

Understanding Theology in 15 Minutes A Day for 40 Days

Day 7

What Other Characteristics of God Make Him Unique?

In addition to being all-powerful and everywhere-present, God is all-knowing, an attribute known as *omniscience*. This means he has perfect and eternal knowledge of all things (Psalm 139:1–6; Isaiah 40:12–14; 1 John 3:2). He cannot learn anything because he has always known everything. He also knows all things that could have happened but did not. An interesting biblical illustration is in 1 Samuel 23:10–13, where God tells David what would happen *if* King Saul came to a certain city looking for David. As it turns out, Saul never came and those things never happened. God knows what would have happened if ... (you had married so-and-so!).

Another implication of omniscience seems to be that God knows everything past, present, and future. Recently there has been theological debate about the future aspect of his knowledge. “Open theology” is convinced that God does not know the future *exhaustively*—some of the future is “open,” unknown even to him. This position is held by some Arminians who believe that if God knows the future, then the choices we will make in the future are not *free* choices, which would be troublesome to the importance they place on human free will. Most Arminians and all Calvinists do not share this concern, believing that God’s exhaustive knowledge of the future is not at odds with human freedom.

Closely connected to omniscience is God’s *wisdom*, which refers to God’s ability to choose the best goals and the best possible means to those goals in order to determine the best overall plan for all that he does. Knowledge has to do with information; wisdom has to do with how that information is used—it is practical, not just cerebral. God knows all things and also knows how to use perfect knowledge in the best way.

The best and highest goal God has chosen is to glorify himself (Numbers 14:21–23; Isaiah 48:11; Romans 11:36; Philippians 2:10–11). One of the very best means toward this goal is how God has created: “How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all” (Psalm 104:24; see also Proverbs 3:19). Another means to God’s glory is how he has made salvation available for all. After reflecting on the riches of his grace through Jesus Christ,

resulting in justification by faith, which Paul had just unpacked (Romans 3–11), he wrote, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!... To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Romans 11:33, 36; see also Ephesians 1:3–12).

By way of application, if the best goal God could choose was his own glory, we cannot improve on this. So we too should make it our goal to glorify God through good works (Matthew 5:16), bearing fruit (John 15:8), and by everything that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). Also, if God knows everything perfectly, including ourselves and our needs, and if his wisdom is perfect (and he is sovereign and omnipotent), we can trust him implicitly. He always does what is the very best for us (Romans 8:28).

Another incommunicable attribute of God is his *immutability*. This means he never changes in his essence or nature. James 1:17 says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Hebrews 13:8 says of Jesus, the Son of God, he “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (see also Malachi 3:6).

This is a part of what makes God unique. Every aspect of his creation is characterized by constant change of some sort—growth, decay, expansion, contraction. God alone experiences no change like this.

Any change regarding God is in relation to what is outside of him. For example, sinners are under his wrath, but when sinners repent, they are under his blessing. What happened to the city of Nineveh as recorded in the book of Jonah is a good example of this.

An amazing application is that we enjoy in our relationship with God something that we do not have in any other relationship—stability and predictability (from God’s end). In every other relationship, we are never exactly sure what is going on within the other person; every such bond carries with it a degree of uncertainty and risk. Not so with God. We always know he loves us (Romans 8:38–39), has forgiven us (Colossians 2:13), and is with us to guide us and protect us; he will never abandon us (Matthew 28:20)!

Another attribute of God is his *holiness*. God is sinless, morally perfect, totally apart from evil (Job 34:10; Habakkuk 1:12–13). Even further, he is the very standard of moral perfection. Numerous times in Scripture, God says, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus

11:44; 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15–16). All laws and commands that come from God flow from and reflect his holy nature.

However, we still have not gotten to the most basic meaning of God’s holiness, which is that he is distinct from everyone and everything else. God is unique, in a category all by himself. This is expressed in Exodus 15:11, “Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness?” The answer: No one. Similarly, 1 Samuel 2:2 says, “There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.” One effect this should have upon us is what it had on Isaiah. After having a vision of God and hearing angels say, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty” (Isaiah 6:3), he was humble, repentant, and willing to serve God however he could. An understanding of God’s holiness will revolutionize one’s life.

INTERESTING FACT

The concept of God’s *glory* is probably best seen not as an attribute but rather the effect of all of God’s attributes when they are revealed. John Piper says it well: “God’s glory is the beauty of his manifold perfections.... It can refer to the infinite moral excellence of his character.” Read the account of Moses asking God to show his glory. God did, but had to “tone it down” for Moses to survive the experience of a lifetime (Exodus 22:18–34:9).