

DISCUSSING GOD

Understanding God's Personal Attributes

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The Contemplation of God

Ever heard the saying, “He’s so heavenly minded he’s no earthly good”? There may be a few folks like that, but the truth is, more of us are so worldly-minded we’re no heavenly good. Sometimes, the background sounds of life and the many activities packed into our daily routines crowd out thoughts of God.

Before refrigerators, people used icehouses to preserve their food. Icehouses had thick walls, no windows, and a tightly fitted door. In winter, when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the icehouses, and covered with sawdust. Often the ice would last well into the summer. One man lost a valuable watch while working in an icehouse. With the help of fellow-workers, he carefully searched for it, raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it. A young boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the icehouse during lunch and soon emerged with the watch. Amazed, the men asked him how he found it. “I closed the door,” the boy replied, “lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still. Soon I heard the watch ticking.” If we want to connect with God, we’re going to have to schedule time to be still and listen and get our spirits in tune with him.

Spurgeon once said in a sermon, “There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity... But while the subject humbles the mind it also *expands* it... Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.”¹

- “*Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth.*” (Col. 3:2)
- “God, within Your temple, we *contemplate* Your faithful love.” (Psalm 48:9)
- “When, on my bed, I think of You, I *meditate* on You during the night watches” (Psalms 63:6)
- “Consider attentively and thoughtfully... Jesus” (Hebrews 3:1, Wuest)

Jack Taylor wrote, “When we see God as he is, we will praise God as we ought!”²

Our worship should be expressed; it should also be precise. Too often, our praise is vague. “Lord, I just want to praise you for who you are,” we may pray. This booklet attempts to answer, *specifically*, what is it about him that is so wonderful?

Today’s Prayer Guidance:

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer
Enable me to reflect on Your deeds and meditate on Your actions
Enable me to fix my mind on You*

Prayer Guidance at top based on: Psalm 19:14; Psalm 77:12; Isaiah 26:3, ESV; Hebrews 3:1, Wuest; Matthew 22:37

¹ Cited in James M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, page 27 ² Jack Taylor, *The Hallelujah Factor*, Broadman, 1983, page 25

God Has Revealed Himself

The word, *revelation*, means to remove a veil. We know what we know about God because he wanted to reveal himself to us and has done so in several ways.

First, God has revealed himself through his *creation*. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.” Romans 1:20 echoes this truth: “His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made.” Even a lost man can walk on a beach with his wife and admire the beauty of the sunset, and give thought to a Creator.

God has also revealed himself within our *conscience*. Romans 2:15 says that even the Gentiles, without the benefit of the Scriptures, “Show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts will either accuse or excuse them” (Romans 2:15).

We are hard-wired for God. The problem isn’t in our hardware, but that our software has been infected with the virus of sin. This is why we misinterpret what God has revealed. And this is why when we correctly understand what God has revealed, we replace it with something lesser. “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator” (Romans 1:25).

God has revealed himself clearly through *his Word, the Bible*. God hasn’t told us *everything* about himself, but in the Bible — its historical records, God’s mighty acts (with the biblical explanations of their meanings), personal encounters, parables, songs, prophecies, and commands — God has told us about himself and his plan. (Psalm 119:89-105; 2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 15:4)

God, however, does *not* reveal himself to us through the culture around us (1 John 2:15-17; Ephesians 2:1). Many will listen to various concepts of God, then pick the qualities they like, to assemble the kind of god they prefer. God has not left us that option. He doesn’t operate by opinion polls. He has given us the Bible.

Most of all, God revealed himself to us *in the person of Jesus Christ* — making himself known personally. “Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). God hasn’t been hiding. He has revealed himself to us!

Today’s Praise Guidance:

O Father, there are hidden things, mysteries, unseen by our eyes.
And there are those promises You have graciously revealed to Your children.
You have made known Your victory
and revealed Your righteousness in the sight of the nations.
I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth
Because You have hidden these things from the elite and highly educated
and have revealed them to insignificant and unknown people of this world.

Praise Guidance based on: Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 98:4; Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 1:18-29

God is Self-Existing

How many children have asked their parents, “Where did God come from?” or “Who made God?” The answer, of course, is that God has existed from all eternity past. He did not need to be created. He is eternal and self-existing. When God revealed his name to Moses — I AM Who I AM — this is exactly what he was saying (Exodus 3:14-15).¹

God doesn’t owe his existence to another cause. Instead, he is the source of all life. As the Psalmist prayed, “For with You is life’s fountain” (Psalm 36:9). Jesus said, “the Father has life in himself” (John 5:26). This is in contrast to all other beings, who are descended from generations of parents. We can always legitimately ask, “And where did he come from?” Yet, not so with God.

To say that God is self-existing is not to say that God is self-created. Creation implies a beginning, and there was never a time when God was not. God spoke the world into existence from nothing (Psalm 33:9), but how could God create himself if he himself didn’t exist? Sometimes, people ask questions concerning God purpose; for example, “What is the purpose of the Trinity?” The answer is, only created things are made for a purpose. God, being uncreated, is simply who he is — “I Am That I Am” (Exodus 3:14, KJV). “To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority *before all time, now and forever. Amen*” (Jude 25).

There has never been a time when God was not, nor will there be a time when he is no more.

- “Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world, *from eternity to eternity, You are God.*” (Psalm 90:2)
- “You, Lord, are enthroned forever; Your throne endures from generation to generation.” (Lamentations 5:19)

So, we see that God exists from eternity to eternity, and that from generation to generation, he rules over all. “May Yahweh, the God of Israel, be praised from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen.” (Psalm 41:13)

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*You are the everlasting God.
Before You there was no god formed
And there will be none after You.
From everlasting to everlasting You are God.
To You be glory, majesty, power, and authority
Before all time, now and forever. Amen.*

Praise Guidance based on: Genesis 21:33; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 43:10; Jude 25

¹The theological term is Aseity.

God is Self-Sufficient

Because God is *self-existing*, he is also *self-sufficient*. Imagine yourself existing for all eternity... before the creation of the heavens and the earth. Nothing to look at. No one else to talk to. Nothing to do or to be done. It would have quite literally driven us insane! This is why we have heard people describe the creation story as if poor God was lonely and, so, he created us for fellowship. However, our Triune God was, throughout all the eons before the creation, completely happy. The three Persons eternally communed in perfect fellowship.

God does not grow or “become.” He exists already in eternal perfection.

We do not, in some way, “complete God.” We need other people and we need God, but God doesn’t need us. We flatter ourselves if we think that he does. James Montgomery Boice lists things God *doesn’t need*: God doesn’t need *worshippers*, He doesn’t need *helpers*, and He doesn’t need *defenders*.¹ As D. A. Carson has put it, God does not arrive to a Thursday wishing Sunday would hurry up and get here, needing to receive some worship to pick him up.²

When John the Baptist faced unbelievers who tried to rationalize away their need of repentance by citing their ancestry, he told them they could be replaced, “...God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones!” (Luke 3:8). God is not dependent upon our worship or our love. In Athens, Paul told the intellectuals attending the open forum there:

The God who made the world and everything in it—He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands. Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. (Acts 17:24-25)

God didn’t create us out of some inward need; he isn’t “needy.” It pleased God to create us. He delights in our love. He takes pleasure in our obedience and worship. However, because God is whole, his love for us is untainted by manipulation. He isn’t using us. God is self-sufficient; thus, his love for us is pure.

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Where was I when You established the earth?
I’ve never commanded the morning or assigned the dawn its place.
You are the One who gives everyone life and breath.
If You were hungry, You wouldn’t tell me— As though You needed anything;
For the world and everything in it is Yours.
You are Lord of heaven and earth and do not live in temples made by man.
Nor are You served by human hands.*

Praise Guidance based on: Job 38, 40, Psalm 50:11-12, and Acts 17:24-25

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations for the Christians Faith*, pp 103-105

² D. A. Carson, The Aseity of God, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B4J_An6i2I

God is Triune

There is one, and only one, true God whose eternal being has been revealed to us as a tri-unity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three distinct, yet inseparable, Persons possessing one and the same divine nature.

This is a teaching of the New Testament many Christians are reluctant to think about. It is a deep and challenging subject. However, this truth about God distinguishes him from the gods as described in all other religions of the world. The God who is... is Triune. If you are a Christian, you are a trinitarian.

We offer seven biblical “guardrails” in discussing the three-ness of God: ¹

1. There is One God: There are three Persons, but there are not three gods.
2. There are three Persons. “Three who’s, one what.”
3. Each Person is truly God, possessing the same divine nature: Jesus isn’t merely the highest created being; he is the uncreated Creator. The Holy Spirit isn’t merely the life-energy of God, he is God.
4. The Persons are distinct. The Father could send the Son. The Son could pray to the Father. The Spirit could anoint the Son’s ministry. And so forth.
5. There are three Persons simultaneously, not a one-person god who “wears different hats” as he relates to us in different ways at different times.
6. Each Person mutually indwells the others as the Trinity communes in perfect fellowship.
7. The three Persons act inseparably, as seen in creation, salvation, prayer, etc.

In over 70 New Testament passages, each of the three Persons are mentioned. But we may fail to pick up on the three-ness of God. One reason is the New Testament refers to only one Person of the Trinity at a time (though sometimes in quick succession). Another reason is that the Father is often referred to simply as “God.” When other Persons of the Trinity are mentioned in the same passage, then it is clear, the reference is to the Father. In our culture, we often use the term “Lord” to refer to God in a general way, when in the New Testament, *Lord* usually refers to the Lord Jesus. As you read the New Testament, the Trinity will come alive to you if you will *read the words* (not just for the general idea) — with the awareness that *God* usually refers to the Father and *Lord* usually refers to the Lord Jesus.

