

DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD
THE NATURE OF GOD—HIS NATURAL ATTRIBUTES

Introduction

Because man is unable to comprehend God's essence, God reveals Himself through His attributes.

Reduced to its simplest definition, an attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself.

A. W. Tozer has written:

"If an attribute is something true of God, it is also something that we can conceive as being true of him. God, being infinite, must possess attributes about which we can know nothing." (The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 19)

"In the awful abyss of the divine being may lie attributes of which we know nothing and which can have no meaning for us, just as the attributes of mercy and grace can have no personal meaning for seraphim or cherubim. These holy beings may know of these qualities in God but be unable to feel them sympathetically for the reason that they have not sinned and so do not call forth God's mercy and grace. So there may be, and I believe there surely are, other aspects of God's essential being which He has not revealed even to His ransomed and Spirit-illuminated children." (Ibid, p. 52)

So, it must be concluded that there are likely many hidden facets of God's nature that are unknown (and perhaps unknowable) by any created being, even angels. They are known only by Jehovah God himself.

Let's consider some of the known attributes of God.

I. GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT!

Exodus 3:13, 14: "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

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We've already discussed in a previous study the existence of God, but one of His attributes is *self-existence*. This is simply to say (with staggering implications) **that God exists because He exists!**

He is the first cause— Himself uncaused!

A. He Is Not Dependent Upon Anything Or Anyone For His Thoughts!

Romans 11:33-34—"33O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"

B. He Is Not Dependent Upon Anything Or Anyone For His Will!

Romans 9:19—"19Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"

Ephesians 1:5—"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"

C. He Is Not Dependent Upon Anything Or Anyone For His Power!

Psalm 115:3—"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

D. He Is Not Dependent Upon Anything Or Anyone For His Counsel!

Psalm 33:10-11—"The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

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II. GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT!

Psalm 50:10-12: “10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.”

This attribute is closely connected to the attribute of self-existence, but carries it a step further. This means **God has never had in eternity past, nor can ever have in the ages to come, a single need for which His own divine nature has not already provided!**

III. GOD IS ETERNAL! (i.e. WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.)

“Eternity” and “Eternal” speak “infinity in relation to time.” Simply defined, this means **God is absolutely free from the tyranny of time. In Him there is no past or future, but one always and never-ending present.** He is neither conditioned nor confined by time.

Deuteronomy 33:27—“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say, Destroy them.”

Psalm 102:11, 12—“My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.”

During one of his dialogues with the wicked Pharisees, the Son of God made reference to his attribute of eternity.

Note his declaration in **John 8:56-58.**

It should be observed that He did not say, “before Abraham was, I was,” but “**before Abraham was, I am**” (John 8:58).

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Psalm 90:2—“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

IV. GOD IS INFINITE!

This means that **God has no limitations! He is bounded only by His own nature and will!**

1 Kings 8:22, 23, 27: “And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”

Jeremiah 23:24: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”

V. GOD IS OMNIPRESENT! (i.e. EVERYWHERE PRESENT)
“Omnipresence” is “infinity in relation to space.”

The great theologian A. H. Strong defines this attribute as follows: “God, in the totality of His essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts.” (Systematic Theology, p. 279)

The omnipresence of God thus means He is present everywhere with His whole being at the same time. The great danger to avoid in rightly understanding this attribute is the grievous error of pantheism, which says that God is everywhere, and everything is God. That is totally false. Two aspects should be kept in mind as one studies the omnipresence of God.

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- A. God’s Immanence.**
This speaks of **God being in the world, acting within and through his creation.**
- B. God’s Transcendence.**
This affirms that **God is above and beyond his creation.**

Psalm 139:7-12: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

VI. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT! (i.e. ALL-POWERFUL)
“Omnipotence” is “infinity in relation to energy.”

It refers to **God’s unlimited power by which He can bring everything to pass which He wills.**

Genesis 18:14: “Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Revelation 19:6: “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

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This means God can do anything if it can be done and if it does not contradict his own nature.

To illustrate these two things: God cannot create a rock so heavy that He couldn’t lift it, because the very nature of this act would be impossible to perform. God cannot lie, or steal, for these things would contradict His own nature.

Here are some areas in which God’s omnipotence is clearly seen.

- A. He Has Power Over Nature!**
- 1. He Has Creative Power!**
(Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3)
 - 2. He Has Sustaining Power! (Colossians 1:17)**
 - 3. He Has Control Over The Elements!**
(Exodus 7:1-5; Psalm 107:25-29; Nahum 1:5-6)
- B. He Has Power Over Men!**
- 1. Power To Change Circumstances!**
(Joseph – Genesis 39:2-3, 21)
 - 2. Power Over Rulers!**
(Nebuchadnezzar – Daniel 4:19-33)
 - 3. Power Over Nations. (Psalm 75:6-7)**
 - 4. Power Over The Animal Kingdom.**
(Daniel 6:22)
- C. He Has Power Over Angels!**
Psalm 103:20: “Blessed the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Also see, Daniel 4:35b

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D. He Has Power Over Satan! (*Job 1:12; 2:6*)

The first two chapters of Job deal with Satan's accusations against the patriarch before God. The devil then subjects Job to various fierce and fiery trials, but not before being granted the needed specific permission from the omnipotent God himself.

