

DOCTRINE MATTERS: ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Message 4: **The Character of God:** Communicable Attributes

How do I know God exists?

God has **revealed** Himself ...

- 1) _____ to all men by creation and providence
- 2) _____ in the Scriptures (Old and New Testament)
- 3) _____ in His Son, Jesus Christ
- 4) _____ through the work of His Word and Spirit

John 17:3 (ESV)

³ *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

1 John 5:20 (ESV)

²⁰ *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

What can I know *about* God?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.

For this reason, the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God.”

—A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

“Incommunicable” v. “communicable” attributes ...

Attributes Describing **God's Being**

1) 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 existence.

John 4:24 (ESV)

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Exodus 20:4 (ESV)

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Practical implications:

"To think of His being in terms of anything else in the created universe is to misrepresent Him, to limit Him, to think of Him as less than He really is." – Wayne Grudem

2) 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 (ESV)

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 6:46 (ESV)

⁴⁶ ... not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.

1 Timothy 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ ... 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.

What about *theophanies*?

To Abram – Genesis 18, to Jacob – Gen 32:28ff, to Israel – Exodus 13:21ff, to Isaiah – Isaiah 6:1

What about *Jesus*?

John 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 14:9 (ESV)

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Hebrews 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil ...

What about *the future*?

We will see God ... (Matt 5:8, 1 Cor. 13:12)

... personally (Rev 22:3-4)

... transformationally (1 John 3:2, 2 Cor. 3:18)

... but likely not in his entirety (Ps 145:3, John 6:46, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16, 1 John 4:12)

Mental Attributes

3) Knowledge (or _____)

God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.

Job 37:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge,

1 John 3:20 (ESV)

²⁰ ... for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

“actual and possible”

Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Matthew 11:21 (ESV)

²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

“simple act” ... God is always fully aware of everything.

example:

“eternal act” ... God’s knowledge never changes or grows.

4) Wisdom

God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.

Romans 16:27 (ESV)

²⁷ ... to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Job 9:4 (ESV)

⁴ He is wise in heart and mighty in strength —who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?—

Job 12:13 (ESV)

¹³ “With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.”

He invites us to ask for wisdom – James 1:5

He promises wisdom from His Word – Ps 19:7, Deut 4:6-8

He tells us wisdom originates in reverence – Ps 110:10, Prov 9:10

NOTE: Though we can grow in/gain wisdom, our wisdom will always be finite. In practical terms, this means ...

1 Peter 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

5) Truthfulness (including Faithfulness)

He is the true God, and all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.

Jeremiah 10:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. ¹¹ Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens."

Job 37:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge ...

Regarding "faithfulness", God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised.

Numbers 23:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Moral attributes

6) Goodness (including Mercy and Grace)

God is the final standard of good, and all that God is and does is worth of approval. (Whose?)*

Luke 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Psalms 100:5 (ESV)

⁵ For the LORD is good ...

"**Mercy**" = God's goodness towards those in misery and distress

"**Grace**" = God's goodness towards those who deserve only punishment

Exodus 34:6 (ESV)

⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness ...

Psalms 103:8 (ESV)

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

7) Love

God eternally gives of Himself to others.

1 John 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

*God's love is expressed in the **Trinity**:*

John 17:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

John 14:31 (ESV)

³¹ ... but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

*God's love is expressed in the **Gospel**:*

1 John 4:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ ... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

*All of our obligations can be summed up in **love**:*

Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)

³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

8) Holiness

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

Example: The Tabernacle ... "Holy Place", and "Most Holy Place" ...

Exodus 26:33 (ESV)

³³ And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy.

God Himself is Holy: (Ps 71:22, 78:41, 89:18, Isa 1:4, 5:19,24, etc.)

God's holiness is our pattern to imitate:

Leviticus 19:1-2 (ESV)

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ ... but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

9) Righteousness (or Justice)

God always acts in accordance to what is right and He Himself is the final standard of what is right.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (ESV)

⁴ "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

Genesis 18:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

Isaiah 45:19b (ESV)

¹⁹ I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.

The Cross as the ultimate example of righteousness:

Romans 3:24b-26 (ESV)

²⁵ ... Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

10) Jealousy

God continually seeks to protect His own honor.

Exodus 20:5 (ESV)

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me ...

Exodus 34:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

Isaiah 48:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

How is God's jealousy totally incomparable to our jealousies?

11) Wrath

God intensely hates all sin.

John 3:36 (ESV)

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Romans 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 2:5 (ESV)

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Romans 2:8 (ESV)

⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

What would God be like if He were a God who did not hate sin?

How is this attribute of God a virtue?

Later ...

Attributes of Purpose

12) Will (Freedom)

God approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of Himself and all creation.

13) Power (or _____; includes Sovereignty)

God is able to do all His holy will.

*NEXT WEEK:
The Trinity*