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Triune God, You have no peer, there is no God but You!
An idol in this world is nothing; there is no God but one.
Who is like you, O Lord, among the ‘gods?’*

*Who is like you—majestic in holiness, fearful in praises, working wonders?
There is no one like you, and there is no God besides you!*

Praise Guidance based on: Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5; 46:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Exodus 15:11; 2 Samuel 7:22

¹ For more information, see: <https://smalltownbaptist.net/trinity.htm>

The Oneness of God

There is one and only one true God. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4). “For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 44:6). There is one God and also... there is a oneness within God.

The Persons of the Trinity are indivisible; God is not a collection of parts, but is a unified Being. God is a *Tri-Unity*. The Persons do not bump their rings together, combine their assorted powers, and pool their collective knowledge to be greater together than they are apart. The Trinity is not a coalition of three separate beings who form up one God. Rather, there is one God who eternally and simultaneously exists as three Persons — “three who’s, one what.” The Athanasian Creed says it in a helpful way: “The Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.”

The Persons of the Trinity mutually indwell one another. Jesus said, “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30). Later, when Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus answered, “Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?...” (John 14:9-10).

The Persons of the Trinity are of the same essence, one in will and purpose, one in knowledge, and one in how they feel about things. The Persons act inseparably. Thus we see how one God would use the plural to describe Himself during creation, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26).

Since each Person of the Trinity is truly God and since God is a unity, we see Trinitarian phrases in the New Testament like this blessing from Paul:

- “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

And we see the formula for Christian Baptism:

- “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Today’s Praise Guidance:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

According to Your eternal plan You have given us a new standing

By which we stand holy and blameless before You.

You have adopted us as Your own

And by Your grace we’ve been redeemed.

You are the Father of mercies and the Giver of every perfect gift.

Praise Guidance based on: Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Corinthians 1:3; James 1:17

The Three-ness of God

There is one God, who eternally exists in three distinct Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is truly God. “All of God’s attributes are true of all three persons, yet he is one God.”¹

- *The Bible calls the Father God.* “God the Father” (I Peter 1:2)
- *The Bible calls the Son God.* “Our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1)
- *The Bible calls the Spirit God.* In Acts 5, Peter rebukes Ananias and Sapphira for being deceitful regarding their offering. He asks, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...?” (verse 3). Then, in the next verse explains, “You have not lied to men, but to God!” Peter clearly regards the Holy Spirit as being God.

God alone is eternal. “From eternity to eternity, You are God” (Psalm 90:2). And each member of the Trinity is said to be eternal.

- *The Father is eternal.* “The eternal God” (Romans 16:26-27, cp. Jude 25)
- *The Son is eternal.* “Bethlehem... One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for Me. His origin is from antiquity, *from eternity*” (Micah 5:2)
- *The Spirit is eternal.* “The eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14)

God is the creator (Genesis 1:1) and we see each Person of the Trinity involved in creation. For example, in 1 Corinthians 8:6 we see both the Father and Son involved in creation: “There is one God, the Father. All things are from Him, and we exist for Him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through Him, and we exist through Him.” And in Genesis 1:2, we see the Holy Spirit involved, also: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.”

The three Persons participated in redemption: “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14, ESV).

The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. There is one God, in unity and three-ness, the Trinity.

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Jesus Christ, You are the faithful witness,
The firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth.
You loved us and washed us from our sins in Your own blood,
and have made us kings and priests to Your God and Father.
To You be glory and dominion forever and ever.*

Praise Guidance based on: Revelation 1:5-6

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Page 226

The Persons in their Order of Operations

There are not three gods, but one. This doesn't mean he simply reveals himself in different ways at different times, one moment appearing as Father, another appearing as the Son, and another appearing as the Spirit. How could the Son pray to the Father? How could the Father *send* the Spirit? Why would the Spirit be said to testify about the Son? To whom did the Son obey? No, "They are equal in essence, yet distinct in function."¹ Here are some ways the Bible describes an order of operations within the Trinity:

"From the Father" The Father is the origin, the source, the planner, the initiator.

- "Jesus replied, 'I have shown you many good works *from the Father*'
(John 10:32)
- "I came *from the Father*" (John 16:28)
- "He... has received *from the Father* the promised Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33)
- "Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down *from the Father*..." (James 1:17)

"Through the Son" What the Father plans, the Son executes and accomplishes. The Son is his agent of action, the mediator between God and man.

- "All things were created *through Him [Jesus]*, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created." (John 1:3)
- "...and *through Him [Jesus]* to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace *through* the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20)

"By the Spirit" The Spirit applies and empowers what the Father planned and initiated and what the Son accomplished.

- "*By the Spirit* we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" (Galatians 5:5)
- "God has chosen you for salvation through *sanctification by the Spirit*"
(2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- "But if you are *led by the Spirit*, you are not under the law." (Galatians 5:18)
- "For we... *serve by the Spirit* of God" (Philippians 3:3)
- "If we *live by the Spirit*, we must also follow the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25)

Today's Praise Guidance:

Spirit of holiness, You are the perfect Spirit, the sevenfold Spirit before the throne

You are the Spirit of glory and of God

The Spirit of truth, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of grace

You assure us of our adoption and empower our witness

You are the good Spirit who instructs us, the gracious Spirit who leads us.

Based on: Rom. 1:4; Rev. 1:4; 1 Peter 4:14; John 15:26; Rom. 8:2; Heb. 10:29; Rom. 8:15; Neh. 9:20; Ps. 143:10

¹ ESV Study Bible, *The Trinity*, Page 2515



God is Spirit

We have seen God in art and in cartoons depicted as an old man with a beard. But *how should* an artist depict God? How would you portray God? The answer is, one shouldn't attempt to portray God at all.

Because God is spirit, he is non-material and not able to be seen or touched in a physical sense. Hence, graven images would not only be a violation of the Ten Commandments, they would be a joke.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “God is spirit” (John 4:10). What did Jesus mean by that? It means God is not physical. He doesn't have a body — even if Scripture does use such figures of speech to tell us what he is like. God is invisible. He cannot be detected by our five senses. God cannot be limited to any one geographical location. To say God is Spirit does not mean that He is a mere impersonal force. God is another category of being than are we. He is not similar to anything else on earth and cannot be represented by any creature on earth (or even by combining parts of several creatures). Thus, graven images are forbidden.

We often think something has to be tangible, observable, and measurable to be real. However, everything on earth we call real is external to us, superficial, and temporary. To say God is spirit is to not to say He is less than real; on the contrary, God is *real* and the ultimate ground of *reality*. That being the case, his very being tells us how we should worship Him.

Relating to God isn't merely about outward appearances — the motions we go through, saying specific words we are supposed to say, kneeling or standing in certain positions. As we relate to others on a human level, we can know only what we can see them do or hear them say. We don't always know the reality of the inward person. Yet, our human spirits are open books before God, who is spirit. God interacts with you in the deepest recesses of your spirit. He knows what is there, even the hidden hurts, the secret sins, and the unspoken dreams. It's about reality. You can try to fake it, but God can't be faked off. To align ourselves with God in genuine worship, we have to be honest and transparent with him. No pretensions, no keeping up appearances. “God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:10).

Today's Praise Guidance:

Lord God, You are Spirit.

The highest heaven cannot contain You.

You are the God who made the world and everything in it,

Lord of heaven and earth, You do not live in temples made by man.

To You be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Praise Guidance based on John 4:10; 1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24; 1 Timothy 1:17

¹Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 66

God is Invisible

God is invisible.

- “No one has ever seen God” (1 John 4:12)
- “Whom none of mankind has seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:16)
- “Now to the King eternal, immortal, *invisible...*” (1 Timothy 1:17)

That God isn’t visible doesn’t mean he doesn’t exist. Even in the natural world, we know invisibility doesn’t deny existence. Germs and some gasses aren’t visible to our eyes, either; but we know they are there and can impact our lives. God is invisible, not our imaginary friend.

The invisibility of God has been a frustration for humankind. People have insisted that God be visible and tangible. Making God to their liking, they “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles” (Romans 1:23). We even try to make him into our image!

Even though we cannot see God visibly, he has revealed many things about his nature and character to us. He does so through the witness of the creation and of the Word. “From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made (Romans 1:20).

Sometimes in the Bible, God showed people the glow of his glory. Glory is when the invisible qualities of the invisible God are made visible. When that happened it was always experienced with an overwhelming experience of awe and fear.

The Bible speaks of people having spiritual insight into the existence and nature of God. Moses “persevered, as one who sees Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27).

When God the Son became human in the incarnation, he became visible and tangible. “No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son—the One who is at the Father’s side—He has revealed Him” (John 1:18). Jesus is “is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). At his return, all believers will see Jesus in his glory... and will be transformed upon his sight —“We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). The promise to believers in heaven is that “they shall see His face” (Revelation 22:3-4, cp. 1 Corinthians 13:12).

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You dwell in unapproachable light,
No one of mankind has seen You nor can see You
In Jesus, we see the fullness of Your glory, You expressing Yourself in human form
You are eternal, immortal, and invisible*

Praise Guidance based on: 1 Timothy 6:16; Colossians 1:15; John 1:14, 18; 1 Timothy 1:17



God is Immutable

The next time you go to your high school class reunion and want to tell someone she hasn't changed a bit, tell her she is *immutable*. You will have just told her she is not subject to change. Of course, that would be flattery. We all change. Hair turns gray or turns loose. We put on a few pounds. We add a few wrinkles here and there. We grow sweeter and wiser or harder and bitter. We change. But God doesn't change.

