

EQTH105 Basic Bible Doctrine

Unit 1 Reading 2

The Attributes of God Study Resource

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God :: The Attributes of God

When we speak of God's attributes, we are talking about those characteristics that helps us to understand who He truly is. That which follows is a thorough, yet incomplete list and summary of His attributes.

Eternality	Mercy
Goodness	Omnipotence
Grace	Omnipresence
Holiness	Omniscience
Immanence	Righteousness
Immutability	Self-Existence
Justice	Sovereignty
Love	Transcendence

Eternality

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Exodus 3:14](#) — And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."
- [Psalm 102:12](#) — But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations.
- [Hebrews 13:8](#) — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

SALIENT POINTS:

Not only will God exist undiminished everlastingly into the future, but He has existed identically throughout the infinite past. Not only has God himself existed eternally into the past, but so also has His plan for His creation. Before the foundations of the world, God ordained the Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation and Resurrection, and the Salvation of His people. This is a wondrous truth for the believer for it grants him confidence in the tenacity of his faith. Once a believer realizes that God has demanded his salvation and perseverance from this sin-stained world he can live without fear in the joy that God offers all of His children. Also of note is the fact that Christ is eternal in His sonship: He existed eternally before his incarnation as the First-Born over creation (though without human form) and will exist eternally post-resurrection as the glorified Son of God (and it seems that He will bear the scars of His sacrifice evermore — *cf.* [Luke 24:36-40](#) and [John 20:24-29](#)).

Goodness

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Exodus 34:6-7](#) — The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.

- [Psalm 25:8](#) — Good and upright is the Lord.
- [James 1:17](#) — Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

SALIENT POINTS:

One of the most intrinsic attributes of God is His goodness. God is not good because it is attractive for Him to be so, nor does He follow after some sort of standard for goodness. God is actually so good that He is the source of goodness; He alone is the rule and measure of what we truly know to be good. To the Christian, the goodness of the Lord is a security. The Christian knows well that he has been bathed in the death and resurrection of Christ and now stands wholly righteous before God; and this being so, he also recognizes all that God will work in his life will be for his own good — for a good God would never work circumstances to the peril of the righteous. [Romans 8:28](#) tells that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." This is the believer's rest and assurance. But not so for the unbeliever: the goodness of God demands all circumstances to work together for the bad of those rebellious and hateful towards God. God's goodness will manifest itself in a wrathful justice against those who are defiled of holiness, for True goodness cannot abide evil.

Grace

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Psalm 145:17](#) — The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works.
- [Romans 1:5](#) — Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.
- [Romans 3:24](#) — [We] being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
- [Romans 5:15, 20](#) — But the free gift [is] not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.... Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.
- [Ephesians 4:7](#) — But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.
- [Hebrews 4:16](#) — Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

SALIENT POINTS:

Grace is the bestowal of blessing unearned or unmerited. When we speak of God's grace, we speak of those wonderful gifts (e.g., salvation) that no man deserves but God grants anyway. There are several methods by which God demonstrates His grace to us. There is what we call "common grace" — this is that grace that God shines upon the elect and the wicked alike. This kind of grace is God's bestowal of non-eternal blessings (e.g., health, prosperity, good weather, the Sunday comics, &c.); in fact, life itself is a gift of common grace to the non-believer since sinful man deserves nothing but death (*cf.* [Genesis 2:15-17](#) and [Romans 6:23](#)). He does not have to give life to any one, no one can demand it from Him, and He can take it when He pleases. The other kind of grace is that special grace which God demonstrates on those whom he inexplicably chooses to be His people. Just as He did with national Israel (*cf.* [Deuteronomy 7:6-8](#)), God chooses His children not because they are more powerful, wise, intelligent, charismatic, pious, handsome, &c., but simply because that is what He wanted. This grace is amazing for it relies not at all upon us, but solely upon God and His will, rather than any service or good

we are capable to render. This grace also causes us to throw ourselves at the feet of the Lord in praise and rejoicing for His pleasure in granting us salvation.

