

8 Attributes of God

An 8-Week Study from the Psalms

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God is Our Protector

Reading: Psalms 23, 27, 71, 91, 121

King David was a mighty warrior, and he was constantly under physical attack from his enemies. Because he wrote so many of the Psalms, warfare played a significant role in this book of poetry and music. Many of them were written while fleeing evil men who would kill him without a second thought if they had the chance.

In addition to David, those who were faithful in Israel relied heavily on the Lord for their safety. Israel had a rough and war-filled history – one they would have never survived without God's guidance and protection. The Psalms gave Israel songs of hope that God would be their protector.

Our Creator has proven Himself time and time again throughout history that He indeed is a God who protects His people. Just as He watched over Israel in their beginnings as a nation, He has promised to watch over us as children of God.

God is our faithful protector.

As we rely on God's protection, we need to realize that God never promised us a life without trials and suffering...even persecution and death. Jesus spoke the following to his disciples in the book of John:

"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." – John 16:33

God sees everything through eternal eyes. He has a plan and purpose for every person who claims Him as Lord. He will be faithful to guide us and protect us as we carry out this plan on earth. We need to remember that in God's eyes, death on this planet is not the end for His children.

For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ...Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. So

whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. – 2 Corinthians 5:1, 8-9

As our protector, God sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross to pay for our sins. Then through His resurrection, He conquered death itself. So through His death and resurrection, we are made right with God and we inherit eternal life.

God protects His children from a certain death.

We as believers have nothing to fear – not even death itself. As our heavenly Father, God is faithful to watch over our lives and to guide our steps. He also protects us against the enemy. The devil has no power over us as children of God.

With God as our protector, we truly have nothing to fear.

In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me? – Psalm 118:5-6 (NLT)

Week 1 Study Questions:

Psalm 23:

- What is the relationship between a sheep and his shepherd?
- How has Jesus demonstrated Himself as a shepherd in your life?

Psalm 27:

- David faced enemies who were after his life. What are some of the “enemies” that we have today as believers?
- How has God protected you against these enemies?

Psalm 71:

- Verse 6 tells us that God watches over the entire lives of those who are His. How has God protected you growing up, even before you were saved?
- What should our response be to God’s protection over the span of our lives?

Psalm 91:

- List some of God’s faithful promises that we can hold on to as believers.
- What conditions does God give in order to receive these promises in your life?

Psalm 121:

- How does this Psalm bring comfort to you in times of trial when God seems far away?
- Can you think of a time in your life when God alone kept you from harm?

God is Just

Reading: Psalms 9, 11, 37, 105, 146

God's justice isn't typically something we enjoy thinking about today as Christians. We love discussing how merciful, loving, and gracious He is... but justice isn't usually His most popular attribute. Perhaps it has something to do with sin. Most people don't like the fact that they will be held accountable one day for their actions... especially those who don't consider themselves to be Christians. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly defines God as being just in all His ways.

There are three main aspects of God's justice found in the Psalms:

God's justice can clearly be seen in His love and compassion for the less fortunate.

Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. – Psalm 68:5

The Lord protects the foreigners among us. He cares for the orphans and widows, but he frustrates the plans of the wicked. – Psalm 146:9

Even throughout the Old Testament law, God's justice and mercy prevailed when it came to taking care of the poor and needy in the land of Israel.

God avenges those who belong to Him.

The wicked plot against the godly; they snarl at them in defiance. But the Lord just laughs, for he sees their day of judgment coming. – Psalm 37:12-13

We belong to God, and He cares about us deeply. In His justice, He will deal with those who harm His children.

God is just when it comes to our choice to serve Him or live for this world.

The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who love violence. He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulfur on the wicked, punishing them with scorching winds. For the righteous Lord loves justice. The virtuous will see his face. – Psalm 11:5-7

Look at those who are honest and good, for a wonderful future awaits those who love peace. But the rebellious will be destroyed; they have no future. – Psalm 37:37-38

Every human being has a choice. We can follow the narrow path that leads to eternal life, or we can follow the crowd into darkness. The dark path will always lead to death. God is just. He leaves the choice to us, but in the end, He must be fair in letting us suffer the consequences of our choice.

For the world, God's justice can be very intimidating. It's one of the many reasons why the world denies Him altogether. Denying Him, however, doesn't change the truth. He is God. And we will all stand before Him one day.

For believers, God's justice and His mercy go hand in hand. We all sin and fall short of God's perfect standard, but in His mercy, He has given us His Son. When we stand before God, we don't have to receive the consequences we deserve (death). In His justice, God has given us all a choice.

