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Why are we studying God's attributes?

Jeremiah 9:23-24 says,

23 This is what the LORD says: The wise man must not boast in his wisdom; the strong man must not boast in his strength; the wealthy man must not boast in his wealth. 24 But the one who boasts should boast in this, that he understands and knows Me—that I am Yahweh, showing faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things. This is the LORD's declaration.

There was a time not too long ago that Christians were passionate about seeking to understand and to know God. To study the attributes of God was a regular endeavor. However, somewhere along the way, we lost our passion to know Him. We now seem more intent on understanding and knowing ourselves. It certainly doesn't help that we live in a culture where God is being re-imaged before our very eyes. The culture is telling us to let God be who we want Him to be.

So how do we get to know who God is with all the false ideas about Him in our world today? Is He just an apathetic kind of God who expects nothing from us unless we make a mistake, then "BAM" He zaps us? Or do we see God in the Old Testament as old and cranky, while we view Jesus in the New Testament as our good buddy? To be honest, none of those ideas are true. How can we know that? We have an authoritative source that tells us who God is and what He is like. That source is the Bible, God's Word. It is the direct, written revelation from God that tells us who He is, what He is like, who we are, what our problem is, and what He has done for us. That is why our only book in this study is the Bible, God's words to us.

So, what are attributes?

An attribute is defined as, "A quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something." When referring to God's attributes, we are talking about the various qualities inherent in Him and revealed to us in the Scriptures. Even though the Bible is an ancient book, it tells us that God never changes. His attributes, defined in Him from the beginning of time, are still true today and will still be true tomorrow. These attributes help us understand who He truly is.

Why does it matter that we study His attributes?

1. It pleases God that we study His attributes.

Colossians 1:10 reminds us that a life that is honoring and pleasing to the Lord is one that is continually "growing in the knowledge of God." Since God is knowable through His attributes, we can grow in the knowledge of God if we study His attributes, as revealed to us in the Bible. So, every Christian should seek to please God by growing in their understanding of His nature.

2. It guards us against having a wrong view of God.

A lack of proper understanding of God's attributes leads to a wrong view of God. Developing a high view of God will lead us to holy living, to an attitude of proper worship, and to acts of service.

3. It produces joy in our hearts

We can't truly love someone until we know him. As we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God, our love for Him increases and so does our obedience. As a result, the Holy Spirit produces more joy in our lives.

Before we begin, we need to understand that attributes are not components or parts of God. God is not 40% love, 40% holy and 20% mercy. Each attribute describes His total being. So, love is not part of God's nature; it is His nature. Holiness is not part of God's nature; God in His total being is holy. The true greatness of God is actually seen in the combination of all His traits.

Consider the colors of the rainbow. Pure white light is the summation of all these different colors. Each color is unique and beautiful on its own, but when combined, they produce a force and a brightness that is unmatched. So, during this study, take time to occasionally pause and reflect on the summation of all His combined attributes. You will be amazed at the glorious God we serve.

There are also many more attributes of God than just the ones we will be studying. My prayer is that this study will whet your appetite to get to know God and to be able to confidently share your understanding of Him with others.

What will you need for the study?

Your Bible, the handout, and a notebook to write down the answers (also access to a dictionary such as "Wordhippo" & "Bible Hub" – I use my iPhone).

Suggestions as we study God's attributes:

- Some people like to do the questions in order. Some people like to look up the Scripture passages and write them down first. Figure out what works for you.
- We ask that you write out the Bible verses, because it engages another part of your brain.
- Some people like to complete the attribute for the week in one chunk of time. Some like to do it daily. I have done it both ways. If you would like to do it daily, try do it for 15-20 minutes a day, or try do a couple of letters per day. Doing two to three letters per day will give you five days to finish the study.
- After you finish questions a-k, then read the information and listen to the song.
- Always pray for guidance and understanding from the Holy Spirit before you begin.
- Note to leaders: Please have the group take turns reading the scripture verses aloud.

