple truth that they take so much for granted – that the eternal God has deigned to share with us some of the truths that are on his mind. He condescends to elevate us poor undeserving sinners by actually sharing with us a portion of what he knows.” – Robert L. Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*.

The Scriptures come to us as divine self-disclosure. Here the mind of God is laid bare on many matters. With a knowledge of Scripture we do not have to rely on secondhand information or bare speculation to learn who God is and what he values. In the Bible he reveals himself. – R. C. Sproul in *Knowing Scripture*

Why should God not communicate propositionally to the man, the verbalizing being whom He made in such a way that we communicate propositionally to each other? Therefore, in the biblical position there is the possibility of verifiable facts involved: a personal God communicating in verbalized form propositionally to man – not only concerning those things man would call in our generation “religious truths,” but also down into the areas of history and science. God has set the revelation of the Bible in history; He did not give it (as he could have done) in the form of a theological textbook. Having set the revelation in history, what sense then would it make for God to give us a revelation in which the history was wrong? God has also set man in the universe, which the Scriptures themselves say speaks of God. What sense then would it make for God to give His revelation in a book that was wrong concerning the universe? The answer to both questions must be, “No sense at all!” It is plain, therefore, that from the viewpoint of the Scriptures themselves there is a unity over the whole field of knowledge. God has spoken, in a linguistic propositional form, truth concerning Himself and truth concerning man, history and the universe...At the same time, one must avoid the opposite mistake of saying that because God has communicated truly concerning science, all scientific study is wasted. This is a false deduction. To say that God communicates truly does not mean that God communicates exhaustively. – Francis Schaeffer in *The God Who is There*

PERSONAL REVELATION IN CHRIST

Hebrews 1:1-3, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, Colossians 2:9, Matthew 11:25-27, John 1:14-18, 1 John 5:20

What does it mean that Christ is the image of the invisible God? In what specific ways does Christ reveal God?

SAVING REVELATION IN THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

John 4:24, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16, Romans 8:15-16, Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 1:23-25, John 16:13-15

GROWING IN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

1 Corinthians 13:12, Colossians 3:10, 2 Peter 1:2-3, Colossians 1:10, John 17:3, 2 Peter 3:18

“One can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him...One can know a great deal about godliness without much knowledge of God.” – J. I. Packer in *Knowing God*

How can we turn our knowledge about God into knowledge of God?

Questions to consider

1. What are some specific ways in which knowing God impacts your life?
2. How would you assess your appreciation God’s self-revelation in creation & providence? Jesus? Scripture? The Holy Spirit? What impact might neglecting one of these forms of revelation have on the way you live?
3. Would you call your present relationship to God a personal relationship? How is it similar to your relationship with other people, and how is it different? What would make your relationship with God better? (Grudem)

IMMUTABILITY

In what respects is God unchangeable?

“God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes and promises.” – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Exodus 3:14, Psalm 102:25-28, Hebrews 13:5-9, Romans 8:38-39, 2 Timothy 2:13, James 1:17, Psalm 110:4, Malachi 3:6, Numbers 23:19, Job 23:13, Isaiah 14:27, Isaiah 46:8-11, Ephesians 3:9-11, Ephesians 1:3-14, Hebrews 6:17-18

What two problems does the writer of Hebrews use the immutability of Christ to confront in Hebrews 13:5-9?

“There can be no reason for any change in the will of God...It cannot be for want of foresight...Nor can it proceed from a natural instability of his will or an easiness to be drawn to that which is unrighteous....Nor can it be for want of strength.” – Stephen Charnock in *The Existence and Attributes of God*

“God is immutable in his attributes. Whatever the attributes of God were before the universe was called into existence, they are precisely the same now, and will remain so forever. Necessarily so; for they are the very perfections, the essential qualities of his being. *Semper idem* (always the same) is written across every one of them. His power is unabated, his wisdom undiminished, his holiness unsullied. The attributes of God can no more change than Deity can cease to be.” – A. W. Pink in *Knowledge of the Holy*

Questions to Consider

1. Isn't the Bible full of examples of God changing his mind?

Genesis 6:5-8, 1 Samuel 15:10-29, Isaiah 38:1-6, Jonah 3:3-5, 10, Exodus 32:9-14, Jeremiah 18:7-10

“The divine immutability should not be understood as implying immobility, as if there is no movement in God...The Bible teaches us that God enters into manifold relations with man and, as it were, lives their life with them. There is change round about Him; change in the relations of men to Him, but there is no change in His Being, his attributes, His purpose, His motives of actions, or His promises. The purpose to create was eternal with Him, and there was no change in Him when this purpose was realized by a single eternal act of His will. The incarnation brought no change in the Being or perfections of God, nor in His purpose, for it was His eternal good pleasure to send the son of His love into the world. And if Scripture speaks of His repenting, changing His intention and altering His relation to sinners when they repent, we should remember that this is only an anthropopathic way of speaking. In reality the change is not in God, but in man and in man's relations to God.” – Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*.

