

One of the most wonderful things about knowing God is that there is always so much more to know. Just when we least expect it, He intrudes into our neat and tidy notions about who He is and how He works.

—Joni Eareckson Tada

▶ DAY 2: GOD—INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND KNOWABLE

What is an attribute of God? We do not use that word very often, but it is an important word. A. W. Tozer wrote in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, “An attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself.”

1. **An attribute is something that God has revealed to be true about Himself. This is not a truth that we discover on our own.**
2. **An attribute is something that is essentially true of God.**

It is *who* He is, not merely *how* He acts; therefore, He never needs to maintain it. This is a crucial truth that we often misunderstand because we think of these descriptions of God in the same way that we think of descriptions of people.

Think of it this way: We are human. Good days and bad days . . . we wake up as humans. We live all day as humans. We do not have to try to be human or to maintain our humanity. *Human* is *what* we essentially are, not merely *how* we act. We may act as a kind human or an impatient human. We may be a thoughtful human or a cruel human. But none of that changes the reality that *human* is a description of something that is unchangeable and essential about us. If we stopped being human, we would have to stop existing. It would no longer be us anymore. It would be something different, something non-human.

God is *who* He is. Whatever is true of God’s character is part of who He is. For example, think about His omnipotence (the possession of all-power). He never has to start the day by trying to make Himself all-powerful. He does not have to work at remaining all-powerful even after the passing of ten thousand years. It is *who* He is. He is God Almighty. This is one of His attributes. It is one aspect essential to His deity. If He were not all-powerful, He would not be *who* He is—He would not be the person that the Bible reveals to us as God.

3. An attribute is something that is in perfect harmony with all other attributes.

God, unlike us, is not divided. He is perfect unity. There can be no division or conflict within God. Every attribute is in perfect harmony with every other attribute. His love is never at odds with His wrath. His justice and His mercy walk together. Furthermore, every attribute of God influences all other attributes. If He is all-powerful, then His wrath is all-powerful. We are faced with a dazzling reality while studying God's attributes: They converge and form a multifaceted divine diamond. No matter how we turn these truths in front of our mind's eye, there is always more splendor to behold.

Let's apply what we have considered above to one of God's attributes. God has revealed that He is essentially *incomprehensible*. He is beyond our understanding. In short, this teaches us that though God can be known in a personal way, He can never be *figured out*. In fact, no angel, no saint in heaven, and no seminary professor on earth can ever fully grasp the boundlessness of God. Being incomprehensible is just part of *who* He is. He knows Himself perfectly, but He is the only one who possesses this ability.

This has a great deal to do with our getting to know Him better, so let's slow down and think about it.

Being infinite, God is inexhaustibly interesting. It is therefore impossible that God be boring.

—John Piper

WHY IS GOD INCOMPREHENSIBLE?

The answer lies in another attribute: He is infinite. He has no limits upon His Person. He cannot be measured. Another way to think of it is that He is overflowing with all fullness in every aspect of His character. Every attribute is infinitely, immeasurably, limitlessly full. However you try to use your mind to capture the vastness of God's character, He will pour over the edges of your imagination.

LOOK UP the following passages and fill in the blanks. Consider the way in which the Bible speaks about this incomprehensible fullness of our God.

1. God overflows the bounds of creation with His Person.

Psalm 145:3

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; _____
_____.

Jeremiah 23:23–24

“Am I a God near at hand,” says the LORD, “And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?” says the LORD; “_____?” says the LORD.

2. His thoughts toward creation are beyond numbering.

Psalm 139:17–18

How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! _____

_____ ; when I awake I am still with you.

3. His deeds are beyond measure.

Job 5:8–9

But as for me, I would seek God, And to God I would commit my cause—

Job 9:10

_____, yes, wonders
without number.

God. How much this title implies no tongue, human or angelic, can express. It is a volume of an infinite number of leaves and every leaf full of meaning. It will be read by saints and angels, through the ages of eternity, but they will never reach the last leaf, nor fully comprehend the meaning of a single page.

— Edward Payson

Job speaks about God transcending our understanding. He asks us a very searching question:

Job 11:7–9

Can you search out the deep things of God? _____

_____. They are higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.

Job 36:26

Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; _____

_____.

Job uses two simple word pictures to show us the incomprehensibility of God.

Job 26:14

Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?

Below, fill in the blanks with Job's descriptions of the incomprehensibility of God.

Our knowledge of His actions is only the _____ of His _____ . We know as much of God as a person who hears a small _____ of a great voice.

FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

Imagine an infant. He cannot understand much of his father. He cannot understand how he is related to his father, how much his father does for him, or even what his father does in his occupation. But the baby knows this: When his father walks by and he sees those familiar shoes and the hem of his pants . . . that's Dad!

Imagine the *Mayflower's* initial approach to the American coastline. Only a fraction of that expansive land would have been visible from the ship. What could be seen was only the edge of a continent that stretched for thousands of miles.

Imagine you are sitting at a restaurant. At the table next to you, two men are talking about the latest happenings in the news. You are very interested, but they are talking quietly. For all your discreet straining, you hear only a phrase or two of the conversation.

These are ways we describe our limited understanding of God's character. True, He reveals Himself in the Bible, but do we think that we will study these twelve weeks and at the end have Him figured out? Not at all. There will always be more of Him to know. He is infinite. At the end of a lifetime of getting to know Him, all we will know is what a baby can know of his father by the edge of his trousers, what a traveler can know of North America by seeing the New England coastline, or what a person can understand of a conversation from whispered fragments.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

One of the evidences that we are growing in the knowledge of God is that we are more aware of how little we know Him! The great Christians of the past spoke more of the mystery of God than we commonly do today. Read what the hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote of our knowledge of the incomprehensible God.

*Earth from afar has heard Thy Fame,
And worms have learned to lisp Thy Name.*

Our greatest theology must include a humility born out of the awareness that we know only the edges of His ways. The spiritual smugness of evangelical, conservative churches is proof of our ignorance, not our knowledge.

It is the believer's joy that there can be no end to knowing the Infinite Being. He is not only perfect; His perfections go on forever. After one hundred thousand years in heaven, the Christian will still be growing in the knowledge of God.

*How should finite
comprehend Infinite? We
shall apprehend Him, but
not comprehend Him.*

— Richard Sibbes

*How completely satisfying
to turn from our limitations
to a God who has none.*

— A. W. Tozer

At the end of twelve weeks, you can test your progress, not merely by the words or doctrines you will have learned or the outward changes in your behavior—but by your humility.

Have you responded in humility to the truths revealed to you this week?