



# attributes of *God*

WEEK 21 — KNOWING GOD



**A. W. Tozer**

“If there is one terrible disease in the Church of Christ, it is that we do not see God as great as He is.”

**Augustine:**

“You are most high, excellent, most powerful, omnipotent, supremely merciful and supremely just, most hidden yet intimately present, infinitely beautiful and infinitely strong, steadfast yet elusive, unchanging yourself through you control the change in all things, never new, never old, renewing all things yet wearing down the proud though they know it not; ever active, ever at rest, gathering while knowing no need, supporting and filling and guarding, creating and nurturing and perfecting, seeking although you lack nothing. You love without frenzy, you are jealous yet secure, you regret without sadness, you grow angry yet remain tranquil, you alter your works but never your plan; you take back when you find although you never lost it; you are never in need yet you rejoice in your gains.... You owe us nothing, yet you pay your debts; you write off our debts to you, yet you lose nothing thereby.”

**Hosea 6 : 3**

“Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD”

## RESOURCES TO HELP YOU “PRESS ON”

*Systematic Theology* or *Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem  
*The Attributes of God* by A. W. Pink  
*Praying the Attributes of God* by Rosemary Jensen  
*Knowing God* by J. I. Packer  
*God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God* by Mark Jones



## WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD?

**God shows us who He is in Scripture with His names, with images, and with His attributes.**

*The attributes of God are “those qualities or characteristics of the divine being by virtue of which he is distinguished from all created beings and without which he would not be worthy of the worship and service of man.” (WT Conner)*

*“Each attribute is simply a way of describing one aspect of God’s total character or being. God himself is a unity, a unified and completely integrated whole person who is infinitely perfect in all of these attributes. Why then does Scripture speak of these different attributes of God? It is probably because we are unable to grasp all of God’s character at one time, and we need to learn of it from different perspectives over a period of time. Yet these perspectives should never be set in opposition to one another, for they are just different ways of looking at the totality of God’s character.” (Wayne Grudem)*

**God’s attributes are revealed to us by God.**

We cannot know God unless He reveals Himself to us.

**Matthew 11:27** – “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

**We never will know everything that can be known about God.**

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

**Psalms 145:3** – “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”

**Psalms 147:5** – “Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.”

**Romans 11:33-36** – “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.”

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

*“Whoever has seen God and has understood what he saw, has seen nothing.” (Maximus the Confessor)*

*“The majesty of God is too high to be scaled up to by mortals, who creep like worms on the earth.” (John Calvin)*

*“For all eternity we will be able to go on increasing in our knowledge of God and delighting ourselves more and more in him.” (Wayne Grudem)*

## REVIEW OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD WE HAVE SEEN:

### Incommunicable attributes

**UNITY** – *God is not divided into parts. Every attribute of God is completely true of all of God’s character all of the time.*

**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.” (Wayne Grudem)*

**ETERNALITY** - *“God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees and acts in time.” (Wayne Grudem)*

**SPIRITUALITY** - *“God’s spirituality means that 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 sense, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.” (Wayne Grudem)*

**OMNIPRESENCE** - *“God is not confined to space any more than he is measured by time.... He is present everywhere. He is present at one and the same time everywhere.” (James P. Boyce )*

**UNCHANGING** - *“God is perpetually the same; subject to no change in his being, attributes, or determination. Therefore God is compared to a rock (Deut. 32:4, etc.) which remains immovable, when the entire ocean surrounding it is continually in a fluctuating state... Because God has no beginning and no ending, he can know no change.” (A. W. Pink)*

## Communicable attributes

**OMNISCIENT** – *“God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act” (Wayne Grudem)*

**WISDOM** – *“Wisdom in God is infinite and unerring, choosing always the best end and the best means of attaining it. It is seen in creation, and in providence, but is most signally manifested in redemption.” (James P. Boyce)*

**TRUTHFULNESS** – *“God’s truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.” (Grudem)*

**OMNIPOTENT** - *“The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever he pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve.... How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them.” (Stephen Charnock)*

**GOOD** - *“God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.” (Grudem)*

**HOLY** - *“The sum of all moral excellency is found in him. He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin.” (A. W. Pink)*

**LOVE** – *“God’s love means that God eternally gives of himself to others.” (Grudem)*

**RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE**– *God’s righteousness and justice refer to God’s holy and perfect character, and the holy and perfect works that then flow from His character. His righteousness and justice mean that all He says and does is right. It also means that His truth will certainly prevail and that every wrong will one day be punished, yet salvation certainly will come to His people.*