“God intended to teach that he always relates himself to men salvifically through a mediator...So what many assert is an example of the mutability of God's purpose is in actuality a remarkable example of God's fixed purpose to relate himself to sinful men on the basis of the intercession of an appointed Mediator. [See also, for example, Genesis 18:22-33, Genesis 19:29; Exodus 17:9-13; Job 1:4-5; Ezekiel 22:30.]” – Robert Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology for the Christian Faith*

“God has willed all the actual conditions of the world in order to accomplish the particular ends he has determined, even though some of those conditions (because he is good) would offend and grieve him. Second, God being not only the God of infinite holiness but also the God of infinite goodness and compassion, we should not be surprised to read that, in reaction to the evil of those who refuse to obey him, he could be so grieved that he had made them.” – Robert Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology for the Christian Faith*

2. Does God have emotions? Does God showing emotion constitute change?

Acts 14:11,15 , Isaiah 62:5, Zephaniah 3:17, Psalm 78:40, Ephesians 4:30, Exodus 32:10, Psalm 103:13, Hebrews 4:15

“Of course there are emotions that are inappropriate for God. God is never homesick, anxious about tomorrow, inwardly troubled by divided intentions, compulsive or addicted. He is not like human beings, who are often overcome by waves of passion, who make decisions on the basis of momentary feelings, and whose passions lead them to make false judgments. God doesn’t have such kinds of emotions, but that does mean that he lacks the emotions ascribed to him in Scripture.” – John Frame in *Doctrine of God*

3. Of what practical use is the knowledge that God is immutable?
4. What if God were not immutable? What would it be like if God could change?

“It seems to me impossible to think of God as varying from Himself in any way. Here is why: For a moral being to change it would be necessary that the change be in one of three directions. He must go from better to worse or from worse to better; or, granted that the moral quality remain stable, he must change within himself, as from immature to mature or from one order of being to another. It should be clear that God can move in none of these directions. His perfections forever rule out any such possibility.” – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*

5. If God’s will is immutable then why pray?

“What comfort would it be to pray to a god that like the chameleon, changed color every moment? What encouragement could there be to lift up our eyes to one that were of one mind this day and of another mind tomorrow? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that was so mutable as to grant a petition one day and deny it another and change his own act? ...Were he of an unrighteous nature or changeable in his mind, this would be a bar to our seeking him, and frustrate our hopes; but since it is otherwise, is not this excellency of his nature the highest encouragement, to ask of him the blessings he hath promised , and a beam from heaven to fire our zeal in asking?” - Stephen Charnock in *The Existence and Attributes of God*

“God will not compromise and He need not be coaxed. He cannot be persuaded to alter His Word nor talked into answering selfish prayer. In all our efforts to find God, to please Him, to commune with Him, we should remember that all change must be on our part.” – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*

6. Was the incarnation of Jesus a change in God’s being?
7. Was the institution of the “new covenant” a change in God’s purpose or will?
8. How can God’s immutability encourage you when you next face difficulty or personal crisis?
9. How can we reflect, in a small way, the immutability of God?
10. How would you answer someone who said that “process and change are essential aspects of genuine existence and that therefore God must be changing over time also just like everything else that exists”?
11. Explain how the doctrine of God’s immutability or unchangeableness helps to answer the following questions: Will we be able to do a good job of bringing up children in such an evil world as we have today? Is it possible to have the same close fellowship with God that people had during biblical times? What can we think or do to make Bible stories seem more real and less removed from our present life? Do you think that God is less willing to answer prayer today than he was in Bible times? (Grudem)

ETERNALITY

INTRODUCTION

What is eternity? What do we mean by “eternity”?

“Eternity is a perpetual duration which hath neither beginning nor end; time hath both. Those things we say are in time that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts; eternity is contrary to time, and degrees, have succession of parts; eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state; a perfect possession of life without any variation; it comprehends itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages; it never begins.” – Stephen Charnock in *The Existence and Attributes of God*

“Time strictly has relation to the world of objects existing in succession. God fills time; is in every part of it; but His eternity still is not really this being in time. It is rather that to which time forms a contrast” – James Orr in *Side-Lights on Christian Doctrine*.

The Eternal God – Exodus 3:14, Genesis 21:33, 1 Timothy 1:17, Daniel 7

We generally think of God’s eternity...as duration infinitely prolonged both backwards and forwards. But this is only a popular and symbolical way of representing that which in reality transcends time and differs from it essentially. Eternity in the strict sense of the word is ascribed to that which transcends all temporal limitations. – Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

GOD TRANSCENDS ANY LIMITATION OF BEGINNING AND END

“The infinity of God in relation to time is called his eternity. The form in which the Bible represents God’s eternity is simply that of duration through endless ages.” – Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

Psalm 90:1-2, Psalm 102:24-27 (Hebrews 1:10-12), Genesis 1:1-5, 2 Timothy 1:9-10, Hebrews 7:3, Romans 1:20,23, Psalm 9:7, Psalm 135:13, Psalm 33:11, Revelation 4:8-11, Psalm 146:10, John 1:1-3, John 8:58, John 17:5,24, Hebrews 9:14

GOD TRANSCENDS ANY LIMITATION OF CHANGE – See our study of God’s immutability

GOD TRANSCENDS ANY LIMITATION OF TEMPORAL FRUSTRATION

“To us, often time seems to pass too slowly or too fast. For God, however, time never passes too slowly. But neither does time pass too quickly for God.” – John Frame in *Doctrine of God*

Psalm 90:4, Acts 1:7, Acts 17:26, 2 Peter 3:8-10, Isaiah 40:28

GOD TRANSCENDS ANY LIMITATION OF IGNORANCE

Isaiah 57:15,, Galatians 4:4-5, Acts 17:30-31, Genesis 40:8, Psalm 139:16, Isaiah 46:9-10

Consider – “with [God] there is no distinction between the present, past and future, but all things are equally and always present to Him. With Him duration is an eternal now...the past and the future are always and equally present to Him...to Him there is neither past nor future, neither before nor after.” – Reformed theologian Charles Hodge

Do you see any problem with Hodge’s conclusion? Or consequences of his conclusion?

