



Understanding God

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”

Isaiah 46:9

“The gravest question before a person 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. . . Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God.”

A. W. Tozer

God is incomprehensible – but what does that mean?

While the Scripture is clear that God has revealed Himself, it is also true that God hides Himself (Isa. 45:15). This means that **we may know God truly while not yet knowing Him fully** because He is absolutely infinite and there is no end of Him and therefore He can never be known in totality.

How is God known?

God is not known by any instrument or human ability. He is known **only through self-disclosure**, which is called revelation. God reveals Himself by what he has created (General Revelation). He also reveals himself by the deeds performed by Him alone and the employment of language (Special Revelation). Language is employed because of human necessity and limited capacity, not a deficiency of God’s character. Special Revelation, represented exclusively in the Bible you own, is particularly important because God speaks to us about Himself, our relationship with Him and others, and the precious nature of being image bearers reflecting His very character to other humans, as well as, rulers and authorities in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10).

How many gods are there?

The Bible is abundantly clear that there is **only one true God!**

(2 Chron. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:20–21)

All other “gods” are false and therefore mere idols that are not “gods” at all.

(Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Ps. 96:5; Isa. 37:19; 41:23–24, 29; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19–20).

Fallen angels have posed as gods to elicit worship, possibly even through counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles

(Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8).

The Old Testament contains a number of clear statements that there is **only one God**.

(Deut. 4:35, 4:39, 6:4–5, 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22, 22:32; Ps. 86:8–10; Isa. 37:20, 43:10; 44:6–8, 45:5, 14, 21–22, 46:9).

The New Testament clearly states that there is **only one God**.

(John 5:44; Rom. 3:30, 16:27; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:17, 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25).

Scripture clearly teaches that there is no one like God

(Ex. 8:10, 9:14, 15:11; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chron. 17:20; Ps. 86:8; 1 Kings 8:23; Isa. 40:18, 25, 44:7, 46:5, 9; Jer. 10:6–7; Micah 7:18).

Scripture also teaches that any claim to be like God is a satanic lie.

(Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:14; John 8:44).

What are God's attributes?

God is not an idea or a proposition but instead a living and free person who is completely "other", or holy. Speaking about this entirely "other" God is difficult and so Christians often speak about God in two main terms:

- **His attributes that He has revealed to us in Scripture.**
- **Attributes that He has revealed through our relationship with Him.**

First, His attributes are not something merely attributed to Him, but qualities inseparable from His very Being. In every way that God exists, He exists without limit, that is, in perfection. God's attributes can be divided into two categories: shared and unshared. His Unshared Attributes belong only to God, while His Shared Attributes are found in people to a limited degree since we are created in His image and likeness. Secondly, we know God by our experiences through relationship with Him: when we recognize His presence all around us; when we recognize His provision in our lives; when we confess our sins and accept His grace to live by faith. In His loving friendship we come to a fuller realization of who He truly is as revealed in Scripture.

Unshared Attributes

Omnipresence – God is everywhere at all times (Ps. 139:7–12, Jer. 23:24 Prov. 15:3 Deut. 31:6; Col. 1:17).

Application – Since God is present everywhere at all times, it is foolish to think we can avoid Him or hide our sins from Him (Job 34:21–22). Also, it is comforting to know that He is there in times of trouble (2 Kings 6:14–17).

Omniscience – God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and everything actual or potential (Ps. 147:5, Isa. 40:12–14, 46:10; Ps. 139:1–6; Job 42:2; Heb. 4:13).

Application – It is comforting to know that God knows all about us, yet still loves and forgives us. Since God knows everything, nothing can separate us from Him, nothing can surprise Him, and He knows all our needs.

Omnipotence – God is all-powerful and able to do all that He wills (Job. 42:2, Ps. 147:5 Matt. 19:26; Eph. 3:20).

Application – It is God's power which guarantees us assurance of our salvation (Rom. 8:35–39, see also 1:16). Also, we can trust God to work out our seemingly impossible situations (Gen. 18:14, see also Jer. 32:17, 27; Luke 1:37). No being visible or invisible, committee, nation, or federation can add or detract from God's power. God is not aided or defeated by opposition from what He chooses to do. What God has decreed will be.

