

Episode 235

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. Gwen and Nelson are joining me again today as we continue our series on the attributes of God. The attributes of God are crucially important to study. It's not just a theological exercise, but ultimately helps us to get to know God better. And that's ultimately the goal of Scripture, help us to come into an intimate relationship with God, to know Him, to understand Him, to know His will, and understand each of His attributes helps us along that path. So Gwen is the Associate Editor for Got Questions Ministries and also our Volunteer Coordinator, and Nelson is our Director of Video Content. So Gwen, Nelson, thank you for joining me again today. We're going to be covering two different attributes in today's episode. First is, what does it mean that God is eternal? And second, what does it mean that God is infinite? Two closely related but different and important to understand the differences between the two.

Shea Houdmann

For God is eternal, think of God's relationship to time. God has always existed, and God always will exist, and that's different from us being created beings. There was a time we did not exist, but then according to Scripture, we will live eternally. But that doesn't mean we're eternal, because ultimately we did have a beginning. So a helpful way of seeing the difference between the two. But Gwen, in your study of God's eternity, what were some of the key scriptures or key points that particularly stood out to you?

Gwen Sellers

Well, one thing for me was linking God's eternity with another attribute known as the aseity of God or the self-existence of God. So that's this idea that God just is. He's dependent on no one else, which links with eternity, right? Like God just always has been, he always will be, he just is. So the scripture that comes to mind for me with that is Exodus 3:13 through 14. So this is when God is talking to Moses out of the burning bush, telling him, you know, you're going to go to Egypt and bring the people back. And so Moses says, So if I come to the people of Israel and say to them the God of your fathers has sent me to you. And they ask me, what is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say this to the people of Israel, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God Issac, and the God Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever. And this is to be remembered throughout all generations.

Gwen Sellers

So that I am who I am is basically God saying, like, I just am, you know, it's like, I am who I've always been. I will always be this person. But what I love in this passage is he also links it to, and that's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So we see that God is eternal and separate and other, and yet also so personal. And I just love that, like, interaction of big and small. Nelson, what for you comes to mind with God's eternity?

Nelson Domingues

I think like most of God's attributes, they're hard for us even to correctly think about them. These are the kinds of things that hurt our brains. I mean, the idea that something or someone has no beginning or no end is completely foreign to humanity, right? Everything we know, everything we experience and see and touch, you know, is within time. You know, it had a beginning, it had an end. Even the most ancient of relics that we see and we get to look at the pyramids or things way older than that, they had a beginning. There was a time when they were not. And same thing with us. We celebrate birthdays, we celebrate anniversaries, all these sorts of different things. We bound our lives by time, you know, on our watch, our calendars. And to think that God stands outside of time is difficult. But we have to remember that he created all things, right? And so he created time. And so he stands completely outside of time. There is no boundary for him in the sense where he had no beginning. He has no end. He always was.

Nelson Domingues

Revelation 1, verse 8 reminds us, I am the Alpha, the beginning, and the Omega, which means the end, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Right? Like, he just is. And Job 36, verse 26 says, Behold, God is great, and we know him not. The number of his years is unsearchable. And so, when we think about the eternity of God, it reminds us of his—reminds me of his majesty, of his glory. He's just so much bigger than I can even give him credit for. I can't explain this well enough for us to totally encapsulate the true depth of what this means. But this should give us a peace and assurance to know that there wasn't a time in any history of ours where he wasn't there. From our—from before we were born until after we die in eternity, he's there, and we get to spend eternity with him as well. And so, this is one of these attributes of God that I think brings immense comfort because he stands outside of everything else, everything we know. He has always been. And so, when I think about that, it brings me comfort to know that God is always there and will always be there.

Nelson Domingues

And the fact that he's eternal means he's unchanging, right? Like, he's completely unchanging. He wasn't one way before. He isn't one way today. He's going to be another way tomorrow. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And he doesn't change. And so, the fact that he says he loves me, he knows my past. He knows my present. He knows my future. And that brings me tremendous comfort, the fact that he says he'll walk beside me. And again, he knew my past. He knows what I'm going through now, and he knows what I will go through. And again, that brings me a lot of comfort, too, in that he doesn't change. Everything we know changes. We change. The world around us change. Even rocks erode, right? But God does not. He was always who he is, unchanging, perfect. He's eternal.

Shea Houdmann

Nelson, you jumped ahead in our series a little bit to the unchanging nature, but I love how you tied it in to God's eternality. Because, yes, even as Gwen was saying, God is who he is, is who he was, and is who he always will be. So God's eternality definitely has a connection to God's unchanging nature, his immutability, and that we can trust that God is eternally the same.

