

“Bible Doctrine”: Wayne Grudem
5. The Character of God: “Communicable” Attributes
Notes: Pastor Keith McMinn

I. Explanation and Scriptural Basis

- *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.* (Eph 5:1)

We share/can display his communicable attributes. We can be loving, wise, merciful and gracious.

A. Attributes Describing God’s Being

1. Spirituality

- *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.* (John 4:24)

“We should therefore not think of God as having size or dimensions, even infinite ones (see the discussion on God’s omnipresence in the previous chapter, pp. 86-90).” (Grudem, p. 95)

- *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.* (Exodus 20:4)

“Thus, God does not have a physical body, nor is he made of any kind of matter like much of the rest of creation... God is spirit.” (Grudem, p. 95)

“God is made of God”- Jeff Mingee

- 2. Invisibility-** “God’s invisibility means that 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.” (Grudem, p. 96)

- *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.* (John 1:18)
- *not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.* (John 6:46)
- *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.* (1 Timothy 6:16)
- *“But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”* (Exodus 33:20)

“A theophany is ‘an appearance of God.’” (Grudem, p. 96)

- *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’?” (John 14:9)*

“Thus, in the person of Jesus we have a unique visible manifestation of God in the New Testament that was not available to believers who saw theophanies in the Old Testament.” (Grudem, p. 97)

- *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. (Psalm 145:3)*
- *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)*

“When we realize that God is the perfection of all that we long for or desire, that he is the summation of everything beautiful or desirable, then we realize that the greatest joy of the life to come will be that we ‘shall see his face.’ To look at God will change us and make us like him. The vision of God will give us full delight and joy for all eternity.” (Grudem, p. 97; 1 John 3:2 & 2 Corinthians 3:18)

B. Mental Attributes

1. **Knowledge (omniscience):** “God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.” (Grudem, p. 97)

Illustration: You and I know things about our areas of interest: music, cars, HVAC, cooking, piano and etc. People can know a lot of things with our finite minds. God knows everything about all things! Wow

- *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:20)*

“God’s knowledge of all things actual applies to the entire creation, for God is the one whom ‘no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to who we must give account.’” (Grudem, p.98; Hebrews 4:13)

“God also knows all things possible, including events that might happen but do not actually come to pass.” (Grudem, p. 98)

“God is always fully aware of everything.” (Grudem, p. 98)

- *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4)*

a) The challenge of open theism: Does God know future human choices?

This view is not supported by Scripture. It reduces God to something he is not. He knows all things. He did not start Creation and then step away from things.

- *I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them. (Isaiah 42:8-9)*
- *Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. (Isaiah 44:6-7)*
- “Therefore, open theism is not a viewpoint that is faithful to Scripture.” (Grudem, p. 99)

2. Wisdom- “God’s wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.” (Grudem, p. 100)

- *to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Romans 16:27)*
- *He is wise in heart and mighty in strength —who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded? (Job 9:4)*
- *O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. (Psalm 104:24)*
- *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

“Every day of our lives, we may quiet our discouragement with the comfort that comes from the knowledge of God’s infinite wisdom. If we are his children, we can know that he is working wisely in our lives to bring us into greater conformity to the image of Christ.” (Grudem, p. 100)

- *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)*
- *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111:10)*

God’s wisdom is not entirely communicable; we can never fully share God’s wisdom... God is infinitely wise and we are not, and it pleases him when we have faith to trust his wisdom even when we do not understand what he is doing.” (Grudem, p. 101)

3. Truthfulness (including faithfulness)- “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, p. 101)

- *But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. (Jeremiah 10:10-11)*

“If we think the same thing God thinks about anything in the universe, we are thinking truthfully about it.” (Grudem, p.101)

Faithfulness- “God’s faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised.” (Grudem, p. 101)

Chapter Review Questions

1. What are the five major categories of God’s “communicable” attributes?

- 1- Attributes Describing God’s Being
- 2- Mental Attributes
- 3- Moral Attributes
- 4- Attributes of Purpose
- 5- Summary Attributes

2. Define theophany.

- ‘an appearance of God.’” (Grudem, p. 96)

3. Fill in the blanks: God fully **knows** himself and all things **actual** and possible in one simple and **eternal** act. (Grudem, pp. 97-98)

C. Moral Attributes

1. Goodness (including mercy and grace)- The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval. (Grudem, p. 102)

- *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)*

Mercy- “God’s mercy means God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.” (Grudem, p. 103)

Grace- “God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment. (Grudem, p.103)

2. Love- God’s love means that God eternally gives of himself to others. (Grudem, p.103)

- *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (I John 4:8)*
- *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

3. **Holiness-** “God’s holiness means that he is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor.” (Grudem, p. 104)

- *And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:30)*

4. **Righteousness (or justice)-** “God’s righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.” (Grudem, p.105)

- *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?” (Genesis 18:25)*

- *I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek me in vain.’ the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right. (Isaiah 45:19)*

5. **Jealousy-** “God’s jealousy means that God continually seeks to protect his own honor.” (Grudem, p. 106.)

- *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. (Isaiah 48:11)*

6. **Wrath-** God’s wrath means that he intensely hates all sin. (Grudem, 107)

- *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. (John 3:36)*

Chapter Review Questions

4. Define God’s love. How is this different from how the world normally talks about love?

- God’s love means that God eternally gives of himself to others. (Grudem, p.103) The world has a very shallow view of God’s love and not one of service and sacrifice.

5. How would God be far less good if he were not wrathful?

- Because he would not be dealing with sin and being just.

D. Attributes of Purpose

1. **Will-** “God’s will is that attribute of God whereby he approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.” (Grudem, p.108)

a) God’s will in general

- *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the*

The Communicable” Attributes of God, 6
counsel of his will, (Ephesians 1:11)

- *“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)*

b) Distinction in aspects of God’s will

“God in the infinite greatness of his personality is able to will different things in different ways. (Grudem, p.109)

- *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 29:29)*

Freedom- “God’s freedom is that attribute of God whereby he does whatever he pleases. (Grudem, p.111)

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

2. **Omnipotence (or power, including sovereignty)-** “God’s omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.” (Grudem, p. 112)

E. Summary Attributes

1. **Perfection-** “God’s perfection means that God completely possesses all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him. (Grudem, p.112)
2. **Blessedness-** “God’s blessedness means that God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character.” (Grudem, p.113)
3. **Beauty-** “God’s beauty is that attribute of God whereby he is the sum of all desirable qualities.” (Grudem, p. 113)

- *One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)*

Chapter Review Questions

6. What is the distinction between God’s secret will and His revealed will?
7. Define blessedness.

Biblical Engagement

8. Ephesians 5:1 says, “Be imitators of God, as beloved children.” Pick three of God’s communicable attributes and describe how each can be imitated by Christians in their daily lives.

Personal Application

9. Which communicable attribute is hardest for you to reflect personally? Which communicable attribute is easiest for you to reflect?

10. How does the reality of God's omniscience bring you comfort as you face unknowns in your life?
11. Is it difficult for you to praise God for His wrath? What have you learned about God's wrath in this chapter that may help you see this attribute of God as good and right?