

Behold Our God
Session 1: Why Study the Attributes of God?
(Select Scriptures)

Introduction:

Q: What is the most important thing about you?

Imagine with me that for the next week I ask every single person I come across this question. I imagine I would hear all kinds of answers. Things like....

- **Family**
- **Career**
- **Money**
- **Talent**
- **Popularity**
- **Romantic Relationships**
- **Religion (for Christians, Jesus Christ)**
- **Morality**
- **Health**

AW Tozer, a well-known Christian theologian and author from the 20th Century, in the opening sentence of his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, suggested the following answer: “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”¹

I am in total agreement with Tozer. I believe that what you believe about God and His ways is the most important thing about you. Why do I believe this? Because what you believe about God determines everything about you....

- the way that you think (your worldview)**
- the way that you speak**
- the way that you behave**
- the way that you love**

Ultimately, it determines your eternity. Eternity is in the balance as we approach the topic of God.

The reality is that every human being on planet earth right now is a theologian (and this includes every one of you in the room tonight). You are a theologian whether you like it or not. Even the atheist is a theologian, though he or she believes in no god.

So the question isn't “Are you a theologian?” The question is “Are you a good theologian or a bad theologian?”

¹ AW Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 1.

Sadly, for most people, they are lousy theologians, settling for incorrect, low views of God and this includes many of those who claim to follow Jesus!

In July 1972, Christian theologian, JI Packer, wrote the foreword to his classic book, *Knowing God*. In it, he suggests that the Church of his day was weak. Why does he say it was weak? Listen to what he has to say:

“The conviction behind the book is that 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.”²

Fifty years later, I would argue that things haven’t gotten any better. If anything, they are worse; the Church is weaker because people are even more ignorant as it relates to God and having a relationship with Him.

In fact, right before our eyes, I believe we see Romans 1 on full display (even among many who claim to be Christians).

In Romans 1, Paul describes a people who are under the judgment of God. Why are they under His judgment?

-Because they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for created things (v. 23)

-Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and served the created rather than the Creator (v. 25)

The reality is that many in our day and age have exchanged the glory of our immortal God for figments of their own imaginations. They have rejected the Creator for their own creation, their own conception of who He is or who they think He should be.

In so doing, they have fallen into idolatry, entertaining thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.³ This idolatrous thinking has led to all kinds of sinful behavior. For example, think about the sexual immorality that is so rampant in our culture. Why is this the case? Because so many have exchanged the truth about God for a lie and therefore, God has given them up to the sinful desires of their hearts. They are under His judgment.

May we, the people of God, reject this idolatrous thinking, and renew our commitment to thinking rightly about God. But if we are to think rightly about Him (that is, if we are to be good theologians) we must think biblically about Him. Our beliefs about God can’t be based on our opinions or the opinions of others, but they must be based on the Bible. Why? Because the God whom we desire to think rightly about is a God who has revealed Himself and He has revealed Himself in His Word (the Bible).

² JI Packer, *Knowing God*, 6.

³ AW Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 3.

So in this series, we're going to dive deep into the Bible and discover what it teaches us about God and His attributes (characteristics). We're going to learn that God is...

- Infinite
- Holy
- Self-Existent & Self-Sufficient
- Omnipotent
- Omniscient
- Omnipresent
- Gracious & Merciful
- Love
- Just
- Good
- Immutable (Unchanging)

The goal of this series isn't just to make you smarter or simply give you more knowledge, because as the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8:1, knowledge in and of itself will just "puff up" (make you an arrogant "know it all"). My hope and prayer for you is that by studying the attributes of God your awe and love for Him will grow and your relationship with Him will deepen.

As Pastor Chip Ingram writes, "He (God) created you for closeness, love, and friendship. Are you experiencing that?"⁴

I believe you'll experience greater intimacy with God the more your knowledge of Him grows.

Therefore, I am going to exhort you in the same way as King David exhorted the leaders of Israel in 1 Chronicles 22. In this passage, David is near the end of his life. These are his final instructions. Listen to what he says:

1 Chronicles 22:19: 19 Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God.

This is what we're going to do in this series; set our minds and our hearts to seek the LORD our God.

Tonight, I want us to simply answer the question "Why?" Why should we set our minds and our hearts to seek the Lord our God?

Take Home Truth: The most important thing about you is that you know God and think biblically about Him.

This evening, we'll survey the Word of God and discover 10 reasons why we should study the attributes of God; 10 reasons why you should engage in this series.

⁴ Chip Ingram, *The Real God*, 22.

