



Defining FAITH

2

Defining God



Series: Defining Faith

Defining God

Characteristics

“The (divine) attributes are permanent and intrinsic qualities, which cannot be gained or lost . . . God’s attributes are essential and inherent dimensions of his very nature.”

Millard Erickson

“When we speak of the incomprehensibility of God, then, we do not mean that there is an unknown being or essence beyond or behind his attributes. Rather, we mean that we do not know his qualities or his nature completely or exhaustively. We know God only as he has revealed himself. While his self-revelation is doubtless consistent with his full nature and accurate, it is not an exhaustive revelation. Further, we do not totally understand or know comprehensively that which he has revealed to us of himself. Thus, there is, and always will be, an element of mystery regarding God.”

Millard Erickson

Furthermore, we should keep in mind that the Bible Uses ***Anthropomorphic*** language to describe God; that is, language that associates aspects of human knowledge and experience with divine qualities for the pedagogical purpose of providing insight into God’s being by way of human analogy.



Series: Defining Faith

1. UNIQUENESS

God is entirely ***unique***, existing in a category of being by Himself. Though humans are declared to be made in His image and likeness, this is in a limited fashion as will become evident as we consider God's attributes.

Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him counsel? ¹⁴Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? ¹⁵Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales . . . ¹⁷All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. ¹⁸To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?

ISAIAH 40:13-15,17,18

2. SPIRIT

“God’s spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.”

Wayne Grudem

God is uncreated, immaterial, uncompounded, invisible, and indestructible with no spatial dimensions whatsoever. Neither is He pure energy or thought, or any other such thing. He is instead



Series: Defining Faith

pure, infinite Spirit, unlike our own spirits, which are created, dependent, limited, and localized.

3. INVISIBLE

Some biblical texts which affirm God's attribute of invisibility are: John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16; 1 John 4:12.

4. PERSONHOOD

God is personal . . . with self-consciousness and will, capable of feeling, choosing, and having a reciprocal relationship with other personal and social beings."

Millard Erickson

God's self-disclosure to Moses as the "I AM" (Exodus 3:14) underscores the fact that He is a personal being.

God is:

- Self-conscious / self-aware
- Intelligent, with reason, rational
- Volitional which involves desire, purpose, and will
- Emotive (yet God has no uncontrollable passions, but is able to "feel" and experience anger and joy in relation to His creation, in addition to the joy and love He experiences within Himself among the members of the Trinity).

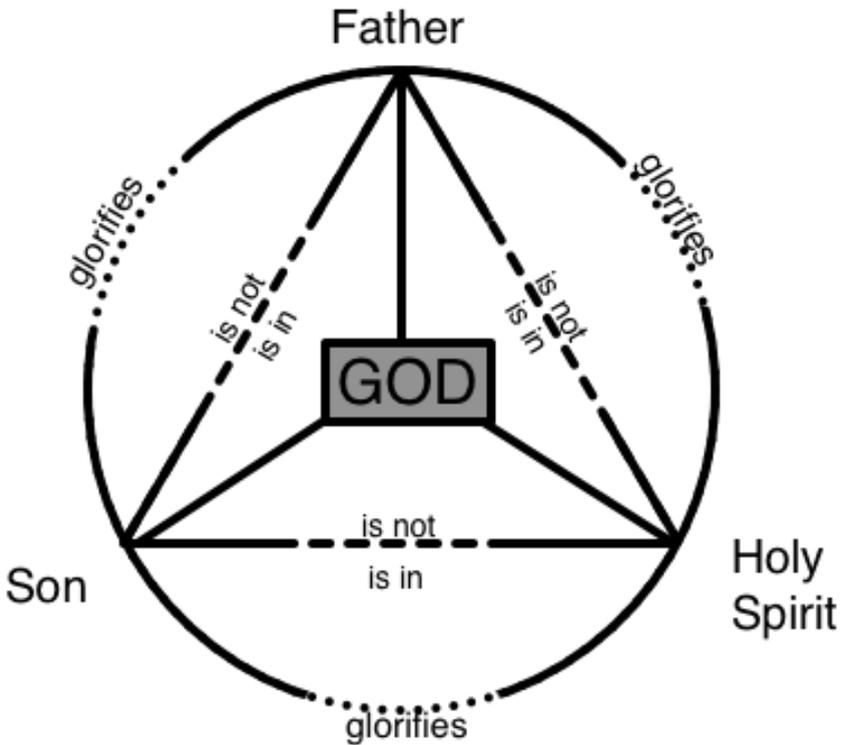


Series: Defining Faith

5. UNITY

God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.”