Holiness

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Exodus 3:5-6](#) — Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.
- [1 Samuel 2:2](#) — "No one is holy like the Lord."
- [Psalm 99:2-3](#) — The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy.
- [Isaiah 6:3](#) — "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"
- [Revelation 4:8](#) — "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

SALIENT POINTS:

Holiness is synonymous with God's total purity and separation from the rest of creation. Holiness is a moral purity, and different from Adam's holiness, God's is eternally incorruptible. This holiness so sets God apart from fallen man that in his natural state, no man may approach the incorruptible God (for man is tarnished, dirty, and corrupt, and True holiness cannot bear such) — this is evidenced by the special commands to those who would approach God (*cf.* [Exodus 3:4-6](#), [Isaiah 6:1-6](#)). God's holiness is one of the primary reasons why the advent of Christ is so incredible: it allows men who were once unable to come before God the ability to kneel before the throne of God and worship forever and ever ([Revelation 4:9-11](#), [5:14](#)).

Immanence

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Jeremiah 23:23-24](#) — "Am I a God near at hand?" says the LORD, "And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD.
- [Acts 17:27-28](#) — He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being.
- [Haggai 2:5](#) — "According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!"

SALIENT POINTS:

Immanence describes a God who is at hand, working through the minutiae of the lives of His creation to produce a love for and enjoyment of His Word, His Gospel, and Himself. God does not sit back and merely observe a creation which he set in motion millennia ago; he is present and actively participating in His world. This gives the believer rest in the knowledge that there is no place or situation that is too far to be under God's protecting hand.

Immutability

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Malachi 3:6](#) — "For I am the Lord, I do not change."
- [James 1:17](#) — Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

SALIENT POINTS:

In God's immutability lies a great source of comfort for the believer. The fact that God does not change his mind, his characteristics, his plan, or anything else is a security better than any earthly insurance for it guarantees His quality of character and gives security to the believer that if He has saved one of us, that saved person WILL persevere to the end for God has chosen him and will not change his mind and let that man slip through His fingers into the breach of hell. No, God neither changes His plan, His covenants, His prophecies, nor His justice; this lends greatly to His dependability ("there is [in God] no variation or shadow of turning").

Justice

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Genesis 18:25](#) — Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?
- [Exodus 34:6-7](#) — The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.
- [Nehemiah 9:32-33](#) — However You are just in all that has befallen us.
- [Romans 9:14-33](#) — What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?
- [Psalm 99:4](#) — The King's strength also loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
- [Romans 1:32](#) — Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.
- [1 Peter 1:17](#) — The Father... without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.

SALIENT POINTS:

The Father of justice, God is the ultimate judge over the lives and actions of men. There seems to be so much injustice in the world (men lie, cheat, steal, and kill all the time with no seeming repercussions), but true justice is not meted out in this earthly realm, but in the true realm (the eternal heavenly realm). In the end, each man will receive his just deserts at the hands of an immutable God who cannot be persuaded or bribed. Christ will look at each man's heart and if it is the least bit corrupted by sin, that man, not being pure, will receive the justice of hell. The believer too would fail this test, if he were not already made clean by his baptism into Christ's death. Thus he is rightly judged clean by Christ and enters into eternal Sabbath. In God's justice, we can find a comfort for all the wrongs perpetrated against us and against mankind. We know that our cruel boss who cheated us for so many years will receive what he deserves. We know that the politician who did wrong to gain personal power will receive justice. We know that killers like Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot will receive justice. And we know that we will receive justice as well. That can be scary for one who truly knows his heart's deceitfulness and is not a believer, but the Christian rests in his sweet faith in Christ, knowing

that he is judged in Christ (*cf. Romans 2:16*) and his safety is thus secured.

