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All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment. “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

The amazing response by Jesus summarized the intent of the Ten Commandments, the Law given to the Jews, the declarations made by all of the prophets, the entire Bible (Old and New Testament), the creation of the earth and everything that lives upon it. All of this was brought into existence because God desires us to love Him. There is nothing more important one can do in life. In addition, when we love God with all of their heart, soul and mind:

- We will live within God’s will and fulfill His desire for each of us.
- His love will naturally flow through us and upon those whom we encounter (i.e. our “neighbor”).

As such, God designed humans with multiple attributes (innate qualities, characteristics, traits, etc.) that enable us to willingly love Him and others. To facilitate understanding of these attributes, they are segmented into two groups: internal and external. Internal attributes are primarily focused upon how we function internally. External attributes are primarily focused upon facilitating our interaction with others.

It is important to understand our God-given attributes are:

1. Spiritual because they are components within our heart and soul.
2. Used by the Holy Spirit to influence who we are, what we do, and how we spiritually bless other persons.
3. Unique from all animal species.

In addition, most are unaware we utilize these attributes minute-by-minute as we function throughout our day. As such, as you read, consider personal examples of your experience with each attribute. Also consider what your life (and the world) would be like if we were not designed with each attribute. For example, consider what our life would be like if we did not have an imagination, if we were unable to communicate, if we were unable to perceive God exists, if we did not have a free will, if we only had a small and limited memory, and so forth.

<p>Internal Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Will • Imagination • Memories • Analytical Thinking • Self-Awareness • Pride • Emotions • Conscience • Guilt • God Awareness • Hope • Belief • Faith • Trust 	<p>External Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to Communicate • A Need to Love and Be Loved • Thankfulness • Discernment • Skepticism • Altruism • Empathy • Forgiveness
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Meditate and reflect upon each attribute to enhance your spiritual understanding of the intent of God’s design, His desire for each of us, and how these attributes influence who we are and what we do.

Internal Attributes

Free Will

Humans have been designed with a free will—in that we have the mental capability to make decisions and to act autonomously at our own discretion. As such, we continually make decisions regarding:

- What we do and where we go.
- What we say and how we behave.
- What we believe and disbelieve.
- Whom we love and disdain.
- Choices in life that have unimaginable everlasting benefits or undesirable eternal consequences.

The reason why we are designed with free will is because God does not want programmed robotic responses expressed to Him (i.e. “I...LOVE...YOU...GOD” with no heartfelt meaning and emotions). When you think about it, we also desire an expression of love from someone based upon their heart, and not because they are preprogrammed to express empty declarations. The reason why humans desire heartfelt love (like God) is because we are made in His image. **“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:27**

Jesus Christ demonstrated the greatest example of free will. Jesus knew the cost and benefits of the cross. He knew of the unprecedented and indescribable suffering he would endure. He knew of the torture. He knew chunks of His flesh would be ripped from His body from scourging. He knew a crown of thorns would pierce His scalp in a vain attempt to humiliate Him. He knew He would hang on a cross with nails piercing his hands and feet. However, He also knew the punishment and pain He would endure is pale by comparison to what would happen next:

- Cost:
 - God would turn away from Him and He would be absolutely alone.
 - Meanwhile, He would:
 - “Taste” (undergo, experience, go through) punishment and death for all who believe.
 - Fulfill His purpose on earth and for all of eternity.
- Benefits:
 - He would provide a means for us to reestablish a relationship with the Father.
 - Those who make a decision to believe in what He did on the cross may:
 - Be reborn and sanctified.
 - Live with Him for eternity.

So Jesus made a free will decision to yield to the will of God and prayed, **“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.” Luke 22:42**

In truth, real love cannot be mandated, it cannot be preprogrammed, it cannot be driven by fear—and must be an expression of our free will. As God expresses His love towards us by His grace and mercy, we learn to willingly express our love to Him in return.

“We love Him because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19



For additional information read “Free Will” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

Imagination

God designed humans with a unique attribute that animals do not possess: imagination. Imagination may be defined as an act of creating a mental image or concept of something that is not physically present.