God [accomplishes] his purposes in the fullness of time. That fact is a testimony to his sovereignty, but also to the importance of temporal relationships in the divinely ordained course of history. The biblical narrative relates a historical succession of events – events of creation, fall and redemption....So history is a linear pattern of events, beginning at creation, reaching a climax in the work of Christ, continuing on to the Last Judgment, and concluding in the eternal state...All these events are God’s works, and so he works in a temporally successive pattern. The sequence is foreordained by God’s decree, but he brings it to pass in time.

God, like a temporalist God, can know (and assert) temporally indexed expressions like “the sun is rising now.” He can feel with human beings the flow of time from one moment to the next. He can react to events in a significant sense (events which, to be sure, he has foreordained). He can mourn one moment and rejoice the next. He can hear and respond to prayer in time. Since God dwells in time, therefore, there is give-and-take between him and human beings.

God’s providence operates on the world both from above (government) and from below (concurrence). And in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we see again how the eternal God entered time. In Christ, God entered, not a world that is otherwise strange to him, but a world in which he had been dwelling all along.

So God is temporal after all, but not merely temporal. He really exists in time, but he also transcends time in such a way as to exist outside it. He is both inside and outside of the temporal box – a box that can neither confine him nor keep him out. This is the model that does the most justice to the biblical data. – John Frame in *Doctrine of God*

“[The] everlasting God, though he is at any and every given moment immanent in his world, is still the sovereign Creator and Lord over it, that the world (including its future) is in no sense foreign or unknown to him, and that history – past, present and future – is the product of his eternal plan, creative activity, providential preservation, and common and special grace.” – Robert Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology for the Christian Faith*

“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.” – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Further Reading – *God and Time: Four Views* (ISBN: 0830815511) G. E. Ganssle (ed.) InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Questions to consider

1. What about passages which speak of other things as being everlasting?

Deuteronomy 15:17 (Romans 6:22), Leviticus 6:20 (Hebrews 7:27), Genesis 17:8 (Revelation 21:1-22:6), Genesis 17:13 (Colossians 2:10), Exodus 12:24 (Hebrews 10:1-10, 1 Corinthians 5:7), 1 Timothy 6:16

2. Of what comfort is the knowledge that God is eternal?
3. How should the knowledge that God is eternal impact the way we live?

LISTS AND CLASSIFICATIONS OF ATTRIBUTES

“An attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself.” – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*

“None of these [classifications] has much to commend it and certainly none is to be regarded as authoritative. Scripture nowhere attempts a classification.” –Donald Macleod in *Behold Your God*

A. W. Pink’s *Attributes of God*: Solitariness, Decrees, Knowledge, Foreknowledge, Supremacy, Sovereignty, Immutability, Holiness, Power, Faithfulness, Goodness, Patience, Grace, Mercy, Love, Wrath

A. W. Tozer’s *Knowledge of the Holy*: Incomprehensibility, Trinity, Self-existence, Self-sufficiency, Eternity, Infinitude, Omniscience, Wisdom, Omnipotence, Transcendence, Omnipresence, Faithfulness, Goodness, Justice, Mercy, Grace, Love, Holiness, Sovereignty

Stephen Charnock’s *Existence and Attributes of God*: Existence: Spirituality, Eternity, Immutability, Omnipresence, Knowledge, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Goodness, Dominion, Patience

John M. Frame’s Classification of the Attributes in *Doctrine of God*

	Goodness	Knowledge	Power
Control Dynamic; Content	Goodness Love Grace Mercy Patience Compassion Jealousy Wrath	Speech Incomprehensibility	Eternity Immensity Incorporeality Will Power Existence
Authority Static; Form, Structure	Justice Righteousness	Truth	Aseity Simplicity Essence
Presence Integrity; Involvement	Joy Blessedness Beauty Perfection Holiness	Knowledge Wisdom Mind Knowability	Glory Spirituality Omnipresence

Robert L. Reymond’s Analysis of Shorter Catechism Definition in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*

	Transcendent adjectives	Condescendent nouns	Summary referent
		Being	
	Infinite	Wisdom	
		Power	
Spirit	Eternal	Holiness	Glory
		Justice	
	Unchangeable	Goodness	
		Truth	

Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology

- Incommunicable attributes – those attributes that God does not share with others
Independence, Unchangeableness, Eternity, Omnipresence, Unity
- Communicable attributes – those attributes that God shares with us
 - a. *Attributes describing God's being*: Spirituality, Invisibility
 - b. *Mental attributes*: Knowledge/Omniscience, Wisdom, Truthfulness/Faithfulness,
 - c. *Moral attributes*: Goodness, Love, Mercy/Grace/Patience, Holiness, Peace/Order, Righteousness/Justice, Jealousy, Wrath
 - d. *Attributes of Purpose*: Will, Freedom, Omnipotence/Power/Sovereignty
 - e. *Summary attributes*: Perfection, Blessedness, Beauty, Glory

“Remember that none of the attributes of God are incommunicable in the sense that there is no trace of them in man, and none of them are communicable in the sense that they are found in man as they are found in God.”— Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*.

TRIUNITY

“It is most important that we think of God as Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance...The Persons of the Godhead, being one, have one will. They always work together, and never one smallest act is done by one without the instant acquiescence of the other two. Every act of God is accomplished by the Trinity in Unity.” – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*

What is the doctrine of the Trinity?

“God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times...Every attribute of God qualifies every other attribute.” – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Whatever God is He is completely and simultaneously. – H. Bavinck in *Doctrine of God*.

Exodus 34:6-7, John 4:24, 1 John 1:5, 1 John 4:8,16, Hebrews 12:29

Questions to consider

1. How should a proper understanding of the Triunity (or Unity) of God impact your life?
2. What are some common ways in which people think of God in “disunity” and how might these ways of thinking impact the way they live?