- “For I the LORD do not change” (Malachi 3:6, ESV)
- “The Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”
(James 1:17, CSB)
- “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)

God does not grow or develop. He can't get any better. He is already perfection personified... and he stays that way. Thus, “God replied to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’” (Exodus 3:14).

God is consistent and dependable. He isn't like the boss whose employees have to ask, “What kind of mood is he in today?” Psalm 136:1 says, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His faithful love endures forever” (CSB).

God isn't fickle or subject to the whims of the prevailing culture. “LORD, Your word is forever; it is firmly fixed in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). It doesn't change with the times. “God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind. Does He speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?” (Numbers 23:19)

The biblical record takes us from the Old Testament to the New Testament. We see God doing “a new thing” (Numbers 16:30). But, because God's eternal plan is unfolding before our eyes, it doesn't mean God has changed. “The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation” (Psalm 33:11).

God isn't distant, detached, or inactive. His personality is unchanging, not because he doesn't care, but because *he cares consistently*. That *he* doesn't change doesn't mean he doesn't change anything else. God changes people and circumstances all the time, consistent with his unchanging character!

Today's Praise Guidance:

LORD, You are good, and Your love is eternal;

Your faithfulness endures through all generations.

The nations will perish from the land, but You, LORD, are King forever

They will perish, but You will endure

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

You are the Alpha and the Omega, the One who is, who was, and who is to come.

Praise Guidance based on Psalm 100:5, Psalm 10:16, Psalm 102:26, Matthew 24:35, Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:8



God is All-Powerful

A young man approached the pastor and asked him if he thought there was intelligent life on other planets in the universe. The pastor answered that he didn't see any biblical evidence for that. The young man responded, "So why did God go to all the trouble to create all the other solar systems and planets?" The pastor answered his question with a question, "What trouble?"

We see God's power in the created universe. We see it as he sustains the creation—"He upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). Scripture affirms God's power in numerous ways:

- "Ah, Lord GOD! You Yourself made the heavens and earth by Your great power and with Your outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for You!
(Jeremiah 32:17)
- "Our God is in heaven and does whatever He pleases." (Psalm 115:3)
- "He does what He wants with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can hold back His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (Daniel 4:35)
- Fifty-eight times in Scripture God is called by the name "Almighty."

To say that God is omnipotent means that "God is all-powerful and able to do anything consistent with His own nature."¹ By this definition it wouldn't make sense to ask if God can create a rock too heavy for him to lift. God is Spirit, and without a physical body; so that's a silly question. Can God make $2+2=6$? The reality is that $2+2=4$; God cannot tell a lie so... no (Titus 1:2). God cannot sin nor be tempted by sin (James 1:13). God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). However, God can do anything consistent with His own nature.² In fact, writes Wayne Grudem, "God is able to do more than he actually does."³

Whether a person needs salvation or deliverance or his prayers answered, "Indeed, the LORD's hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear (Isaiah 59:1). Most importantly, God is able to change our lives. "For His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You rescue and deliver. You are strong and mighty in battle.
You perform signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth.
With You all things are possible. Nothing is too difficult for You.
You are able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think—
according to Your power that works within Your people—to You be glory
in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Praise Guidance based on: Daniel 6:27, Psalm 24:1, Matthew 19:26, Jeremiah 32:17, and Ephesians 3:20-21

¹Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*. page 40 ² Ibid ³ Wayne Grudem, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, page 217



God is Creator

Though it is attributed to both William Cowper and John Bright, it is one of the classic insults of all time: “He is a self-made man and worships his creator.” When things are going well, we can begin to swagger with a confidence we haven’t earned and imagine ourselves as having a self-sufficiency we don’t possess. We sometimes forget that we aren’t self-made. We are created beings dependent on our Creator. The Bible says, “Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us” (Psalm 100:3).

God is the uncreated Creator. That is such a significant fact of life it is appropriate to refer to God as “the Creator,” as if it were his name. Where there had previously been nothing, God created everything in the universe, by merely commanding everything to exist — “...for He commanded, and they were created” (Psalm 148:5). Though everything has been damaged by the fall, he created everything “good.” The creation owes its existence to God, but God is not part of the creation nor does he, in some way, need the creation.

- “Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.” (Psalm 95:6)
- “He made the earth by His power, established the world by His wisdom, and spread out the heavens by His understanding.” (Jeremiah 10:12)
- “The Lord... stretched out the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him.” (Zechariah 12:1)
- “There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” (I Corinthians 8:6, ESV)

This is not a simple matter, that as a historical event, God created everything, and that was that. God continues to *sustain* the created universe — “He sustains all things by His powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3). “By Him [Jesus] all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). In an ongoing way, “He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25). We are not self-made nor self-determining; we are creatures, continually dependent on the Creator.

Today’s Praise Guidance:

LORD, You alone are the Lord. You created the heavens, the highest heavens with all their angelic host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to all of them, and the heavenly host worships You.

Everything was created by You, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible

— All things have been created through You and for You

Praise Guidance based on: Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16



God is Transcendent

Imagine yourself as a young boy in South Dakota. Your family is poor. You really enjoy attending the local high school football games. But the school is so small that they have, as is common out west, eight-man teams. For some reason you've never even seen a college game on television. But then a generous and wealthy relative takes an interest in you and flies you to Alabama. He takes you to Jordan-Hare or Bryant-Denny Stadium to see an SEC game. With the size, the volume of the sound, the pageantry, the colors, and the talent, your experience at that game would *transcend* all your previous experiences with football. It would be so far above and beyond what you have known.

God is transcendent. But that is not to say God is a much bigger version of something with which we are familiar. When we compare God to the greatest and most powerful things we know, we still represent God as far too small. He is above and beyond everything else in the universe. Nine times the Bible says there is "none like" God. Isaiah asks, "Who will you compare God with? What likeness will you compare Him to?" (Isaiah 40:18).

We cannot understand God at all apart from his revealing Himself to us. We can't "philosophy" our way to God or figure Him out. We cannot praise him adequately; he is beyond our ability to conceive. "In God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom..." (I Corinthians 1:21). J. I. Packer quotes Martin Luther:

*"Your thoughts of God are too human" said Luther to Erasmus. That is where most of us go astray. Our thoughts of God are not great enough; we fail to reckon with the reality of His limitless wisdom and power. Because we are limited and weak, we imagine that at some points God is too, and find it hard to believe that He is not."*¹

He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20, KJV) because God himself is exceedingly, abundantly above our wildest dreams. When we get a sense of the great gap between God and us we will worship with astonished reverence. The angelic beings do: "God is greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, more awe-inspiring than all who surround Him" (Psalm 89:7). God is transcendent!

Today's Praise Guidance:

*There is no one like You, God. You are great; Your name is great in power.
Who is like You, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?
Your glorious name is exalted above all blessing and praise.
All the nations are as nothing before You; You consider them as nothingness and emptiness.
Who could I compare You with? For among all the wise people of the nations
and among all their kingdoms, there is no one like You.*

Praise Guidance based on Exodus 8:10; Exodus 15:11; Jeremiah 10:6; Isaiah 40:17-18; Nehemiah 9:5

¹J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pages 78-79



God is a Personal Being

“May the force be with you”—this familiar phrase from the Star War films may remind some of another much older phrase, “May the Lord be with you.” However, in the film, the force is very different. It sounds more like the pantheism of Eastern Religions. In the film, the force is said to be an energy field created by all living things, that surrounds and penetrates living beings and binds the galaxy together. At death one may be absorbed into the force. It has a dark side. One can master the ways of the force and learn to use its energies. But the force is just that, an “it”—something impersonal.

By contrast, God is a personal being, not a force like in Star Wars. He is not mere cosmic energy. God is distinct from—and not part of—the creation. He is not one with the universe, He *created* the universe! Some people (not attempting to write science fiction) have tried to apply impersonal terminology to God: “Supreme Being,” “unmoved mover,” “the immoveable object,” “irresistible force.” However, we should not conclude that because God is *infinite*, he isn’t *personal*.

Repeatedly, Scripture describes God as having personal qualities and emotions. For example: *Love* (“His great love that He had for us”—Ephesians 2:4), *anger* (“When You are angry, who can stand before You?”—Psalm 76:7), *compassion* (“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.”—Psalm 103:13), and *grief* (“How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert.”—Psalm 78:40).

In Star Wars, Luke is told to “Use the force.” And, too often, people try to *use* God. However, God is not merely a “Higher Power” to be depended on for help; He is a person with whom we relate. We know God reverently and respectfully, but he *can be known...* and we can have a personal relationship with Him. As Jesus prayed, “This is eternal life: that they may *know You*” (John 17:3).

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Lord, to know you is better than having a high IQ or a great education;
Knowing You is better than wielding enormous power;
Knowing You is better than having vast wealth
— and possessing all the things money can buy.
Nothing is as good as knowing and understanding You;
Because You show faithful love to me;
and will bring final justice and righteousness to the earth.*

Praise Guidance based on Jeremiah 9:23-24



God is Good

The word *good* is used with a wide range of meanings. Of course, God is good in every sense of the word. Consider:

Good is used in a moral sense. As in, “She is a good and honest person.”

The Psalmist prayed, “You are good, and You do what is good” (Psalm 119:68). When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he called him, “Good teacher.” Jesus replied, “‘Why do you call Me good?’ Jesus asked him. ‘No one is good but One—God’” (Mark 10:18). Jesus wasn’t denying his deity; he was asking him if he understood what he was saying. Because only God is truly and completely good.

Good is used to describe skill and quality. As in, “He is a good athlete” or “They make good furniture.”

