

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 14, Communicable Attributes, Part 1, Personal, Wise...

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 14, Communicable Attributes, Part 1, Personal, Wise..., Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This text is an excerpt from **Dr. Robert A. Peterson's "Theology Proper," Session 14**, which begins an exploration of **God's communicable attributes**. The session specifically examines five of these shared characteristics: **God's personal nature, sovereignty, wisdom, truthfulness, and faithfulness**, providing scriptural support and explanations for each. Peterson emphasizes that these attributes are manifested perfectly in God and are increasingly reflected in believers through their relationship with Christ. The lecture also touches upon the interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and highlights the practical implications of understanding these aspects of God's character for believers' lives.

2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Theology Proper: God).



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 14, Communicable Attributes, Part 1, Personal, Wise...

Briefing Document: Communicable Attributes of God (Part 1)

Overview: This document summarizes the first part of Dr. Peterson's lecture on the communicable attributes of God. It outlines the concept of communicable attributes as qualities God shares with humanity, albeit in perfect degree, and then delves into five specific attributes: Personal, Sovereign, Wise, Truthful, and Faithful.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. Introduction to Communicable Attributes:

- Communicable attributes are God's qualities or characteristics that He shares with His people. This sharing occurs through creation in His image, salvation by grace, union with Christ, and progressive transformation into Christ's image.
- God possesses these attributes perfectly, while believers are dependent and continually growing in them through God's grace and union with Christ.
- The lecture will cover thirteen communicable attributes in total, followed by a discussion of God's works. The initial focus is on: Personal, Sovereign, Wise, Truthful, and Faithful.
- Dr. Peterson acknowledges that the distinction between communicable and incommunicable attributes can be "fuzzy" and "subjective." However, he emphasizes the value of attempting categorization for the sake of understanding God.

2. God is Personal:

- The self-existent, infinite, unchanging, and great God is not an impersonal force but a "divine person."
- Human beings are personal because they are made in God's image.
- God possesses the attributes of personality:
- **Intellect:** God has perfect knowledge (Job 37:16, 1 John 3:20, Hebrews 4:13).
- **Self-awareness:** God declares His unique identity (Isaiah 45:22: "Turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other").

- **Relatability:** God knows His people (2 Timothy 2:19: "the Lord knows those who are his") and His people know Him (1 John 4:7: "Love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God"). This is exemplified in the mutual knowledge between Jesus and believers (John 10:14: "I am the good shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me").
- The personal nature of God has significant blessings:
- He loves us everlastingly (Jeremiah 31:3: "I've loved you with an everlasting love").
- He saves us by His grace (Ephesians 2:8).
- He keeps us (Romans 8:1).
- He answers our prayers (Matthew 7:7-8).
- He comforts us in affliction (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- Because God is personal, He made humans as personal beings with the capacity to think, feel, and choose, and to have relationships with God, each other, and creation.

3. God is Sovereign:

- God has "supreme authority and reigns over all things." He is the ultimate King who plans and guides everything according to His goals.
- Biblical images of God's sovereignty include "Lord of armies," "Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 2:12-18), and "king of kings" (1 Timothy 6:15).
- God has unlimited authority over nature, human life, and history (Psalm 135:6: "the Lord does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths").
- God ordains individual lives (Psalm 139:16: "All my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began") and governs the history of nations (Acts 17:26).
- While God is sovereign, humans are still held accountable for their actions. God's sovereign plan is never thwarted (Job 42:2).
- Human responsibility and divine sovereignty are "twin truths" affirmed in Scripture (Ephesians 1:11). Humans possess genuine freedom, a gift from God.

- The story of Joseph illustrates this dual causation: his brothers' evil plan was used by God for good (Genesis 50:20: "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good").
- The crucifixion of Jesus is the most striking example. Though a heinous act of evil, God used it to accomplish the greatest good: redemption (Acts 2:23, 4:27-28).
- God's sovereignty is not detached or malicious but is aligned with His other attributes: personal, infinite, powerful, good, wise, and loving (James 1:13-18, 1 John 1:5).
- Christ also possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 1:20-22).
- God's sovereignty brings joy (Psalm 97:1), comfort (Psalm 29:10-11), and hope, knowing that ultimately God wins.
- God shares a measure of rule with humanity as stewards of creation (Genesis 1:26-31).