*Excerpts from GBC-Winsor.org, May 10, 2018

1. Accessible

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 4:7

Psalm 27:4

Matthew 6:6

Mark 15:37-38

John 14:6

Ephesians 2:13

Ephesians 3:12

Hebrews 4:16

Hebrews 7:25

Hebrews 10:22

James 4:8

- a. Look up the definition of accessible and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for accessible and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being accessible, too.
- d. How do we gain access to God?
- e. What does it mean to us that God is accessible?
- f. How would life be different if God were *not* accessible?
- g. How have you experienced the accessibility of God in the last couple of weeks?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is accessible, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have not taken advantage of God's accessibility.
- k. As you think about God being accessible, write down some ways you can thank Him for His accessibility. Ex. Thank You that You are near whenever I pray and that I can approach You with confidence and receive mercy and find grace to help me in my time of need.

From the beginning when God made Adam and Eve, He was accessible, or near to them. In the covenants God made with the patriarchs, He promised to be in relationship with them always. Later, God commanded the people to build the tabernacle so He could live among them. God made Himself even nearer to people when He became a man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true tabernacle. Now He is accessible in the most intimate way possible. His Spirit lives in every believer. Whenever you pray, He hears you.

A song about God being accessible: "Draw Near to God" sung by Russ Taff & Leigh Nash

2. Creator

Scripture:

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 139:14

Jeremiah 32:17

Genesis 1:3

Isaiah 51:15-16

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Psalms 19:1

Isaiah 66:2

write v. 5

Psalms 121:2

Jeremiah 27:5

Hebrews 3:4

- a. Look up the definition of creator and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for creator and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being the Creator, too.
- d. Where do we see God the Creator in the world?
- e. The Bible says God created life from nothing. What does that tell us about God?
- f. How does creation cause people to see the God of the universe?
- g. Knowing God created you and all things around you, how should you respond to Him? (What should it mean to us that we were created by Him?)
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is the Creator, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have not worshiped God as the Creator.
- k. As you think about God being the Creator, write down some ways you can thank Him for His creation or creativity. Ex. Thank You, God, that You created this world and the beauty of each season. Thank You for reminding me that You are so powerful that You can create with just a word.

There was never a time when God did not exist. Before there was anything at all, even time, God existed. No one made God. God made everything, from the tiniest subatomic particle to the farthest galaxy in the universe. Everything came from God – what we can see and what we cannot see — heaven, angels, and the whole spiritual realm. He spoke, and all these things came into existence. God alone is able to bring something out of nothing.

Song about God as Creator: “So Will I (100 Billion X)” video by Hillsong United

3. Faithful

Scripture:

Exodus 34:6-7

Lamentations 3:22-23

2 Timothy 2:13

Deuteronomy 32:4

1 Corinthians 1:9

1 Peter 4:19

Psalms 145:13

1 Corinthians 10:13

1 John 1:9

- a. Look up the definition of faithful and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for faithful and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being faithful, too.
- d. What does it mean that God is faithful? What does that tell us about Him?
- e. How many different ways can we see God's faithfulness to us?
- f. Describe a situation when God was faithful to you or to a loved one.
- g. The Bible is clear that God is forever faithful. So, how should we react when life gets challenging?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is faithful, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have doubted God's faithfulness.
- k. As you think about God being faithful, write down some ways you can thank Him for His faithfulness. Ex. Thank You that I can believe everything written in the Scriptures because You are a faithful God.

God knows and loves each of His own. He will do all He has promised – care for and make strong, forgive and make new, and protect and purify. From the beginning, He has had a plan to restore the world broken by sin, and God is faithful to His own plan. We know that God is faithful because He sent His Son to the cross to keep His promise. Now nothing can separate God's people from His love. He is faithful to Himself and His Word. We can trust Him to keep all His promises.

Song about God's Faithfulness: "Great is thy Faithfulness" | Austin Stone Worship | Live from TGC

4. Gracious

Scripture:

Exodus 33:17-19

Psalm 145:8

2 Corinthians 9:8

Exodus 34:6-7

Isaiah 30:18

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Nehemiah 9:17

John 1:16-17

Hebrews 4:16

- a. Look up the definition of gracious and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for gracious and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being gracious, too.
- d. List the ways God displays His graciousness to His people and to the world.
- e. How does this aspect of God's character make it easier for us to approach Him when we are in need?
- f. How do Christians sometimes take God's gracious nature for granted? Can you relate a specific situation when you have seen this happen?
- g. How can we reflect this character trait of God to those around us?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is gracious, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have taken for granted God's graciousness.
- k. As you think about God being gracious, write down some ways you can thank Him for His graciousness. Ex. Thank You that You are not stingy with Your grace; instead, You abundantly pour out Your grace on me.