Psalm 139:14 says “I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made.” In the creation account, we see God creating and then hear the words of evaluation, “And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:18).

Good is used to describe those who are kind and generous. As in, “He’s a good guy; he’d give you the shirt off his back.”

Psalm 103:5 reminds us that God “satisfies your years with good things.” “No *good thing* does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” (Psalm 84:11). As the Israelites entered the Promised Land, we read this summary, “Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:45).

And good is used to describe that which is pleasant, pleasing, and enjoyable. As in, “It was so good to see you again!”

God’s will represents a good plan for our lives: “That which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). Even in challenging times, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him” (Nahum 1:7). Asaph recounts a “spiritual near-miss.” He had become disillusioned seeing the prosperity of the wicked. But then he goes to the temple, and things come into perspective and he realizes, “But as for me, the nearness of God is *my good*” (Psalm 73:28).

Thus, we are commanded, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good” (Psalm 118:1).

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*God, You are good! Your lovingkindness is everlasting!
No good thing do You withhold from those who walk uprightly.
You are always with me. Your presence is my good.
And who do I have in heaven but You?*

*You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me up in glory.
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever.*

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 73; 84:11; 103:17



God is All-Knowing

Here are some things the angels in Heaven never hear God say:

- *Why do you suppose she did that?*
- *Gasp! I am so shocked and disappointed!*
- *Wow! What a pleasant surprise.*
- *Guess what I just learned?*
- *I wonder what would happen if...*

God never says these things. God is omniscient; that is, He knows everything. “Our Lord is great, vast in power; His understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5).

God knows every microscopic part of His expansive creation. We now know there are billions of stars, yet “...He brings out the starry host by number; He calls all of them by name...” (Isaiah 40:26) .

God knows history, even that part of it that hasn’t happened yet... everything past, present, and future. “He reveals the deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness...” (Daniel 2:22). Not only does He know everything that will occur throughout history, but he knows everything that *could have* happened had different choices been made.

God knows us. He knows every thought and motive of every person.

- “The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, observing the wicked and the good.” (Proverbs 15:3)
- “No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.” (Hebrews 4:13)
- “You have set our unjust ways before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence.” (Psalm 90:8)

Hagar had run away from home and God came to her in the wilderness. She would call him, “The God who sees” (Genesis 16:13). For the person who loves and trusts the Lord, it’s like when Mom watched over us out the window when we played in the back yard. For those in rebellion against God, it is intrusive. But God sees us all!

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You know all things.
You see my ways and number my steps
You know the number of the hairs on my head
Before I speak You know what I will say
You see my actions and You read my thoughts
Human hearts lie open before You
Lord, You know all things*

Praise Guidance based on John 21:17; Job 34:4; Luke 12:7; Psalm 139; Proverbs 15:11



The Wisdom of God

Sometimes we don't make good decisions because we didn't have all the facts. "God, however, has access to all the information. So his judgments are made wisely. He never has to revise his estimation of something because of additional information. He sees all things in their proper perspective; thus he does not give anything a higher or lower value than what it ought to have. One can therefore pray confidently, knowing that God will not grant something that is not good."¹

God's wisdom goes beyond his omniscience. We all have had the experience of knowing all the relevant facts and still making the wrong decision. Wisdom involves using information correctly. "God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals."²

We see God's wisdom in creation.

- "The Lord founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding." (Proverbs 3:19)

We see God's wisdom in salvation.

C. S. Lewis wrote "This is one of the reasons I believe Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed... it is not the sort of thing anyone would have made up. It has just that [strange] twist about it that real things have."³

- "For to those who are perishing the message of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is God's power... in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom." (I Corinthians 1:18, 21)
- "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.' This is the LORD's declaration. For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."
(Isaiah 55:8-9)

God has chosen to display his wisdom to the universe.

- "This is so God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens." (Ephesians 3:10)

God, by his wisdom, will achieve all his purposes and will bring glory to Himself!

Today's Praise Guidance:

Lord, You are the only wise God—to You be the glory forever!

Where is the philosopher? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age?

How You have made the world's wisdom foolish!

Oh, the depth of the riches both of Your wisdom and Your knowledge, God!

How unsearchable are Your judgments and untraceable Your ways!

Praise Guidance based on: Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 1:20; Romans 11:33

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Page 276 ² Wayne Grudem, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Page 193

³ C. S. Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, Page 22



God is Omnipresent

The preacher wasn't trying to make a big point of it—it was just an aside and not his real point—but someone took it that way and challenged him on it. “It” was smoking. And the person was so agitated about it, the preacher said, “This seems to have you upset; why don't you just light up so it will settle your nerves?” The man replied, “You mean, here in the church?!” The man felt that there were some places where God was present more than He is in others. What about that? When Solomon prayed the dedicatory prayer for the temple, he knew the answer: “But will God indeed live on earth? Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain You, much less this temple I have built” (I Kings 18:27).

In regard to size, space, and places, God is unbounded and unlimited. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?”—the LORD's declaration” (Jeremiah 23:23).

We may attempt to hide ourselves from God. “Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the LORD's presence” (Jonah 1:3). Jonah discovered that you can run, but you can't hide from God. “If they dig down to Sheol, from there My and will take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will track them down and seize them” (Amos 9:2-3).

On the other hand, there are times when Scripture speaks of God's presence in people's lives. God will *reveal* His presence in different ways according to our response to Him. He is present in the sense of blessing us.

- “In Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.” (Psalm 16:11)
- “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (II Corinthians 3:17)

Then, there are times God hides his presence from us due to our sin. “Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2, ESV).

God reveals his presence in Heaven more than any other place in the universe. He reveals his presence in the Person of Jesus Christ in ways he doesn't through other people, even the most committed Christian. He reveals his presence in the church in ways He does not through people in general. God is not limited by space!

Today's Praise Guidance:

Lord, You fill heaven and the earth.

Where can I go to escape Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?

If I go up to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there.

*If I live at the eastern horizon or settle at the western limits,
even there Your hand will lead me; Your right hand will hold on to me.*

Based on Jeremiah 23:24; I Kings 8:27; Psalm 139



The Beauty & Majesty of God

Imagine identical twin ladies in their late twenties, both naturally attractive. They have the same hairstyle and are wearing matching clothes. However, one sister has a cigarette hanging out of her mouth and, when she is not blowing out smoke, she is breathing out profanity and bitterness. She has made bad choices and life has been hard on her. Her sister has lived more wisely. She is kind and positive, and speaks encouragingly. Even though they are identical twins, by the virtue of her goodness, one has a beauty the other doesn't possess. In a similar way, God's goodness gives Him beauty.

- “He appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise *the beauty of holiness...* and to say Praise the Lord...” (2 Chronicles 20:21, KJV)
- “I have asked one thing from the LORD; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, gazing on *the beauty of the LORD* and seeking Him in His temple.” (Psalm 27:4)

God is both beautiful and majestic. This speaks to the vast greatness of His power, the expansiveness of His reign, and the indescribable splendor of His person.

The praises of God recorded in Scripture often describes God's beauty as it relates to His strength:

- “Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the *splendor* and the *majesty...*” (1 Chronicles 29:11)
- “The Lord reigns! He is robed in *majesty*; The Lord is robed, enveloped in strength...” (Psalms 93:1)
- “*Splendor and majesty* are before Him; strength and *beauty* are in His sanctuary.” (Psalm 96:6)

As we read the biblical accounts of those who encountered God, we notice how their reactions are a blend of dread and reverence on one hand, and attraction and admiration on the other. The apostle John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and yet, when he saw the ascended Jesus in his glorified state, he says “I fell at his dead like a dead man” (Revelation 1:17). When Jesus returns, those who reject him will be eternally separated from “the Lord's presence and from *His glorious strength.*” Conversely, Jesus will be “*admired* by all those who have believed” [Other translations read, “to be marveled at.” The ISB reads, “regarded with wonder”] (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Such is the majesty and beauty of God!

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Praise the Lord! Lord my God, You are very great
You are clothed with majesty and splendor.
Lord, Yours is the greatness and the power and the glory
and the splendor and the majesty!*

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 104:1; 1 Chronicles 29:11



God is Sovereign

I once asked a friend who had faced great tragedy how he got through it. His daughter, an only child, had been killed in an automobile accident and his wife suffered brain damage that altered her personality. He told me that if didn't believe in the sovereignty of God he could never get through it. It is of comfort and it gives us confidence to know that God causes some things to happen and He allows some things to happen, but nothing just happens.

God reigns and rules over history, over nations, over rulers, and over individual lives, with the power and freedom to accomplish his purposes. The Bible affirms this repeatedly:

- “...God is King of all the earth. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on His holy throne.” (Psalms 47:7-8)
- God “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will”
(Ephesians 1:11, NIV)

God has the power to rule over everything.

- “Riches and honor come from You, and You are the ruler of everything. In Your hand are power and might, and it is in Your hand to make great and to give strength to all.” (1 Chronicles 29:12)

God has the freedom to rule to rule over everything.

- “The Lord does whatever He pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths.” (Psalms 135:6)

God has the right to rule over everything. James Montgomery Boice writes, “The basic reason women and men do not like the doctrine of God’s sovereignty is they do not want a sovereign God. They wish to be autonomous.” ¹

- “But who are you—anyone who talks back to God? Will what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Or has the potter no right over His clay...?” (Romans 9:20-21)
- “Pay homage to the Son, or He will be angry, and you will perish in your rebellion” (Psalm 2:12)

Today’s Praise Guidance:

Lord, You are the ruler of everything.

Riches and honor come from You. In Your hand are power and might

It is in Your hand to make great and to give strength to all.