4. God is Wise:

- Wisdom is defined as "the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal together with the surest means of attaining it" (quoting J.I. Packer). It is the practical side of moral goodness, found in its fullness only in God.
- God's wisdom is practical, as seen in Him giving wisdom to Bezalel for the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-5), Joshua to lead Israel (Deuteronomy 34:9), and Solomon to rule (1 Kings 3:12).
- Both Old and New Testaments praise God's wisdom (Job 12:13, Romans 11:33: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!").
- God displays His wisdom in creation (Proverbs 3:19, Psalm 104:24) and redemption (Ephesians 1:8).
- God's wisdom is made known in the gospel (2 Timothy 3:15).
- Christ also possesses divine wisdom (Isaiah 11:2, 1 Corinthians 1:30: "you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us," Colossians 2:3: "in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge").

- God's wisdom fortifies His Word, leading to growth in wisdom through Scripture (Psalm 119:98-99, Colossians 3:16).
- God's wisdom deserves praise (Romans 16:27, Revelation 5:12, 7:11-12).
- God generously gives wisdom to those who ask in faith (Proverbs 2:6, James 1:5).
- God's wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 9:10), is the skill of godly living (Proverbs 4:11), and results in pure, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and sincere living (James 3:17).

5. God is Truthful:

- God's truthfulness means two things: He is the only true God, and He always speaks the truth (Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, p. 372).
- Scripture affirms that there is only one living and true God (Jeremiah 10:10, 1 Thessalonians 1:9). Biblical conversion involves turning from idols to the "living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).
- Images of God's truthfulness include light (Psalm 27:1).
- The one genuine God speaks the truth (Isaiah 45:19, John 3:33: "God is true").
- God does not lie (1 Samuel 15:29, Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:2).
- Therefore, His Word is true (2 Samuel 7:29, Psalm 25:5, John 17:17: "Your word is truth," Colossians 1:5, James 1:18, Psalm 119:160: "the entirety of your word is truth," 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God"). His Word is the standard of truth.
- God's promises are also true (Joshua 23:14, 21:45).
- The attribute of truthfulness is also ascribed to the Son (John 14:6, 1:14, 8:40, 18:37, 8:32) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1 John 2:27), highlighting their deity.
- Because God is truthful, we can trust His word and the fulfillment of His promises.
- God's truth convicts (1 John 1:8-10), is acknowledged by those in fellowship with Him (Psalm 15:1-2), guards (Psalm 40:11), and guides us (Psalm 25:5).
- We are enjoined to speak truth to one another (Zechariah 8:16, Ephesians 4:25) and to love in action and truth (1 John 3:18). Diligence in Scripture equips us to teach the word of truth correctly (2 Timothy 2:15).

6. God is Faithful:

- Faithfulness means God is reliable in His character, actions, and words.
- God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His redemption of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7-9: "the Lord, your God, is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands").
- Images of God's faithfulness include husband (Hosea 3:1) and various strongholds (Psalm 18:1-2). Psalm 18 is cited as a powerful example of God's faithfulness in rescuing David.
- God fulfilled His promise to give Israel the promised land (Joshua 21:43, 45).
- God's people can praise His great faithfulness (Psalm 89:1, 3-5, 8).
- Even when Israel felt forgotten in exile, God promised never to forget them (Isaiah 49:15-16).
- In times of despair, believers can find hope in God's faithful love and mercies (Lamentations 3:21-24: "Great is your faithfulness").
- Paul assures New Testament believers of God's faithfulness to sustain them to the end (1 Corinthians 1:8-9, 10:13).
- Proper responses to God's faithfulness include gratefulness, obedience, and faithfulness in turn.
- God's faithfulness undergirds us even when we sin and repent (1 John 1:9: "he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness").
- Our assurance of final salvation rests on God's faithfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: "He who calls you is faithful; he will do it").
- The fruit of the Spirit includes faithfulness (Galatians 5:22-23).