When you think about it...imagination is more important than we realize, and we use it more often than we are aware of. For example, we use our imagination when we plan something in the future, when we view a situation from different angles, when we read a book, when we experience empathy, and when we innovate. When you consider all of the things we interact with today (technology, transportation, medical, and so forth)—all were developed via the initial influence of human imagination. Without imagination we would still be in the stone age!

Memories

God designed us with a memory that has the capacity and capability to store and retrieve sights, sounds, smells, tastes, music, conversations, emotions, thoughts, motivations, the good and bad times, and what we have said and done—including those things we'd like to forget, and those we want no one to know about.

Some scientists estimate our memory capacity equates to around 2.5 petabytes. This amount of memory on an array of hard disk drives can store 300 years of continually-recorded 24x7 television video. What's more, unlike a hard disk drive, our memories cannot be erased, deleted, lost due to power loss, or destroyed due to physical damage to the storage medium—because our memories are spiritual, part of our soul—and will go with us after we die. Here are scriptures that reinforce this truth:

- In Luke 16:19-28 Jesus described how a rich man (after he died and was in the torments of Hades) recognized and remembered Lazarus (who had also died and was with Abraham). The rich man also begged to warn his brothers about what he was experiencing.
- In Revelation 4:1-2 and 6:9-10, John described how martyred souls remembered those who killed them.
- Our memory is required when we are judged by Jesus and are required to give an account of our life. Romans 14:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 3:12-15
- Our memories will magnify our praise and worship of Jesus in Heaven. Revelation 5:11-12
- For those who are cast into the lake of fire, their memories will provide an excruciating reminder of what they did, what they deserved, and justification of what they are experiencing. Matthew 13:40-42 and Revelation 20:11-15

Take a moment and consider how difficult life would be if we were designed with a limited amount of memory, or if our memory only lasted for a short period of time.



For additional information read "Memories" on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

Analytical Thinking

To make common sense decisions in life we need the mental ability to collect relevant information, evaluate and weigh options by considering the potential outcomes and risks, and make choices that provides the greatest benefit for our wellbeing.

Unfortunately, we often fail to use this God-given ability. For example, how many times have you responded to a situation without evaluating options and the consequences and/or benefits for each option; and afterward you looked back with remorse because you made the wrong decision. (Me...more times than I'd like to consider!)

From a spiritual perspective, accepting or rejecting Jesus Christ involves the same analytical process of collecting relevant information, weighing options, and making a decision. What's more, this same process occurs each time we are faced with a temptation or in the midst of a trial. In addition, this analytical process may occur within a very short period of time (i.e. a fraction of a second), or may take a significant amount of time.

It is my personal opinion there is a correlation between the degree of spiritual maturity and the amount of analytical thinking that occurs when a Christian is faced with an important decision. It is also my personal opinion that most immediate responses to situations—without analysis—is primarily driven by the flesh. Whereas, a mature Christian who is driven by the Spirit will:

- Refrain from a “knee-jerk” response to the situation.
- Pray for wisdom and guidance.
- Collect and evaluate information.
- Identify optional responses.
- Select the best response that glorifies God.

In addition, our analytical abilities are used for more than simply making decisions. Can you identify a few?

Self-Awareness

God designed us with an ability to look “inward” and analytically evaluate our thoughts, motivations, emotions, and reasons for our behavior. We are able to see:

- The good, the bad, and the ugly.
- When we tell the truth and when we lie.
- Our sinful nature.
- Our conscience (an awareness of right from wrong).
- The pain associated with guilt, remorse, and bad memories.
- Our pride.
- The influential changes upon our heart and soul by the Holy Spirit.

In addition, self-awareness facilitates how we interact with other persons, including discernment, skepticism, empathy, and forgiveness. By knowing what we are like on the inside—including how our “internal status” affects how we behave—we are able to gain greater insight into our own behavior and the behavior of other persons.

Here is an interesting question to consider: If we were not designed with self-awareness, how would someone realize they are a sinner and in need of a Savior?

Our ability to look inward and analyze what's “inside” was demonstrated by Jeremiah when he declared the truth about our sinful nature. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9

Pride

“Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” Proverbs 16:5

C. S. Lewis is regarded as one of the greatest Christian apologists of the twentieth century. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis referred to pride as the great sin, the essential vice, and the utmost evil. He also added, “Pride is a spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.”