RECAP

1. **Incomprehensibility** – “[God is] unable to be fully or exhaustively understood...We can never fully understand any single thing about God.” - Grudem
2. **Knowability** – “[God] has revealed himself to all men *generally* by creation and providence...*propositionally* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, *personally* in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and *savingly* through the work of his Word and Spirit.” –Reymond
3. **Immutability** – “God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes and promises.” - Grudem
4. **Eternality** – God transcends temporal limitations of beginning and end, of change, of temporal frustration and of ignorance - Frame
5. **Triunity** – There is one indivisible God, who exists eternally as three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, who are each equally and fully God.

OMNIPRESENCE

What do we mean by “omnipresence”?

“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.” –Grudem

Psalm 139:7-12, Acts 17:22-28, Jeremiah 23:23-24, 1 Kings 8:27, 2 Chronicles 2:6, Isaiah 66:1, Acts 7:48-49, Amos 9:1-4, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:17, Matthew 18:20

Questions to consider

1. How does a right view of God’s omnipresence differ from pantheism?
2. What about passages which refer to God being located in heaven? – Deuteronomy 26:15, Psalm 33:13-14, Psalm 11:4, Palm 115:3, Isaiah 63:15-16, Psalm 123:1, Nehemiah 1:4-6
3. What about passages which refer to God dwelling with or in his people?
1 Samuel 4:4, Romans 8:9-11, John 14:23, Ephesians 2:22, Ephesians 3:17, Colossians 1:27, Acts 1:8
4. What about passages which refer to God being separated from unbelievers?
Isaiah 59:2, Proverbs 15:29, 2 Kings 17:18-23
5. Does God’s omnipresence also imply that God is present in hell?
2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 14:9-11
6. What is the danger in forgetting God’s omnipresence?
Genesis 3:10, Isaiah 43:5, Job 22:12-14, Job 24:15-17, 2 Samuel 12:9
7. What comfort can we draw from God’s omnipresence?
8. How should a right understanding of God’s omnipresence impact the way we live?

OMNISCIENCE

What do we mean when we say God is “omniscient”?

“God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.” – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

“He knows everything: everything possible, everything actual; all events and all creatures, of the past, the present and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell...Nothing escapes his notice, nothing can be hidden from him, nothing is forgotten by him...His knowledge is perfect. He never errs, never changes, never overlooks anything. Yes, such is the God with whom we have to do!” – A. W. Pink in *The Attributes of God*

To say that God is omniscient is to say that He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn....Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows nothing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does he seek information or ask questions.” – A. W. Tozer in *Knowledge of the Holy*

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” – Romans 11:33-36

God knows all his creation

Job 37:16, Psalm 50:11, Psalm 147:4-5, Proverbs 3:20, Psalm 139:15-16

God knows all our ways

Psalm 139:1-6, Jeremiah 32:19, Psalm 119:168, Proverbs 5:21, Psalm 33:13-15, Proverbs 15:3, Isaiah 40:27-28, 1 Samuel 2:3, Genesis 4, Joshua 7, Genesis 18

God knows all our thoughts and motives

Psalm 94:9-11, Isaiah 65:24, Ezekiel 11:5, 1 Samuel 16:7, Proverbs 15:11, Proverbs 16:2, Luke 16:15, Matthew 9:4, Jeremiah 11:20, 20:12 Acts 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 4:5, Jeremiah 17:10, Hebrews 4:12-13

God knows the future

Isaiah 46:9-10, Isaiah 42:8-9, Isaiah 44:7-8, Isaiah 48:3, Acts 2:23

God knows what would have happened

Isaiah 48:18, 1 Samuel 23:10-13, 2 Kings 13:19, Jeremiah 38:17-20, Matthew 11:21-23

Questions to consider

1. If God knows everything that will happen, how can our choices be at all free?

It may be helpful...to note the suggestion of Augustine, who said that God has given us “reasonable self-determination.” ...That is, we think about what to do, consciously decide what we will do, and then we follow the course of action that we have chosen....It is not as if events occur regardless of what we decide or do, but rather that they occur because of what we decide and do...for us, it is important that we think, choose and act, and that those thoughts choices and actions are real and actually have eternal significance. If God knows all our thoughts words and actions long before they occur, then there must be some sense in which our choices are not absolutely free. ..Scripture nowhere says that we are “free” in the sense of being outside of God’s control or of being able to make decisions that are not caused by anything. Nor does it say we are “free” in the sense of being able to do right on our own apart from God’s power. But we are nonetheless free in the greatest sense that any creature of God could be free – we make willing choices, choices that have real effects. We are aware of no restraints on our will from God when we make decisions. We must insist that we have the pose of willing choices; otherwise we will fall into the error of fatalism or determinism and thus conclude that our choices do not matter, or that we cannot really make willing choices. – Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

2. How does God’s knowledge differ from our knowledge?
3. Why pray if God already knows our thoughts?
4. What about passages which say God won’t remember the sins of certain people?
Isaiah 43:25, Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 10:17, Ezekiel 33:16
5. What about passages which say that God doesn’t know some people?
Amos 3:2, Matthew 7:23, Matthew 25:12
6. What about passages where God asks questions? Does this imply that he doesn’t know the answer?
Genesis 3:9, Ezekiel 20:3, John 21:17
7. What about passages which seem to imply that God doesn’t know something?
Genesis 22:12, Deuteronomy 8:2, Deuteronomy 13:3, Genesis 18:21, 2 Chronicles 32:31
8. How should a right understanding of God’s omniscience impact the way we live?
9. How should God’s omniscience be a comfort to Christians?
2 Chronicles 16:9, Job 24:23, Luke 12:6-7

OMNIPOTENCE

What do we mean when we refer to the attribute of “omnipotence”?

