

Attributes of God

A barrier to the gospel is how people conceive of God.

- Many view God as impersonal, distant, a great power, so a relationship is not possible.
- Many believe that God is ultimately forgiving, so cast aside justice.
- Many do not make a connection between a non-physical God and physical life.

If we treat the subject of the attributes of God as a question, perhaps we can interest people in a discussion of God without the trappings of modern practices of the church (legalism).

- Created: Without getting into the mechanism, is it more reasonable that God created? The other choice is that the universe, mass and energy, has always been here and always will be here.
- Consistent: God cannot have contradictory attributes. If God had inner conflict, eventually one side would win. Further, the winner must be the good side, since pure evil is self-destructive. While we may have difficulty defining exactly what is “good,” God, by virtue of being God, can do so and will act consistently, in harmony with that “good.”
- Cares: If God created, God must have some purpose, concern, interest, or relationship to that which was created. The concept of a Creator makes random action improbable.
- Communicates: By observation of human history, we can see that people have had many conceptions of God. Not even the best philosophical minds have been able to come to agreement. The only way God can reveal the purpose of the universe is by initiating a communication. This conclusion gives (1) motivation to find the true communication and (2) a mindset for interpreting that communication.

Some of the attributes of God described in the Bible:

- Exodus 6:3 God draws a contrast between names. He does not want to be known only as Almighty, but also as I Am, a person. God has a personality, characteristics, rather than being just a force.
- Exodus 33:17 Moses requested to see God’s glory. God responded by saying “I will make my goodness pass before you.” And, when the event actually occurs, in Exodus 34:6 – 7, God proclaimed His mercy, grace, longsuffering, goodness, truth, and justice.
- 1 John 4:8 God is love. Those who do not imitate this characteristic do not know God.
- 3 John 11 He who does evil does not understand God.
- Jude 25 God is characterized as supremely wise.
- John 4:24 God is Spirit
- Hebrews 12:29 Our God is a consuming fire. The context refers to how God deals with those who refuse. In 12:23, God is called the Judge of all.
- The God of peace: *e.g.*, Hebrews 13:20, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Philippians 4:9, Romans 16:20, 15:33.
- God is faithful: *e.g.*, Hebrews 10:23, 1 Peter 4:19, 1 John 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Corinthians 1:9

How do we translate these attributes into practicality?

- Colossians 1:15 Jesus is the image of the invisible God (see also John 1:1 and 1:14)
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 We are being transformed into that character