

# COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

## DEFINITION

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- Communicable attributes emphasize God's personal nature and are those attributes which can be imparted to man
- They are those attributes which are possessed by men and angels in a more or less finite degree
- It is in reference to these that man is said to be made in the image of God

*Genesis 1:26-27 ~ 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.*

## THE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

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### Spirituality

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#### A. Explanation

- Spirit is an immaterial substance, invisible, uncompounded, and indestructible; God is not only Spirit, He is pure Spirit
- God is a spirit being and as such has an immaterial nature which is the essence of who He is
- God is not a corporeal being located in any one finite space; He is not limited to nor bound by the physical realm
- "God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has not parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily sense, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence" ~ Grudem, 187-8
- "Thus, God does not have a physical body, nor is he made of any kind of matter like much of the rest of creation. Furthermore, God is not merely energy or thought or some other element of creation. He is also not like vapor or steam or air or space, all of which are created things: God's being is not like any of these. God's being is not even exactly like our own spirits, for these are created things that apparently are able to exist only in one place in one time. Instead of all these ideas of God, we must say that God is spirit. Whatever this means, it is a kind of existence that is unlike anything else in creation." ~ Grudem, 187

#### B. Scripture

*Psalms 139:7-10 ~ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.*

*John 4:24 ~ God is spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*

*2 Corinthians 3:17 ~ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

#### C. What about the passages in Scripture that refer to God's physical features?

*Genesis 3:8 ~ They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

*Psalms 34:15 ~ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry.*

*Isaiah 65:2-3 ~ I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, A people who continually provoke Me to My face, Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks*

#### **D. How should the fact God is Spirit affect our view of Him?**

- “Thus, we should not think of God as having size or dimensions, even infinite ones... We should not think of God’s existence as spirit as meaning that God is infinitely large, for example, for it is not part of God but all of God that is in every point of space... Nor should we think that God’s existence as spirit means that God is infinitely small, for no place in the universe can surround him or contain him. Thus, God’s being cannot be rightly thought of in terms of space, however, we may understand his existence as spirit” ~ Grudem, 186-7
- No image, icon, or idol can accurately represent God; hence the prohibition against making images of Him (Exodus 20:5)
- The often repeated denunciations of idolatry throughout the OT are based upon the revealed fact that God is a Spirit, not a corporeal being.
- God is in no way limited by the aspects of a corporeal being

### **Invisibility**

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#### **A. Explanation**

- “God’s invisibility means that God’s total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us” ~ Grudem, 188
- God in spirit is invisible and, therefore, unapproachable in the sense that sinful man has never seen nor can he ever see His full glory

#### **B. Scripture**

*Exodus 33:20 ~ But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”*

*Job 23:8-9 ~ Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; <sup>9</sup> When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.*

*John 1:18 ~ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

*John 5:37 ~ And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.*

*John 6:46 ~ Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.*

*Colossians 1:15 ~ And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.*

*1 Timothy 1:17 ~ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible. . .*

*1 Timothy 6:16 ~ Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see.*

*1 John 4:12 ~ No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.*

#### **C. How then does God appear in visible form at times?**

- These are theophanies and should be understood as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity appearing in human form
- “A theophany is ‘an appearance of God.’ In these theophanies God took on various visible forms to show himself to people” ~ Grudem, 189

*Genesis 18:1-2 ~ Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth,*

**Genesis 32:29-30** ~ Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

**Judges 13:21-22** ~ Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God."

**Isaiah 6:1** ~ In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. (compare with John 12:41)

- Sometimes God reveals his glory in a very veiled manner – Revelation 1
- Although God has manifested himself at particular times in human history these manifestations are not inconsistent with His essential incorporeality and spirituality.

#### D. What will believers see in heaven?

**1 Corinthians 13:12** ~ For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

**1 John 3:2** ~ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

**Revelation 22:3-4** ~ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

### Personality

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#### A. Explanation

- God is the supreme example of personhood, having the characteristics that make up personality
- We know that God is a person because He possesses intellect, emotion, and will

#### B. Scripture

##### Intellect

**Psalm 147:5** ~ His understanding is infinite.

**Isaiah 40:28** ~ The Everlasting God. . . His understanding is inscrutable

**Romans 11:33** ~ Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom & knowledge of God...

##### Emotion

**Psalm 78:40** ~ How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert!

**Jeremiah 31:3** ~ I have loved you with an everlasting love...

**John 3:16** ~ For God so loved the world...

## Will

*Ephesians 1:5, 11 ~ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*

*James 1:18~In the exercise of His will He brought us forth...*

*II Peter 3:9~ The Lord is not... wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

*Revelation4:11~ Worthy... Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.*

## C. Other supports for God's personality

1. Personal pronouns are used of God in Scripture
2. The personality of man as created in the image of God provides strong reason to believe in the personality of God.
3. The attributes of God point to His personality: Love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, kindness are all characteristics of persons
4. Anthropomorphic expressions of God imply His personality: These would not apply to mere forces