Unfortunately, pride is a component of our sinful flesh and is common to all. What’s more, pride is a clandestine “slippery slope” in that it provides a deceitful feeling of pleasure and/or satisfaction derived from:

- One's own achievements.
- Personal attributes.
- Possessions.
- Recognition, respect and accolades from other persons.

But what’s worse, pride creates an internal barrier and stumbling block that makes it difficult for a person to admit their sin, realize they are unable to inherit eternal life based upon their own strength, and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

“The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.” Psalm 10:4

In addition, pride may cause a Christian—who has been blessed by God with attributes to glorify Him—to delusionally consider their God-given talents from a self-centered and prideful perspective:

- Look at me because of what I can do.
- I am important and worthy of recognition!

This disregard for the true source of one’s gifts will result in:

- A distortion and reduction in the ability to see and understand spiritual truths.
- The loss of the most important gift anyone on earth can have: a relationship with God.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18

Therefore, it is imperative that we each take an honest look at our unmerited (undeserved, unearned) salvation in God’s grace through Jesus Christ—which is the greatest gift any person can receive—and compare it against our insignificant attributes, accomplishments, and/or possessions. Once we realize all we “are” and all we “have” is because of Him, is when we will lay our “crowns” at His feet in worship and prayer, and give humble thanks to God for the wondrous things He has done—for He alone is worthy of honor and praise.

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:6

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Romans 12:3

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:23-24

For additional information read “Pride” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.



Emotions

God created us in His image. Throughout the Bible, scripture reveals the emotions God experiences such as sadness, anger, disgust, and joy. As such, God gave humans with an ability to respond to various situations in life with a variety of feelings such as joy, sorrow, fear, anger, love, and so forth. These emotional feelings can range from a subliminal and unnoticeable influence, to a strong feeling, and to an overwhelming force. In addition, they can arise without warning and forethought, and can cause one to behave in a way that has not been checked (and approved) by rational thought. As such (and unfortunately) there are times when our emotions completely take over our thoughts and actions that results in regrettable behavior.

Although the list of different emotions we experience is larger, psychologists generally agree there are six basic emotions: sadness, anger, disgust, fear, surprise, and happiness. In addition, psychologists agree these basic emotions are innate (inborn, instinctive) and cross-cultural.

When you consider the list of basic emotions, sadness, anger, disgust and fear are undesirable emotions, surprise can be desirable depending upon the situation, and happiness is the most desired.

Consider what would life be like without emotions? For example, imagine going to a sporting event where everyone sits in the seats and watches with no emotion, are expressionless, and displays no excitement. Given this scenario, do you think anyone would care to watch the sporting event?

EMOTIONS



For additional information (including how to manage emotions) read “Emotions” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

Conscience

God has given us a conscience: an inner awareness of thoughts and behavior that are wrong, versus thoughts and behavior that are right. We know it is wrong to lie, steal and murder. We also know it is a good thing when we tell the truth, help those who are in need, and never use the name of God as a swear word.

In Exodus 20:3-17, God gave the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people to define a “minimal standard” of good and correct behaviors for His chosen people. The commandments—which are based upon common sense—are followed by Gentiles (non-Jews) even though they have not formally received these documented commandments (on stone tablets) from God—because it is designed within our nature.

“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.” Romans 2:14-15

Note how the bolded words in the above scripture insightfully reveals what happens when we break one of God’s commandments. Our conscience will accuse us for not doing what we know is right. To overcome this disconnect between what we know what is right and what we did was wrong, some will attempt to find a means to justify their actions by finding an excuse for the behavior. However, a Christian—with a heart that earnestly seeks God—will experience another God designed attribute when they sin: guilt.

Here is an interesting and revealing exercise. Take some time to reflect upon your “right from wrong list” before and after you knew Jesus Christ.

Guilt

Guilt is comprised of a negative feeling that occurs when a person does something bad or wrong. When a Christian is faced with a temptation—and willingly sins—the magnitude of guilt is magnified, and can become caustic within the heart and soul. At times our guilt may include strong negative emotions such as sadness (my behavior was against the will of God who loves me), anger (at ourselves because we did not listen to nor comply with the way of escape), and disgust (towards the sin, how we willingly believed the lie, and are now suffering the consequences).

