

# THINK BIBLICALLY

## Lesson 4: Nature of God

### What is God like?

Throughout history people have created religions where “god” or “gods” are much like people with all their faults and shortcomings. These invented gods generally confirm people in their sin. The Bible presents God who is not patterned after humanity, but of whom every human beings were created in His image. The created universe tells us that this God exists and is powerful (so-called natural revelation), but beyond that our primary source for knowing what God is like is in what He reveals in the Bible (so-called special revelation). The Bible describes God and even give Him various names descriptive of His character. Indeed, in the Bible, a name speaks of one’s character and reputation. So for God, His “name” includes all that the creation and the Bible reveal about Him. Thus the command not to “take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Ex. 20:7) prohibits dishonoring His reputation. Indeed, we are called upon to honor His name (recall Matt. 5:16, “hallowed be your name”). So in this lesson we begin to consider the character of God.

1. **Incommunicable attributes of God:** Below we define some of the incommunicable attributes of God.

— **Independence** (self-existence, aseity) God does not depend on the creation but the creation (including people) can glorify God and bring Him joy. (Acts 17:24-25; Job 41:11; Psalm 50:10-12, 90:2; Rev. 4:11; Exodus 3:14; Isa. 62:3-5; Zeph. 3:17-18)

— **Unchangeableness** (immutability) God is unchanging in His being, attributes and promises but feels emotions and may interact with His creation. (Num. 23:19; Isaiah 46:9-11; Psalm 33:11, 102:25-27; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17); Can God change His mind? (Ex. 32:9-14; Isa. 38:1-6; Jonah 3:4, 10)

— **Eternity** “God has no beginning, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time, and He acts in time.” (Grudem) (Ex. 3:14; Psalm 90:2, 4; Isa. 46:9-10, 48:3-5, 57:15; John 8:58; 2 Pet. 3:8; Jude 25; Rev. 1:8)

— **Omnipresence** God is everywhere present with His entire person but may act differently in different places. (Jer. 23:23-24; Psalm 139:7-10; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; 1 Kings 8:27; Acts 7:48)

— **Unity** God’s attributes characterize His whole person, not divisible parts, but each attribute qualifies the others (e.g., love, justice, mercy, truthfulness, omniscience, holiness, eternity). (e.g., 1 John 1:5, 4:8; Ex. 34:6-7)

2. **Communicable attributes of God:**

— **Spirit** (John 4:21-24) God is spirit (thus immaterial).

— **Omniscience** God knows Himself and all things actual and possible. (1 John 3:20; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Heb. 4:13; Matt. 10:29-30, 11:21-23; Psalm 139:1-4)

— **Truthfulness** God is the true God and His word is true. (Jer. 10:10-11; John 17:3, 17; Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2)

— **Love** God eternally gives of Himself to others. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-10; Rom. 5:8)

— **Mercy, Grace, Patience, Justice** (Exod. 34:6; Psalm 103:8; 2 Sam. 24:14; 2 Cor. 1:3; Heb. 4:16; 1 Pet. 5:10; Deut. 32:4)

— **Holiness** means that God is separated from sin and devoted to his own honor. (Grudem) The OT tabernacle and later the temple pictured God’s holiness. (Ex. 26:33) God’s holiness is the standard for us. (Lev. 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16; Heb. 12:14). God called Israel to be holy. (Ex. 19:6) There is a future time when everything on earth will be holy. (Zech. 14:20-21)