You work out everything in line with the purposes of Your will

You are King of all the earth. You reign over the nations

As the only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords

Praise Guidance based on: 1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalms 47:7-8; Ephesians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:15

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, Page 120



God Condescends

Many who have important positions of leadership do not stop and pay attention to others of lesser rank or status. They may love humanity, but they are not interested in individual people. Or, they may feel they are engaged in such important matters they simply don't have the time. One friend worked in advertising for a local television station. He was telling me about the various people who worked in the news department. "So and so is really nice, but this other guy (and he named each person) won't speak to you in the hall; he always walks around with this serious look on his face like he's thinking about the news."

God actually does have an important job, but if you are "lowly of spirit," He will "stop and speak to you in the hall." For God to stoop down from such an exalted position to give attention to sinful and mortal creatures is called his *condescension*. Note that God's *condescension* is *not* the same thing as *being condescending* — in the sense of looking down on someone — but is an expression of the kindness of God toward us. The Bible describes this quality of God's several times:

- "Who is like the LORD our God—the One enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?" (Psalm 113:5-6)
- "You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great." (Psalm 18:35, NIV)
- "It is he who remembered us in our low estate..." (Psalm 136:23)
- "Though the LORD is exalted, He takes note of the humble; but He knows the haughty from afar." (Psalm 138:6)
- "For the High and Exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy says this: 'I live in a high and holy place, and with the oppressed and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the oppressed.'" (Isaiah 57:15)

God didn't have to be interested in us, or think about us, or give us the time of day — he is God. That he does is not a tribute to our own importance, but of his great grace!

Today's Praise Guidance:

Lord, You are exalted

You live in a high and holy place. You are enthroned on high.

Yet You stoop down to take an interest in things on earth

You are mindful of us. You remember us in our low estate

You take note of the humble and revive the spirit of the lowly.

Praise Guidance based on: Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 113:5-6; Psalm 8; Psalm 136:23; and Psalm 138:6



God is Gentle

Our family has an unusual last name. People often think they must not have heard right; they can't be hearing the name *Gentle*. "Jones," they often guess. "Gentle, like a horse that won't throw you," we explain. In our minds, of course, we are not picturing a sickly Shetland pony, but a big, strong, fast thoroughbred.

Gentleness is strength under control. In fact, one can show gentleness only from a position of strength. If the lowest ranking employee is going to ask the boss for a raise, the employee's wife isn't going to remind him on the way out the door, to be gentle with the boss. The boss's wife, however, might urge her husband to be gentle with the employee.

What is the difference between saying God condescends to relate to us and saying he is gentle with us? While the ideas definitely overlap, one could condescend to deal with a person of lower rank, but do so in a way that is harsh, stern, and exacting.

In 1 Kings 19 we see God's gentleness in several ways. God finds Elijah where he is. He sends His angel to prepare food for the prophet. The angel touched him. God gives the exhausted prophet time to rest. Unthreatened by his answers, God starts with questions to help Elijah think realistically. God calmly describes the situation to Elijah more accurately. And God makes a point of showing that he is to be found, not in earthquakes and fires, but heard speaking in a small, still voice.

- "See, the Lord God comes with strength, and His power establishes His rule... He protects His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them in the fold of His garment. He *gently* leads those that are nursing." (Isaiah 40:10-11)
- "You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and *your gentleness* made me great." (Psalms 18:35, ESV)
- "All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because *I am gentle* and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves." (Jesus in Matthew 11:29)
- "Now I, Paul, make a personal appeal to you by the *gentleness* and graciousness of Christ..." (2 Corinthians 10:1)

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You know what we are made of and remember that we are only dust
Though You come in strength, You protect Your flock like a shepherd
You gently carry the weak and gently lead Your flock
Your gentleness makes me great*

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 103:14; Isaiah 40:10-11; Psalm 18:35



God is Faithful

You've heard the music of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. Carol writes the music. Jim Cymbala, her husband, is the pastor. Their teenage daughter, Chrissy, had turned her back on God. Although their hearts were breaking, Jim and Carol continued ministering to the people of the New York City church. After two years and much prayer, including a special prayer meeting of the church, Chrissy came home to God. Some people think that Carol wrote one of her best-known songs, "He's Been Faithful," in praise after her daughter's return to God, but she didn't. She wrote it before. Carol refers to it as "a song of hope born in the midst of my pain." The song "became like a balm to my heart, strengthening me once again." Although her daughter had not yet come back to the Lord, Carol could praise Him for His faithfulness in her own life.

God's faithfulness means that "he proves true."¹ God sticks with us.

God is faithful to Himself. God "is never forced to act out of character."² Even "if we are faithless, *He remains faithful*, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). God is so reliable He is called "The Rock" with that description being further explained in the same verse, "His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true" (Deut. 32:4).

God is faithful to His promises. "For He who promised *is faithful*" (Heb. 10:23).

God is faithful to make us grow in holiness. The Apostle prays for the Thessalonian Christians toward that end and then adds, "He who calls you *is faithful*, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

God is faithful when we are tempted. "...God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able..." (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God is faithful when we sin. "If we confess our sins, *He is faithful* and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God is faithful when we suffer. "So those who suffer according to God's will should, in doing good, entrust themselves to a *faithful Creator*" (1 Peter 4:19).

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Lord, Heaven itself praises You for your faithfulness
You establish Your faithfulness in the heavens; faithfulness surrounds You
For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is Your faithful love
You show faithful love to a thousand generations
From eternity to eternity Your faithful love is toward those who fear You
You remain faithful, for You cannot deny Yourself.*

Praise Guidance based on Psalm 89:2,5,8; Psalm 103:17; Exodus 20:6; II Timothy 2:13

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*,. Page 291 ² A. W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God*, Volume 2, Chapter 9



God is Jealous

We tend to think of jealousy as a very negative trait. In human relationships, jealousy is the fear of being replaced. So we picture insecure and controlling people who smother others. We refer to jealousy as “the green-eyed monster.” However, jealousy is sometimes the precisely correct emotion. Imagine the husband who comes home unexpectedly to discover his wife in the arms of another man. What if he simply spoke to his wife and the other man and went on as if nothing had happened? Would you not doubt his love for his wife and question the value he placed on his own marriage? In that situation a person is *supposed* to be jealous!

To say that God is jealous is to say that He places great value on the relationship He has with us and is determined to protect that relationship and His own honor. In fact, as Timothy George has expressed it, “God's middle name is Jealous.”¹

- “You shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” (Exodus 34:14, ESV)
- “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5)
- “The LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” (Deut. 4:24)
- “Judah did what was evil in the LORD’s eyes. They provoked Him to jealous anger... with the sins they committed.” (1 Kings 14:22)
- “Or do you suppose that it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘The Spirit which He has caused to dwell in our hearts yearns jealously over us?’”

(James 4:5, Weymouth)

God isn’t jealous *of* you; he is jealous *over* you. Sin is a hurtful act of betrayal of God. It violates our connection with God and his love for us. God has a right to us, heart and soul, words, and thoughts. He wants us to know him and enjoy him and to experience his fullness. Sin says to God that we are not satisfied in the relationship. It testifies to others that a relationship with God doesn’t satisfy. God, in His zeal for his own honor, will become jealous. God’s jealousy is his determination to protect his relationship with us.

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Lord, we became satisfied, our hearts became proud, and I’ve forgotten You.
I’ve fled from You and rebelled against You. I’ve acted unfaithfully.
We did not cry to You from our hearts. We turned for help, but not to You.
I’ve misrepresented You as the one to blame
I provoked You to jealous anger with the sins I’ve committed
I wanted to be the world’s friend, but You yearned jealously over me.
You are a consuming fire, a jealous God*

Praise Guidance based on: Hosea 2:6-7; 5:3; 7:13-14; 13:6; 1 Kings 14:22; James 4:4-5; Deuteronomy 4:24

¹Daniel Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church*, Section 2, Chapter 4



The God of Truth

On the campus of Harvard University is a statue with the following inscription: “John Harvard, Founder 1638.” It is known as “The statue of the three lies.” First, the artist could not find a clear picture of John Harvard, so he used a picture of a respectable-looking gentleman from the proper era. Second, John Harvard was not the founder of Harvard University; he did donate a lot of money in its early days. Third, the date on the base of the statue does not represent John Harvard's death, as one might suppose, but the year he donated his library and most of his fortune to the college. On the side of the statue is the Harvard emblem, emblazoned with the school's motto: “Veritas” ...which is Latin for “Truth.”

God personifies truth and defines reality. God always tells us the truth:

- “...God, who cannot lie...” (Titus 1:2)
- “It is impossible for God to lie...” (Hebrews 6:18)

He is the un-lying God, but he is more than that. He is the true God (John 17:3). He is not a fictional character or a figment of someone's imagination. He is real... this is reality.

In regard to God, “There are three dimensions of truthfulness: (1) genuineness—being true; (2) veracity—telling the truth; and faithfulness—proving true. Although we think of truthfulness primarily as telling the truth, genuineness is the most basic dimension of truthfulness.”¹ God embodies the truth. Jesus said, “I am... *the truth*...” (John 14:6).

- “We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace *and truth*.” (John 1:14)
- “The Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know *the true One*. We are in *the true One*—that is, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is *the true God* and eternal life.” (I John 5:20)

Christians are instructed not to lie since deceit isn't in the nature of God. If we are going to be like Jesus, we can't deceive others; since Jesus doesn't deceive others. “*Do not lie* to one another, since you have put off the old man with his practices and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge *according to the image of his Creator*” (Colossians 3:9-10).