**MERCY** - *Mercy includes God forgiving sin and God showing compassion to those who are suffering.*

**JEALOUSY** - *“God’s jealousy is not the sinful emotion of envy that characterizes human jealousy. It is God’s righteous concern to protect the truth that he is the Creator of the universe and that he alone, not ‘gods’ of human invention, deserves human praise. Those who worship idols provoke God’s jealousy and receive his wrath, as Israel had experienced in the wilderness.” (ESV Study Bible)*

**GRACE** – *“God’s attribute of always being disposed to and leaning towards blessing and kindness, not because it is deserved or earned, but because it is God just being God.” (Greg Teal)*

**WRATH** – *“The wrath of God is his eternal detestation of all unrighteousness... It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin. It is the moving cause of that just sentence which he passes upon evildoers.” (Pink)*

**GLORY & MAJESTY** – *“There are basically two ways that we can speak of God’s glory, a term that denotes his divine splendor and the magnificence for which he is worthy of honor. First, God’s essential glory represents the sum of his attributes, which together make him the ‘God of glory’.... Second, there is a glory ascribed to God in terms of what his creatures bring to him. This latter glory has in view our praise, worship, obedience, and delight as we keep the name of the Lord holy in all that we do.” (Mark Jones)*



## THE GOAL IS KNOWING GOD

*“We need to ask ourselves: What is my ultimate aim and object in occupying my mind with these things? What do I intend to do with my knowledge about God, once I have it?” (J. I. Packer)*

**There is a big difference in knowing about someone and knowing someone.**

*“Not many of us, I think, would ever naturally say that we have known God. The words imply a definiteness and matter-of-factness of experience to which most of us, if we are honest, have to admit that we are still strangers. We claim, perhaps, to have a testimony, and can rattle off our conversion story with the best of them; we say that we know God – this, after all, is what evangelicals are expected to say; but would it occur to us to say, without hesitation, and with reference to particular events in our personal history, that we have known God? I doubt it, for I suspect that with most of us experience of God has never become so vivid as that.” (J. I. Packer)*

**We must seek to know God.**

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

**John 17:3** – “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

*“It is God himself in his whole being who is supremely important, and it is God himself in his whole being who we are to seek to know and to love.” (Wayne Grudem)*

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

## HOW CAN WE GROW IN KNOWING GOD?

### **1. Think correctly about ourselves**

**Romans 12:2-3** – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”

**Thinking about the attributes of God will help us think correctly about ourselves.**

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

## **2. Meditate on the attributes of God as revealed in Scripture**

*“How can we turn our knowledge about God into knowledge of God? The rule for doing this is simple but demanding. It is that we turn each truth we learn about God into matter for meditation before God, leading us to prayer and praise to God.” (J. I. Packer)*

*“Christian meditation involves filling your mind with God and His truth... Biblical meditation requires constructive mental activity... Let’s define meditation as deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture, or upon life from a scriptural perspective, for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer.” (Donald Whitney)*

## **3. Think about how God is both infinite and personal**

**Take time to think about all the attributes, not just the ones to which you are most drawn.**

*“God is both infinite and personal: he is infinite in that he is not subject to any of the limitations of humanity, or of creation in general. He is far greater than everything he has made, far greater than anything else that exists. But he is also personal: he interacts with us as a person, and we can relate to him as persons. We can pray to him, worship him, obey him, and love him, and he can speak to us, rejoice in us, and love us. Apart from the true religion found in the Bible, no system of religion has a God who is both infinite and personal.” (Wayne Grudem)*

## **4. Worship God for His attributes**

**Psalm 95:3-7** – “For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

**Be concerned if you consider the attributes of God and are unmoved.**

**Be concerned if you feel moved without knowing God as He has revealed Himself.**

## **HOW CAN WE KNOW IF WE REALLY KNOW GOD?**

**If we really know God, our lives will change.**

**We cannot be in His presence and remain unmoved and unchanged.**

J. I. Packer suggests there are four evidences we know God....

1. Those who know God have great energy for God.
2. Those who know God have great thoughts of God
3. Those who know God show great boldness for God
4. Those who know God have great contentment in God.

**We must ask ourselves if studying God's attributes changes us.**

### **IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE GOD ONLY WISE**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above  
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small,  
in all life Thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish, but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render, O help us to see  
'tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reread the hymn on page 7. What attributes of God do you find in it?
2. Wayne Grudem said, “God is a subject of study that we will never master.” Does that encourage you or discourage you? Why?
3. How can we be sure that when we get to heaven God won’t tell us that everything we learned about Him was wrong?
4. Do you agree that our concept of God often is too small? Why is that so? How can we grow in our understanding of God?
5. Which attribute of God most stretched your thinking?

*FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION THIS WEEK...*

*Would you call your present relationship to God a personal relationship?*

*Why or why not? What would make it more personal?*