However, this corrosive combination of thoughts and emotions is a very good thing because this caustic internal experience is God's way of chastising us when we fail. We will remember the pain we experienced the next time we are tempted. This pain—which is a worse experience than the delusional perception of sin benefits—adds to our spiritual strength in overcoming temptation.

We are God's children. In the same manner a parent will lovingly punish their child when they do things that are wrong, God also chastens those whom He loves. [“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”](#) Hebrews 12:5-7

God Awareness

God gave us the ability to mentally visualize via our imagination something that is intangible. However, the most important use of our imagination is when we consider the existence of God—for He is a Spirit and not physically present (which is why he designed us with imagination). There are revealing precious moments, when we take the time to reflectively look at the world around us, and when we deeply consider the interdependence and synergistic interaction of all that is living and non-living. This is when our imagination begins to “connect the dots” of what is not readily visible. This is when we become increasingly aware that everything on earth did not happen by chance, and this is when we are able to conceptualize the existence of God who created all that is on earth and in the universe—and we believe He exists.

[“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.”](#) Romans 1:20

[“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.”](#) Psalm 19:1

[“But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this.”](#) Job 12:7-9

Unfortunately, man's realization that a higher power exists has resulted in vain attempts to define who He is—which is reflected in the various religions that have existed throughout history (including the worship of idols). Today, it is estimated that there are more than 4,000 religions in the world, and more than 80% of the global population identifies with a religious group.

Sources:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religions_and_spiritual_traditions
- <https://www.learnreligions.com/how-many-religions-are-there-in-the-world-5114658>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/27/religion-why-is-faith-growing-and-what-happens-next>

In response to man's various attempts to define God, Jesus said, [“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”](#) John 14:6

Hope

Hope is a foundational and optimistic perception that there is a possibility of a better future. Hope can make a tough situation more bearable; help to manage stress, anxiety, and oppressive emotions; and can motivate us to take steps that will improve our lives.

Sometimes challenges we face in life can become completely overwhelming—resulting in sadness and depression. When this occurs, never give up and hold onto hope—even when you are in the “deepest of life’s valleys” or in the “midst of torrential storms.” Dr. Judith Rich, a teacher and author wrote: “Hope is a match in a dark tunnel, a moment of light, just enough to reveal the path ahead and ultimately the way out.”

Regardless of the turmoil and present circumstances, our hope is bolstered when we remember the promises God has made to those who love Him.

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

John described what will occur in the future: “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” Revelation 21:3-4

Here are additional scriptures that help strengthen our hope.

“That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Ephesians 2:12

“Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13

“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” Romans 8:24-25

“Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:2-5

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23

“That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.” Hebrews 6:18-19

Belief

While hope is a foundational and optimistic perception of positive future outcomes, belief a progressive step beyond hope in that it is an acceptance that the object of our hope is true or that it exists—without tangible evidence. In addition, our hopes and beliefs are interdependent, synergistic, and influence our behavior.

- Imagine the negative impact upon someone's belief in something or someone if they had no hope of a positive future outcome.
- Belief strengthens hope. For example, our belief in God and His promises bolsters our hope.
- Our hope in a positive future outcome, combined with the belief that the positive future outcome is real and attainable, will cause a motivation to move towards experiencing the desired outcome.

However, it is important to note that Jesus did not say have hope in Him. But rather, He said believe in Him. What's more, belief is the "key" to eternal salvation.

- "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Mark 9:23
- "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." John 6:47
- "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29

If obtaining eternal life is as simple as believing in Jesus Christ, why do people decide not to believe in Him? Jesus gave the answer to this question in John 3:18-21. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." John 3:18-21

God designed us with hope and belief so that we could utilize and focus these attributes in His Son. However, those who prefer sin, will utilize and focus their hope and belief into lies and darkness.

