

Section: Doctrine of God

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**Q7. Describe God: What is God like?**

He is holy, He is good, He is love, He is wrath, He is just, He is wise, and He is in control of all things.

* **Introduction**

**Webster’s Dictionary of 1828**, ***Attribute***: 1. That which is attributed; that which is considered as belonging to, or inherent in; as, power and wisdom are attributes of the Supreme Being. 2. Quality; characteristic disposition; as bravery and generosity in men.

**The Learner's Dictionary, *Attribute***: An attribute is a quality or feature that someone or something has.

So an attribute refers to a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic of someone or something. It’s what is attributed to someone. They are qualities of someone that specifically (and in some cases uniquely) define them. The characteristics of that person or being.

When we say the attributes of God, what are we talking about? We are talking about God’s character, His person, His nature; in the highest sense, it refers to the perfections of God, the being of God, the qualities of God.

**Martin Luther**: “Your thoughts of God are too human.”

**Psalm 50:21** “...you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.”

**R.C. Sproul**: “... Theologically speaking, to say God is incomprehensible is not to say that God is utterly unknowable. It is to say that none of us can comprehend God exhaustively. Incomprehensibility is related to a key tenet of the Protestant Reformation—the finite cannot contain (or grasp) the infinite ...

Our finite understanding cannot contain an infinite subject; thus, God is incomprehensible.”

Scripture must be our ultimate authority above all else in order to rightly understand and 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, 24 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.”

Knowing God, rightly understanding God, and enjoying God must come first in the life of a Christian.

The psalmist asks in **Psalm 71:19** “… O God, who is like you?” The answer is that there is no one like our God. God is unique.

* **Glossary of God’s Attributes: An Overview**

**Aseity:** God does not owe His existence to anything or anyone outside Himself, nor does He need anything beyond Himself to maintain His existence. He is self-contained, self-existent, self-sufficient, and independent (Psalm 90:2; Psalm 102:24–27; John 5:26; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:8).

**Eternal & Infinite:** God is timeless, having always existed, and without measure or limit in greatness or duration. He transcends time and has no beginning and no end. God is infinite in essence—absolutely perfect. There are no constraints upon Him from outside of Himself (Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 90:2; Psalms 147:5; Psalms 145:3).

**Goodness:** All that God is and does is perfectly good, and He alone is the final standard of good. There is such an absolute perfection in God’s nature and being that nothing is lacking or defective in Him, and nothing can be added to make Him better (Psalm 34:8; Psalm 145:9; Psalm 25:8; Matthew 7:7-11; Romans 8:28-29).

**Grace:** Grace is a perfection of the divine character, which is exercised only toward the elect. Grace is distinguished from “mercy.” God gives unmerited grace to the guilty and unworthy that He has chosen. This includes blessings such as regeneration, faith, reconciliation, sanctification, and eternal life (Ephesians 1:2-14; Romans 11:6; Romans 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 4:16).

**Immutability:** God, in His being, perfections, will, purposes, ordinations, and promises, does not change in any way. He has always been and will always be exactly the same (Numbers 23:19-20; James 1:17; 1 Samuel 15:29; Exodus 3:14; Acts 14:15)

**Impassibility:** God does not experience emotional changes either from within or effected by His relationship to creation. He remains unchanged and unchanging, both prior and subsequent to creation (Numbers 23:19-20; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; 1 Samuel 15:29; Exodus 3:14).

**Omnipotence:** God is able to do all His holy will. He is all-powerful (Psalm 33:9; Isaiah 46:10; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Job 42:2).

**Omnipresence:** God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with His whole being. Nothing in the universe exists outside the presence of God (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24; Deuteronomy 4:39; Hebrews 13:5; Revelation 14:10).

**Omniscience:** God has perfect, complete knowledge. He knows all things that exist and all things that could have existed. He never learns, nor does He forget. God cannot grow in understanding, knowledge, or wisdom, because He lacks nothing (Job 37:16; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 46:9-10; Romans 11:33-34; Matthew 11:21, 23).

**Spirituality:** God is spirit. He exists as a being that has no parts or dimensions, is not made of any matter, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence. He is an invisible, immaterial, and infinite being that is fundamentally distinct from visible, material, and finite creatures (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Matthew 1:23; Colossians 1:15; Luke 24:39).

**Truthfulness & Faithfulness:** God is the original truth, the source of all truth, and the truth in all truth. All that proceeds from Him—all His words, ordinances, paths, works, commandments, and laws—are pure truth. God does not lie. He is faithful and without deceit. All His knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth. He keeps all His promises (Isaiah 40:8; Numbers 23:19; John 14:6; John 17:17-19; 2 Timothy 2:15).

* **Six of God’s attributes that are specifically mentioned in our catechism answer**

1. **Holiness:** God is distinct, separate, and in a class by Himself (set apart). He is superior to creation in every way and above all. He is morally pure (without any sin), and He is holy in relation to every aspect of His nature and character. Purity and the sum of all moral excellency are found in Him (Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Revelation 4:8; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 1:5; Psalm 99:3).

