

What is an Attribute of God?



"He in condescending love has by revelation declared certain things to be true of Himself. These we call His attributes."
- A. W. Tozer

"By 'attribute' is meant some characteristic that can be attributed to God's nature – an essential trait of God."
- Norman Geisler

WHY STUDY THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD?

"I Want an Intimate Relationship with God..."

What if I told you the woman in this picture is my wife – the one with whom I have a deep intimate relationship – but yet I didn't know her:

- Real name
- Character traits
- Desires and Hopes
- Likes
- Dislikes
- Goals/objectives
- Other personal defining things...



All Theological Truth Depends on God's Attributes



- Creation – depends on God's attributes of eternity, omnipotence, aseity, necessity, actuality, etc.
- Soteriology (study of Salvation) – depends on God's attributes of justice, love, mercy, sovereignty, righteousness, holiness, etc.
- Eschatology (study of the End Times) – depends on God's attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, truthfulness, wrath, etc.


“Ignorance of God-ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him-lies at the root of much of the church’s weakness today.”
- J. I. Packer

Must know the True God to Recognize Fake gods




- “For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law” (2 Chron. 15:3)
- “But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King” (Jer. 10:9)
- “A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line.” – C. S. Lewis
- “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21)

"Assigning to God any thing by him not assumed is making to ourselves a deifying of our own imaginations."
- John Owen

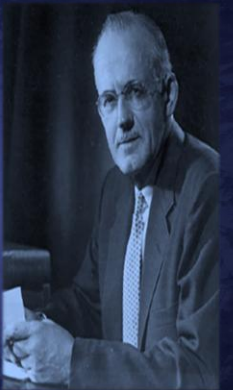


False Ideas Have Consequences



"The person who participates in (Holy Battles) in Allah's cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His Apostle, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward, or booty (if he survives) or will be admitted to paradise (if he is killed)."
- The sayings of Mohammad, Al Bukhari vol 1:35

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God."
- A. W. Tozer



False Ideas Have Consequences



"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6)

False Ideas Have Consequences

The Christian Post • Church & Ministries | Wed, Sep 21 2011 03:55 PM EDT

Pastor on Past Dirty Little Secret: I Didn't Believe in Hell

By Michele A. Vu | Christian Post Reporter

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Brian Jones lost his faith in God and belief in hell while he was a student at Princeton Theological Seminary. His faith recovered, but his belief in hell didn't. For four years he led a church, keeping his belief on hell a secret, even from his wife.



But during a moment of sincerity and vulnerability, God revealed what the Bible truly says about the existence of hell. Jones, now the senior pastor at Christ's Church of the Valley in the suburbs of Philadelphia, shares why he believes that hell exists and why people, including evangelicals, don't believe it.

The following are excerpts from the interview with Pastor Brian Jones.

CP: What new perspective does your book offer to the debate about the existence of hell?


"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6)

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/pastor-on-past-dirty-little-secret-i-didnt-believe-in-hell-56179/>

Spiritual Maturity Depends on a Right Concept of God

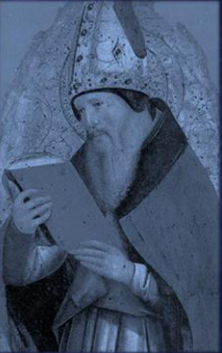
- "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." (Rom. 10:2)
- "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ: until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:11-16)

"The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men"
- A. W. Tozer



Nothing Less than a Commitment to the Ultimate

"God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you."
- Augustine



QUESTIONS ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

How Can God be One and Have Many Attributes?

- How can a God who is absolutely one have many attributes? Doesn't this violate the concept of God being one?
- Answer: there may be many things said about one thing, but yet it is still one
- A single rock can be smooth, round, gray, etc.



How Many Attributes does God Have?

- Different theologians ascribe different numbers of attributes to God
- Some combine attributes together to form one characteristic
- They can be broken up into Metaphysical attributes (non-moral) and Moral attributes



How Many Attributes does God Have?

Metaphysical (Non-Moral) Attributes	Moral Attributes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aseity, Eternality, and Necessity • Pure actuality and simplicity • Immutability • Impassibility and infinity • Immateriality and immensity • Omnipotence and omnipresence • Omniscience • Wisdom and light • Majesty, beauty and ineffability • Immortality • Unity and triunity • Sovereignty • Transcendence • Immanence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiness • Justice • Jealousy • Perfection • Truthfulness • Goodness/love • Mercy • Wrath

Why are Many Attributes of God “Negative”

- God is “infinite” (not finite)
- God is “Immutable” (not changeable)
- God is “indivisible” (not divisible)
- The negative aspect of some of God’s attributes is to ensure the finitude is removed
- The negation removes any limitation from God



How can We Speak about God’s Attributes?