E. He Has Power Over Death!

Hebrews 2:14-15—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

VII. GOD IS OMNISCIENT! (i.e. ALL-KNOWING)

"Omniscience" is "infinity in relation to intelligence."

God possesses (without prior discovery of facts) complete and universal knowledge of all things past, present, and future. This includes not only the actual, but also the possible. This total and immediate knowledge is based on His eternity (He has always, and will always exist), and His omnipresence (He has been, is, and will always be everywhere at the same time).

The Bible teaches that ***God is all knowing and absolutely perfect in knowledge.***

Romans 11:33—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Job 37:16—"Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of **him which is perfect in knowledge?**"

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Psalms 147:5: "Great is our Lord, and of great power: **his understanding is infinite.**"

Isaiah 40:13, 14: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?"

Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Psalms 104:24: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

1 John 3:20—"For if our heart condemn us, **God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.**"

A. He Sees All Things!

Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

B. He Knows All Things!

The big and small of His universe.

Psalms 147:4: "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names."

Matthew 10:29, 30: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

C. He Knows Mankind!

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- 1. He Knows Our Thoughts!**
Psalm 139:2b: “Thou understandest my thought afar off.”
Psalm 44:21: “Shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.”
- 2. He Knows Our Words!**
Psalm 139:4: “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.”
- 3. He Knows Our Deeds!**
(Psalm 139:2-3; Revelation. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15)
- 4. He Knows Our Sorrows!**
Exodus 3:7: “And the Lord’ said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.”
- 5. He Knows Our Needs!**
Matthew 6:32: “(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”
- 6. He Knows Our Devotion Or Lack Of Devotion!**
Genesis 18:17-19: “And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

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Genesis 22:11, 12: “And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

2 Chronicles 16:9: “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: Therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.”

- 7. He Knows Our Frailties!**
Psalm 103:14: “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”
- 8. He Knows Our Foolishness!**
Psalm 69:5: “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.”
- 9. He Knows His Own!**
John 10:14: “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”

2 Timothy 2:19: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

- D. He Knows From Eternity Past That Which Shall Be In Eternity Future!**
Acts 15:18: “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

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Isaiah 46:9-10—“9Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”

E. He Knows The Whole Plan Of The Ages And Man’s Part In It.

Ephesians 1:8-11—“8Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

F. He Knows What Might Or Could Have Been!

Matthew 11:23: “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”

A. W. Tozer has written:

“God perfectly knows Himself and, being the source and author of all things, it follows that He knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet unborn.

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God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all beings and every being, all creaturehood, and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.” (The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 62)

VIII. GOD IS IMMUTABLE! (i.e. UNCHANGEABLE)

It is that attribute of God whereby *He is completely and fully perfect in all His being and attributes, and thereby, ultimately unchangeable.*

A. The Immutability Of God Stated.

(Malachi 3:6; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 102:26-27; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8; Isaiah 40:28)

B. God Is The “I AM!”

All change must of necessity be for better or worse. God cannot change for the better since He is perfect, neither can He change for the worse. He can never be wiser or more holy than He is.

C. The “Repentance” Of God.

If God cannot change why does the Bible say God repents.? (Genesis 6:6-7; Exodus 32:14; Deuteronomy 32:36; Judges 2:18; 1 Samuel 15:11, 35; 2 Samuel 24:16; 1 Chronicles 21:15; Psalm 135:14; Jeremiah 15:6; 26:13, 19; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2)

This is in the light of Numbers 23:19!

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The answer is two-fold:

1. God's Repentance Is Anthropomorphic.

The word "*repent*" means "*a change of mind resulting in a change of course,*" and does not always have to do with sin and salvation.

In the Bible, God uses a human action to describe what He is about to do in order that we might understand the Infinite.

2. God's Repentance Is Always In Consonance With His Attributes.

It could be said that God "*repents*" every time a sinner calls upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

The unchangeable holiness of God demands that sin be punished—the unchangeable love of God saves the sinner who repents and believes. In Christ, both God's holiness and love are satisfied.

However, if God decided to allow an unwashed sinner to enter Heaven—or, for that matter, decided to send a blood-washed saint to hell—such a change of mind (repentance) would be contrary to His attributes!

The reason God repented about destroying Nineveh was because they repented. Therefore God's change of mind was in harmony with His unchanging grace.