Wayne Grudem



Series: Defining Faith

Beware that we don't contrast the Old Testament God with the New Testament God, nor the Father with the Son, whereby we view the one as primarily just and wrathful, and the other as merciful and gracious. God is a perfect unity who never changes. The Old Testament is full of mercy and grace when interpreted properly, and the New Testament is full of fearful judgment when read in its entirety.

6. ETERNAL

“God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.”

Wayne Grudem

Eternal vs Everlasting

1. The contextual concept can mean long-lasting. This is the case when used to speak of the creation (Deuteronomy 33:15; Hebrews 3:6).
2. It can also mean unending. This is the case when used to speak of post-resurrection human immortality (Daniel 12:2)
3. It can also mean without beginning or end. This is the case when used to speak of God's being (Psalm 90:2; Genesis 21:33; Isaiah 26:4; 40:28)

God's self-disclosed Old Testament identity involves His eternity. The Old Testament proper name of God is transliterated from the Hebrew into English as “YHWH.” Many scholars are convinced it is a derivative of the Hebrew verb meaning “to be,” and is



Series: Defining Faith

etymologically and cognitively related to God's self-disclosure to Moses as the "I AM." The implication is that both imply that God is the self-existent, eternal one.

7. LIFE

God is Life itself. He alone is uncreated, self-existent and self-sufficient. All other living creatures are derivative of God's creative will and power, and dependent upon Him for their continued existence.

God is not mere existence, but is the supreme, perfect expression of quality of life. None of His creatures enjoy exactly the same quality of life that He intrinsically possesses in His own being. We will only enjoy it in a derivative sense. Nevertheless, it will be a real participation in the very life of God.

8. INDEPENDENCE

God's independence stems from His self-existence and self-sufficiency. He is uncreated and exists eternally without needs. He needs absolutely nothing from His spiritual or material creation to sustain life; He is the source of all life. He doesn't need to will His own existence; He exists necessarily. He cannot acquire more knowledge or strength or wisdom, because He possesses all these infinitely. He cannot improve Himself, because He is perfect in all things.

(Acts 17:24,25; Job 41:11; Psalm 50:12).



Series: Defining Faith

9. OMNIPOTENCE, FREEDOM, AND SOVEREIGNTY

“God’s omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.”

Wayne Grudem

“Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”

JEREMIAH 32:17

God’s sovereignty can be defined as the possession of supreme dominion, power and authority free from external control.

There is no higher authority than God, no one to whom He must appeal for authorization,

or approval, or counsel for anything at all.

His Word is law.

“The vision of God on the throne—that is, ruling— recurs; and we are constantly told in explicit terms that the LORD... reigns as king, exercising dominion over great and tiny things alike. God’s dominion is total: he wills as he chooses and carries out all that he wills, and none can stay his hand or thwart his plans.” J.I. Packer

10. OMNIPRESENCE

God fills the entire creation; all of God in all His powers is everywhere present all the time (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23,24).



Series: Defining Faith

Yet God's presence is close to those who are humble, penitent, and look to Him in faith (Isaiah 57:15). God dwells in a unique and mysterious manner by His Spirit within every repentant believer in Jesus (John 14:15-23) and among every community of believers (Matthew 18:20). In His presence is joy, life, peace, comfort, wisdom, power, and love.

11. OMNISCIENCE

No one can teach God anything, or counsel Him on any matter (Isaiah 40:13,14).

Nothing can be hidden from God (Psalm 139:11,12; Hebrews 4:13). God sees and knows the hearts, thoughts, words, attitudes, actions, and motives of every person (Psalm 11:4; Psalm 33:13-15). "*Death and Destruction lie open before the LORD—how much more do human hearts*" (Proverbs 15:11, NIV).

12. WISDOM

God's wisdom is especially manifested in two spheres of divine activity: creation and redemption. With respect to creation, God's wisdom is especially manifested in His ordering and governance of the world (Psalm 104:24). With respect to redemption, God's wisdom is especially manifested in His execution of the plan of salvation (Ephesians 1:8)

God's wisdom is epitomized in Christ being crucified for our sins (1 Corinthians 1:20-25). Christ being crucified destroys all of our



Series: Defining Faith

attempts at finding God through our own wisdom and philosophies (1 Corinthians 1:18-30).