- God is able to do all his holy will. – Grudem
- God has the power to do everything that he has determined that he will do, and even the power to do that which is non-contradictory which he does not will to do. - Reymond

The Lord Almighty – 2 Corinthians 6:18, Revelation 1:8, Revelation 19:6

God has the power to do all his holy will – Psalm 115:3, 1 Corinthians 12:11, Daniel 4:35, Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:17, Jeremiah 32:26-27, Mark 10:27, Luke 1:34-37, Isaiah 46:9-10, Isaiah 43:13, Psalm 135:6, Job 42:2

Even more than we ask or think – Ephesians 3:20, Job 26:5-14

God has the power to do even that which is non-contradictory which he does not will to do – Matthew 3:9, Exodus 32:10, Matthew 26:53

God’s Power in creation, providence and redemption – Ephesians 1:19-21, Romans 1:20, Romans 4:17, Isaiah 44:24, Psalm 89:11-13, Psalm 33:6-9, Hebrews 1:3, Proverbs 21:1, Romans 9:15-21, Isaiah 14:24-27, 2 Corinthians 4:14

Because God is free we should not try to seek any more ultimate answer for God’s actions in creation than the fact that he willed to do something and that his will has a perfect freedom (so long as the actions he takes are consistent with his own moral character). Sometimes people try to discover the reason why God had to do one or another action (such as create the world or save us). It is better simply to say that it was God’s totally free will (working in a way consistent with his character) that was the final reason why he chose to create the world and to save sinners. – Grudem

God’s power is like Himself, self-existent, self-sustained. The mightiest of men cannot add so much as a shadow of increased power to the Omnipotent One. He sits on no buttressed throne and leans on no assisting arm. His court is not maintained by His courtiers, nor does it borrow its splendor from his creatures. He is Himself the great central source and Originator of all power. – Charles H. Spurgeon

Questions to consider

1. Is there anything that God cannot do?

God cannot do whatever is contrary to his nature – Hebrews 6:17-18, Titus 1:2, 2 Timothy 2:13, Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29, James 1:13-17,

Although God’s power is infinite, his use of that power is qualified by his other attributes (just as all God’s attributes qualify all his actions). This is therefore another instance where misunderstanding would result if one attribute were isolate from the rest of God’s character and emphasized in a disproportionate way - Grudem

God cannot do the irrational or self-contradictory

He cannot make two and two equal five, or create adjacent mountains with no valley between them, or make a stone too heavy for him to lift, or make a four-cornered triangle or a square circle. As Buswell rightly observes, all one has to do is to ask himself “How much power would it take to accomplish the self-

contradictory, for example, to make a wrong answer in arithmetical calculation, without changing it, the right answer?" to realize that such "irrationalities" belong to the domain of logic (and are condemned by it) and not to the domain of power at all. - Reymond

2. If God's power is his ability to do what he wills to do, then is power for us the ability to obey God's will and bring about results in the world that are pleasing to him? Name several ways in which we can increase in such power in our lives. (Grudem)
3. What are some particular ways in which God's omnipotence should be a comfort to the believer?
4. How might a functional disbelief in God's omnipotence manifest itself in the life of a believer?

INDEPENDENCE

What do we mean when we refer to the attribute of "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 – Grudem
- This attributed is also referred to as God's aseity, self-existence, or self-sufficiency.

God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything – Acts 17:24-25, Job 41:11, Psalm 50:10-12, Genesis 1:1, John 1:3, Romans 11:35-36, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Psalm 90:2, Exodus 3:14

Yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy – Isaiah 43:7, Ephesians 1:11-12, Isaiah 62:3-5, Zephaniah 3:17-18

Questions to consider

1. But didn't God create mankind *because* he was lonely or needed love, worship or fellowship? – John 17:5, 24
2. How does it make you feel that God didn't need to create you?
3. What is the temptation toward thinking that God as needs (or at least felt the need) for us?
4. What is the danger in thinking that God needed to create us or needs us now?
5. How can God's independence be a comfort to us?

WISDOM

What do we mean by God's *wisdom*? How does it differ from his omniscience?

"God always choose the best goals and the best means to these goals." – Wayne Grudem

God's wisdom in creation – Psalm 104:24, Proverbs 3:19-20

God's wisdom in providence – Psalm 33:10-11, Romans 8:28, Job 12:13,

God's wisdom in redemption – 1 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 3:10, Romans 11:33-35

LOVE

What do we mean by God's *love*?

“God eternally gives of himself to others.” – Wayne Grudem

“It is the benevolent disposition or inclination in God that stirs him to bestow benefits both physical and spiritual upon those created in His image (and is thus in this respect synonymous with grace). However, insofar as not all of God's creatures receive and experience His love in precisely the same manner or to the same degree, one cannot speak of "the love of God" without qualification. It seems inescapable, both from Scripture and experience, that we differentiate between the love of God as manifested in common grace and the love of God as manifested in special grace.” – Sam Storms

In his book *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, D. A. Carson identifies five ways in which the Bible speaks of the love of God

1. ***The peculiar love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father***

John 3:35, John 5:20, John 14:31, John 17:24

2. ***God's providential love over all that he has made*** – Genesis 1, Matthew 6:25, Matthew 5:43-48

The manner in which God shows his love providentially is the same toward believers and unbelievers.