Conclusion:

This lecture provides a foundational understanding of several key communicable attributes of God. Dr. Peterson emphasizes that while humans share these attributes with God, they exist in God in perfect and infinite measure. Understanding these attributes fosters a deeper appreciation for God's character and strengthens our trust in Him. The next lecture will continue exploring other communicable attributes, beginning with God's holiness.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 14, Communicable Attributes, Part 1, Personal, Wise...

Study Guide: Communicable Attributes of God (Part 1)

Key Themes:

- The distinction between communicable and incommunicable attributes of God.
- God as Personal: His intellect, self-awareness, and relatability, and the implications for believers.
- God as Sovereign: His supreme authority and rule over all things, and the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.
- God as Wise: His perfect knowledge applied to achieve the best ends, displayed in creation and redemption.
- God as Truthful: He is the only true God and always speaks the truth; the reliability of His Word and promises.
- God as Faithful: His reliability in character, actions, and words; His covenant loyalty and sustaining grace.

Key Scripture References (Consider looking these up and reading them in context):

- Job 37:16, 12:13
- 1 John 3:20, 4:7, 2:27
- Hebrews 4:13
- Isaiah 45:22, 11:2
- 2 Timothy 2:19, 3:15, 3:16, 2:15
- John 10:14, 14:6, 14:17, 1:14, 8:40, 18:37, 8:32
- Jeremiah 31:3, 10:10
- Ephesians 2:8, 1:11, 1:8, 4:25
- Romans 8:1, 11:33, 3:4, 8:28, 16:27
- Matthew 7:7-8, 6:9-13, 28:18
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

- Psalm 103:19, 135:6, 139:16, 33:10-11, 97:1, 29:10-11, 119:98-99, 119:160, 27:1, 31:5, 25:5, 40:11, 15:1-2, 18:1-2, 89:1, 3-5, 8
- Acts 17:26, 2:23, 4:27-28
- Genesis 37:26-28, 45:4-8, 50:20, 1:26-31
- Deuteronomy 34:9, 7:7-9
- 1 Kings 3:12
- Exodus 31:1-5
- Proverbs 3:19, 2:6, 9:10, 4:11
- Colossians 2:3, 3:16, 1:5
- 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10, 5:23-24
- Titus 1:2
- 2 Samuel 7:29, 7:28
- Joshua 23:14, 21:43, 21:45
- Revelation 5:12, 7:11-12
- James 1:5, 3:17, 1:18
- 1 Samuel 15:29
- Numbers 23:19
- Zechariah 8:16
- 1 John 3:18, 1:8-10
- Hosea 3:1
- Isaiah 2:12-18, 49:15-16, 65:16
- Lamentations 3:21-24
- 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, 1:30, 10:13
- Galatians 5:22-23
- 2 Chronicles 15:3

Quiz: Communicable Attributes (Part 1)

1. Explain the difference between God's communicable and incommunicable attributes. Provide one example of each type of attribute mentioned in the lecture.
2. What are the three key aspects of God's personality discussed in the lecture? Briefly describe each aspect and provide a scripture reference for one of them.
3. Define divine sovereignty as presented in the lecture. Give one biblical example used to illustrate God's sovereignty and its interaction with human actions.
4. According to J.I. Packer's definition, what is wisdom? How is God's wisdom demonstrated in the biblical narrative, according to the lecture?
5. What are the two primary aspects of God's truthfulness discussed? Provide a scripture reference that supports one of these aspects.
6. Explain why the truthfulness of God's Word is significant for believers. Reference at least one scripture that highlights the truth of God's Word.
7. Define God's faithfulness as described in the lecture. What does it mean for believers that God is a faithful God?
8. Describe the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility, as highlighted through the example of Christ's crucifixion.
9. How does the lecture suggest believers should respond to God's faithfulness? Provide a scripture that supports one of these responses.
10. Why might the attribute of sovereignty be considered both a communicable and an incommunicable attribute, according to the lecture?