1. God's wisdom is ethically and morally pure and holy (James 3:17);
2. God's wisdom as manifested toward His creatures is relational and holy, not self-centered (James 3:13,17);
3. God's wisdom is demonstrated in making one people out of a multitude of ethnicities through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:10,11).

13. INFINITUDE

- God's infinitude is related to many of His attributes.
- God is without spatial dimensions or limitations.
- God is timeless and eternal.
- God possesses immeasurable, unlimited knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of all things, real and possible, now, in the past, and in the future.
- God possesses unlimited power - over nature, the course of history, and all aspects of human life.

14. HOLINESS

Holiness is the essence of God's nature, the foundation of His being, the full expression of His attributes.

Holiness involves two basic concepts based on the idea of being "set apart."



Series: Defining Faith

- In the first instance, divine holiness refers to the separateness and otherness of God.
This is true in terms of His being entirely distinct from His creation, and in terms of His majesty and awesomeness.
- Divine holiness also refers to the Moral perfection of God; i.e., the utter sinlessness of God in thought, motive, attitude, word, and deed.
- The human response to God's manifestation of His holiness includes the following
 - Fear and dread
 - Repentance and faith
 - Wonder and awe
 - Note: Moral excellence is not when a person behaves right in God's eyes so God can accept them, but a consequence of God's Spirit bearing fruit of righteousness in a person's life. This is the difference between grace and law.

15. RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, WRATH

The terms "Righteousness" and "Justice" are based on a singular word group in both Hebrew and Greek. The concept centers on doing what is right.

Justice, which means doing in all circumstances things that are right, is one expression of God's holiness . . . His moral law, requiring behavior that matches his own, is 'holy, righteous and good' (Romans 7:12). He judges justly, (Genesis 18:25; Ps 7:11; 96:13; Acts 17:31



Series: Defining Faith

Wrath primarily involves God's "active judicial hostility to sin," but also includes His emotional response to sin. Retributive, penal justice lies at the core of its biblical meaning (Romans 1:18; 2:5; 5:9; 9:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Revelation 19:15).

16. LOVE

"God's love means that God eternally gives of himself to others."

Wayne Grudem

There are two key Hebrew terms translated Love. One denotes the essence of a bond or covenant of fellowship (Deuteronomy 7:7). The other denotes the longing or Desire that one has for another, and is manifested in actions (Deuteronomy 6:5). Both are used to describe God.

God's love is manifested in many ways:

- Good will - God desires what is good for us, and not evil;
- Friendship - God is our friend in Christ, and desires us to be His friends;
- Generosity - God is generous toward us and will ultimately withhold nothing from us, having already given us Christ;
- Emotional engagement - God emotionally engages us in a meaningful way;
- Pleasure - God delights in us.



Series: Defining Faith

17. GOODNESS

“What is ‘good’? ‘Good’ is what God approves . . . (T)here is no higher standard of goodness than God’s own character and his approval of whatever is consistent with that character.”

Wayne Grudem

God’s goodness entails His mercy, grace and patience; (see Exodus 34:6; Psalm 103:8; 86:15)

18. TRUTHFULNESS AND FAITHFULNESS

“God’s truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.”

Wayne Grudem

Faithfulness entails various characteristics, some of which are listed here.

- *Utter dependability* – God can always be counted on.
- *Tenacious loyalty* – God will always be for His redeemed people.
- *Steadfastness in affection* – God will always love His people.
- *Staunchly adherent to promises* – God will keep all His promises.
- *Resolutely observant of duty* – God will always come through in the end.



Series: Defining Faith

19. UNCHANGEABLENESS (IMMUTABILITY, CONSTANCY)

God cannot improve or degenerate in any aspect of His being, character, or powers; (Psalm 102:26,27; 89:34; Matthew 24:35; Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8). All that God is He has always been, and all that He has been and is He will ever be.

20. PERFECTION

The term perfection is contextually defined several different ways in Scripture:

- flawless, without deficiency or error;
- undivided, complete, whole;
- mature (as when applied to believers)