

Lesson 3

GOD: HIS CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES

Prepare for Your Assignment

Download message #3, "God: What is He Like?" from www.gty.org/fof.

Take your notebook to take notes on the message.

Work through the questions and tasks on the following pages.

Memorize 1 Chronicles 29:11

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, and all that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.

Change yourself in the Godhead's deepest love; be lost in His immensity; and you will come forth as from a couch of rest refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead."

—C. H. Spurgeon on January 7, 1855

I. Introduction

In the religions of today's world, there are many so-called gods and just as many opinions about what God (or god) is like. The Bible, on the other hand, claims to be the revelation of the one true God. The Bible never tries to prove that God exists; it simply states, "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1).

A. How does Psalm 89:7–8 describe God?

God is to be feared; He is awesome and mighty.

B. What statement is made to point to the fact that there is only one God (Isaiah 43:10)?

"Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me."

C. What is it that God will not give to another (Isaiah 42:8)?

He will not give His glory or His praise.

II. The Importance of Knowing God

A. Jesus equated knowing God with what (John

17:3)? Eternal life

B. Rather than boasting in wisdom, might, or riches, what one thing does God say a man should boast about (Jeremiah 9:24)?

"That he understands and knows Me (God)."

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.¹ —A. W. Tozer

III. How Can One Know God?

A. What does Jesus say about the means for knowing God (John 14:9–10)?

“Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?”

B. What does Paul say about Christ in Colossians 2:9?

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”

C. The writer of Hebrews says that God has spoken to us in His Son. How is Christ described (Hebrews 1:3)?

“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”

IV. God’s Attributes

A. What are attributes?

An attribute is a quality or characteristic that is true about someone. Studying God’s attributes allows us to have a limited understanding of His Person. Even though some concepts exceed the limits of our comprehension, our ideas concerning God need to be as true as possible.

| Father, Son, and Holy Spirit |
|------------------------------|
| Holiness |
| Righteousness and Justice |
| Sovereignty |
| Eternality |
| Immutability |
| Omniscience |
| Omnipresence |
| Omnipotence |
| Love |
| Truth |
| Mercy |

Note: These are just a few of God’s attributes.

¹ Quote from *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer, © 1961 by Aidan Wilson Tozer. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

B. God's attributes defined

First look up the following Scripture verses, then write down the part of the verse that best describes the given attribute.

Second, in the Personal Application section, write out how that attribute personally applies to you based on your understanding of the attribute.

✓ 1. Holiness

God's attribute of holiness means that He is untouched and unstained by the evil in the world. He is absolutely pure and perfect.

a. Exodus 15:11 "Who is like You, majestic in holiness?"

b. Psalm 99:9 "Worship at His holy hill, for holy is the Lord our God."

Because God is holy, we are exhorted to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). We are to be set apart from sin unto God. Our lives are to shine as a reflection of God in an unrighteous world.

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

✓ 2. Righteousness and Justice

Righteousness and *justice* are derived from the same root word in the original language of the New Testament. The meaning is being right or just.

Righteousness designates the perfect agreement between God's nature and His acts. Justice is the way God legislates His righteousness. There is no action that God takes in relation to man that violates any code of morality or justice.

There is no law **above** God, but there is a law **in** God.²

a. According to Psalm 119:137, God's righteousness is displayed in His judgments.

² Quote from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Volume 5, ed. Merrill C. Tenney, © 1975, 1976 by The Zondervan Corporation. Used by permission.

b. In Psalm 89:14, righteousness and justice are referred to as the foundation of Your throne.

How does *your standard* of what is right and just compare with *God's standard*?

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

✓ **3. Sovereignty**

The word *sovereign* means chief or highest, supreme in power, or superior in position to all others.

a. Isaiah 46:9–10 “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”

b. Isaiah 45:23 “I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.”

The idea of sovereignty is encouraging, for it assures the Christian that nothing is out of God's control and that His plans cannot be thwarted (Romans 8:28).

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

✓ **4. Eternality**

Since God is eternal, there has never been a time when He did not exist. He had no beginning and will have no end.

a. Isaiah 44:6 “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.”

b. Isaiah 43:13 “Even from eternity I am He”

Being eternal, God is not bound by time. Having always existed, He sees the past and the future as clearly as He sees the present. With that perspective, He has a perfect understanding of what is best for our lives. Therefore, we should trust Him with all areas of our lives.