Immutability – God does not change (Malachi 3:6, Num. 23:19, Ps. 102:27, Rom. 11:29, Heb. 13:8; James 1:17).

Application – God has decreed the right order to the universe. He has set a course for His story, which He will not edit later. He has made promises, which He is sure to fulfill. He has chosen you to be part of Christ's household, not as slave but as son or daughter with a shared estate with Him, which He will not rethink later and change. So, it is comforting to know that God remains the same even when we change. Also, it is reassuring to know that we can trust what God has said because His Word never changes.

Eternality – God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time (Ps. 90:2, 93:2, 102:12; Eph. 3:21).

Application – God endows you with eternal life made possible because God Himself possesses it unequivocally. It is, therefore, comforting to know that God sees things from an eternal perspective. Despite what might happen to you in this life He has secured an eternity with Him.

Sovereignty – God is supreme in rule and authority over all things (Ps. 103:19, 2 Sam. 7:28, 1 Chron. 29:10–13), though He does allow human freedom (Gen. 50:21, 22).

Application – The freedom of God to rule without opposition is the security we have to trust Him through terrible trials. No attribute can supply the security and comfort like God's sovereignty, because within our trials is the reminder that God is working out all things for our eventual good. (Rom. 8:28, see also account of Joseph in Gen. 50:20).

Shared Attributes

- Spirit** – God is invisible and immaterial (John 4:19–24, John 1:18, 3:1–10, 14:16–17, 16:12–1, 2 Cor. 3:15–17; 1 Tim. 6:15–16). A Spirit who is personal with a mind (Ps. 139:1–4), emotions (Eph. 4:30), and a will (John 6:40).
Application – It is encouraging to know that since we are created in the image and likeness of God we have a spirit and will go on to eternal life if we know Him.
- Holiness** – God is absolutely separate from any evil (1 Peter 1:16, Ex. 3:5, Lev. 19:2, Ps. 5:4–6, 99:5, Isa. 6:3, 8:13, 57:15; Hab. 1:12–13; 1 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:14–19).
Application – The Holiness of God is both fearful and awe–inspiring. Since He is absolutely holy, it is only through His holy work that we can come into a relationship with Him and one day enter into His presence. Also, we are made holy by His sanctifying work in our lives (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).
- Love/Goodness** – God alone is perfectly good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love (1 John 4:8–16, see also Ex. 34:7; Ps. 84:11; John 3:16; Eph. 2:4–7; Gal. 5:22).
Application – All that we do in life should be motivated by our love for God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37–40). Also, we must remember that love may involve rebuke or chastisement when we sin (Heb. 12:6; Prov. 13:24).
- Truth** – God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth (John 17:17, see also John 14:6, Titus 1:2, Num. 23:19; 2 Cor. 1:20).
Application – It brings great confidence and comfort to know that we can completely trust God and His Word.
- Justice/Righteousness** – God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of His character (Ex. 34:7, see also Gen. 18:25; Deut. 32:4; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:11).
Application – It is comforting to know that God deals fairly with all people, not allowing the guilty to go unpunished, but providing love and mercy to those who turn from sin and to Him for forgiveness.
- Mercy** – God does not give some people what they deserve because He is loving and gracious (Titus 3:5, see also Eph. 2:4–7; Ex. 34:6–7; Matt. 18:23–35; Rom. 12:8).
Application – Jesus’ dying for and becoming our sin and saving us from the deserved wrath of God, was the ultimate act of mercy for which we should be eternally grateful. Due to His mercy, we should be eagerly merciful to those whom we meet.
- Beauty** – God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. God made men and women in His image and likeness to also create works of beauty (Ps. 27:4, see also 50:2; Isa. 33:17; Eccl. 3:11).
Application – In response to God’s beauty we should take time to enjoy the beautiful creation He has surrounded us with. We should also appreciate the reflection of His beauty that we find in the arts and creative process, recognizing that creating is a part of being made in the image and likeness of God, an act that gives Him glory.