- **Univocally** – ascribe an attribute in exactly the same way as with us. You can’t describe an infinite being in the same way as a finite being
- **Equivocally** – ascribe an attribute in an exactly different way than with us. This would leave us completely in the dark about God
- **Analogically** – ascribe an attribute in a similar way as with us. This is the only meaningful way open to us



How does Analogy Apply to Us?

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our **image**, according to Our **likeness**; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own **image**, in the **image** of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:26–27)



- Aseity, Eternality, and Necessity
- Pure actuality and simplicity
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How does Analogy Apply to Us?



"Man was made in God's image (şelem) and likeness (dēmūt) which is then explained as his having dominion over God's creation as vice-regent. Ps 8:5-8 is similar citing man's God-given glory, honor and rule. God's image obviously does not consist in man's body which was formed from earthly matter, but in his spiritual, intellectual, moral likeness to God from whom his animating breath came."
 - Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

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How does Analogy Apply to Us?

Extrinsic analogy: only the effect has the characteristic from a proper standpoint.
 Example: Hot water makes an egg hard

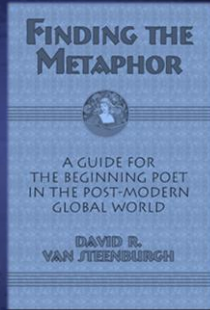
Intrinsic analogy: both the cause and the effect have the characteristic from a proper standpoint. Example: Hot water makes a hot egg



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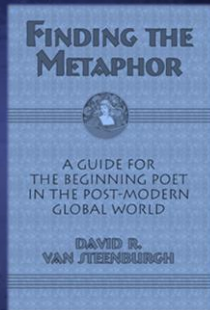
Metaphorical vs. Metaphysical Attributes of God

- Not all descriptions about God in the Bible are metaphysical (literal)
- God is called:
 - A Rock (1 Sam. 2:2)
 - A Tower (Prov. 18:10)
 - A Shield (Gen. 15:1)
- God is said to have:
 - Wings (Ex. 19:4)
 - Eyes (Heb. 4:13)
 - Arms (Deut. 33:27)



Metaphorical vs. Metaphysical Attributes of God

- Metaphysical attribution is based on the way God actually is
- Metaphors often inform us of what God can do
- Metaphors communicate what God is like in an indirect and non-literal way
- Metaphors are evocative; they invoke an emotional response from us



Metaphorical vs. Metaphysical Attributes of God

- Metaphysical: God is the uncaused cause of everything
- Metaphorical: "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27)
- Metaphysical: God is omnipotent
- Metaphorical: "Who is like me and who can challenge me? And what shepherd can stand against me?" (Jer. 49:19)
- Metaphysical: God is omniscient
- Metaphorical: "Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13)

Types of Metaphors



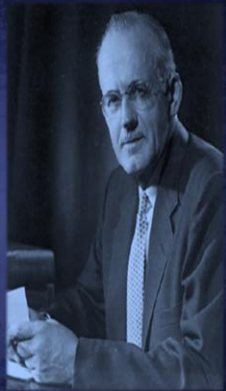
- Anthropomorphisms – depict God in human form, such as having eyes, etc.
- Anthropopathisms – picture God has having changing human feelings such as moving between anger and grief
- Anthropeiseses – attribute human actions to God such as repenting and forgetting

Warning about Metaphorical Descriptions



- "The Lord repented" (Ex. 32:14) can lead to a denial of immutability
- "The eyes of Him..." (Heb. 4:13) can lead to a denial of immateriality
- "He is a Rock..." (Deut. 32:4) can lead to a denial of infinity
- "Whom He foreknew..." (Rom. 11:2) can lead to a denial of eternity and omniscience
- "The Lord became angry..." (1 Kings 11:9) can lead to a denial of impassibility or immutability
- "The Lord came down to see..." (Gen. 11:5) can lead to a denial of omniscience

"What is God like?" If by that question we mean "What is God like in Himself?" there is no answer. If we mean "What has God disclosed about Himself that the reverent reason can comprehend?" there is, I believe, an answer both full and satisfying"
- A. W. Tozer



How God's Attributes can Impact Us

"What overwhelmed him was two seemingly opposite attributes of the triune God "in a sweet conjunction: majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness". . . .If

God were simply a cosmic version of the greatest imaginable human, God would still be by human standards a capricious and unreasonable tyrant, the father whose love turned out to be petty control, harsh judgments, tenderness mixed with fits of anger, unyielding disciplines, and punishments. In fact, it was only when Jonathan's vision expanded to appreciate that the triune God who controlled this vast universe must be ineffably good, beautiful, and loving beyond human comprehension that he could lose himself in God."

- Historian George Marsden
Jonathan Edwards: A Life



How God's Attributes can Impact Us



"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
(John 17:3)

The End Goal of This Series



"Thank you. Now I can worship God much better."
-Man to Francis Schaeffer
After Schaeffer had answered all his questions about God and His nature