We can choose Jesus. We can choose eternal life. We can choose to belong to Him.

Week 2 Study Questions:

Psalm 9:

- What does this Psalm teach you about the heart of God for victims of crime and poverty?
- What should our response be to God's judgment of the world?

Psalm 11:

- What is it that God hates? What does He love?
- How does the Psalm comfort you in today's world where Christianity is under persecution?

Psalm 37:

- What should our response be when it comes to the "wicked"?
- What does God promise for those who put their trust in Him?

Psalm 105:

- What does this Psalm teach you about God's commitment to keep His covenant?
- What should our response be to God's covenant with us? (see verses 1-6, 45)

Psalm 146:

- What happens to those who seem powerful by worldly standards?
- According to this Psalm, who does God promise to help and protect?

God is Merciful

Reading: Psalms 25, 32, 51, 103, 116

Of all the attributes of God to be thankful for, mercy certainly tops the list for most of us. It's the aspect of God that we as humans rely on the most. Everyone falls short of God's perfect standard, therefore we all are in desperate need of God's mercy and compassion.

Dictionaries define mercy as "compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm." We have already learned about God's justice. He won't turn a blind eye towards sin. At the same time, however, His ability to show both justice and mercy is part of what makes Him who He is.

In His justice, there needed to be atonement for sin; but in His mercy, He sent His Son Jesus to atone for us once and for all.

God will always stay true to His character. He is a just God and must deal with sin. His desire, however, is to show mercy. He loves us deeply and desires that all men be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

For the nonbeliever, God demonstrated His mercy in Jesus. All men have the same opportunity to turn from their sin and live for God. All men can inherit eternal life through Christ. And all men can have their slates wiped clean and their sins forgotten. The one thing God asks from us is a humble and repentant heart. He doesn't ask for rituals or religion. He desires our hearts.

You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. – Psalm 51:16-17

Once we choose to serve God, He demonstrates His mercy by forgiving our sins. He wipes our slate clean and grants us a new beginning.

Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! – Psalm 32:2

God continues to show His mercy to us as believers when we strive to serve Him. When we make the decision to serve God with our lives, the temptation to sin doesn't disappear. If

anything, the enemy will try even harder to convince us to stray from the truth. The more effective we are for God, the more he will try and stop us.

In His mercy, God gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us and to give us the power to say no. As we grow and learn to live in Him, we will undoubtedly slip up from time to time. Our merciful God will make every effort to bring us back into right standing with Him.

The Lord is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. – Psalm 25:8-9

Without God's mercy, we would all be doomed to death (Romans 6:23). It's certainly what we all deserve.

Mercy is what drove God to send His Son. Mercy is what allows us to be reconciled with our heavenly Father. And it is God's mercy that will carry us into eternity with Him.

Week 3 Study Questions:

Psalm 25:

- How does God help those who have gone astray?

- How does He help those who fear Him?

Psalm 32:

- What happened to David when he refused to confess his sin to God?

- What happens to those who choose to take their sin to God?

Psalm 51:

- This Psalm was written by David concerning his adultery with Bathsheba. What can we learn from the heart of David when he finally brought his sin to God?

- What is it that God desires from us when come to Him with sin? (see verse 17)

Psalm 103:

- What do we learn about God's blessings from verses 3-6?

- What does this Psalm teach you about the heart of God towards mankind?

Psalm 116:

- How was God merciful to this Psalmist?

- How did he respond to God's mercy? (see verses 12-14)

God is Our Sovereign King

Reading: Psalms 24, 29, 75, 115, 145

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. As the Creator of all things, He is in charge. He gets to be the sovereign leader of this world. Ever since the first sin in the Garden of Eden, however, man has desired to be in charge. We want to be masters of our own destiny. We desire to have power and control – over ourselves as well as others.

When God created the world, the enemy intervened by deceiving us into thinking it somehow belonged to us. It's time we acknowledged the truth: The world belongs to God alone.

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. – Psalm 24:1

The enemy does all that he can to convince us that we are in control – that we have the right to choose our own path in life. The truth is that we belong to God. Nothing in this world is beyond His control. Even our leaders are appointed by Him (Romans 13:1).