3. ***God's salvific stance toward his fallen world*** – John 3:16, Ezekiel 33:11

“I know that some try to take *kosmos* ("world") [in John 3:16] to refer to the elect. But that really will not do. All the evidence of the usage of the word in John's Gospel is against the suggestion. True, world in John does not so much refer to bigness as to badness. In John's vocabulary, world is primarily the moral order in willful and culpable rebellion against God. In John 3:16 God's love in sending the Lord Jesus is to be admired not because it is extended to so big a thing as the world, but to so bad a thing; not to so many people, as to such wicked people. Nevertheless elsewhere John can speak of "the whole world" (1 John 2:2), thus bringing bigness and badness together. More importantly, in Johannine theology the disciples themselves once belonged to the world but were drawn out of it (e.g., John 15:19). On this axis, God's love for the world cannot be collapsed into his love for the elect. The same lesson is learned from many passages and themes in Scripture. However much God stands in judgment over the world, he also presents himself as the God who invites and commands all human beings to repent. He orders his people to carry the Gospel to the farthest corner of the world, proclaiming it to men and women everywhere.” – D. A. Carson

4. ***God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect*** – Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Malachi 1:2-3, 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 2:4-5, Romans 8:28-39, Ephesians 1:4-5, Galatians 2:20, 1 John 3:1

The manner in which God shows his love toward believers in saving them is *unconditional*.

5. ***God's love is sometimes said to be directed toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way – conditioned that is on obedience.*** – Jude 21, John 15:9-10, Psalm 103:17-18, Hebrews 12:5-17

The manner in which God shows his love toward believers (e.g., comfort, discipline, etc.) is *conditional* on their obedience. But, for example, even his discipline is an expression of his love.

Questions to consider

1. Do you really believe that God is working wisely today in your life? In the world? If you find this difficult to believe at times, what might you do to change your attitude? – Grudem
2. How should God's saving love for us impact how we live? – Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 John 4:7-21
3. "Is it true that "God is love" to me as a Christian?...If so, certain questions arise. Why do I ever grumble and show discontent and resentment at the circumstances in which God has placed me? Why am I ever distrustful, fearful or depressed? Why do I ever allow my loyalties to be divided so that God has not all my heart? John wrote "God is love" in order to make an ethical point, "Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." Could an observer learn from the quality and degree of love that I show to others – my wife? my husband? my family? my neighbors? people at church? people at work? – anything at all about the greatness of God's love to me?" – J. I. Packer
4. In light of the five ways we have seen the love of God described in Scripture, how would you respond to one who claims "Gods loves everyone the same."?
5. In light of the five ways we have seen the love of God described in Scripture, how would you respond to one who claims "God's love is unconditional."?
6. This being Father's Day, it is an especially good time to remember that God a loving Father to all who believe. What are some ways that our perception of our heavenly Father's love has been shaped (positively or negatively) by the love of our "earthly" father? How should the love of our heavenly Father impact the love we who are fathers have for our children? – 1 John 3:1, Romans 8:15-16, Galatians 4:6, Hebrews 12:5-17

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." – Ephesians 3:14-19

GOODNESS

What do we mean when we say something is “good”?

God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval. – Grudem

That perfection of God which prompts Him to deal bountifully and kindly with all His creatures - Berkhof

Psalm 100:5, Luke 18:19, Psalm 34:8, Genesis 1:31, Romans 12:2, Psalm 119:68, James 1:17

“He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature’s good is a super-added quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature’s good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him.” – Thomas Manton

MERCY

Mercy is God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress – Grudem

Mercy is an attribute of God, an infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature which disposes God to be actively compassionate. – Tozer

Psalm 145:9, Exodus 34:1-7

How should we respond to God’s mercy? – 2 Samuel 24:14, Hebrews 2:17, 4:14-17, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, James 5:11, Luke 6:27-36, Jonah 4:2 (?)

GRACE

God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment – Grudem

As mercy is God’s goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by His grace that God imputes merit where none previously existed and declares no debt to be where one had been before. –Tozer

The unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation –Berkhof

Exodus 33:19, Romans 3:23-24, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Timothy 1:9, Psalm 103:8-13

“The goodness of God is seen in that when man transgressed the law of His Creator a dispensation of unmixed wrath did not at once commence. Well might God have deprived His fallen creatures of every blessing, every comfort, every pleasure. Instead, He ushered in a regime of a mixed nature, of mercy and judgment.” – Pink

PATIENCE

God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time and his delight at seeing his plans for history unfolding over time – Grudem

The divine patience [is] that power of control which God exercises over Himself, causing Him to bear with the wicked and forbear so long in punishing them. – Pink

That aspect of the goodness or love of God in virtue of which he bears with the froward and evil in spite of their long continued disobedience – Berkhof

God's patience – Nehemiah 9:17, Numbers 14:17-18, Romans 9:22, 1 Peter 3:20, Nahum 1:3, 2 Peter 2:5

Responses to God's patience – 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 1:16, Romans 2:3-5, Judges 14-16 (Samson), Acts 17:29-31, Ephesians 4:2, Galatians 5:22, Romans 8:25, Colossians 1:11, James 5:7-11

“How wondrous is God's patience with the world today. On every side people are sinning with a high hand. The divine law is trampled under foot and God Himself openly despised. It is truly amazing that He does not instantly strike dead those who so brazenly defy Him...And what of the writer and the reader? Let us review our own lives. It is not long since we followed a multitude to do evil, had no concern for God's glory, and lived only to gratify self. How patiently He bore with our vile conduct! And now that grace has snatched us as brands from the burning, giving us a place in God's family, and has begotten us unto an eternal inheritance in glory, how miserably we requite Him. How shallow our gratitude, how tardy our obedience, how frequent our backslidings! One reason why God suffers the flesh to remain in the believer is that He may exhibit His “longsuffering to us-ward”(2 Peter 3:9). Since this divine attribute is manifested only in this world, God takes advantage to display it toward His own.” – Pink

Questions to consider

1. As believers, how should our motivation to be good, merciful, gracious and patient differ from that of unbelievers?
2. How do we reconcile God's goodness with passages which seem to make him responsible for evil?