Faith

"God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." Romans 12:3

Faith is the next progressive step beyond hope and belief because faith will emerge from within us as a behavioral response. The outward expression of our faith is facilitated by an assurance of what we hope for will occur, and a conviction in our belief.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

From a spiritual perspective, our faith in God should be demonstrated in various ways by what we say and do for His glory (i.e. our "works"). Otherwise, our faith is useless and has no eternal value.

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." James 2:14-17

Trust

Trust is the next progressive step beyond faith. Trust is a free will choice that involves vulnerability as we “give” an indescribable “internal part” of us to whom we extend our trust. What’s more, trust is the highest personal attribute one can give, and one can earn.

When we extend trust, it is supported by hope, faith and beliefs, such as:

- They have my best interests at heart.
- They are prepared to help or defend me, and provide assistance if needed.
- They will not let me down.

However, trust is extremely fragile. When trust is broken it “hurts” deep on the inside, causes us to experience painful emotions, and can leave scars on our heart and soul. What’s more, once trust is broken it will never achieve the same degree once extended/received.

God desires our whole-hearted trust. However, each and every one of us will encounter events in our lives that will challenge our hope, belief, faith, and trust in God. It is inevitable. Reasons why may never be understood until we are with Him in Heaven. For example, I was 15-years old when my father died of lung cancer at a young age of 38. And as long as I live on this earth I will never understand why. But deep in my heart I have decided to trust God. As such, I am confident I will know why my father died when I am on the other side.

“In Him you also **trusted**, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 1:13

“**Trust** in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6



For more information on hope, belief, faith and trust read “Trust” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

External Attributes

God designed within us multiple attributes that supports interaction with other people, enables the development of relationships, and facilitates loving other persons (the second greatest commandment).

Ability to Communicate

God designed humans so that they can communicate at a “high level” with one another via a variety of means. We are able to communicate our feelings, beliefs, opinions, and emotions. We are able to use our imagination and analytical thinking to convert complex ideas and concepts into simplified messaging that facilitates understanding when communicated. We are able to summarize key points discussed within a conversation to verify understanding is accurate. We are able to communicate by tone of our voice, body language, sign-language, pictures, symbols, gestures, written words, and so forth. In addition, humans speak different languages, and some persons are multi-lingual.

However, the most important reason why God designed us with the capacity to communicate is so that we are able to communicate with Him in prayer.

A Need to Love and Be Loved

We are uniquely designed with a need for reciprocal love that is unconditional; and with the whole heart, mind and soul. This basic human need is reflected in songs, plays, television, movies, and literature; and is expressed by touch, words, and behavior.

Consider how you feel on the inside when you meaningfully hug someone who meaningfully hugs you. There is a fleeting moment of an indescribable feeling of elation as each person’s soul connects spiritually. What’s more, anxieties and daily issues seem to disappear during the embrace.

Our innate need to be loved begins during infancy. For example, there have been numerous studies on the significant and numerous physical ill-effects upon infants caused by deprivation of maternal care—which continued later in life in the form of severe emotional and psychiatric problems.

Sources:

- [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/40724/WHO_MONO_2_\(part1.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/40724/WHO_MONO_2_(part1.pdf?sequence=1)
- <https://drdavidhamilton.com/why-children-need-love-to-grow/>

It is important to remember we are made in the image of God, and He designed us with all of the attributes necessary to love Him in return. God has always desired a personal, intimate, and loving relationship with His creation, starting with Adam and Eve. However, Adam and Eve (and countless numbers after them) decided to not obey God and turned their hearts away from Him.

God’s commandments are given to us because of His love, they are for our personal wellbeing, and are for our spiritual benefit. As one grows in God’s grace and love, the motivation for obeying His commandments becomes stronger as it transitions from doing what is right, to pleasing Him (as a reciprocal expression of our love).

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” 1 John 5:3

Jesus said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” John 14:21

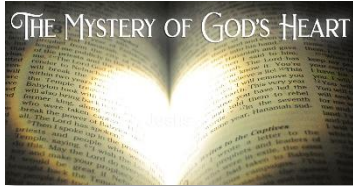
Loving God with all of our heart, soul and mind fulfills the first greatest commandment. Loving others fulfills the second greatest commandment.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 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.” 1 John 4:7-10

For those who desire to know and love God:

“You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me.” Proverbs 8:17



For more information read “The Mystery of God’s Heart” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

Thankfulness

Humans are designed with an ability to express thankfulness (gratitude and appreciation) when someone does something for us. This is especially so when someone helps us without our direct request and without any expectation of reimbursement.