Grace is God's kindness to those who do not deserve it. God is slow to anger and longs to forgive people. God's grace in salvation powerfully reaches out to sinful people and makes them alive in Christ when they were dead in sin. God shows grace to all people. He gives life, families, sunshine, rain, music, talents, and so much more as good gifts, even to people who do not love Him.

Song about God's grace: "Amazing Grace" by John Newton & "Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)" by Chris Tomlin

5. Guide

Scripture:

Genesis 17:1-2

Psalms 139:23-24

Matthew 2:13

Numbers 10:33

Isaiah 30:21

John 16:13-15

Psalms 25:4-5

Isaiah 42:16

Acts 16:6-10

- a. Look up the definition of guide and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for guide and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being our guide, too.
- d. Why do we need a guide?
- e. How did God guide His people in the Bible?
- f. How does God guide His people today? (In other words, how can we know what God is telling us to do?)
- g. How has God guided you personally?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is our guide, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have gone your own way even though He is the perfect Guide.
- k. As you think about God being your guide, write down some ways you can thank Him for being your guide. Ex. Thank You that You guide me into all truth. Thank You that You are my GPS when I need direction in my life.

God leads us in the way we should go. His Word teaches us how we are to live and think. Because God gives His children the Holy Spirit, they recognize His voice and follow Him. We can trust God to lead us in the right way. Without God's guidance, we stumble and fall like people in the dark.

Song about God as our Guide: "God Leads His Dear Children Along" sung by Selah

6. Holy

Scripture

Exodus 15:11

Isaiah 6:3

John 6:68-69

Leviticus 19:2

Isaiah 29:22-23

John 17:11

1 Samuel 2:2

Isaiah 57:15

Hebrews 7:26-27

Proverbs 9:10

Luke 1:46-49

Revelation 4:8

- a. Look up the definition of holy and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for holy and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being holy, too.
- d. What does it mean that God is holy? What does this tell us about Him?
- e. What if God were *not* holy? How would that make worshipping Him different?
- f. How can we live a holy life?
- g. How can people see the reflection of God's holiness in you? (Or how have you seen the holiness of God reflected in Christians?)
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is holy, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have treated God casually.
- k. As you think about God being holy, write down some ways you can thank Him for being holy.
Ex. Thank You that You, a holy God, want to know me and want me to know You.

God is high and exalted. He is set apart from His creation. Our English word "holy" is from the same root word as "whole." God is whole – perfect in goodness and righteousness. No one is like God. Even God's holy angels tremble in reverent worship before Him. God sets apart His children for Himself and commands us to be holy as He is holy. Being holy makes you whole, which is what God intended you to be.

Song about God being Holy: "Worthy is the Lamb" by Michael W. Smith – Agnus Dei - Live

7. Jealous

Scripture:

Exodus 20:4-6

Joel 2:18

Romans 13:13-14

Exodus 34:14

Nahum 1:2

1 Corinthians 10:21-24

Deuteronomy 4:24

Zechariah 8:2

2 Corinthians 11:2

- a. Look up the definition of jealous and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for jealous and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being jealous, too.
- d. Compare Romans 13:13-14 with 2 Corinthians 11:2. What is the difference between man's jealousy and a godly jealousy?
- e. What does God's jealousy for His people tell us about Him?
- f. How does knowing God is jealous for you change your thinking about Him?
- g. How should we respond to God knowing that He is jealous? What does God want from His people?
- h. How has your thinking about jealousy changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is jealous, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have put others before God.
- k. As you think about God being jealous, write down some ways you can thank Him for being jealous. Ex. Thank You, God, for being jealous for my love and worship.

God's jealousy is one of protective love. The Lord seals every believer to Himself through the Holy Spirit. Unlike human beings, God does not experience feelings of insecurity, fear, and anxiety about His relationships with people. He is righteously angry when His children choose to devote their time and attention to lesser things. When God's children turn their backs on Him, He pursues them.