Sometimes it is difficult to see God's sovereignty. When we look around at the world today in all its chaos and sin, it's easy to think that God has forgotten about us. The enemy uses the state of the world to try and convince us that God has somehow abandoned us, that He doesn't care, or maybe He doesn't even exist at all.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name goes all the glory for your unfailing love and faithfulness. Why let the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes. – Psalm 115:1-3

The truth is that God is in complete control. The New Testament repeatedly tells us that in this life we will encounter trials and persecution; and Jesus often spoke of the difficulty of being His follower. His goal in telling the disciples about the things to come was not to sadden them or to cause them to fear. His desire was that they would be prepared and that they would be able to trust God during these difficult times.

Nothing that happens in our lives or in this world surprises God.

As Christians, we have nothing to fear because we know the end of the story. Even when it appears that the enemy has the upper hand, he truly doesn't. Jesus already defeated him. He lost. And God continues to give us the victory now as believers while we advance His Kingdom.

We can rest in God's sovereignty. The darkness of this world is no match for the light that God has placed inside each and every one of us.

We serve the God who created the heavens and the earth. We serve the God who defeated death. We serve the God who loves us deeply and has a plan for our future. And He will accomplish all that He has set out to do on this earth.

We serve the Sovereign King.

The Lord rules over the floodwaters. The Lord reigns as king forever. The Lord gives his people strength. The Lord blesses them with peace. – Psalm 29:10-11

Week 4 Study Questions:

Psalm 24:

- What belongs to the Lord? Why does it belong to Him?
- Who may stand in God's holy place? What blessings will they receive from God? (see verses 3-6)

Psalm 29:

- What does this Psalm teach us about the voice of the Lord?
- After learning about the power of God's voice, how does verse 11 give you hope in times of trial?

Psalm 75:

- When does God plan to bring His judgement on the wicked?
- What does this Psalm teach us about pride?

Psalm 115:

- What does the Psalm teach us about those who put their trust in idols?
- What are some of the idols we worship today?

Psalm 145:

- As children of God, how should we respond to God's goodness? (see verses 4, 11-12)
- How does the sovereignty of God give you peace of mind during difficult circumstances?

God is Holy

Reading: Psalms 15, 33, 77, 99, 111

Holiness is a term in Christianity that is often misunderstood. I personally grew up with a distorted definition of the word. Every time I read the word “holy” in the Bible, my brain interpreted it as perfect or sacred. So when God told His people to be holy, I took that to mean I had to be perfect.

The true meaning of the word “holiness” really sunk in when I spent several months studying the life of Moses. God kept referring to the nation of Israel as His holy people, even when they disappointed Him time and time again. Once I discovered this truth, I realized that my warped definition of holiness needed to change.

True holiness is something that can only be attributed to God. He alone is holy and worthy of praise. He is the one and only true God.

Our holy God chooses to set us apart for Himself. He longs to make us holy as He is holy.

Every act of God is holy.

Every aspect of God’s character stems from His holiness. He is just, righteous, faithful, sovereign, loving, gracious, kind, forgiving, merciful, mighty, glorious – and the list goes on. Everything God has done and ever will do is holy. (Psalm 111:7-9)

Everything God touches is holy.

Moses had to take off his sandals when he came before the burning bush because He was standing on holy ground. (Exodus 3:4-5) The ground was ordinary and nothing special until God showed up. It was His presence that made the ground holy. The same could be true for us as human beings. We can be made holy in the sight of God, but only if we have God’s presence in our lives. (Psalm 15:1-2)

We are made holy through the blood of Jesus Christ.

I find comfort in the fact that God knows my heart. He understands the struggles I face as I strive to live for Him. Even while I was still a sinner, he chose to set me apart as His child. (Psalm 33:13-15)

Because of His holiness, we too can be made holy through the blood of Jesus Christ.

- The blood of Jesus cleanses us of our sin making us blameless in the eyes of God.
- The Holy Spirit invades our hearts and transforms us from the inside out.
- God's grace and power lives within us and enables us to live godly lives.

In God's holiness, we can choose to live a life that is holy and set apart for Him.

Week 5 Study Questions:

Psalm 15:

- What are some of the traits required to be holy enough to worship in God's presence?
- What hope do we have today that we can indeed be made holy enough to have a relationship with God?

Psalm 33:

- List some of the ways God watches over His people.
- What should our response be as believers to God's holiness? (see verses 1-3, 20-22)

Psalm 77:

- What can we do when God's presence doesn't feel near? (see verses 10-12)
- Can you think of a time when God led you through a pathway no one knew was there?

Psalm 99:

- Since it is God's holiness that sets Him apart from the gods of this world, how do His justice, mercy, and sovereignty make Him holy?
- Based on this Psalm, what should our response be to God's holiness?

Psalm 111:

- What can we do to grow in wisdom? (see verse 10)
- What does this Psalm teach us about God's commandments?

