

Week 2: Who is God?

WCF Chapter 2; WLC #8-11; WSC # 4-6

1. How many Gods are there?

Heb. 11:4, 6

Deut. 6:4

1 Cor. 8:4-6

Jeremiah 10:1-11

WSC #4 What is God? [Recite it with me.]

God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

2. God is a spirit--omnipresence

John 4:24

2 Cor. 3:12-17

John 16:4-15

What are the implications of God's omnipresence?

3. God is infinitely wise—omniscience

Romans 16:25-27

Psalm 147:5

John 21:17

1 John 3:20

4. God is all-powerful—omnipotence

Can God do all things? God can do _ _ _ _ _ .

Are there things God cannot do? Titus 1:2

Scripture affirms God's omnipotence by saying that God does whatever he is pleased to do ([Psa 115:3](#); cf. [Isa 55:11](#) and [Jer 32:17](#)). Nothing is too hard for him ([Gen 18:14](#)). His word is never void of power, so when he speaks, everything in creation obeys him ([Isa 55:11](#)). Of course, creatures do disobey him in one sense; that is the essence of sin. But God has control even over sinful actions ([Psa 105:24-25](#), [Gen 45:5-8](#), [Exod 4:21](#), [Psa 105:24-25](#), [Rom 9:18](#), [Acts 2:23, 4:28](#)). He ordains sinful, disobedient actions for his good purposes. So his word always prevails, and we can trust that His prophecies always come to pass ([Deut 18:21-22](#)).

READINGS

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God Is Spirit

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” ([John 4:24](#)).
- [John 4:24](#)

We can only trust a Lord who is good, loving, holy, merciful, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and faithful as the biblical Creator truly is. At the same time, we recognize that we can study for a lifetime and only scratch the surface of His immensity. But this will be worth the effort, for as we deepen in our knowledge of Him, we will become ever more established in our faith ([Heb. 5:11–14](#)).

The verse we have selected for today’s study tells us that “God is spirit” ([John 4:24](#)). This may immediately conjure up images of a ghost or other such apparition, but we must be clear that to say the Lord is spirit does not mean He is wispy or ethereal. When Jesus says “God is spirit,” He simply teaches what the Father is like — divine, not limited by physical corporeality, life-giving, and incomprehensible.

As human beings we are defined by our locality. We can be localized at one particular place at one particular time. Though we are composed of body and spirit, our spirits are always where our bodies are, at least while we are alive. God, on the other hand, cannot be localized. When we say that He is spirit, we are saying that He is invisible, not contained. There is some analogical similarity between our spirits and the being of the Lord, but they are not identical.

To be physical is to have extensions. Our bodies extend out from our core to a definite boundary. However, our Father has no such extensions or limitations. We cannot be in more than one place at a time, but God is everywhere. Even our spirits have this limit ([Luke 16:19–31](#)), but God is forever omnipresent. We will examine this attribute more next week.

Coram Deo

Wherever our bodies are, there our spirits are as well. However, God does not have this limitation. He is as present in Moscow as He is in Washington and as is as present there as He is in the jungles of the Amazon. Think of how amazing that is — no matter where we find ourselves, the Lord is always at hand! Do you feel as if He is far from you today? Pray that He would make His presence felt and encourage another who feels like God is far away from him.

Passages for Further Study

[Ps. 139:7](#)

[Jer. 23:23–24](#)

[Eph. 4:9–10](#)

[Rev. 6:9–11](#)

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/god-spirit>

The Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence of God

AN ESSAY BY John M. Frame

DEFINITION

The three “omni” attributes of God characterize him as all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present. Each of these involves the other two, and each provides a perspective on the all-embracing lordship of the true God.

SUMMARY

Omnipotence means that God is in total control of himself and his creation. Omniscience means that he is the ultimate criterion of truth and falsity, so that his ideas are always true. Omnipresence means that since God’s power and knowledge extend to all parts of his creation, he himself is present everywhere. Together they define God’s lordship, and they yield a rich understanding of creation, providence, and salvation.

Introduction

The prefix *omni* means “all,” so the three divine attributes in our title can be paraphrased by saying that God is “all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present.” Let us look at these individually.