Song about God being jealous: "How He Loves" sung by David Crowder Band

8. Just

Scripture:

Psalm 9:7-8

Jeremiah 9:23-24

2 Thessalonians 1:5-8

Psalm 37:27-29

Micah 6:8

1 Peter 1:17-19

Psalm 89:14

Romans 12:19

1 John 1:9

- a. Look up the definition of just and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for just and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being just, too.
- d. Describe God's form of justice as compared to the systems of justice in the world.
- e. How would life be different if God acted on whims and prejudices instead of being perfectly just?
- f. Sometimes it seems that God is being very unfair to us or others around us. How can we reconcile the unfair suffering we see in the world with the idea that God is just?
- g. Why is it sometimes hard for us to be just?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is just, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have doubted His justice.
- k. As you think about God being just, write down some ways you can thank Him for being just.
Ex. Thank You, God, for being just. Thank You that Your judgment is measured.

God's justice is perfect. His decisions are always based on His righteous character. God cannot ignore sin because He is holy. It would be unjust to ignore wickedness, rebellion, and sin. God is just and does not show favoritism. Every penalty will be fair and right. God does not treat His children as their sins deserve because Jesus suffered the full punishment for our sins. Because God is just, He will never punish His children for the sin which Jesus paid on the cross.

Song about God being Just: "God of Justice (We must Go)" sung by Tim Hughes

9. Patient (Long-Suffering)

Scripture:

Exodus 34:5-8

Isaiah 48:9

1 Timothy 1:15-16

Nehemiah 9:30-31

Joel 2:12-13

1 Peter 3:20

Psalms 103:8-10

Romans 2:3-4

2 Peter 3:8-9

- a. Look up the definition of patient (or long-suffering) and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for patient or long-suffering and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being patient/long-suffering, too.
- d. How does God display His patience with unbelievers?
- e. How does God display His patience toward believers?
- f. How do we sometimes try to abuse God's patience with us? What are the consequences?
- g. How can you show your appreciation for the patience God has shown you?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is patient/long-suffering, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have tried God's patience.
- k. As you think about God being patient/long-suffering, write down some ways you can thank Him for being patient/long-suffering. Ex. Thank You, God, for being patient with me. Thank You that You are slow to anger, abounding in love, and forgiving of my sin and rebellion.

God is patient. He could put an end to human rebellion immediately, but God has pity on people whose lives are broken by sin. He loves His creation. His plan is to restore creation and reconcile repentant sinners to Himself. Today is the day of salvation, but one day, God will come to judge all people.

Song about God being patient: "His mercy is More" sung by Keith & Kristyn Getty
God's perfect patience – He is patient with you – CrossMap Inspiration.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZVkw7zUBSQ>

10. Perfect

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 32:3-4

Isaiah 25:1

Hebrews 7:28

2 Samuel 22:31-33

Matthew 5:48

Hebrews 10:14

Psalms 19:7

Romans 12:1-2

James 1:17

- a. Look up the definition of perfect and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for perfect and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being perfect, too.
- d. Our culture today seems to prefer heroes who are complex and human (i.e., not perfect). Why is it important that the God we worship is perfect?
- e. How can we see the perfection of God in a flawed world?
- f. If we are to emulate God, we need to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). But, of course, this is not possible. What is God really asking of us?
- g. What can we do to become increasingly more “perfect?”
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is perfect, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have questioned God, even though He is perfect.
- k. As you think about God being perfect, write down some ways you can thank Him for being perfect. Ex. Thank You, God, that I can count on You being perfect. Thank You that Your word is flawless and is trustworthy.

Everything God is, does, and says, all His attributes, His revelation, and His original works are completely free of fault or defect. Because God is unchanging and faithful, the measure of perfection begins with God. What God wills is good and perfect; His ways are flawless; His judgments are upright; His Word is without error. Therefore, everything God is, does, and says is right, including His Word in Scripture.

Songs about God being perfect: “Perfect God” sung by KJ Scriven & “Good, Good Father” sung by Chris Tomlin

11. Sovereign

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 3:24

Proverbs 16:4

Habakkuk 3:19

Deuteronomy 9:26

Isaiah 25:6-8

Romans 14:11

2 Samuel 7:22

Isaiah 61:11

Revelation 6:10

- a. Look up the definition of sovereign and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for sovereign and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being sovereign, too.
- d. What proof do we have that our God is sovereign?
- e. If God can do anything, why is there so much suffering in the world?
- f. How should the fact that God is sovereign affect our daily lives?
- g. In what current situation do you need to depend on God's sovereignty?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is sovereign, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have wanted to be the ruler in your life instead of allowing God to be the ruler.
- k. As you think about God being sovereign, write down some ways you can thank Him for being sovereign. Ex. Thank You, God, that You rule over all nations, so I don't have to worry about what is happening politically in the world.