Psychological research has found gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. In addition, gratitude creates positive emotions, improves health, and facilitates strong relationships.

Sources:

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gratitude>
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain

From a spiritual perspective, when we worship God, we express our thankfulness, praise, joy, and love.

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Colossians 2:6-7

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

“Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.” Psalm 100

Take a moment and imagine what it will be like when we collectively worship in Heaven. Thankfully, God gave us a glimpse through John’s account of what he witnessed. “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’” Revelation 7:9-12

Discernment

God also gave us an attribute of discernment, or behavioral insight. Behavioral insight is an innate ability to see, evaluate, and make judgments of persons based upon their words and actions.

Because of our design attributes of self-awareness and analytical thinking, we have a propensity (tendency, inclination) to use these capabilities to evaluate, form opinions, and judge other persons.

However, a true and accurate understanding of what's going on inside a person's heart and soul can only occur spiritually by the Holy Spirit. When this revelation occurs, the experience is accompanied by a compassion and empathy for the heart and soul of the person who is revealed. This is when you can feel their pain. This is when you no longer have control over your emotions as tears begin to rise from deep within your soul as you cry for their condition. This is when you are spiritually influenced by the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit.

- This is only a "taste" of the compassion Jesus had for the multitudes, and the love God has towards us.
- Those who have had this experience find it difficult to describe from a physical perspective, because it is spiritual.
- When the Holy Spirit moves through you:
 - The control and influence of your sinful flesh vanishes.
 - Earthly factors that seemed important just a short time ago disappear.
 - As you wipe away your tears you realize you are enveloped in a degree of peace that passes all understanding. Philippians 4:7
 - This is when you begin to truly worship God from the depths of your heart and soul for who He is, for His holiness, for His love, and for His Son who died for us.
 - This is when God's perfect love can flow through you.



For more information read "Judgment vs Spiritual Discernment" on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

Skepticism

God designed us with an attribute of skepticism—which may be simply defined as doubting the truth of something or someone. Skepticism will raise an internal "uneasy feeling" or "red flag" warning that something is not right, will cause us to hit a "pause button" that stops us from believing what we see or hear, will cause us to not accept what is presented at face value, and will cause us to evaluate the validity of what we are witnessing.

Spiritually, skepticism leverages discernment and analytical thinking as a means to protect us against harmful and evil influences. Without this God-given attribute we would believe (and accept as true) everything we see and hear. As such, skepticism is a good thing as long as it is used properly and does not overwhelm our perception.

Jesus warned us about those who profess to know God, but attempt to hide their lies and evil intent behind a façade of "appropriate Christian behavior." However, when you look closely, you will see indicators of behavior (their tainted "fruits") that will cause skepticism to rise. Jesus said, **"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."** Matthew 7:15-20

In addition, skepticism will become more prevalent for Christians as we enter into the last days. Jesus warned us about last day deception: for there will be many who will declare they are Jesus Christ. Jesus said, **"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many."** Mark 15:5-6

When we experience skepticism, we will (1) doubt and question behavior, or the truth of a stated fact or opinion; and (2) seek evidence that supports or rejects the behavior, stated fact or opinion. When this occurs:

- Pray for spiritual guidance and the revelation of truth.
- Do not accept what they do and what they say at face value.
- Use discernment to evaluate their persona, behavior and words (which reflects the spiritual condition of their heart and soul).
- Seek to determine if a stated fact or opinion is comprised of one or more of Satan's lying techniques: a mixture of truth and falsehoods, a twisting of the truth into a different meaning, and making a difficult to prove absolute statement.
- Evaluate the validity of a stated fact or opinion by seeking different sources of verifiable and indisputable facts.
- Test everything against scripture.

Altruism

Altruism may be defined as a selfless concern for the wellbeing of others.

["But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" 1 John 3:17](#)

We are designed with an intrinsic desire to help others. For example, we have seen news videos of persons risking their life to save someone who is in distress, people volunteering in soup kitchens, and persons building Habitat for Humanity homes. In addition, consider the motivating influences of altruism upon nurses, firefighters, police officers, social workers, and teachers—who are driven by a basic need to help others and better their community.