Genesis 50:20, 1 Samuel 16:14, 2 Samuel 12:11-12, 16:22, Jonah 1:15, 2:3, Romans 9:14-24, Isaiah 45:7, Lamentations 3:38, Isaiah 63:17, Exodus 4:11

HOLINESS

When you think about the “holiness” of God, what comes to your mind?

God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor. – Grudem

The Hebrew word for “to be holy,” [kadosh], is derived from the root [kad], which means to cut or to separate. It is one of the most prominent religious words of the Old Testament, and is applied primarily to God. The same idea is conveyed by the New Testament words *hagiazō* and *hagios*. From this it already appears that it is not correct to think of holiness primarily as a moral or religious quality, as is generally done. Its fundamental idea is that of position or relationship existing between God and some person or thing. – Berkhof

“God’s holiness is more than just separateness. His holiness is also transcendent...Transcendence describes God in His consuming majesty, His exalted loftiness...It points to the infinite distance that separates Him from every creature.” – R. C. Sproul in *The Holiness of God*

Holy as “separate” – Exodus 20:8-11, Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 3:4-6, Exodus 30:25-33, Genesis 38:21

Holy is his name – Psalm 78:41, Psalm 30:4, Psalm 99

Transcendent aspect of holiness - Exodus 15:11, 1 Samuel 2:2, Isaiah 8:13, Isaiah 57:15, Hosea 11:9

“[God] is exalted far above the created universe, so far above that human thought cannot imagine it...To think accurately about this, however, we must keep in mind that “far above” does not here refer to physical distance from the earth but to quality of being...Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above the caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite...They both belong in the category of that-which-is-not-God and are separated from God by infinitude itself.” – Tozer

Ethical aspect of holiness - Job 34:10, Psalm 5:4-6, Psalm 11:5-7, Psalm 89:35, Habakkuk 1:12-13, 1 John 1:5, Romans 7:12

“This ethical holiness of God may be defined as that perfection of God, in virtue of which He eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellence, abhors sin, and demands purity in his moral creatures.” – Berkhof

“We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God’s holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God’s power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine.” – Tozer

Visions of a Holy God – Isaiah 6, Revelation 4:6-8, Luke 5:1-8

Questions to consider

1. What should be our response to God's holiness?

"If man reacts to God's majestic holiness with a feeling of utter insignificance and awe, his reaction to the ethical holiness reveals itself in a sense of impurity, a consciousness of sin." – Berkhof

Leviticus 11:44-45, Leviticus 19:2, Leviticus 20:26, 1 Peter 1:13-16, Exodus 19:4-6, 1 Peter 2:9-12, Hebrews 12:10-14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 2:19-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

"This holiness God can and does impart to His children. He shares it with them by imputation and by impartation, and because he has made it available to them through the blood of the Lamb, He requires it of them. To Israel first and later to his Church, God spoke saying "Be ye holy; for I am holy" He did not say "Be ye as holy as I am holy" for that would be to demand of us absolute holiness, something that belongs to God alone...No honest man can say "I am holy," but neither is any honest man willing to ignore the solemn words of the inspired writer, "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do? We must like Moses cover ourselves with faith and humility while we steal a quick look at the God whom no man can see and live. The broken and the contrite heart he will not despise. We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. We must take refuge from God in God. Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in His Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness. By faith and obedience, by constant meditation on the holiness of God, by loving righteousness and hating inequity, by a growing acquaintance with the Spirit of holiness, we can acclimate ourselves to the fellowship of the saints on earth and prepare ourselves for the eternal companionship of God and the saints above." – Tozer

2. Are there activities or relationship in your present pattern of life that are hindering your growth in holiness because they make it difficult for you to be separated from sin and devoted to seeking God's honor? (Grudem)
3. How do we reconcile "the Holy One of Israel" with our "Abba Father"? How do we reconcile God's transcendent majesty with his call to intimate fellowship?
4. What do we mean when we pray "hallowed be your name"?
5. How can we know if we are making real progress in our call to be holy?

Galatians 5:16-24

JUSTICE

What do we mean when we say God is “just” (or “righteous”)?

“God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.” – Grudem

“Justice embodies the idea of moral equity... It is sometimes said, “Justice requires God to do this,” referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God, for only a superior power can compel obedience....Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more. He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation.” – Tozer

Deuteronomy 32:4, Genesis 18:25, Psalm 19:8, Psalm 7:11, Psalm 9:7-8, Psalm 96:10-13, Isaiah 5:16, Daniel 9:14, Romans 2:5-11, Romans 3:5-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7, Psalm 99:4

WRATH

What do we mean by God’s “wrath”?

“God intensely hates all sin.” – Grudem

“It is sad indeed to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or who at least wish there were no such thing. While some who would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the divine character, yet they are far from regarding it with delight; they like not to think about it, and they rarely hear it mentioned without a secret resentment rising up in their hearts against it. Even with those who are more sober in their judgment, not a few seem to imagine that there is a severity about the divine wrath that makes it too terrifying to form a theme for profitable contemplation. Others harbor the delusion that God’s wrath is not consistent with His goodness, and so seek to banish it from their thoughts. Yes, many there are who turn away from a vision of God’s wrath as though they were called to look upon some blotch in the divine character or some blot upon the divine government. But what saith the Scriptures?” – Pink

Exodus 32:9-10, Deuteronomy 9:7-8, Deuteronomy 29:23, Deuteronomy 32:39-43, 2 Kings 22:13, Nahum 1:2-8, Romans 1:18, Romans 2:4-8, Colossians 3:5-6, Hebrews 9:22, Revelation 6:16-17, Revelation 19:15

Examples: Leviticus 10 (Nadab & Abihu), 1 Chronicles 13 (Uzzah), Acts 5 (Ananias & Sapphira)

Questions to consider

1. Do the following verses show God to be unjust? How would you respond to someone who claimed they did?
Isaiah 40:2, Jeremiah 16:18, Jeremiah 17:18, Revelation 18:6
2. How is wrath of God revealed?