I. Reason #1: Jesus came so that you would know God (John 17:1-3)

John 17:1-3: When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

- A. Jesus begins His “High Priestly Prayer” by stating the reason that He came: “to give eternal life to all whom” God the Father had given Him (v. 2).**
- B. So He came to make eternal life available to you.**
- C. But, what is eternal life? Jesus defines it in v. 3:**
 - 1. John 17:3: 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**
 - 2. So eternal life is knowing God the Father and knowing Jesus Christ, the Son.**
- D. So let’s put all of this together: Jesus came so that you would know Him and know His Heavenly Father.**
 - 1. Eternal life is a relationship with God.**
 - 2. This is why He died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead three days later; so that you would know God.**
 - a) Notice, I didn’t say “know about” God.**
 - b) There’s a huge difference between knowing about God and knowing Him.**
 - (1) He came so that you would know Him.**

Application: This is so critically important; God didn’t save you simply so you could escape from hell and go to heaven. No, He saved you because He loves you and He desires to have a relationship with you. For those of you who are in Christ, you have this relationship. You have the opportunity to walk with Him every day! You have the opportunity to have communion with God. How amazing is that?

II. Reason #2: There is nothing more important than knowing God (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Jeremiah 9:23-24: 23 Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

- A. God declares that there is nothing of greater importance than knowing Him.**
 - 1. Not your intellect or wisdom**
 - 2. Not your strength or might**
 - 3. Not your wealth or earthly possessions**
 - 4. Not your family or friends**
 - 5. Not your reputation or popularity**

6. Not your talent or abilities
- B. What matters most is that you understand and know God
 1. The God who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in all of the earth.

Application: There's no room for bragging or boasting in anything or anyone else other than God. If you have eternal life tonight; that is, you have a relationship with God, there should be only one thing you boast about: the God who saved your soul and the reality that you know Him.

Why study the attributes of God? Because there's quite literally nothing more important.

III. Reason #3: Knowing God is necessary for obedience to the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:35-38)

A. Matthew 22:35-38: 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment.

1. According to Jesus, the greatest of all the commandments is to love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
2. That is, you are to love God with the entirety of who you are and you are to love Him more than anything or anyone else.
3. But this leads me to ask the question: How on earth can you obey this commandment if you don't know anything about God?
 - a) In other words, how are you going to love God above all else, if you don't know anything about Him?
 - b) The reality is that your love for something or someone grows as you gain more knowledge of the object of your love.
 - c) For instance, when a marriage operates according to God's design, a husband and wife's love for one another will grow, the longer they are together.
 - (1) Why is this the case?
 - (2) Because they learn more about each other as the years pass by, and this increasing knowledge of one another results in greater love.
4. In the same way, the more you learn about God and His attributes, the more you will grow in your love for Him.

Application: The reality is that for those who hate God or don't love Him, they don't have an accurate view of who He is. They don't know Him and therefore, they can't obey the greatest commandment. But for those of us who have a relationship with God, in Christ, we are able to obey this command.

Why study the attributes of God? So that you'll grow in your obedience to the greatest commandment.

IV. Reason #4: Growing in your knowledge of God and His attributes is essential to walking “in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Colossians 1:9-10)

A. Colossians 1:9-10: 9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1. In these 2 verses, Paul describes what it looks like to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord”, what it looks like to live a life pleasing to God.

a) You are filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9)

b) You are bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (v. 10)

Application:

This is actually one of the main ways you can know that you are actually in Christ: a growing knowledge of God and His will. It is essential to living a life pleasing to God.

V. Reason #5: Studying God and His attributes is necessary in your fight against sin (Colossians 3:1-5)

A. Colossians 3:1-5: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

1. In v. 5, Paul commands believers to put to death sin.

a) This is what the Puritan, John Owen, referred to as “The Mortification of Sin”.

(1) Putting sin to death

b) How do we kill our sin?

(1) Seek the things that are above (v. 1)

(2) Set your minds on things that are above (v. 2)

c) In other words, set your heart and your mind on God

Application:

You cannot put your sin to death apart from knowing God.

The deeper and clearer your understanding of God, the deeper and clearer your understanding of your sin will be. A greater knowledge and love of God will lead to a greater disgust of your sin. As you study God and His attributes, the light of His glory and

holiness will shine brighter and brighter in your heart, exposing your sin and enabling you to fight against it.

Why study God and His attributes? So that you can put to death sin in your life.