Love

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](#) — "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."
- [John 14:31](#) — "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do."
- [Romans 5:5, 8](#) — Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- [Romans 8:35, 39](#) — Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [Neither] height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- [1 John 4:8, 16](#) — He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God abides in him, and who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

SALIENT POINTS:

We all have a basic understanding of what love is, but we are unable to comprehend the depths of True love. This is the love that God embodies. God is the genesis of love; He is its source; and it is by Him that we experience love. God's love is based in a supreme desire to glorify Himself, for He is the being most worthy of love. By seeking His own glory, God pours forth His love upon His creation that it might better give glory to Him. God loves His creation and better than His creation, God loves His people — those whom He will take with Himself into eternal glory! This is one of the greatest truths of Scripture: in spite of who we are and though God hates the workers of iniquity ([Psalm 5:5](#)), in spite of all this, God still loves us! It's amazing.

Mercy

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Psalm 6:4](#) — Return, O Lord, deliver! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!
- [Hebrews 4:16](#) — Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- [Romans 9:23,24](#) — And that he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?
- [Ephesians 2:4](#) — God, who is rich in mercy.
- [Titus 3:5](#) — Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.
- [1 Peter 1:3](#) — Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a loving hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

SALIENT POINTS:

Mercy is when that which is deserved is withheld to the benefit of the object of the mercy. God has demonstrated this attribute in abundance with respect to mankind. We from nearly the beginning of our existence have deserved nothing but wrath; having sinned and fallen short of eternal life in glory, we can do nothing to commend ourselves to or defend ourselves before God. But thankfully, God has been so amazing in His mercy. Over and against merely having the mercy to allow us to live out our miserable lives without destroying us instantly, God has chosen us to greatness and glory by the hand of His Son. The believer finds himself in Christ and enjoys full well the fruits of God's mercy.

Omnipotence

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Romans 11:36](#) — For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
- [Ephesians 1:11](#) — In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.
- [Hebrews 1:3](#) — [God's Son upholds] all things by the word of His power.
- [Mark 14:36](#) — And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."
- [Jeremiah 32:17](#) — "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you."
- [Matthew 19:26](#) — "With God all things are possible."
- [Psalm 115:3](#) — "But our God is in heaven; He does what He pleases."

SALIENT POINTS:

God has the unlimited power to accomplish anything that can be accomplished — this is termed omnipotence. The things God does are neither difficult nor easy for God; they are only either *done* or *not done*. This is because difficulty is a factor that comes about only through the potential for not accomplishing a task. This does not apply to God for potentials do not apply to Him — only actuals. God's power to do all that He desires is the fuel for the engine of sovereignty, which accomplishes His providence. A senseless challenge to God's sovereignty is the question of whether He can make a rock so heavy that he couldn't lift it. This is a senseless question because the feat requested is not a thing to be accomplished through power, but rather by contradiction of reality — the equivalent of asking whether Homer could write an epic so long that he couldn't read it.

Omnipresence

PROOF TEXTS:

- [1 Kings 8:27](#) — "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You."
- [Job 11:7-9](#) — Can you search out deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven - what can you do? Deeper than Sheol - what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.
- [Jeremiah 23:23-24](#) — "Am I a God near at hand?" says the LORD, "And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD.

- [Psalm 139:7-10](#) — "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your Spirit? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utter most parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.
- [Psalm 90:1-2](#) — LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

SALIENT POINTS:

By omnipresence — also referred to as "ubiquity" — we mean that God is everywhere present in the fullness of His being. This allows Him to interact in any places at any times (even in multiple places simultaneously). Being in all locations present in the whole of His being, there is no place we can go and not be in His presence; this is a comfort for Christians and a torment to nonBelievers. God is not spatial or dimensional in existence as we are; if He were, we would constantly be bumping our heads on Him. While it is beyond the scope of our understanding to work out how it is that God can be ubiquitous but act locally, we accept it in like manner as many other recalcitrant ideas: the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the ex nihilo Creation, etc.

Omniscience

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Psalm 147:5](#) — [God's] understanding is infinite.
- [Ezekiel 11:5](#) — Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me, "Speak! 'Thus says the Lord: "Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind'"."
- [Acts 15:18](#) — "Known to God from all eternity are all His works."
- [Romans 11:33](#) — Oh the depth of His riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!
- [1 John 3:20](#) — For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.
- [Hebrews 4:13](#) — And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.
- [Romans 2:16](#) — God will judge the secret things of men by Jesus Christ, according to [Paul's] gospel.