Today's Praise Guidance:

*God, You are not a man who lies — You cannot lie.
Nor are You a man who changes His mind.
You never speak and not act, nor promise and not fulfill
The works of Your hands are truth and justice
You are the God of truth!*

Praise Guidance based on: Numbers 23:19; Psalm 31:5; Titus 1:2

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*,. Page 289

God is Holy

God is holy. How holy is he? Well, he's not like your dad's younger brother who winks at your indiscretion, signaling he won't tell your parents what you've done. God doesn't compromise and isn't compromised. God's holiness is absolute. "Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him" (1 John 1:5).

The word for holy in the Old Testament means, *marked off, distinct, different*. It emphasizes the idea of "otherness." You can see this in Leviticus 20:26 where God tells His people, "You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have *set you apart* from the nations to be Mine." C. C. Ryrie writes, "In respect to God, holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil but also that He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others."¹

In other words, *God is distinctively different and completely clean.*

- "Lord, who is like You among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11)
- "There is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides You!"
(1 Samuel 2:2)
- "...For I am God and not man, the Holy One among you..." (Hosea 11:9)
- "Lord, who will not fear and glorify Your name? Because You alone are holy, because all the nations will come and worship before You, because Your righteous acts have been revealed." (Revelation 15:4)

In many hymns, the first hymn is *Holy, Holy, Holy*. The third verse says:

Holy, Holy, Holy!
Tho' the darkness hide Thee;
Tho' the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Today's Praise Guidance:

Lord, when I see You clearly, I want to say, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful person.'
I have unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips
You alone are holy. There is no one holy like You.
Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing.
You are glorious in holiness and your righteous acts have been revealed.
You are light and in You is no darkness at all.

Praise Guidance based on: Luke 5:8; Isaiah 6; Samuel 2:2; Habakkuk 1:3; Exodus 15:11; Revelation 15:11; 1 John 1:5

¹Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*. page 38



God is a God of Justice

Justice is not often a quality we enjoy thinking of God as having... until we think about it. I was once sharing Christ with a couple and explaining how we do, in fact, want God to be a God of justice. What if unsolved murders went unpunished? There would be no final justice. The husband agreed with this point by saying, “Yes, like my wife’s son who was murdered several years ago and they never found who did it.” I quickly replied that I hadn’t known and didn’t intend to bring up something hurtful, but they weren’t hurt; they were in full agreement that they wanted to see justice done in the end. The problem, of course, is that it’s not just dictators and serial killers who will face God’s justice, but all sinners.

God’s justice is a reflection of His Person. He administers justice because He Himself is just in His Person.

- “For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and injustice...” (Isaiah 61:8)
- “...His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

God administers justice accurately, without partiality or favoritism. He knows all the facts, each person’s motives, and every mitigating fact and aggravating circumstance.

- “He judges the world with righteousness; He executes judgment on the peoples with fairness.” (Psalm 9:8)
- “...there is no favoritism with Him.” (Ephesians 6:9)
- “His judgments are true and righteous...” (Revelation 19:2)

God’s final justice is certain.

- “The Lord is slow to anger and rich in faithful love, forgiving wrongdoing and rebellion. But He will not leave the guilty unpunished...” (Numbers 14:18)
- “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12)

Arthur Pink wrote, “God has often forgiven sinners, but He never forgives sin...”¹ Either justice was satisfied by Christ taking your punishment for you on the cross or justice will be satisfied as you bear your own punishment in hell — but no sin will go unpunished; justice will prevail.

Today’s Praise Guidance:

Lord, You love righteousness and justice

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne

I know that You uphold the just cause of the poor, provide justice for the needy

And execute justice for the exploited

You have set the day on which You will judge the world in righteousness.

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 33:5; Psalm 89:14; Psalm 140:12; Psalm 146:7; Acts 17:31



God's Wrath

If someone were to hurt a member of your family or break into your home, violating your security, you wouldn't think of it as a mere technical offense against the legal code. You would take it personally. Because all sin is an act of hostility toward God and rebellion against him, God takes it personally — and he directs his anger toward those who are responsible for sin.

There are those who would deny this quality of God, considering it to be beneath him. However, God isn't like the teddy bear store where one can pick the color and the costume and so forth to assemble the kind of bear desired. God is the God he reveals himself to be in Scripture:

- “God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses *his wrath* every day.”
(Psalm 7:11, NIV)
- “For *God's wrath is revealed from heaven* against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people...” (Romans 1:18)
- “Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for because of these things *God's wrath* is coming on the disobedient.” (Ephesians 5:6)

The reason many feel uncomfortable thinking of God as expressing wrath is related to the kinds of wrath they have witnessed or to which we have fallen victim in their human relationships — an out of control, irrational, unfair anger. God's wrath comes for the right reasons, is expressed at the right time, and is expressed to the right proportion. Each person who faces it receives, “precisely what he deserves.”¹ To some, wrath may seem inconsistent with God's love. However, God's wrath should be seen together with all of his other qualities. God hates sin because He loves righteousness. It is possible to be angry with people we love; ask any married couple or a parent. God is under no obligation to be “nice.”

Wrath is specifically mentioned in regard to those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ, “The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36). The Bible pictures a day when the Christ-rejecting world will say “to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb’” (Revelation 6:16).

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Lord, in your righteous judgment, You will take vengeance on those who don't know You.
You hate arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood
You hate a heart that plots wicked schemes, and feet eager to run to evil
You hate lying and one who stirs up trouble among brothers.
Your wrath is coming on the disobedient because You are the righteous judge*

Praise Guidance based on: II Thessalonians 1:5-10; Ephesians 5:6; Proverbs 6:16-19; Psalm 7:11



God's Patient Forbearance

On the first day of class R. C. Sproul carefully explained the assignment of three term papers to 250 college freshmen. Each paper was due on the last day of September, October, and November. Except for medical reasons, there would be no extensions. At the end of September, some 225 students dutifully turned in their papers, while 25 remorseful students were fearful. "We're so sorry," they said. "We haven't adjusted from high school to college, but we promise to do better next time." He bowed to their pleas for mercy, gave them an extension, but warned them not to be late next month.

At the end of October, 50 students showed up empty-handed. "Oh, please," they begged, "it was homecoming weekend, and we ran out of time." Sproul relented once more, warning them, "This is it. No excuses next time; you will get an F."

When the end of November came, only 100 students turned in their papers. The rest told Sproul, "We'll get it in soon." "Sorry," Sproul replied. "It's too late now. You get an F." The students protested, "That's not fair!" "Okay," Sproul replied, "you want justice, do you? Here's what's just: you'll get an F for all three papers that were late. That was the rule, right?" "The students had quickly taken my mercy for granted," Sproul later reflected. "They assumed it. When justice suddenly fell, they were unprepared for it... and they were outraged." They had benefitted from the professor's patience and forbearance. We have benefitted from the patience of God.

"God's patience means God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time."¹ Others refer to this as God's "persistence."²

- "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, *slow to anger*" (Psalms 103:8)
- "Therefore, *having overlooked the times of ignorance*, God now commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30)
- "Do you despise the riches of His goodness, *forbearance, and longsuffering*, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"
(Romans 2:4, NKJV)
- "The Lord does not delay His promise... but is *patient with you*, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Today's Praise Guidance:

Lord, I despised Your restraint, and patience.

I didn't appreciate how Your kindness was giving me time to repent.

In my hardness, and unrepentant heart, the wrath against me was building up;

Being stored up toward the day when Your righteous judgment is revealed.

But You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and rich in faithful love.

Your patience was my opportunity for salvation.

Praise Guidance based on: Romans 2:4-5; Exodus 34:6; II Peter 3:15

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 201 ² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Page 296



The Love of God

The Bible tells us, “...God is love” (1 John 4:8). There are those who attempt to take this single aspect of God’s nature and build their entire understanding of God on this one foundation. In fact, to hear some talk, one might get the idea that it is just as true to say “Love is God” as it is to say “God is love.” However, God has other qualities:

- “*God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him.*” (1 John 1:5)
- “*The LORD our God is holy.*” Psalm 99:9
- “*God is the judge: He brings down one and exalts another.*” (Psalm 75:7)
- “*The LORD of Hosts is exalted by His justice, and the holy God is distinguished by righteousness.*” (Isaiah 5:16)

So, we can’t imagine God as a collection of qualities, some more important than others, and define his entire person according to our favorite quality. Sentimental ideas of his love as an indulgent, benevolent softness, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God’s love is holy love.”¹ Consider God’s love for us:

God’s love for us is emotional. He is personally engaged. “The Lord detests the way of the wicked, but He loves the one who pursues righteousness” (Prov.15:9).

God’s love goes beyond mere emotions; it is self-giving and sacrificial. Someone has said that selfishness is meeting our own need at someone else’s expense. Correspondingly, love is meeting another’s needs at our own expense. That’s God’s love! God’s love is self-sacrificing. “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2).

God’s love for us is incredibly lavish. God is “rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4, NKJV). “Look at how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God’s children. And we are!” (1 John 3:1). God could have forgiven us, but then made house servants out of us. Instead, he adopted us as His own children. What judge clears a defendant of all charges and, then, the defendant becomes a member of the judge’s family?