3. In what ways should a proper understanding of God's justice impact a believer's life?

Romans 13:3-5, 1 Peter 1:14-19, Ephesians 6:5-9, 1 Peter 2:18-25

4. In light of God's justice and wrath how can He forgive sin? How do we reconcile God's mercy with his wrath?

Romans 3:21-26, Romans 5:9-10, Romans 9:22, 1 John 4:9-10, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, John 3:36

5. Do you ever find yourself wishing that some of God's laws were different than they are? If so, does such a wish reflect a dislike for some aspect of God's moral character? What passages of Scripture might you read to convince yourself more fully that God's character and his laws are right in those areas? (Grudem)

6. Why is it important to meditate on the justice and wrath of God?

The wrath of God is a perfection of the divine character upon which we need to frequently meditate. First, that our hearts may be duly impressed by God's detestation of sin. We are ever prone to regard sin lightly, to gloss over its hideousness, to make excuses for it. But the more we study and ponder God's abhorrence of sin and His frightful vengeance upon it, the more likely are we to realize its heinousness. Secondly, to beget a true fear in our souls for God: "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." We cannot serve him "acceptably" unless there is due "reverence" for His awful Majesty and "godly fear" of His righteous anger; and these are best promoted by frequently calling to mind that "our God is a consuming fire." Thirdly, to draw out our souls in fervent praise for our having been delivered from "the wrath to come." – Pink

"Unless we give a real content to the wrath of God, unless we hold that men really deserve to have God visit upon them the painful consequences of their wrongdoing, we empty God's forgiveness of its meaning." – Leon Morris in *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*

ADDITIONAL ATTRIBUTES

“An attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself.” – A. W. Tozer

Grudem defines several other attributes of God, most of which are not commonly included by others.

Peace – In God’s being and in his actions he is separate from all confusion and disorder, yet he is continually active in innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions.

1 Corinthians 14:33, Romans 16:17-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Ephesians 2:13-17, Isaiah 9:6-7, Psalm 119:165, John 14:27, Galatians 5:22-23, Numbers 6:24-26

Spirituality – God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of creature.

John 4:21-24, Exodus 20:4-6, Psalm 139:7-12, 1 Corinthians 14:14, Romans 8:16

Invisibility – God’s total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows himself to us through visible, created things.

John 1:18, 1 Timothy 1:17, 1 Timothy 6:13-16, 1 John 4:12

Theophanies – Genesis 18:1-33 (Abraham & Sarah), Genesis 32:28-30 (Jacob wrested with God), Exodus 13:21-22 (Cloud by day & fire by night), Exodus 24:9-11 (Elders of Israel), Judges 6:11-23, Numbers 22:22-38, Exodus 3:2-4 (Burning Bush), Exodus 33:11, 20-23 (Moses)

Jesus, the image of the invisible God – John 6:45-46, John 14:9, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3,

We will see Jesus face to face – Matthew 5:8, Revelation 1:7, Revelation 22:3-4, 1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 13:12

Jealousy – God continually seeks to protect his own honor

Deuteronomy 4:23-24, Exodus 34:10-16, Exodus 20:4-6, Isaiah 48:9-11

How should we imitate God’s jealousy? How shouldn’t we imitate God’s jealousy?

Perfection – God’s perfection means that God completely possesses all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him.

Matthew 5:48, Psalm 18:30, Deuteronomy 32:4

Blessedness – God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character.

1 Timothy 1:8-11, Genesis 1:31, Isaiah 62:1-5, Zephaniah 3:17

Beauty – God’s beauty is that attribute of God whereby he is the sum of all desirable qualities.

Psalm 27:4, Psalm 73:25-26, 1 Peter 3:4, Titus 2:10, Ephesians 5:27

Why is it important that we have a proper understanding of what the Bible means by “beauty” when we consider the “beauty of the Lord”?

Glory – God’s glory is the created brightness that surrounds God’s revelation of himself.

Honor or “excellent reputation” – Isaiah 43:7, Romans 3:23, John 17:5

Bright light that surrounds God’s presence...that is the outward expression of his excellence – Psalm 24:10, Psalm 104:1-2, Luke 2:9, Matthew 17:2, Hebrews 1:3

God made us to reflect his glory – 2 Corinthians 3:18, Mathew 5:16, Philippians 2:15, Proverbs 4:18, Daniel 12:3

ATTRIBUTES WE HAVE STUDIED PREVIOUSLY

Incomprehensibility – [God is] unable to be fully or exhaustively understood...We can never fully understand any single thing about God.

Knowability – [God] has revealed himself to all men *generally* by creation and providence...*propositionally* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, *personally* in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and *savingly* through the work of his Word and Spirit. –Reymond

Immutability – God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes and promises.

Eternality – God transcends temporal limitations of beginning and end, of change, of temporal frustration and of ignorance. - Frame

Triunity – There is one indivisible God, who exists eternally as three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, who are each equally and fully God.

Omnipresence – 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.

Omniscience – God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.

Wisdom – God’s wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to these goals.

Love – God eternally gives of himself to others.

Goodness – God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.

Mercy – God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress

Grace – God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment

Patience – God’s goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time and his delight at seeing his plans for history unfolding over time.

Holiness – God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor.

Justice – God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.

Wrath – God intensely hates all sin.