God is Our Refuge

Reading: Psalms 17, 34, 46, 84, 142

God enjoys protecting His children. He watches over us and keeps us safe from harm. But there is a difference between God's protection and His desire to be our hiding place.

As a mother, I will do all that I can to protect my children from harm. In that way, I am their protector. But I also want to be their refuge. I want to be their safe place – their home and their shelter from the storms of life. In protecting them, I move. I respond to harmful situations whether they want my help or not. When they seek refuge, however, they come to me. They share with me and allow me to hold them and watch over them.

God is our mighty and all-powerful Father. How much more should we run to Him as our refuge?

God is our refuge during times of persecution.

David relied on God when His enemies were trying to take his life. We may not have men trying to kill us the way David did, but we still encounter "enemies" today. We may encounter persecution and suffering for Christ, but God promises to be our refuge and strength through it all. (Psalm 17:7)

God is our refuge when the troubles of life are weighing us down.

The stresses of life tend to have a way of breaking us down. He wants to be our strength when we are weak and to give us His peace when life overwhelms us. (Psalm 46:1)

God is our refuge when the world is in chaos around us.

The world is constantly changing. Wars, politics, natural disasters – there are a lot of factors that come into play and things we have no control over. God holds the world in the palm of His hand. He will be our refuge when our world is crumbling beneath our feet. In Him, we have nothing to fear. (Psalm 46:6-7)

God is our refuge against the enemy's accusations.

When the nation of Israel was first established in the Promised Land, God set up six cities that would serve as “cities of refuge.” If someone accidentally killed another person (or accused or doing so), they could run to one of these cities for protection until they could have a proper trial. In the same way, God is our refuge against the accusations of the devil. We can rest in Him knowing that when judgement day comes, Christ’s blood covers all sin and we will be declared innocent. (Psalm 34:22)

God is our refuge in times of peace.

God’s desire for us is that we would abide in Him during every season of life – not just the hard times. In His arms, we will find joy and peace beyond all understanding. (Psalm 84:3-4)

When we make God our refuge, we abide in His protection. We abide in His grace and His mercy. And because of Christ’s work on the cross, we are able to abide in His forgiveness.

Week 6 Study Questions:

Psalm 17:

- How does God rescue those who seek refuge in Him? Why does He choose to rescue us? (see verses 7-8)
- In the midst of struggle, what hope do we have as believers? (see verses 14-15)

Psalm 34:

- What can we look forward to as believers when we take refuge in our heavenly Father? (see verses 4-10)
- According to this Psalm, what can we do to live a long and prosperous life?

Psalm 46:

- Using this Psalm for reference, describe the power of our God.
- How does the power of God comfort you as a believer?

Psalm 84:

- According to 1 Corinthians 3:16, where does God dwell today?
- What should our response be to God's presence? (see verses 2-4)

Psalm 142:

- What does this Psalm teach us about David's heart towards God?
- What was David's reason for wanting God to rescue him from harm? (see verse 7)

God is Love

Reading: Psalms 31, 36, 85, 86, 138

Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so. It's a song I grew up singing, and now my own children sing these famous lyrics. It sounds so simple. As a child, I had no trouble believing that Jesus loved me and that I was special to Him. As an adult, I find that I often struggle. My head understands the unfailing love of God, but my heart often has trouble receiving it.

We all sin. We all fall short. We all feel separated from God at times. The psalmist David probably understood better than most the feeling of hitting rock bottom. He was supposed to be God's chosen one. He was anointed king, and it was prophesied that the future Messiah would come from his descendants. Yet, over and over again he failed. Many times throughout the Psalms, he came to God in defeat. He poured out his anguish to God over his guilt and sin.

Ultimately, he knew God loved him. Even in his filthy sin, God still loved him.

In our weakness, we can trust in His unfailing love.

God demonstrates His unfailing love by caring for us.

God is a loving Father who cares deeply about His children. Our sorrow is His sorrow. Our joy is His joy. The psalmists often conveyed their true emotions to God because they trusted that He cared for them. We can take our feelings and emotions to God as well. (Psalm 31:7)

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book. – Psalm 56:8

God demonstrates His unfailing love by meeting our needs.

Beyond our emotional needs, God also cares about our physical needs. Time and time again, He made a way for Israel to eat and drink when it seemed impossible – even to the point of providing manna from the sky. Our physical needs matter to our loving Father. (Psalm 36:8, 85:12)

God demonstrates His unfailing love by protecting us.