Omnipotence

Scripture affirms God’s omnipotence by saying that God does whatever he is pleased to do ([Psa 115:3](#); cf. [Isa 55:11](#) and [Jer 32:17](#)). Nothing is too hard for him ([Gen 18:14](#)). His word is never void of power, so when he speaks, everything in creation obeys him ([Isa 55:11](#)). Of course, creatures do disobey him in one sense; that is the essence of sin. But God has control even over sinful actions ([Psa 105:24-25](#), [Gen 45:5-8](#), [Exod 4:21](#), [Psa 105:24-25](#), [Rom 9:18](#), [Acts 2:23, 4:28](#)). He ordains sinful, disobedient actions for his good purposes. So his word always prevails, and we can trust that His prophecies always come to pass ([Deut 18:21-22](#)).

Often we infer from these passages that God “can do anything.” But that doesn’t quite reflect the full biblical teaching. There are things that God cannot do. He cannot lie ([Titus 1:2](#), cf. [Num 23:19](#)), nor, similarly, can he perform any immoral action. Since God is perfectly holy and good, he cannot do anything evil. And, since he is perfect truth, he cannot do things that are logically contradictory, like making round squares. His truth is a perfect consistency of thought and action. Nor can God do things inappropriate to his nature as God, like buying shoes or celebrating his birthday.

So how should we define God’s omnipotence more precisely? I think the most helpful definition of God’s omnipotence is this: that he has complete and total *control* over everything. This

includes the smallest details of the natural world, like the falling of a sparrow or the number of hairs that grow on your head ([Matt 6:26-30, 10:29-30](#)). Even the events we call random, that we ascribe to chance, are really God at work ([Prov 16:33](#)). That includes not only the small things, but also the big things (which, after all, are accumulations of small things). He determines what nations will dwell in which territory ([Acts 17:26](#)). He decides what king is to rule, and when, and where ([Isa 44:28](#)). He decides whether the purposes of a ruler will stand or fall ([Psa 33:10-11](#)). And he decided, once, that wicked people would take the life of his dear Son, so that we sinners might live ([Acts 2:23-24](#)).

God rules not only the important events of human history but also the lives of individual people. He knits us together in our mothers' wombs ([Psa 139:13-16](#)). He decides whether we will travel or stay home ([Jas 4:13-17](#)). He controls even the decisions of wicked people, as we saw above. But he also exerts his power to save sinners, to bring forgiveness and new life ([Eph 2:8-10](#)). Our salvation is *entirely* the work of God's power, not at all our own work. We believe in Christ because he has *appointed* us to eternal life ([Acts 13:48](#)) and because he has *opened* our hearts to believe ([Acts 16:14-15](#); cf. [John 6:44, 65](#), [Phil 1:29](#)).

So his power is universal: it controls everything in the universe ([Lam 3:37-38](#), [Rom 8:28](#), [Eph 1:11](#), [Rom 11:33-36](#)).

Omniscience

Now let us look at God's omniscience. God's power is not a blind power. Everything God does has an intelligent purpose, a definite goal. And since, as we've seen, God's power is universal, so also is his knowledge. In knowing his own intentions, God knows everything in himself, in his creation, and throughout history. Scripture often refers to the universality of God's knowledge ([Psa 147:5](#), [John 21:17](#), [Heb 4:12-13](#), [1Jn 3:20](#)). It often mentions that God knows detailed happenings on earth, even in the future ([1Sam 10:2](#), [1Kgs 13:1-4](#), [2Kgs 8:12](#), [Psa 139:4](#), [Acts 2:23, 4:27-28](#)).

Some theologians¹ have referred to passages like [Gen 18:20-21](#) as teaching God's ignorance. But Scripture assumes God's omniscience pervasively, and it is far more likely that such passages should be interpreted consistently with that assumption. In [Gen 18:20-21](#), for example, God does not admit ignorance, but declares that he is gathering facts for an indictment, preparing the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for judgment.

Indeed, God's omniscience is based on his authority, for he is the supreme judge of all things, and he is the ultimate standard of what is true and false. Not only does God know what is true, but he is the very nature of truth. Truth is what he is (as [John 14:6](#)). So it is inconceivable that he could be wrong about anything.

God's knowledge is a precious blessing to God's people. [Psa 139](#) emphasizes how deeply God knows *us*, wherever we are. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it" (v. 6). God's knowledge of us pursues us wherever we may go: to heaven, to the grave, to

great distances, to dark places (vv. 7-12). He knew us when he was forming us in our mother's womb (vv. 13-16), and he knew, even back then, every day of our lifetime on earth (v. 16). Wicked people should well be terrorized by this doctrine; but to the Psalmist God's knowledge of us is wonderful and good (vv. 17-18), and he prays that God will draw on this knowledge to lead him to repentance and forgiveness of sin (vv. 23-24).