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You have loved me with an everlasting love
Like a father, You have compassion on Your children
A mother would forget her baby before you would forget us
It isn’t that I loved You, but that You loved me
You demonstrated Your love in that while I was still in sin, Christ died for me.
It is such a great love with which You loved us*

Praise Guidance based on: Jeremiah 31:3; Psalms 103:13; Isaiah 49:15; I John 4:10; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4

¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, page 110



God's Mercy

Imagine a wealthy man who has a beautiful, sweet wife and three terrific children. They live in a nice, large home and drive nice cars. Though wealthy, he is not a snob, but is very friendly and outgoing. You've known him all your life and liked him. He has it made and is happy. But then, he makes some terrible choices. He gets in trouble with the law; he loses the house and his wealth. Then, he loses his family. After a while, one day you bump into him at Wal-Mart. You can tell he has been humbled... and is repentant. His clothes are a little worn, not the latest fashion you used to see him in. You watch as he gets into his car; it's old and blows smoke when it starts. How far he has fallen! How your heart goes out to him! Discreetly, you find a way to get some money to him without him knowing where it came from.

This is what God's mercy is like. He sees us in our pitiful, fallen condition, seeing all that sin has done to us. Moved to sympathy at our distress, he takes action.

"God's mercy is his tenderhearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplates man as sinful, guilty, and condemned, mercy sees him as miserable and needy"¹

God hears the groaning of His people (Exodus 6:5). "He will have pity on the poor and helpless and save the lives of the poor" (Psalm 72:13).

- "The Lord is very compassionate and merciful." (James 5:11)
- "I have great anxiety. Please, let us fall into the LORD's hands because His mercies are great, but don't let me fall into human hands." (2 Samuel 24:14)
- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3)
- "God, who is abundant in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us" (Ephesians 2:4)
- "He saved us— not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy..." (Titus 3:5)
- "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:10)

Mercy is "God's goodness toward those in misery and distress."²

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You are the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort
You are very compassionate and merciful. You have pity on the poor and helpless.
We are saved by Your mercy and it is by Your mercy we have been made Your people.
O Lord God, You are abundant in mercy*

Praise Guidance based on: 2 Corinthians 1:3; James 5:11; Psalm 72:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:10; Ephesians 2:4

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*,. Page 295 ² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 200.



God is Gracious

It is said that a Scottish Presbyterian minister named George MacDonald preached the gospel of grace so strongly that one of his sons protested, “It all seems too good to be true!” MacDonald replied, “Nay, it is just so good it must be true!”

Justice is when God gives us exactly what we deserve (which would be hell). *Mercy* is when God *doesn't* give us what we deserve. And, *grace* is when God gives us that which we *don't deserve!* We have a gracious God who shows saving grace, who gives sustaining grace, and who supplies serving grace.

God is Gracious in his person. “Grace is God's goodness, the kindness of God's heart, the good will, the cordial benevolence. It is what God is like.”¹

- “The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in faithful love.” (Psalm 145:8)
- “For the LORD God is a sun and shield. The LORD gives grace and glory; He does not withhold the good from those who live with integrity.”
(Psalm 84:11)

God Shows Saving Grace. “By this we mean that God deals with his people not on the basis of their merit or worthiness, what they deserve, but simply according to their need; in other words, he deals with them on the basis of his goodness and generosity.”²

- “For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift” (Ephesians 2:8)

God Gives Sustaining Grace.

- “But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me.” (II Corinthians 12:9)

God Supplies Serving Grace.

- “Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.” (I Peter 4:10)

The acrostic many Christians learned growing up is very much the truth: grace is God's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense.

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Lord, You are gracious and compassionate
You are able to make every grace abound to us
Your grace is sufficient for my salvation and for my every need and trial
In the fullness of Christ we, Your people, have all received grace upon grace.*

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 145:8; II Corinthians 9:8; II Corinthians 12:9; John 1:16

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God*, Volume I, Chapter 6 ² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Page 294



The God of Peace

An American airplane had been shot down by a Peruvian jet fighter. But it wasn't a drug plane like some the Peruvian Air Force had shot down in recent years — it was a missionary plane carrying a young missionary family. The gunfire killed the mother instantly, along with their baby girl seated on her lap. The plane went down and, miraculously, the pilot, along with Jim Bowers and his son, managed to survive. Their escape from the crash and the river was amazing. Then, a few days later, at Ronnie Bowers' memorial service, Jim Bowers stood before a packed church and summarized in two words what he was feeling in the midst of this horrible loss. In his words, “inexplicable peace.” The Bible says God's peace “surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

In Philippians 4, Paul gives counsel on how to experience, “the peace of God” (Philippians 4:7). Then, he says that if we follow his example in these matters, “the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9). The emphasis shifts from the *peace of God* to the *God of peace*. That is, peace isn't merely something God gives us, it is an attribute of his very Person. And Philippians 4 isn't the only time he is called by this name:

- “May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” (2 Thessalonians 3:16)
- “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely...” (1 Thess. 5:23)
- “Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus... equip you with all that is good to do His will...” (Hebrews 13:20-21)
- “God is not a God of disorder but of peace...” (1 Corinthians 14:33)
- Jesus is called, “the Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

When you picture this kind of peace, don't think of the still waters of a lake on a quiet day. Instead, picture a large machine with all the gears turning smoothly. “This peace certainly does not imply inactivity, for it was at a time of intense growth and activity that Luke could say that ‘the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up’ (Acts 9:31).”¹ Sometimes, life comes at us fast and furious, but the God of peace imparts peace.

Today's Praise Guidance:

Father, You are the source of all peace because You are the God of peace.

Jesus, You are the Prince of Peace

Spirit, You produce the fruit of peace

Your peace surpasses all understanding.

You are the God of all peace.

Praise Guidance based on: Galatians 1:3; Philippians 4:4-8; Hebrews 13:20; Isaiah 9:6; I Corinthians 14:33

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Page 203



The Planning God

In the ages of eternity past, God had you, believer, on his mind. As the biblical story unfolds, it isn't a matter of God making brilliant adjustments on the fly — life giving him lemons and him making lemonade. Because God is omniscient (all-knowing), nothing takes him by surprise. Because he knew what was going to take place, he could have taken a detached approach or even a cynical attitude. Instead, before the creation of the world, the Father was making personal plans.

We see how Jesus was to be sent to earth and die on the cross for us, according to God's predetermined plan.

- “[Jesus] was chosen before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the times for you who through Him are believers in God”
(1 Peter 1:20-21)
- Jesus “was delivered up according to God's determined plan and fore-knowledge” (Acts 2:23)

Everyone whose name appears in the book of life, that name was already written “from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8; 17:8).

According to his good plan, God placed each one of us in the right place geographically and in the most opportune moment of history, to seek God and find him.

- “From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.” (Acts 17:26-27)

God's plan unfolds in each believer's life so as to make us more Christ-like:

- “Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to his plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. God, in his fore-knowledge, chose them to bear the family likeness of his Son...”
(Romans 8:28-29, Phillips)

And finally, God will bring all his family to their heavenly home. They “desire a better place—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has *prepared a city* for them” (Hebrews 11:16).

God knows you by name, thinks about you all the time, and has big plans for you!

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Father, You are the God of mysteries and of eternal plans
Your book with our names was written before all time.
You have made us a people of destiny, to be conformed to Christ,
Fulfilling the longings of all those who've been born again.
And You have prepared a place for Your own.*

Praise Guidance based on: Ephesians 3:1-13; Romans 8:28-29; Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 13:8



God is Savior

A savior is someone who comes to the rescue of another, to deliver that person from a harm from which he, in his own power, is helpless to escape. Today, we call such people first responders. Consider someone who has been overcome by smoke inhalation being carried by a firefighter out of a burning house. Think of the person at sea whose boat has capsized. Picture the person being assisted by a swim team member and lifted into a Coast Guard helicopter. Imagine the search team finding a lost child who had wandered into the woods. Each one was helpless to help themselves. They needed outside intervention.

The Old Testament speaks of God as savior from all kinds of distresses. The Bible specifically speaks of Jesus as our Savior from sin. We are not saved by *a plan of salvation*, but by the *Man of salvation*. It takes a Savior to save 'ya.

- “*Our Savior* Christ Jesus... has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10)
- “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for *a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 3:20).
- “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be *the Saviour of the world*” (1 John 4:14)

Numerous times in the New Testament we see Jesus Christ identified as the Savior. However, we mustn't get some idea like “loving Jesus saved us from an overly-strict Father with an anger management problem.” It was from the Father's heart and in his plan to send the Son to be our Savior. Note in Jude 25, it is the Father who is referred to as *Savior*, as praise is offered *to the Father through Jesus*:

- “To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 25)

As we look at Titus 3, notice the three-word phrase: “He saved us.”

- “We too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, captives of various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. But when the goodness and love for man appeared from *God our Savior, He saved us*—not by works of righteousness that we had done but according to His mercy...” (Titus 3:3-5)

How clearly the passage explains that God does all the saving!

Today's Praise Guidance:

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior

Lord, You are a Savior in time of distress.

No Savior exists besides You, our great God and Savior.

You will save Your people from their sins. You are the Savior of the world.

Praise Guidance based on: Luke 1:47; Jeremiah 14:8; Psalm 43:5; Hosea 13:4; Titus 2:13; Matthew 1:21; 1 John 4:14

Praise Appreciates the Goodness of God

There is an array of ways in which we respond to God because his personality and character and power and goodness is so varied, rich, and bountiful. Perhaps the most obvious way we respond is in our reaction to his goodness to us. As we come toward the end of these devotionals, two words start off our short vocabulary of worship, *thanksgiving* and *bless*.

Thanksgiving is expressing appreciation to God for specific things he has done for us. It is recognizing his provision or protection and guidance and help. It is refusing to take credit for what God has done and is giving him the credit he is due.