VI. Reason #6: God promises that those who seek Him will be blessed (Psalm 119:1-2)

Psalm 119:1-2: Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

- A. As John MacArthur notes in his study bible, to be blessed refers to “God’s redemptive favor”, which He lavishes upon His people.⁵
- B. These are spiritual blessings that God gives to those who seek Him and grow in their knowledge of Him
- C. What are some of these blessings that He lavishes upon those who seek Him?

VII. Reason #7: Studying God and His attributes results in humility (Romans 11:33-36)

A. Romans 11:33-36: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

- 1. Up to this point in his letter, Paul has provided the most thorough explanation of the Gospel in the entire Bible.
- 2. He has been mining the depths of God and His glorious gospel and as you can tell from what we just read, He is humbled.
- 3. He admits that God’s wisdom and ways are unsearchable (vast beyond all measure).
- 4. All Paul can do is admit his own limitations and praise God for His infinite knowledge, wisdom and power.
- 5. He gives all glory to God.

Application:

A study of God and His attributes is a humbling exercise. To behold our infinite God serves as a reminder of our own finiteness. The more in awe you are of God, the less in awe you will be of yourself, which is a very good thing!

To be humbled, though painful, is a blessing! Therefore, prepare to receive this blessing as we work our way through this series.

⁵ John MacArthur, *John MacArthur Study Bible*, 664.

VIII. Reason #8: Studying God and His attributes results in peace in the midst of difficulty (Isaiah 26:3)

A. Isaiah 26:3: You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

- 1. The prophet Isaiah declared this at a time of uncertainty and trouble.**
- 2. God will keep in perfect peace the man or the woman whose mind is stayed (or fixed) on Him.**
- 3. That is, if in the midst of difficulty, you continue to seek God and meditate on who He is and what He has done, you will have a peace that surpasses all understanding.**
- 4. In the storms of this life, a deep knowledge of God serves as an anchor for our souls.**
- 5. When external circumstances and other people in our lives are going crazy, we have an inner tranquility and steadiness, because we know our God is fully able to bring us through anything.**
- 6. God promises this blessing of peace to all who keep their minds and hearts fixed on Him.**

IX. Reason #9: Studying God and His attributes results in gratitude and joy (Ps. 105:1-6)

A. Psalm 105:1-6: Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! 2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! 3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! 4 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! 5 Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, 6 O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

- 1. Three times, in these 6 verses, God's people are called to seek God.**
- 2. In v. 3, the psalmist declares that the hearts of those who seek God are to rejoice.**
- 3. The reality is that knowing & seeking God results in our joy.**
 - a) This happiness in the Lord, that can't be taken from you.**
 - b) It isn't controlled by circumstances; it's a gift of God that He richly bestows on those who seek Him, with their whole heart.**
 - c) The most miserable of people are those who are the most ignorant about God and His ways.**
 - d) Those who know God deeply and walk with Him closely have the joy of the Lord as their strength (Neh. 8:10).**
- 4. This study will result in your joy and thus, you will be strengthened.**

X. Reason #10: Studying God and His attributes results in hope (Ps. 71:4-6, 17)

- A. Psalm 71:4-6: 4 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. 5 For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. 6 Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.**
- 1. The psalmist here has been walking with God for a long time.**
 - 2. In fact, later on in the psalm (v. 17), he writes, “O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.**
 - 3. From his youth, God has been His teacher.**
 - 4. For decades, He has sought the Lord, in His Word, and now, later in life, He has a deep knowledge of God and His attributes.**
 - 5. This deep knowledge of God brings him hope.**
 - 6. In fact, he declares in v. 5, “For you, O Lord, are my hope.”**
- B. This is exactly what a deep study of God and His attributes will result in for you; hope.**
- 1. You’ll have hope because you know that only God has the final word.**
 - 2. You’ll have hope because you know that God is always faithful to His Word.**
 - 3. In His Word, He’s made many very special promises to His people, which give us hope for our glorious eternal future in Him.**

Conclusion:

We could keep going here with reason after reason why we should study the attributes of God, but I hope these 10 reasons are sufficient for now.

I close with this: Tozer in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, writes the following:

“Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God.”⁶

The most revealing thing about the health of any church or any ministry is the people’s idea of God: not numbers, not the budget, not the facilities; etc.

At the end of the day, this youth ministry is failing if we aren’t equipping you to think rightly about God. Most importantly, we are failing if we aren’t sharing with you how you can go from knowing about God, to truly knowing Him.

Do you know Him? Have you repented of your sin and placed your faith in Jesus?

Is He your greatest love? Do you have a desire to grow in your knowledge of Him?

If so, great! Would you join me in this journey as we behold our God?

⁶ AW Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 1.