I love how Psalm 36 tells us that all humanity finds shelter in the shadow of His wings. God makes no exclusions. We all have the ability to call Him Father and to be under His wings of protection. (Psalm 36:7)

God demonstrates His unfailing love by forgiving our sins.

In the end, God's love for us is what drove Him to send Jesus to the cross. His love compelled Him to make the greatest sacrifice of all so that we could be reconciled with Him. (Psalm 86:5)

In His unfailing love, God is always ready and willing to pick us up when we fall.

Week 7 Study Questions:

Psalm 31:

- What does verse 7 teach us about the love God has for us?
- What does God have in store for those who fear Him? (see verses 19-20) Read Revelation 12:10. Who is the real accuser God has protected us from as believers?

Psalm 36:

- How does David describe the wicked in verses 1-4?
- In His unfailing love, what are some of the blessings God has in store for His children?

Psalm 85:

- This Psalm was written at a time in Israel's history when God was punishing them for their wickedness, yet they still sang of God's unfailing love and His promises. Why do you think that is?
- Read Romans 5:8. How has God demonstrated His love for all believers?

Psalm 86:

- How did God demonstrate His unfailing love towards David? (see verses 1-7)
- Read verses 11-13. Describe David's heart toward God.

Psalm 138:

- How did God answer David's prayer in verse 3?
- Read verse 8 along with Romans 8:28. How does God demonstrate His unfailing love towards all who serve Him?

God is Our Savior

Reading: Psalms 18, 40, 68, 96, 106

God is loving, merciful, and compassionate. He created man because He desired to have relationship with us. But the second we had a chance, we chose sin. Because of His love, mercy, and compassion, God refuses to give up on us. From the very beginning, He had a plan to save His people. God chose to be our Savior.

The people of Israel knew God best as their mighty Savior. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He delivered them, met their needs (both physically and spiritually), protected them, fought for them, and ultimately led them into the Promised Land. He continued to watch over them as they strived to be His people. Unfortunately, they failed miserably. Every time He rescued them, they would choose to live in sin rather than live for Him. Even then, He had compassion on His people.

Again and again he rescued them, but they chose to rebel against him, and they were finally destroyed by their sin. Even so, he pitied them in their distress and listened to their cries. He remembered his covenant with them and relented because of his unfailing love. He even caused their captors to treat them with kindness. – Psalm 106:43-46

Even though we fail Him time and time again, God still chooses to be our Savior.

He could have given up on us a long time ago. After all, we continually choose sin and the things of this world over Him. God chose to save the world despite our sin and rebellion. He continues to rescue us because He loves us unconditionally. (Psalm 18:17-19)

God delights in us. What an amazing truth to live by! Nothing in this world can separate us from the love God has for us. He sent His Son into the world to die on a cross so that we could be saved from death and be reconciled with Him for all eternity. God loves us that much!

In all our flaws, our weaknesses, and our failures, God still chooses to save us. He comes to our rescue as a mighty hero and carries us in His arms to safety.

As our Savior, Jesus died on a cross so that the entire world could be saved. He is our redemption and our way to life. Because we have been saved from a certain death, we choose to live for Him.

Praise the Lord; praise God our savior! For each day he carries us in his arms. Our God is a God who saves! The Sovereign Lord rescues us from death. – Psalm 68:19-20

It's up to us to spread the Good News of our King Jesus and proclaim to the world that our God saves!

Week 8 Study Questions:

Psalm 18:

- David describes being rescued from a physical death in verses 4-6. As believers, how has God rescued us from a certain death?
- What did God have in store for the enemies of David?

Psalm 40:

- According to verses 6-8, what is truly required for salvation?
- How does David describe God's justice in verses 9-10? What did he choose to do with this knowledge of God's salvation?

Psalm 68:

- What are some of the ways that God saves us according to verses 5-6?
- How does this Psalm demonstrate God's power to save His people?

Psalm 96:

- According to this Psalm, how should we respond to God's saving grace?
- What glorious hope do we have to look forward to? (see verses 10-13)

Psalm 106:

- How do verses 6-12 give you hope?
- Israel had a long, rebellious history with God. What do verses 43-48 tell you about the heart of God towards His people?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alyssa J Howard is happily married with two beautiful daughters. She earned a Master of Arts degree in theological studies from Liberty Theological Seminary in 2010. With a heart for writing and seeing others grow in their faith, Alyssa began blogging in the spring of 2014. Since then, her love for Bible study and theology has grown along with her passion to share her heart with others. You can visit her website for more Bible study resources at www.alyssajhoward.com.