There is the Act of Thanksgiving. It is saying the words and meaning them. We are commanded to “Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

There is the Attitude of Thanksgiving. We might say, God commands me to give thanks and I will obey, but I don’t feel particularly grateful for my present circumstances. Sometimes, this is something we do by faith. However, as we step back, over time, we see God’s goodness to us. We don’t want to be ingrates. So, we adopt an attitude of gratitude. Colossians 3:15 concludes, “And be thankful” (ESV).

Thanksgiving responds to the giving of God. Blessing responds to the God of giving.

To bless God is to appreciate God as the bless-er. It is to be grateful to God as the source of all good things. In Hebrew, the word for bless means *to kneel*. That is, we bend the knee to one with the power and goodness to bless us. The New Testament word is where we get our words, eulogy and eulogize—to speak well of. Consider these examples:

- “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all his benefits*” (Psalm 103:2, KJV)
- “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:3)
- “*Give thanks to him; bless his name!*” (Psalm 100:4, ESV)
- “*Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city.*” (Psalm 31:21, ESV)

Today’s Praise Guidance:

Bless You, Lord God, for all the blessings with which You have blessed me.

I remember Your benefits.

You’ve forgiven all my sin. You’ve healed my diseases. You’ve rescued me from trouble.

You’ve crowned my life with faithful love and compassion.

You’ve satisfied my soul with goodness, and have renewed my spirit.

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 103

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, page 589 ² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 1003



Praise Responds to Seeing God More Clearly

As previously mentioned, worship is the believer's natural response to a fresh glimpse of God. The next two words in the vocabulary of praise, *magnify* and *glorify*, are examples of this.

People in the New Testament are said to *magnify* God when their view of God has just been enlarged. Don't think microscope (God is not small), but telescope (we are so far away from God that we need help to see how great he is!). Mary has been told that she, a virgin, will supernaturally conceive and give birth to the Messiah. She goes to the home of her relative Elizabeth, who breaks into praise as she arrives. "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord'" (Luke 1:46, CSB).

In Acts 19, we read the story of some exorcists who were not believers, but who nevertheless tried to use the name of Jesus in casting out a demon. The spirit replied that he recognized Jesus and he had heard about Paul, but didn't know them! Then, the possessed man attacked them and they fled, beaten with their clothes ripped to shreds. Word got around and the passage concludes, "and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified" (vs. 30).

The word *glorify* comes from a word meaning, "To appear." Glory is when the invisible attributes of the invisible God are made visible. And people are said to glorify God when they take the invisible qualities of God and bring them out into the light, by praising God for his power and goodness which he has shown them.

Jesus forgave a man of his sins — and healed him of his paralysis to prove he had the authority to do so. "But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men." (Matthew 9:8, NASB).

The Centurion at the cross recognized something about the person of Christ. "When the centurion saw what happened, he began to glorify God, saying, 'This man really was righteous!'" (Luke 23:46).

We glorify God through our lives when he reveals his character through us.

- Paul recounted his conversion and the change in his life after persecuting believers: "And they glorified God because of me" (Galatians 1:24).
- "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples." (John 15:8)

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory
and the splendor and the majesty!*

For everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to you.

Yours, Lord, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as head over all.

Wherefore, I magnify Your name and give You glory!

Praise Guidance based on: 1 Chronicles 29:11

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, page 589 ² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 1003

Praise Acknowledges the Wisdom of God

Part of worship is to affirm truth — biblical truth, truth as it is prayed, truth as it is praised. Our lives and our churches should be built on truth. And though sometimes the truth cuts against the grain of our fallen nature, we recognize that God is in the right and what he has done is wise. Two words are used in this regard: *amen* and *confess*.

Amen serves to affirm the truth of a statement, that it is correct and reliable. This is the same word which is translated *truly*, as when Jesus began statement, saying, “Truly, truly I say to you” (John 6:47; 8:34, 51, 58).

In regard to prayer, *Amen* is used to enter into the prayer of another person, saying, “Let it be so.” In the giving of the *blessings and cursings*, as Israel entered the promised land, tribal leaders were to pronounce curses on specific sins. To affirm God’s just punishment, “All the people will say, Amen!” (Deuteronomy 27:15-19).

Amen may underscore one’s own prayer. “May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen” (Romans 15:33, CSB). “Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. *Amen*.” (Philippians 4:20)

Amen enters into agreement with the praise expressed by another person, as if to say, “That goes for me, too.” In Nehemiah 8:6, “Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, ‘Amen, Amen!’” (compare Revelation 7:9-12; 1 Corinthians 14:16).

To Confess is to say, in effect, I have no controversy with God; instead, I have entered into agreement. There is confession of sin and there is confession of truth.

When we *confess sin*, we come to a place of agreement with God, that what we did is wrong, we own it and admit it (1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5).

The Christian faith is personal, but not secret. We believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, but we *confess him* with our mouths (Romans 10:9).

We join our voice in agreement with others who *confess the same truths*. Paul told Timothy, “You made the *good confession* in the *presence of many witnesses*” (1 Timothy 6:12). We are warned, “Every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God” (1 John 4:3). And, Hebrews 10:23 promises, “Let us hold on to the *confession of our hope* without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Holy God, I acknowledge my sin to You.
You are right, and altogether blameless,
But I am a sinner by birth, by nature, and by choice.
I confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, God come in the flesh,
risen from the dead and Savior of the world.*

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 32; 51; Romans 10:9-10; John 4:2, 42

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, page 589 ² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 1003

Praise Celebrates the Victories of God

There is a kind of boisterous celebration that bursts forth from within God's people when they get a glimpse of the greatness of God or experience fresh victory. Two words in the Bible's vocabulary for this aspect of praise are *boast* and *shout*.

To *boast in the Lord* means to *joyfully brag on God for his mighty acts and greatness*. Let's spell that definition out:

To Joyfully... "You satisfy me as with rich food; my mouth will praise You *with joyful lips*" (Psalm 63:5).

Brag... "I will *boast in the Lord*" (Psalm 34:2).

On God for his acts and greatness... "Praise Him for His powerful acts; praise Him for His abundant greatness" (Psalm 150:2).

These three verses all use the same word for praise, from which we get the word, "Hallelujah." It refers to the spontaneous expressions of praise we use when we become excited about God. It means, "Praise the Lord!" Those who get such a glimpse naturally respond in ways that are loud and dramatic!

We see these expressions of praise in the New Testament as well as in the Old. In Revelation 19, for example, we see celebrations erupt, with exclamations of "Hallelujah!" First, in excitement about God's great justice (verses 1-3). Then, in excitement at the sight of God ruling from his throne (verses 4-6).

Shouting is another way God's people celebrate the victories of God. For example, when David was finally able to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem:

- "So all Israel was bringing the ark of the covenant of the Lord up *with shouts...*" (1 Chronicles 15:28)

A fresh beginning with God is reason to shout. When the people of Judah returned from the Babylonian Captivity and began to rebuild the Temple:

- "All the people gave *a great shout of praise* to the Lord because the foundation of the Lord's house had been laid." (Ezra 3:11)

Not only is this kind of celebration acceptable, the Bible commands it!

- "Clap your hands, all you peoples; *shout to God* with a jubilant cry." (Ps. 47:1)
- "*Shout joyfully* to God, all the earth!..." (Psalm 66:1)

Today's Praise Guidance:

*Eternal Father, Victorious Son, Mighty Spirit
I rejoice and boast in You. You never forget the cry of the afflicted
You have destroyed our enemy who held the power of death
Bringing him to eternal ruin.
But You sit enthroned forever!*

Praise Guidance based on: Psalm 9:1-14; Hebrews 2:14

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, page 589 ² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, page 1003



The Body Language of Praise

Included in the vocabulary of praise is body language. *Uplifted hands*, *offerings*, and *bowing facedown* are ways of communicating without the use of words.

Uplifted hands reach up to God in desire. They are raised in surrender. They are empty, admitting they possess nothing with which to barter. They are open to receive in faith. They are lifted *to* the Lord.

- “Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and *with their hands uplifted* all the people said, ‘Amen, Amen!’” (Nehemiah 8:6)
- “*Lift up your hands* in the holy place, and praise the LORD!” (Psalm 134:2)
- “*I spread out my hands to You*; I am like parched land before You.”

(Psalm 143:6)

Offerings: Proverbs 3:12 commands, “Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest.” Giving God our leftovers shows him disrespect, treating him as an after-thought. But when we make him the first check written, we indicate that he is the priority! (cp. Psalm 96:8; Malachi 1:6-8)

Bowing Facedown: It would be easy for someone to get the impression that when Jesus returns, he will receive a standing ovation. That’s how we do it in our culture; applause is an audience’s reward for a job well done. The Bible tells us what will really happen: “At the name of Jesus every knee will bow — of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

In Revelation we see that the 24 elders “fell down and worshipped” (5:14, cp. 4:10; 5:8). When Joshua encountered the Lord near Jericho, he “bowed with his face to the ground in worship” (Joshua 5:14). Such bowing recognizes that one is in the presence of a superior. He is in the dust, as a creature before the Creator. He is in the presence of the Judge, who can punish with terrifying penalties. God answered Elijah, consuming his sacrifice with authenticating fire. “Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!’” (1 Kings 18:39, NKJV). Do we know whom we’re dealing with?

- “Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep under His care.” (Psalm 95:6-7)

Today’s Praise Guidance:

*Lord God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power,
Because You created all things, and because by Your will they exist.
Jesus, the Lamb who was slaughtered, is worthy to receive power and riches
and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!
You administer justice and righteousness. We bow at Your footstool.*

Praise Guidance based on: Revelation 4:11; Revelation 5:12; Psalm 99:4-5

*Praise him for his mighty acts:
Praise him according to his excellent greatness.
Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord.*

— Psalm 150:2, 6 (KJV)

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