## D. What implications does God's personality have for us?

### Holiness

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#### A. Explanation

- God is totally separate from sin; He is set apart and wholly other from His creation in His glory.
- He always acts in a righteous and pure manner because of His holy nature
- In His holiness, God is the moral and ethical standard. He alone sets the standard.
- God never violates His holiness
- Two different emphases of God's holiness:
  - Transcendent emphasis – God is distinct from His creatures and exalted above them in majesty
  - Ethical holiness – He is morally pure; thus, we are to be as well

#### B. Scripture

*Exodus 15:11 ~ Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?*

*1 Samuel 2:2 ~ There is no one holy like the Lord, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God.*

*Job 34:10 ~ Far be it from God to do wickedness, and for the Almighty to do wrong.*

*Isaiah 6:1-3 ~ the Lord, lofty & exalted...holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts*

*Isaiah 57:15 ~ For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.*

*Matthew 5:48 ~ Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect.*

*1 Peter 1:16 ~ You shall be holy, for I am holy*

### C. What implications does God's holiness have for our lives?

- God's holiness provides the pattern for his people to imitate
- Because of God's holiness, we are called to be holy and reflect His righteousness and purity.

## Truthful

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### A. Explanation

- "God's truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth" ~ Grudem, 195
- This means a number of things:
- First, it means that God is the true God and there are none like Him
  - God is absolutely reliable and the ultimate reality
  - God is true...He alone is authentically God...He alone in His being, attributes, and activities conforms to all that God ought to be
  - "We might ask what it means to be the true God as opposed to other beings who are not God. It must mean that God in his own being or character is the one who fully conforms to the idea of what God should be: namely a being who is infinitely perfect in power, in wisdom, in goodness, in lordship over time and space, and so forth. But we may further ask, whose idea of God is this? What idea of God, must one conform to in order to be the true God? At this point our train of thought becomes somewhat circular, for we must not say that a being must conform to our idea of what God should be like in order to be the true God! We are mere creatures. We cannot define what the true God must be like! So we must say that it is God Himself who has the only perfect idea of what the true God should be like. And he himself is the true God because in his being and character he perfectly conforms to his own idea of what the true God should be" ~ Grudem, 195
- Second, it means that God is the truth in that His Word is always true
  - God is truthful...His knowledge and declarations eternally conform to His being...he always tells the truth...God's very character will not allow Him to lie
  - God is faithful...All that God is and tells us is not deceptive
  - God represents things as they really are (veracity)

### B. Scripture

*Isaiah 44:8* ~ Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.

*Isaiah 45:5* ~ "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God.

*Numbers 23:19* ~ God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

*John 14:6* ~ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

*Romans 3:4* ~ May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, And mightest prevail when Thou art judged.

*Hebrews 6:18* ~ in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

*2 Timothy 2:13* ~ If we are faithless, He remains faithful...

### C. What are the implications of God's truthfulness for us?

- God is true so we must worship Him alone!
- God speaks what is true so we must read, study, love, treasure, and obey God's Word: Psalm 19:7-11
- We must believe God's Word to be true and put our faith and trust in it!
- We must not lie!

## Love

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### A. Explanation

- God's affection demonstrated in specific acts of sacrifice.
- The Greek term “agape” means love. This is the term that is often used when referring to God and His love towards man. This is not an emotional, shallow love, but an objective, well-reasoned love – a love that loves the person/object regardless of what that person has done and does not discriminate for lack of reciprocation in that love.
- God is the standard and embodiment of love
- “God’s love means that God eternally gives of himself to others” ~ Grudem, 198

*1 John 4:8 ~ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

### B. The Objects of God’s love

1. Christ  
*John 3:35 ~ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.*
2. Believers  
*John 16:27 ~for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.*
3. Israel  
*Jeremiah 31:3 ~ The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.*
4. World  
*John 3:16 ~ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

### C. The Demonstration of God’s love

1. The death of Christ  
*Romans 5:8 ~ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*
2. The praise of obedient Christians  
*2 Corinthians 9:7 ~ Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*
3. The chastening of believers  
*Hebrews 12:5-8 ~ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; <sup>6</sup>For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.” <sup>7</sup>It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

### B. The Description of God’s love

1. Voluntary  
*1 John 4:10 ~ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
2. Unselfish

**Deuteronomy 7:7-8** ~ *The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup> but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

### 3. Righteous

**Psalm 11:7** ~ *For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.*

### 4. Eternal

**Jeremiah 31:3** ~ *The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.*

**John 17:24** ~ *Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

## C. Does God love believer more than unbelievers?

- There are verses that speak of God's particular love for the elect.