**Revelation 4:8b** “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

As we saw in our definition, the word “holy” can mean "set apart." In this, God is above all of His creation and is totally superior to and distinct from everything that He has made. The holiness of God also stresses the fact that He is separate from all that is profane and sinful.

1. **Love:** God is love; it is not simply that God loves, but that He is love itself, and any true love has its origin in Him. God gives Himself for the blessing and salvation of undeserving sinners. The love of God is uninfluenced; there was nothing in the recipients of His love to call it into exercise, and nothing in the recipients to attract or prompt it (1 John 4:8; Ephesians 5:1-2; John 15:9-11; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:2-6).

**1 John 4:8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**Romans 5:8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us [the Church].

Love as God’s attribute is much more than an emotion, an attitude or work; it is His very being, His very nature. God not only loves—He is love. He is the God of love. He is the very essence of what true love is, and all true love flows from Him as its ultimate source.

**Psalm 5:4** For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you

God’s love is in no sense in conflict with His holiness, righteousness, justice or His wrath. All of God’s attributes are in perfect harmony. Everything God does is loving, just as everything He does is just and right. God is the perfect example of true love. Again, because God is love, He hates sin.

**Romans 12:9** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

1. **Wrath:** God is a God of wrath. The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. God has justice against all evil and decreed eternal punishment against unredeemed sinners (Romans 1:18; Psalm 5:5-6; Psalm 11:5; Psalm 7:11; Revelation 14:9-10).
2. **Justice:** Based on God’s own perfect righteousness and holiness, He deals with all things rightly and completely. All that God has decreed and all that He does is completely just. He hates sin and always judges perfectly (Job 34:12; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 9:7-8; Romans 12:19; Romans 3:26).

**Revelation 16:7** ... “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”

**Hebrews 12:29** … our God is a consuming fire.

**Psalm 5:5-6** The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

In considering the wrath of God, it is important to understand that it is not uncontrollable, irrational, or sinful; rather, His wrath is in perfect harmony with and flows from His holiness, righteousness, love, justice, etc. God is love and zealously loves all that is good. Such intense love for righteousness manifests itself in an equally intense hatred of all that is evil.

In the greatness of His excellence, He will deal with those who do not trust in Christ—those who remain in rebellion against Him—and He will send forth His burning anger to punish them.

**Psalm 9:7-8** The Lord sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

**5. Wisdom:** God is eternally wise and the source of all wisdom. God possesses wisdom perfectly and has decidedly ordained all things perfectly, including the best ways to accomplish His decisions. The wisdom of God is manifest in His creating, ordering, providence in, and governing of all things (Job 12:13; Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33; Romans 11:36; Acts 2:23).

**Job 12:13 “**With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.”

**Isaiah 55:9 “**For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We see in Scripture that God is all-wise. God’s wisdom means that in eternity past, God chose the best results (or ends) and the best means to those ends. Our definition goes beyond the idea of God knowing all things. His wisdom specifies that God’s eternal decisions about what He will do always prove to be wise decisions; that is, they always will bring about the best results (from God’s ultimate perspective), and they will bring about those results through the best possible means.

**6. Sovereignty:** (When we say: “He is in control of all things” in our catechism answer, we are talking about His sovereignty and providence.) As the one true Ruler and Owner of creation, God has rightful and complete authority over all things. He has legitimate claim to absolute lordship, and His governing is just. Providentially, God controls and directs all things, and He does so to fulfill His purposes after the counsel of His own holy will for His glory. God is the Supreme Being who answers to no one and who has the absolute right to do with His creation as He desires; nothing happens without His ordination (Psalm 115:3; Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 4:35; Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 45:7).

**Psalm 115:3** Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

**Daniel 4:35** All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

**Ephesians 1:11** ... [God] works all things according to the counsel of his will.

**1689 Baptist Confession of** Faith: “The Lord our God is one, the only living and true God. He is self-existent and infinite in being and perfection. His essence cannot be understood by anyone but him. He is a perfectly pure spirit. He is invisible and has no body, parts, or changeable emotions. He alone has immortality, dwelling in light that no one can approach. He is unchangeable,immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, in every way infinite, absolutely holy, perfectly wise, wholly free, completely absolute. He works all things according to the counsel of his own unchangeable and completely righteous will11 for his own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. He overflows with goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He rewards those who seek him diligently. At the same time, he is perfectly just and terrifying in his judgments. He hates all sin15 and will certainly not clear the guilty.

* **Important Points to Remember**
* All of these attributes are present in the entire Godhead
* All of these attributes are eternally permanent in God
* All of these attributes are inseparably interconnected
* **Conclusion**

There is nothing more important than knowing God. We all have a joyful obligation to rightly understand God as He is, as He is revealed to us in His word. The benefit of knowing God’s attributes is that we will have a high and correct view of God. High and correct views of God are the foundation to high and holy living, worship, evangelism, and service. An accurate understanding of God will define our worship of God.