Omnipresence

Now, God's omnipresence—his presence in every place and time. To say that God is “present” is to say that he is here with us, really here, not absent. Sometimes we connect a person's presence with his body, as when a teacher takes attendance and says that Jimmy is “present” because his body is in his seat. But God does not have a body; he is immaterial. So how can we tell when God is present or absent?

Scripture's answer is that God is present everywhere, because, as we have seen, his power and knowledge are everywhere. If every event, everywhere, takes place by God's power, and if he has exhaustive knowledge of everything his power has brought to pass, then certainly he is not absent, but present in each event, though his presence is not quite the same as the presence of physical beings. So God's omnipotence and omniscience imply his omnipresence.

His omnipresence is a presence both in place and in time. [Psalm 139](#) indicates that God is present in every place. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth, and so he is in every location. He is also the creator of time,² the one without beginning or end. So he has been present in the world since its creation, and there will never be a time from which he is absent. In Scripture, he freely enters history and interacts with creatures. Supremely, he entered human history in Jesus Christ, where he died and rose again to save us from our sins.

So God's omnipresence is not just a theoretical conclusion. It is a precious truth of redemption. Although we have sinned and deserve God's judgment, God comes to his faithful people and declares to them “I will be *with you*.” This means that God is here, wherever we are, but also that God is on our side. He is with us, not to destroy us, but to forgive and to save us from sin. So this “with you,” this redeeming divine presence, is found often in Scripture as his gracious promise. To Isaac, God said, “I will be with you and will bless you” ([Gen 26:3](#)) and that language often forms the basis of God's redemptive covenant. The heart of the covenant, God's redemptive promise, is that “I will be your God, and you will be my people,” a precious togetherness of God with his people ([Exod 6:7](#), [2Cor 6:16](#); cf. [Gen 17:7](#), [Exod 6:7, 29:45](#), [Lev 26:12](#), [Jer 7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 30:22](#), [Ezek 11:20, 14:11, 36:28, 37:27](#), [Heb 11:16](#), [Rev 21:3](#)). It should not surprise us that a biblical name for Jesus is *Immanuel*, God with us ([Isa 7:14](#), [Matt 1:23](#)). As the Old Testament tabernacle was a place for God to dwell with his people, so Jesus, the Son of God, “tabernacled among us” ([John 1:14](#)).

Of course, God also can be said to be present to the wicked, and that is a fearsome and awful thing ([Rev 1:7](#)). But whether for good or for ill, God is present throughout heaven and earth, to carry out his own purposes.

Unity of the Omni-Attributes

We have seen that the three omni-attributes of God are quite inseparable. Since God's power is purposeful and universal, it implies his omniscience. And since God's omnipotence and omniscience are universal, we must conclude that he is omnipresent. We could note further that since God is omnipresent, all his attributes are omnipresent as well—his power and knowledge, as well as his truth, love, grace, eternity, infinity, and so on.

So the omni-attributes are like the other attributes of God, inseparable from each other and from him. As theologians say, God is "simple." His attributes are not separable parts of him. Rather they are ways of characterizing God as a whole, ways of describing his nature.

Therefore, the omni-attributes are ways of speaking of God's *Lordship*. "Lord" is the word that Scripture uses over 7,000 times to name him. The theological term "sovereignty" is equivalent to lordship. I have argued elsewhere³ that Scripture typically defines God's lordship as his "control, authority, and presence." As we have seen, this triad is equivalent to the three omni-attributes. God's omnipotence is his control over all things. His omniscience is his authority to declare what is true. And his omnipresence is his real existence in every time and place. So when we talk about God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, we are talking about his lordship.

FOOTNOTES

¹See the discussion of this controversy in the article "Openness Theology and Divine Omniscience."

²See the article in this series on the eternality and aseity of God.

³John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishers, 2002), 21-115.

FURTHER READING

- Bavinck, Herman, *Reformed Dogmatics: 2. God and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).
- Frame, John, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishers, 2002).
- Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).
- Pearce, Kenneth, "[Divine Attributes](#)"
- Theopedia, "[Attributes of God](#)"
- Tozer, A. W., *The Knowledge of the Holy: the Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009).
- Van Til, Cornelius, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishers, 2007).

This essay is part of the Concise Theology series.