SALIENT POINTS:

When we say God is omniscient, we mean that He knows all that there is to know. There is nothing that is outside the scope of His conception, understanding, or attention. God neither studies nor learns for one cannot increase a knowledge that is already insurmountable. Neither does probability exist for God; all things either are or are not in His perspective. There is no maybe. There are no potentially infinite realities as the faux-hip coffeehouse philosophers and comic book writers are so fond of speculating. There is one reality and God knows it in its entirety, as it exists by, through, and for Him. God is neither surprised by the way the world works itself out, nor shocked by the choices we make. Omniscience is the passive end of His providence — the working out of God's predetermined purpose via His sovereignty (that is, His mastery over all that is) — in that it is the means by which providence can exist, but neither the engine nor the fuel that brings about His action.

Righteousness

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Genesis 18:25](#) — Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?
- [Psalm 19:7-9](#) — The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- [Psalm 145:17](#) — The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works.
- [Jeremiah 9:24](#) — "But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.

SALIENT POINTS:

Righteousness is similar to goodness and holiness, but differs in that it requires works to establish it. Something (like Adam) can be holy, but not righteous if good works do not accompany it. God is good, but He refers to Himself as righteous because He works the good as well. Christians are called righteous, not because they have any ability to accomplish good works, but because they reside in the good works (or righteousness) of Christ. Christ's obedience is transferred to us and God grants us eternal life as a result!

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Exodus 3:14](#) — And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."
- [Psalm 90:2](#) — Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.
- [John 1:1-5](#) — In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- [John 5:26](#) — "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself."
- [Colossians 1:15-17](#) — He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

SALIENT POINTS:

By self-existence, we refer to that unique attribute of God by which He has existed eternally and will always exist so. Unlike all other things that relate to our existence, God does not owe His being to any other thing. I owe my existence to my mother and father and all my varium of ancestors. My computer owes its existence to Compaq employees and a host of subcontractors. And our earth owes its existence to God who through whatever means and processes he saw fit, created the world. All events have causes. All creatures have been created. Except for God. God is the uncaused cause and the uncreated creator. God did not depend upon anything outside Himself for His existence, nor will He ever depend upon anyone for it.

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Genesis 14:19](#) - "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
- [Exodus 18:11](#) - Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods.
- [Psalm 115:3](#) - But our God is in heaven; he does whatever he pleases.
- [Matthew 10:29](#) - "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will."
- [Romans 9:15](#) - For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
- [Ephesians 1:11](#) - In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.
- [1 Peter 3:17](#) - For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

SALIENT POINTS:

Sovereignty tells of God's divine control over everything that happens. There is nothing outside the control of His loving Hand: not the designs of the wicked (even the plans of history's most evil dictators), not the way the earth works itself seemingly against the lives of men (such as the recent earthquake in Turkey), not the workings of demons (or even Satan), and not my own free will.

Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for the good of God's children and verses 38-39 implies that there is nothing beyond the control of God's sovereign hand. God's sovereignty is a huge source of comfort to the believer, for it helps him to know that no matter how chaotic any situation may seem, he really need not fear for God is still in charge and on the throne (and that combined with His love is unassailable).

Transcendence

PROOF TEXTS:

- [Isaiah 55:8-9](#) - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."
- [Isaiah 57:15](#) - For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."
- [Psalm 113:5-6](#) - Who is like the Lord our God, who dwells on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth?
- [John 8:23](#) - And He said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come. You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world."

SALIENT POINTS:

Transcendence refers to the fact that God is unlike any other being in our experience and so no analogy or comparison can come close to perfectly describing Him. His ways are so other than our ways that we cannot predict Him, categorize Him, or comprehend Him with any sort of accuracy. All that we truly know of God comes solely through what He has chosen to reveal about Himself to us through His Word. As odd as this might seem, this is really a comfort to the Christian for if God were comparable to us, He would likely have the same problems rectifying the seeming chaos and injustice that is now so rampant on our earth; but thankfully, we know and trust that He will eventually make all things right and pay back every iniquity and reward all righteousness....