God controls all things. There is nothing that is outside of God's wise control, even the exact time and place for each person to live. No one tells God what to do. What God plans, happens. No event, no natural disaster, no person, not even Satan, can stop God's plans. When God permits evil, we can trust He has planned to use it for His people's good and His glory. God planned the time for His Son to come the first time and has planned the time for His Son to return. God will accomplish His plans because He alone has power to do it.

Songs about God being Sovereign: "Sovereign" & "How Great is Our God" both sung by Chris Tomlin

12. Wise

Scripture:

Job 9:2-4

Proverbs 3:19-20

Write 1 Corinthians 1:24-25

Job 12:13

Isaiah 28:29

James 1:5

Read Job 28:12-28

Daniel 2:19-23

James 3:13-17

Write Job 28:27-28

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Revelation 7:11-12

- a. Look up the definition of wise and write it down.
- b. Look up some synonyms for wise and write them down.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being wise, too.
- d. Why is it important to understand the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
- e. What is the difference between the world's wisdom and God's wisdom?
- f. How does God's wisdom affect our trust in Him?
- g. In what current life situation do you need the wisdom of God the most?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definitions, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is wise, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a prayer of confession of how you have relied on your own wisdom.
- k. As you think about God being wise, write down some ways you can thank Him for being wise. Ex. Thank You, God, that You supply all the wisdom that I need. Thank You that I can trust Your wisdom when my circumstances don't go as I want.

God is not only all-knowing. He is full of wisdom. He always uses His knowledge to do exactly what is right, and His word reflects His wisdom. Both His plan of redemption and His creation are perfectly wise. Science is still discovering the riches of God's wisdom. The order of an atom displays God's wisdom. Mathematics and music are possible because they were first in God's mind. God is wise in how He put people into families and families into communities and communities into nations. God is wise in the plan He has for each of His children. All wisdom comes from God. To be wise, we must seek Him.

Song about God being wise: "Immortal, Invisible God only Wise" hymn by Walter C. Smith & "Bless the Lord" sung by Jeff Deyo

13. Shepherd

Genesis 49:24-25

Jeremiah 31:10

Micah 5:4

Hebrews 13:20-21

Psalms 23:1-6

Ezekiel 34:23

Zechariah 9:16

1 Peter 5:4

Isaiah 40:11

Ezekiel 37:24

John 10:11-15 (Read whole chapter)

- a. Look up the definition of shepherd and write it down.
- b. Write down some synonyms for shepherd.
- c. Write out the scripture verses written above. Feel free to add other scriptures about God being a shepherd, too.
- d. Based on the Scripture passages, what are some characteristics of a good shepherd?
- e. How has God, our Good Shepherd, been good to you?
- f. How have you seen God's direction and guidance during trials or suffering?
- g. How do you know you are hearing the Good Shepherd's voice?
- h. How has your thinking changed based on the definition, synonyms, or scripture readings?
- i. Knowing that God is the Good Shepherd, how is the Holy Spirit nudging you?
- j. Write a short prayer of confession of when you did not view God as the Good Shepherd.
- k. As you think about God being your shepherd, write down some ways you can thank Him for being your Good Shepherd. Ex. Thank You, God, that as my Shepherd, You lead me to Your best for me.

From the very beginning of the Bible to the very end, God has shepherded his people. In Genesis 48:15, Jacob declared God had been his shepherd all the days of his life. Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10) and proved it when He laid down His life for us, His sheep. The shepherd cares for his sheep. Revelation 7:17 says, *"For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'* From beginning to the end, God is our Shepherd. He will faithfully lead, guide and care for us. Knowing Who our True Shepherd is and what He has done will help us to recognize the wolf in sheep's clothing.

Song about God as our Shepherd: "Good Shepherd (Lead On)" sung by Vineyard Worship featuring David Ruis