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

✓ **5. Immutability**

God never changes in His nature or purpose.

a. Malachi 3:6 “For I, the Lord, do not change.”

b. Hebrews 6:17-18 “the unchangeableness of His purpose; it is impossible for God to lie.”

The Bible contains numerous promises for those who belong to Him. He can be trusted to keep His Word.

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

6. Omniscience

God knows all things present and future. Nothing takes Him by surprise.

a. Job 34:21 “For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps.”

b. Psalm 139:1–6 “O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.”

Since God is omniscient, He knew all our sins (past, present, and future) at the time of our salvation. Yet He still forgave us and received us into His family forever. What does that say about the security of our salvation?

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

■ At one point in my life I thought about the doctrine of omniscience with anything but confidence. When I was a little kid, my parents used to say, “We may not know what you do, but God does. God sees everything.” Remember that beauty? I used to get that. He knows.

As a result, I used to think the doctrine of omniscience was really a bummer. I mean, what a deal. God knew me in ways I wasn’t sure I wanted to be known.

Then I studied John 21 and grew up a little bit. And I remembered Peter’s conversation with Jesus on the lakeside days after Peter firmly denied knowing Him. Peter kept trying to convince the Lord he loved Him. Remember that? “Lord, I’m telling You, I love You.” And the Lord kept asking him and asking. . . . Finally, Peter said, “Lord, look, You know all things, You know that I love You.”

What did he appeal to? What doctrine of God? What attribute? Omniscience—omniscience is a great thing. It’s not so much that God looks down and spies you out; that’s only half of the truth. Do you know that if it weren’t for omniscience there are some days when God wouldn’t even know you loved Him because it isn’t obvious? And if He didn’t know everything He wouldn’t even know you cared. I suppose in my life there are plenty of days when I am indistinguishable from one of the world’s people. Would you agree that is true for your life? How does He know I care? He has to know a lot. He has to know everything. He has to know my heart. Oh, that gives me confidence even when I blow it. My love is still secured because He knows my heart.

John MacArthur

✓ **7. Omnipresence**

God is present everywhere in the universe.

a. Proverbs 15:3 “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.”

b. Psalm 139:7–12 “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.”

Since God is everywhere, it is foolish to think we can hide from Him. This also means that a believer may experience the presence of God at all times and know the blessings of walking with Him.

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

✓ **8. Omnipotence**

God is all-powerful, having more than enough strength to do anything.

a. Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.”

b. Revelation 19:6 “For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.”

God’s omnipotence is seen in:

- ◆ His power to create (Genesis 1:1)
- ◆ His preservation of all things (Hebrews 1:3)
- ◆ His providential care for us (Psalm 37:23–24)

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). What can you learn from Isaiah 41:10 about God’s omnipotence?

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

9. Love

God is love. His love is unconditional; it is not based on the loveliness or merit of the object.

- a. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
- b. Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Love expresses itself in action. God is our example. He demonstrated His love for us in sending Jesus to die in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

10. Truth

God is the only true God.

- a. Psalm 31:5 “O Lord, God of truth.”
- _____
- b. Psalm 117:2 “the truth of the Lord is everlasting.”
- _____

God's truth is above all. He is truthful even if all men are found to be liars. Therefore, His words and His judgments always prevail (Romans 3:4). In light of this, how should you view God's Word and the truths it contains?

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

11. Mercy

God's great mercy is the practical expression of His compassion to those who have opposed His will.

a. Psalm 145:8–9 “The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.”

b. Psalm 130:3–4 “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is

forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

God's great mercy is contrasted with man's sin. His mercy is displayed in our salvation (Ephesians 2:4–5).

Personal Application: _____ (Answers will vary)

V. Application

In light of the attributes of God discussed in this lesson, answer the following questions.

A. How will your prayers be affected? _____ (Answers will vary)

B. How would you respond to a major trial in your life, such as:

1. The death of a close relative (spouse, child)?

_____ (Answers will vary)

2. An accident that leaves you physically disabled?

_____ (Answers will vary)