**Romans 1:7** ~ *to all who are **beloved of God** in Rome, called as saints*

**Romans 9:13** ~ *Just as it is written, "**JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.**"*

**Ephesians 2:4** ~ *But God, being rich in mercy, because of **His great love with which He loved us***

**Colossians 3:12** ~ *So, as those who have been **chosen of God, holy and beloved...***

**1 Thessalonians 1:4** ~ *knowing, brethren **beloved by God, His choice of you***

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** ~ *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren **beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.***

- God does not love everyone with the same kind of love, just as He is not gracious to all in the same way (*common grace vs. special grace*). Therefore, the elect are the special objects of His divine love by which He chose.
- Therefore, since the objects of the Father's love are particular, so are the objects of the Son's death.
- The passages on God's love should not be misconstrued as pillar texts for unlimited atonement, because there is a vast difference between God's common love for all mankind and the design of His Son's death.
- It is out of His love for humanity that God "desires that none perish" (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). God has compassion of those who are lost within His moral will. Yet in His sovereign will, God sees the death of the wicked as giving Him more glory overall, both to the elect and to Himself.

## D. What are the implications of God's love?

- Our love for Him and others should be like God's love

## Goodness

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### A. Explanation

- God is the standard of what is good and whatever He does is good
- There is no greater standard of good outside of God – He is the rule of what is good

## B. Scripture

*Psalm 119:68 ~ You are good and do good*

*Psalm 145:9 ~ The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.*

*Matthew 5:45 ~ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

*Mark 10:18 ~ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.*

## C. Implications

- We should be good to everyone, even those who are our enemies

## Gracious/Merciful

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### A. Explanation

- God deals kindly with all His creatures, and provides a way for them to escape His wrath.
- God's grace is His undeserved favor shown to man. It allows Him to show unmerited favor towards those He chooses.
- God does not always give mankind the punishment they deserve(mercy) but rather can lavish them with his blessing and gifts(grace).
- Mercy is God's goodness manifested towards those who are in misery or distress; His mercy is seen in His withholding of deserved judgment. It is manifested in His patience and longsuffering.
- Grace is God's goodness toward the undeserving
- God manifests his grace in a number of ways, including:
  - His delay of punishment in sin – Romans 2:4; 3:25; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9
  - Saving the unworthy from their sin – Ephesians 1:5-8; 2:7-9; Titus 2:11; 3:4-7
  - Our daily problems – 2 Corinthians 12:9
  - Our service – Romans 12:6
  - Our glorification – 1 Peter 1:13

## B. Scripture

*Matthew 5:45 ~ He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, sends rain...*

*Romans 3:24 ~ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;*

*Ephesians 2:8 ~ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*

*Romans 11:32 ~ God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.*

*Titus 3:5 ~ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy...*

## C. Implications

- We should revel in the grace and mercy God has shown us!
- We should never forget God's gracious dealings with us as we learn to deal with our people.



## Patience

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### A. Explanation

- He is good toward those who are persistently difficult and disobedient
- He withholds his anger and judgment from those who sin over time

### B. Scripture

*Exodus 34:6* ~ Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth

*Romans 2:4* ~ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

*Romans 9:22* ~ What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

*2 Peter 3:9* ~ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance

### C. Implications

- We must be patient like God is patient!

## Compassion

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### A. Explanation

- He feels compassion for us in our weakness

### B. Scripture

*Exodus 34:6* ~ Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth

*Deuteronomy 4:31* ~ For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

*Psalms 111:4* ~ The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

*Psalms 116:5* ~ Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.

*Jonah 4:2* ~ He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

### C. Implication

- We too must be compassionate (Col 3:12)

## Justice

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### A. Explanation

- God is absolutely, always fair; There is no partiality in judgment, but an absolute standard to which everyone is held to.
- God is the perfect judge who will settle the accounts of all men.
- Love without justice is not the God of the Bible
- Justice and Righteousness are closely linked... The justice of God means that He is entirely right and just in all His interaction with man. God's law reflects God's standard, so, God is righteous and just when He judges man for violating His law
- God's justice includes retributive, punitive justice (an expression of divine wrath in which God punishes the wicked) – Romans 1:18, 32; 2 Thessalonians 1:8
- God's justice includes remunerative justice (a reflection of divine love which dispenses reward to the obedient) – Matthew 25:14-30
- See Romans 2:5-8 for both of these in the same context

## B. Scripture

*2 Chronicles 19:7 ~ No part in unrighteousness*

*Deuteronomy 32:4 ~The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.*

*Psalms 89:14~ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Thee.*

*Romans 1:18~ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

*Romans 2:6~ who will render to every man according to his deeds:7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*

*Romans 2:11~ For there is no partiality with God.*

## C. Implications

- Worship God for being both just and the justifier – Romans 3:26
- Trust the Lord to exact justice when an injustice occurs

## Wrath

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### A. Explanation

- In order for God's love to be true love, it must hate what is evil; God hates sin because He is loving
- Wrath is the opposite of loving what is good

### B. Scripture

*John 3:36 ~ He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

*Romans 1:18 ~ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

*Romans 2:5, 8 ~ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God... but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*