However, Jesus defined altruism on a completely different level not commonly known to man: servanthood. In Mark 9:33-35, Jesus reveals the spiritual importance of being a servant. The apostles were arguing amongst themselves who would be the greatest. Jesus said to them, **"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."** In Mark 10:35-44, two of His apostles (James and John) asked for a position of importance and power by sitting on his right and left side when Jesus enters into His glory. However, Jesus turned their perception of earthly power upside down—for within the heavenly realms it is not the rulers who exercise authority, but those who serve. **"Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"**

Jesus Christ, God's Son, the most powerful man to ever walk upon the earth, had every right to be served as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. However, He did not desire earthly recognition, praise and honor. He did not desire to be lifted up, worshipped, and sit on an earthly throne. But rather, He desired to obey the will of His Father, demonstrated spiritual servanthood, and gave His body as a living sacrifice for our sins.

["Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."](#) Philippians 2:5-11

Empathy

To facilitate the second greatest commandment, humans need an ability to mentally and emotionally relate to other persons. Empathy is commonly defined as imagining oneself in another person's situation—including experiencing their feelings, thoughts, and emotions.

Supported by our imagination, analytical ability, memories, self-awareness, and discernment, we are able to vicariously experience the feelings of happiness when someone is expressing joy, or compassion for the heart and soul of someone who is going through a traumatic event in their life.

Our empathy may be influenced and magnified by the Holy Spirit when we encounter someone who has (or is) experiencing trauma in their life. This is when we no longer have control over our emotions as tears begin to rise from deep within our soul, we weep for their condition, and we pray for their healing. What's more, this experience will create a "spiritual bond" with the person.

- This is only a "taste" of the compassion Jesus had for the multitudes, and the love God has towards us.
- Those who have had this experience find it difficult to describe, because it is spiritual.
- When the Holy Spirit moves through us:
 - The control and influence of our sinful flesh vanishes.
 - Earthly factors that seemed important just a short time ago disappear.
 - As we wipe away our tears, we realize we are enveloped in peace that passes all understanding. Philippians 4:7
 - This is when we begin to truly worship God from the depths of our heart and soul for who He is, for His holiness, for His love, and for His Son who died for us.
 - This is when God's perfect love can flow through us.

["Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Romans 12:15](#)

Here are some questions to consider regarding empathy.

- What role do you think empathy has in a loving relationship?
- How many marriages end in a divorce because both partners do not know, understand, and are unable to empathetically relate to each other?
- Without empathy, how does one normally respond to another who is expressing various forms of negativity.

Additional information on empathy:

- <https://lesley.edu/article/the-psychology-of-emotional-and-cognitive-empathy>
- <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/11/feature-cultivating-empathy>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/liking-the-child-you-love/201807/you-cant-fall-back-in-love-without-doing>

Forgiveness

God's grace, combined with empathy, facilitates forgiveness. Empathy mentally puts ourselves in their shoes and enables us to look at the world through their perspective. When we consider God's grace, and are able to correlate our experiences to their experience, it makes it easier to forgive someone who has done something wrong—especially if we are also guilty of a similar mistake.

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

God has designed within us a means to overcome the deep pain and emotional scars caused by someone who has harmed us. Sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse, theft, lies, and slander comprise a short list of malicious behaviors that can leave a deep scar in our heart and soul. As such, most of us can relate to the overwhelming anger, hate, and desire for retribution that continually boils under the surface—but at times can explode like a volcano—resulting in devastation and remorse.

Here are a couple of thought-provoking questions to consider:

1. If we are forgiven by God's grace and mercy for everything we have done, what right do we have to hold onto unforgiveness towards someone else?
2. Who receives the greatest benefit when a person truly forgives someone for what they have done? Is it the one who did the harm, or the one who forgives?

