

1. How do we know there is a God?

a. The bible does not give proof of the existence of God.

God is pre - supposed - *Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God"*

b. Philosophical – Intellectual “proofs” in humanity’s search for God.

i. Cosmological – the existence of the cosmos.

Every effect (the cosmos) must have a cause (God)

ii. Teleological – the design in creation.

Design and order in nature suggests a designer

iii. Ontological – the idea of existence.

The idea of God is that he is a being **“greater** than which nothing can be imagined”. Such a being must exist – since it is greater to exist than not exist.

iv. Historical – religion in human history

The sense of religion in all societies, even the most “primitive”

v. Anthropological – from Humanity

The creator is always greater than his creation. Humanity is evidently a creation: whoever created must be greater.

vi. Moral – sense of what is right and wrong

All people have a sense of right and wrong and a desire for a purpose or meaning in life.

“While they do not prove the existence of God beyond the possibility of doubt, so as to compel assent, they can be so construed as to establish a strong probability and thereby silence many unbelievers” – L. Berkhof

This is **not the biblical approach**. These arguments do not tell us what God is like, so can result in humanity creating “God in our image”. These proofs cannot bring unbelievers to saving faith because that requires a response to the specific revelation of God in scripture. (Paul in Acts 17, Athens)

c. Revelation – God showing himself to humanity

We know God because he has revealed Himself to us.

i. General Revelation – universal sense of God

- Creation.

Romans 1:19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.²⁰
For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, **so that men are without excuse.**

- Moral experience – There remains in humanity a remnant of the moral image of God

Romans 2:4 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them)

ii. Special Revelation – God's revelation of Himself in clarity and fullness.

- Scripture.

The bible is the final authority in matters of faith

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Scripture is to lead us to Jesus

John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life

- Jesus Christ

Jesus is the heart and summit of all divine revelation.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. Who is God?

a. The bible indicates that **God is unknowable, yet knowable**

- God in His depth is incomprehensible.

Job 11:7 "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?"

Also *Psalms 139:6; Psalm 145; 1 Cor 2:10-12; Rom 11:33.*

Our knowledge of Him is limited and we will never fully or exhaustively understand Him, or any single attribute of God.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

- Yet we can know God

In the gospel God personally reveals Himself to every believer

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ... 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

We are to increase in knowledge of God

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

b. Descriptions of God in Scripture

All creation including humanity reveals something about God to us. God uses anthropomorphic language (terms that describe something as if it were human) to describe Himself in scripture. However none of these descriptions by themselves describe God on their own. Hence God is described as:

(See Grudem pg158 for exhaustive list)

- Possessing a human body: e.g.

Face. *Exodus 33:20*

Arm and Ears. *Isaiah 59:1*

- Having human emotions: e.g.

Joy. *Isaiah 62:5*

Grief. *Psalm 78:40*

Anger. *Jeremiah 7:18-19*

Love. *John 3:16*

Hatred. *Deuteronomy 16:22*

- Having human actions : e.g

Remembering: *Genesis 8:1*

Seeing: *Genesis 1:10*

- Having human experience: e.g

As a Father. *Deuteronomy 32:6*

As a Husband. *Isaiah 54:5*

As a Bridegroom. *Isaiah 61:10*

- Having characteristics of animals or inanimate objects e.g.

A rock. *Deuteronomy 32:4*

A Lion. *Isaiah 31:4*

c. **Gods Attributes / Perfections**

When answering the question “What is God like?” We are unable to say everything about Him at once. Theologians have then focused on aspects of His character termed **His attributes or His Perfections**. Traditionally these were further divided into **His “incommunicable attributes”** those we do not share (or as Grudem suggests – those less shared by us), and **His “communicable attributes”** those that are shared by us in some way. (See Grudem Chapters 11& 12)

God is unity and not a collection of his attributes, nor are each attribute additions to his being, God is all his attributes at once. There is no tension between the various attributes in his being. So for example God is fully Loving in all His Justice and He is completely Personal in his filling the universe (Omnipresence).

Bruce Milne (In his book Know the truth) suggests four themes Glory, Lordship, Holiness, and Love as a way of approaching God attributes that possibly help to emphasise God's unity of character.

As we examine each attribute under Milne's headings we will use Grudem's helpfully two part definitions. In the first part the attribute is defined and the second (yet) part provides a balancing statement which guards against our misunderstanding of the attribute.

i. The Glory of God

Glory is the bright shining revelation of himself. An expression of God's infinite worth, his divine majesty, his transcendence (going beyond all finite reality) his sheer "Godness"

- **Self existent** or Independence

"God exists of Himself and does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, **yet** we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy."

God is of a totally different order to creation. He is not dependent on any part of His creation for His existence and nature. He is eternal and complete in himself; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

John 8:58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Although God does not need us for anything, yet by his grace, humanity is still very meaningful to Him. It is in our significance to God that we find our true significance.

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

- **Unchangeable** or Immutable

God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises, **yet** God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

God's faithfulness and consistency of purpose are the basis of covenant relationships with his people

"He cannot change for the better for he is already perfect and being perfect He cannot change for the worse" **A W Pink**

Malachi 3:6 "I the LORD do not change" *HEB 13:8* Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
ISA 46:9 "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. 10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: **My purpose** will stand, and I will do all that I please"

Does God change His mind?

God has a consistent attitude into situations as they exist; if the situation changes, God's expression of intention may change consistent with his unchangeable perfections. God can and does respond to the prayers, and faith of his people.

Isaiah 38:4-5 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.'

Is God impassable? (Without passions)

Some theologians have suggested that God is without passions, but this idea goes beyond what scripture affirm about God's immutability. Although God's being, perfection, purpose or promises are unchanged by events; God's does experience real sinless emotions. It is simply not true that because God is unchanged nothing we do moves him.

- **Infinite:** Eternal and Omnipresent

Eternal: God has no beginning, end or succession of moments in his own being and He sees all time equally vividly, **yet** God see events in time and acts in time.

Indeed only the true God revealed in the bible is both infinite and personal! (We are not deists with an infinite but impersonal God)