

The Character of God

- God lives and moves through all of Scripture and any attempt to summarize him is always inadequate. We hardly know him, but we do know him.
- Knowing him using technical terms is not the same as walking with him and communing with him, though neither should they be thought of as in opposition to each other.
- The word “God” is up for grabs, because of the way sin has touched out minds (noetic, anti-God twist) “I like to think of God this way” (Kant – since God cannot really be known) – this Enlightenment issue is the cause of why we are where we are today.
- Five “sweet peas” – Personal – plural way, tri-personal (Who is he. Answer a society in fellowship); Powerful (how does he exist: infinite, eternal, draws his life from himself, in contrast with ours; Perfect (how does he behave – adorable, excellence of character); Purposeful (What is he up to? His purpose for creation is worked out in providence, re-creating his fallen world, redeeming his people, at the center of his plan is LJC: prophet, priest and king and propitiation for our sins); Praiseworthy (Doxology should be our prime business).
- Think about God in the right way: warning about thinking wrongly. All the strands of the bible’s teaching about God – the analogy of faith – adapting them to talk about God which the bible is doing all the time. Forming a coherent theology by doing so. Thinking God’s thoughts after him by thinking the thoughts of the Bible writers after them. Fitting them all together to make a coherent whole.
- Do not lapse into the Enlightenment way of thinking: off saying the world, reason, common secular knowledge provides us with a frame of reference for all that we can say about God, scaling them down if we need to. The human mind doesn’t think straight about God and we only ever think straight about him when we refuse to follow the way I like to think and take instead the way God shows me in his word.
- Spelling it out: the living God (alive, moving, doing things) – God didn’t give a text book of categories, but showed himself in action, speaking.
 - God is personal and therefore anthropomorphisms is the right way to talk about him: Father, King, Helper – in the 20th century there were exponents of “higher thought” and C S Lewis was confronted by one who thought it improper to talk of him as absolute rather than Father. God is “higher substance” (Miracles book) she had thought of God as an infinite “rice pudding” (which she didn’t much like anyway). God is PERSONAL. He is THREE PERSONS and therefore God is often described in human terms, using ANTHROPOMORPHISMS – the employment of human characteristics to describe what God is like. (E.g., God uses the sense of smell, or olfaction [Genesis 8:21]. God has “hands,” “wings” and “eyes” [Genesis 49:24; Psalm 57:1; Deuteronomy 11:12]. He is “sorry” that he made man [Genesis 6:7]. He “regrets” that he made Saul king [1 Samuel 15:11]).
 - God is solitary and unique, the only one of his kind: Paul in Athens confronted by polytheism, and Acts 17 shows where you have to start with polytheists: the one God has an absolute claim on everyone. Paul didn’t stop but was howled down and had to withdraw. Why did Paul ever start talking about ONE God? Because we can’t know sin until we see polytheism as idolatry. Evangelical opinion in the 20th century has been that Paul was trying his “apologetic style” sermon, but he failed miserably and when he went to Corinth he returned to preaching in the normal way. That’s nonsense. What he is doing is teaching basic theism causes divided allegiance and idolatry. God is UNIQUE. There is only ONE God. Any suggestion of polytheism is outlawed: “I am the LORD,

and **there** is no other, besides me there is no God” (Isaiah 45:5; cf. 45:14, 18, 21, 22).

- God is real, true the God who is there.
- God is ETERNAL (outside of time), INFINITE (outside of space), free from all limitations of the created order or the processes of change and becoming that characterize it. Thus, God is IMMUTABLE (no external force is able to change him), INDEPENDENT, UNCHANGING, SELF_SUSTAINING (Aseity) and manifests SIMPLICITY (Latin, *simplicitas*, single-minded – God’s whole being is involved in everything he does and wills. He is always fully involved). God is self-sustaining (aseity – the quality of having life from oneself, never lacks energy or gets run down). We can’t imagine it. He is independent. He doesn’t need anything. God is present in every point of time and every point of space and all points in space and all points in time he transcends. Open-theists think the future is not part of God’s present. It’s a very odd view indeed. Transcendent (orthodox though there’s a form of it in Kant that isn’t).
- GOD is SOVEREIGN. God is OMNI-POTENT (power – God can do what he wills to do (not can God make a stone too heavy for him to lift -- piffle), OMNI-SCIENT (knowledge), OMNI-PRESENT.
- God is WISE: choosing the best ends and the best way to achieve them.
- God is HOLY. Morally good and free from evil. God overrules evil in such a way that his will is always done. The relationship is compatible. God’s RIGHTEOUSNESS exhibits both retributive and remunerative aspects. A pantehnicon (semantic field) word that all other things about God can be subsumed. Holy in the sense of “different”. He is different from us in every way. Isa 6.
- Moral qualities: How does God behave? God is GOOD and LOVING. He is faithful, patient, joyful, merciful, gracious, jealous to have his people’s full affection and loyalty. God is LOVE: Good in all these ways. Love is the purpose of making the object of the loved one great.
- God is GLORIOUS. His GLORY (God on display, manifested, shown forth) exhibits excellence and evokes praise. It is our goal, in this life and that to come, to glorify him: to tell him how glorious he is and take delight in it.
- INCOMPREHENSIBLE (Isa 40; Romans 11). What we do know, we know truly.