Answer Key: Communicable Attributes (Part 1)

1. Communicable attributes are qualities or characteristics of God that He shares with His people, to a limited degree, as they are created in His image and transformed by His grace. An example of a communicable attribute is wisdom. Incommunicable attributes are those unique to God and not shared with humanity. An example is self-existence.
2. The three key aspects of God's personality are intellect, self-awareness, and relatability. Intellect refers to God's perfect knowledge of all things (e.g., 1 John 3:20). Self-awareness is God's knowledge of Himself as God. Relatability is His ability to know and interact with His creation.

3. Divine sovereignty means that God has supreme authority and reigns over all things, planning and guiding everything according to His purposes. The example of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers, yet Joseph stating that God intended it for good (Genesis 50:20), illustrates this interaction.
4. Wisdom, according to Packer, is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal together with the surest means of attaining it. God's wisdom is demonstrated in creation (Proverbs 3:19) and in redemption, saving us in Christ with all wisdom and understanding (Ephesians 1:8).
5. The two primary aspects of God's truthfulness are that He is the only true God and that He always speaks the truth. Jeremiah 10:10 states, "But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and eternal King."
6. The truthfulness of God's Word is significant because it means His promises are reliable, His guidance is trustworthy, and it serves as the standard of truth for believers. Psalm 119:160 declares, "The entirety of your word is truth."
7. God's faithfulness means that He is reliable in His character, actions, and words. For believers, this means they can trust God to keep His promises, sustain them, and remain loyal to His covenant (Deuteronomy 7:9).
8. The crucifixion of Jesus demonstrates that while evil human beings freely chose to commit a terrible act, God, in His sovereignty, used this very act to accomplish the greatest good: the redemption of humanity. God's sovereignty does not negate the culpability of those who acted wickedly (Acts 2:23, 4:27-28).
9. Believers should respond to God's faithfulness with gratefulness, obedience, and faithfulness in turn. When we sin and repent, God's faithfulness undergirds us to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9).
10. Sovereignty might be considered an incommunicable attribute because God's supreme and ultimate authority is unique to Him. However, it can also be seen as communicable in a limited sense because God grants humans a measure of rule and dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26-31), sharing a degree of responsibility and authority, though infinitely different in scope and power.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the practical implications of understanding God as a personal being for the daily lives and spiritual growth of believers. Use scripture to support your points.
2. Analyze the tension and harmony between divine sovereignty and human responsibility as presented in the lecture. How does the example of Joseph and his brothers illuminate this relationship?
3. Explore the multifaceted nature of God's wisdom, as revealed in creation, redemption, and His Word. How should believers seek and apply God's wisdom in their lives?
4. Explain the importance of God's truthfulness and faithfulness as foundational attributes for a believer's trust and assurance. How do these attributes impact our relationship with God and others?
5. Evaluate the lecturer's perspective on categorizing God's attributes as communicable and incommunicable, particularly in light of the attribute of sovereignty. What are the benefits and potential limitations of such categorizations?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Communicable Attributes:** Qualities or characteristics of God that He shares, in a derivative and limited way, with humanity created in His image.
- **Incommunicable Attributes:** Qualities or characteristics of God that are unique to Him and not shared with humanity.
- **Sovereignty:** God's supreme authority and ultimate control over all things, including creation, human history, and individual lives.
- **Omniscience:** The attribute of God meaning that He knows all things, perfectly and completely, past, present, and future.
- **Dual Causation:** The biblical concept that God's sovereign plan and human free will can both be operative in the same event.
- **Wisdom:** The attribute of God involving His perfect knowledge applied to choose the best means to achieve the best ends.
- **Truthfulness:** The attribute of God indicating that He is the only true God and that everything He says is true and reliable.
- **Faithfulness:** The attribute of God describing His unwavering reliability in His character, actions, promises, and covenant loyalty.
- **Covenant:** A solemn agreement between God and humanity (or a specific group within humanity), often involving promises and obligations.
- **Redemption:** God's act of saving humanity from sin and its consequences through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 14, Communicable Attributes, Part 1, Personal, Wise..., Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Communicable Attributes of God

1. What are communicable attributes of God, and why are they significant?

Communicable attributes are the qualities or characteristics of God that He shares with humanity by creating us in His image and progressively transforming believers into the likeness of Christ. These attributes, such as being personal, sovereign (in a limited sense), wise, truthful, and faithful, are significant because they reveal aspects of God's character that we are intended to reflect. While God possesses these attributes perfectly and innately, we develop them by His grace and through union with Christ, highlighting our dependence on Him and the ongoing process of spiritual growth.