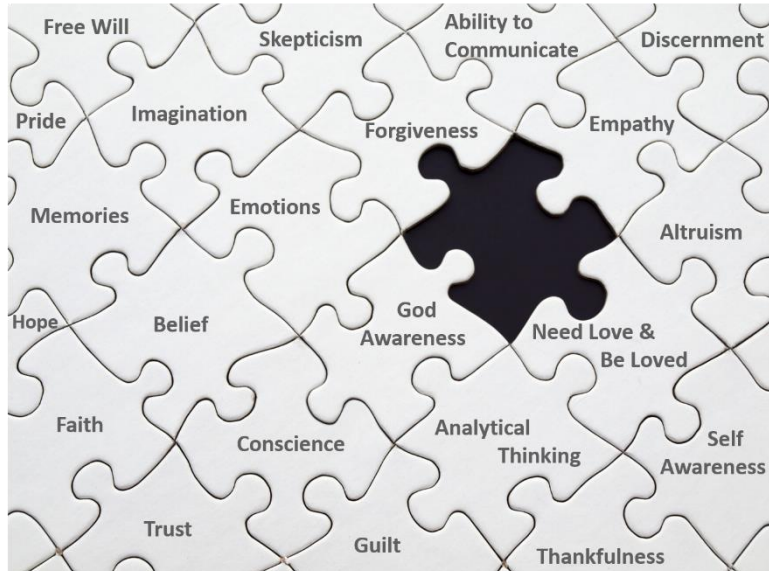
“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:30-32



For more information on forgiveness, read “The Power of Forgiveness” on UniqueBibleStudies.com

Additional Considerations

Spiritual Void on the Inside



There is another aspect of our design which may or may not be considered an attribute—but yet has a purpose. God designed humans with an empty “hole,” or void on the inside. The hole is difficult to describe other than it is a part of us that is missing, and it causes us to feel subliminally “unfulfilled.” Many vainly attempt to fill it with drugs, sex, power, wealth, fame, and so forth. Others turn to false philosophies or religions, hoping these will lead them to the truth and fill the void. However, each of these “hole fillers” never last. Tragically, some discover they have almost destroyed their lives in their vain attempt to fill the void.

Similar to each of our God-designed attributes, the hole God created within each of us is also spiritual. As such, only the Holy Spirit can fill the void—which occurs when we place our hope, belief and faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Here is an interesting point to ponder. The purpose of the void becomes more evident when you consider a scenario where humans were designed without the void, were filled, and contented. As such, would humans have a need for anything, and would they need God and seek Him?

Anthropomorphism

Some may read the content of this lesson and perceive some of the attributes are demonstrated by animals. And rightfully so, because animals (especially pets) seem to demonstrate human emotions (anger, guilt, joy), a need to be loved, and so forth.

However, the perception of animals exhibiting human attributes is referred to as anthropomorphism. Psychology defines anthropomorphism as a perception that animals exhibit human characteristics, emotions, and behaviors. For example, we may perceive a dog is acting guilty when they’ve peed on the carpet. But in reality, the perceived guilt is a human emotion that we project onto the dog. It’s our way of making sense of animal behaviors (based upon our frame of reference).

It is also important to note that anthropomorphism may also occur with non-living objects, such as a child playing with a teddy bear, or as a consequence of worshipping an idol.

This misperception by humans has been studied extensively by the medical community for years. The two links below provide examples of the different types of analysis and findings thus far.

Sources:

- <https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~kiesler/anthropomorphism-org/psychology2.html>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4021380/>

Personally, I like the idea of perceiving a pet having human-like attributes. Besides, to me, “house pets” are designed by God to give us joy, friendship, and comfort—which is beneficial and a good thing. However, it is also beneficial to realize God designed us with attributes that completely transcend the animal kingdom.

Summary

Each of our God-given attributes are designed to assist us in living our daily lives. But more important, each of the attributes:

1. Are spiritual because they reside within our heart and soul.
2. Are used by the Holy Spirit to influence who we are and what we do.
3. Enable us to fulfill the 1st and 2nd great commandment declared by Jesus: to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind; and to love one another.

I pray this lesson has opened your spiritual eyes to see how we are designed by God; how and why we do what we do; and what we need to do to align ourselves with God's desire for each of us.

May God Richly Bless You,
Harold D. Thomas

Can you think of one person who may benefit from reading this lesson? If yes...pass it on!