

SHEFFEY BIBLE COLLEGE — STUDENT HANDOUT

Course: Systematic Theology I

Instructor: Dr. Jody Jenkins

Chapter 12 — The Character of God: Communicable Attributes (Part 1)

What You Should Learn From Today's Lecture

Define communicable attributes.

Explain how God shares aspects of His character with humanity.

Understand God's spirituality and invisibility.

Identify God's mental and moral attributes.

Recognize how believers are called to imitate God's character.

Apply these attributes to Christian living.

I. Introduction — Communicable Attributes

Communicable attributes are those characteristics of God that are shared, in some measure, with humanity.

These attributes:

- Reflect God's character
- Are to be imitated by believers
- Reveal how God relates to His creation

They are grouped into:

- Attributes of Being
- Mental Attributes
- Moral Attributes
- Attributes of Purpose
- Summary Attributes

Notes:

Key Truth:

Communicable attributes reveal how God shares aspects of His character with us and calls us to imitate Him.

II. Attributes Describing God's Being — Spirituality

God is not made of matter and does not have a physical body.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

—John 4:24

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

—Psalm 139:7–10

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them...”

—Exodus 20:4–5

Notes:

Key Truth:

God is spirit, meaning His being is not material and cannot be represented by anything in creation.

III. Invisibility of God

God's full essence cannot be seen by human eyes.

“No man hath seen God at any time...”

—John 1:18

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God...”

—1 Timothy 1:17

God reveals Himself through:

- Creation
- Theophanies
- Jesus Christ

“...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...”

—John 14:9

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

—Matthew 5:8

Notes:

Key Truth:

God is invisible in His essence, yet He reveals Himself so we may truly know Him.

IV. Mental Attributes — Knowledge (Omniscience)

God knows everything perfectly.

“...God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

—1 John 3:20

God knows:

- Himself fully
- All things that exist
- All future events
- All possible events

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me... thou understandest my thought afar off...

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.”

—Psalm 139:1–4

Notes:

Key Truth:

God’s omniscience means He perfectly knows all things—actual and possible—at all times.

V. Mental Attributes — Wisdom

God always chooses the best goals and the best means to accomplish them.

“To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

—Romans 16:27

“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all...”

—Psalm 104:24

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...”

—Romans 8:28

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...”

—James 1:5

Notes:

Key Truth:

God’s wisdom ensures that all His plans and actions accomplish the best possible purposes.

VI. Mental Attributes — Truthfulness (Faithfulness)

God is the true God, and all His words are true.

“...the only true God...”

—John 17:3

“...God, that cannot lie...”

—Titus 1:2

“...it was impossible for God to lie...”

—Hebrews 6:18

“Thy word is truth.”

—John 17:17

Notes:

Key Truth:

God is perfectly true in His being, knowledge, and words, and He is the final standard of truth.

VII. Moral Attributes — Goodness

God is the final standard of what is good.

“O taste and see that the LORD is good...”

—Psalm 34:8

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...”

—James 1:17

Notes:

Key Truth:

God’s goodness means He is the ultimate standard and source of all that is good.

VIII. Moral Attributes — Love

God's love is His eternal self-giving for the good of others.

"...God is love."

—1 John 4:8

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..."

—John 3:16

"But God commendeth his love toward us..."

—Romans 5:8

Notes:

Key Truth:

God's love is seen in His self-giving nature, and believers are called to reflect that love.

IX. Moral Attributes — Mercy, Grace, and Patience

Definitions:

- Mercy — God's goodness toward those in misery
- Grace — God's goodness toward those who deserve judgment
- Patience — God's goodness in delaying judgment

"The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering..."

—Exodus 34:6

"...justified freely by his grace..."

—Romans 3:23–24

Notes:

Key Truth:

God's mercy, grace, and patience show His goodness toward sinners and call us to humility and imitation.

X. Moral Attributes — Holiness

God is completely separate from sin and devoted to His own glory.

“Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts...”

—Isaiah 6:3

“Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”

—Leviticus 19:2

Notes:

Key Truth:

God’s holiness means He is perfectly pure and completely devoted to His glory.

XI. Moral Attributes — Peace (Order)

God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace...”

—1 Corinthians 14:33

“Now the God of peace be with you all.”

—Romans 15:33

Notes:

Key Truth:

God’s peace means that all His actions are perfectly ordered, controlled, and free from confusion.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are communicable attributes important for Christian living?
 2. How should the knowledge of God's attributes shape our daily behavior?
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Things to Know (Exam Review Section)

1. Communicable attributes are characteristics of God shared in some measure with humanity.
2. God's spirituality means He is not made of matter.
3. God is invisible in His full essence.
4. God is omniscient—He knows all things fully.
5. God's wisdom means He always chooses the best ends and means.
6. God's truthfulness means He is the final standard of truth.
7. God's goodness makes Him the ultimate standard of what is good.
8. God's love is His self-giving nature for the good of others.
9. God's mercy, grace, and patience show His goodness toward sinners.
10. God's holiness means He is separate from sin and devoted to His glory.

A question on the exam will ask if you did the assigned reading.

Closing Summary

The communicable attributes of God reveal how God shares aspects of His character with humanity and calls believers to reflect Him in daily life. From His spirituality and knowledge to His love, goodness, and holiness, these attributes show a perfect God who is both above us and personally involved with us. As believers grow in understanding these truths, they are called to imitate God's character in every area of life.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Chapter 12 — The Character of God: Communicable Attributes (Part 1)