2. In what ways is God considered "personal," and what are the implications of this for humanity? God is personal in that He is not an impersonal force but possesses the attributes of personality, including intellect, self-awareness, and the ability to relate to others. His intellect is demonstrated by His perfect knowledge (omniscience), His self-awareness is evident in His declarations of His unique identity, and His relatability is shown through His covenant commitments and knowledge of His people. Because God is personal, He loves us everlastingly, saves us by grace, keeps us secure, answers our prayers, and comforts us in affliction. Furthermore, being made in His image as personal beings, we possess the capacity to think, feel, choose, and engage in relationships with God, each other, and creation.

3. How can God be both sovereign and hold humanity accountable for its actions?

God's sovereignty means He has supreme authority and reigns over all things, planning and guiding everything according to His will. Scripture affirms both God's absolute sovereignty and humanity's genuine responsibility. While God's sovereign plan is never thwarted, and He can even use evil actions for good (as seen in the story of Joseph and the crucifixion of Jesus), this does not negate human accountability. Individuals are held responsible for their choices, even when those choices are part of God's overarching plan. This dual causation is a mystery that Scripture upholds without fully explaining, emphasizing that God's sovereignty is not a dark or capricious force but is aligned with His goodness and other attributes.

4. What does it mean for God to be wise, and how does His wisdom manifest itself?

God's wisdom is His ability to use His perfect knowledge to choose the best and highest goals and the surest means of achieving them. It is the practical side of His moral goodness and is uniquely and fully present in Him. God displays His wisdom in all His works, particularly in creation (founding the earth and heavens by wisdom) and redemption (saving us in Christ with all wisdom and understanding). Even the seemingly contradictory message of the crucified Christ is presented as God's hidden wisdom in the gospel, which has the power to make people wise for salvation. Christ Himself embodies divine wisdom.

5. What are the two key aspects of God's truthfulness, according to the source? God's truthfulness encompasses two main aspects: first, He is the only true God, and second, He always speaks the truth. Scripture consistently affirms that there is only one living and true God, in contrast to idols. Because God is truthful, He does not lie, and His word is therefore entirely true and serves as the standard of truth. Furthermore, God's promises are also true and will be fulfilled. The truthfulness of God is also attributed to the Son (Jesus is the truth) and the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of truth), underscoring their deity.

6. How does God's truthfulness impact believers, and what is expected of them in response? God's truthfulness convicts us of sin and leads to confession. Those who seek fellowship with Him acknowledge truth in their hearts and practice righteousness. God's truth guards and guides believers. In response to God's truthfulness, we are called to speak truth to one another, to love in action and in truth, and to diligently study Scripture to correctly teach the word of truth.

7. What does it mean for God to be faithful, and how is His faithfulness demonstrated in Scripture? God's faithfulness means He is reliable in His character, actions, and words. His faithfulness is demonstrated throughout Scripture in His steadfast love and covenant loyalty towards His people, such as His redemption of Israel and His promises to give them the Promised Land. Even when Israel faced exile, God promised never to forget them. In the New Testament, God's faithfulness is the basis for the assurance that He will sustain believers to the end, keep them from being tempted beyond their ability, and forgive their sins upon repentance.

8. How should believers respond to God's faithfulness, and where does our ultimate assurance of salvation reside? Believers should respond to God's faithfulness with gratefulness, obedience, and faithfulness in their own lives. When we sin and repent, God's faithfulness undergirds us, providing forgiveness and cleansing. Ultimately, our assurance of final salvation does not depend on our own merit or consistency but resides in God's faithful character and His commitment to His promises. The Holy Spirit, who produces the fruit of faithfulness in us, links us to Christ and secures our connection to God's unwavering faithfulness.