Shea Houdmann

It's funny, at Got Questions along the lines of, what was God doing before he created the universe? I'm not a physics expert, but from what physics is telling us, time is connected to gravity and energy and light and distance. All these things are all woven together. Can you even say there was a before God created the universe, because God seems to have even created time when he created the universe. How is that going to work in eternity with God in heaven? To what degree will he experience time? That's another big question. I love, Nelson, your conclusion in that eternality of God provides comfort, and that we know not only will God always be there, but also God already is there. He's not bound by time like we are. We can trust that he's in control and always will be, that we don't have to—maybe God wasn't aware of something in the future. No, God is already there, and he already has been there, and already has been, will be there. It's just fun to think about those sort of things, but ultimately, like all of God's attributes, as we get to know God's better, it helps us to trust him even more than we do knowing all things are perfectly under his control, including time itself.

Gwen Sellers

I had those same thoughts about the comfort and trustworthy part of just knowing that God is, yeah, is who he always is going to be, and so that unchanging of, okay, I can rest, that God is going to be steadfast and firm regardless. But then also that, yeah, that there is something bigger and outside of me and even outside of time. So when everything here changes, it's

like, well, that's okay because we're all resting on something bigger and consistent. And yeah, that does just bring so much peace and comfort.

Gwen Sellers

I was actually with a group just last night, and we talked about 2 Peter 3:8-10, with the Lord a thousand days was like a year, or a thousand years was like a day, let's get that right. And the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God?

Gwen Sellers

So just that idea of, because God is eternal, he's not in a rush. And we can wait, and we can trust, and Shea, like you were saying, it's like, well, actually both of you said God created time. And so I think we can get so, or at least I can get so bound up in time, and this needs to happen now, or what if this never happens, or everything is happening too fast. It's all about time, time, time. But for God, it's really not. And yet he still did choose to make us and to make time and to make time part of our experience. So yeah, it's a little mind-blowing, really, for us, which connects back to our last podcast episode of the incomprehensibility of God. How does eternity really make sense in our minds? It doesn't.

Nelson Domingues

It's also comforting to know that, like you mentioned, I think, that he's already there. Like, as we pray for our day tomorrow, what might happen, as we pray for a loved one who's sick and God to heal them, he's already there with them. He's already with us in that future space and time. And I think that's a huge comfort. God learns nothing, right? He knows all things already. We'll talk about that at a different time. But the fact that he doesn't have to be told anything, he doesn't have to not know what's going to happen. He knows all things. He is, and was, and will be. And again, those things bring us tremendous comfort to know that, God, I'm worried about tomorrow, but you're already there. I'm worried about next year, but you're already there. You already know these things. And I don't have to be scared of the uncertainty of life, because again, while we are finite, he's infinite, right? And so, as we move forward in our discussion, we'll talk about that a little bit more. But yeah, his eternity is awesome because he's already there. He's already taken care of me in my future and the people I'm praying for.

Shea Houdmann

I think as I intro topic of eternity, we tend to think of it just about length of time. But it's more about, as we've been discussing, God's relationship to time. Yes, God has existed from eternity past, eternity future, before time, after time, if that's even a comprehensible concept. But ultimately, it's not about God just living forever on both ends of the spectrum. It's God's relationship. He is above and beyond the limitations of time. He not only created time, but he's above it and in control of it. And there's numerous passages in Scripture that speak to this, and exactly what Gwen, Nelson, and I have been trying to focus on here, but should enable us to trust God more.

Shea Houdmann

In Psalm 90, we read verses 1 to 4, Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, wherever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. You return man to dust and say, return, O children of man. For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch of the night. You sweep them away with the flood, there like a dream, like the grass that is renewed in the morning.

Shea Houdmann

So, as Gwen had quoted earlier in 2 Peter, where this verse is quoted, it's not saying that God views a thousand years exactly like a day, or a day like a thousand years, it's the passage of time is completely different for God than it is for us. And I love how Scripture points us again and again and again, God's eternity should help us to trust Him more, knowing that He's not only in control of the future, He's already there.

Nelson Domingues

I think we see this in the story of Lazarus as well, where they're upset that he didn't get there in time, and he knew exactly the time to be there, and the time in relationship to the people, and the lesson that they needed to learn, and what was going on, and for us to find comfort in the fact that nothing is beyond his control, nothing slips out of his hands, even life itself He's there, and he can resurrect from the dead. He can pull things out from what we think is the past and over and done, and he can bring new life out of all these things. And so, when they told him, you know, you're too late, if you just had shown up a little earlier, God could have said, I was already there, and I'm already here, and I will be there. Like, the idea of someone telling God he's late, or he's not in time yet is only something that we can relate to. For God, time doesn't matter, He's already in those spaces.

Shea Houdmann

God's eternity, it's an attribute that most people would say, that's one I can understand, but the more you dig into it, the more you're like, yes, we can understand it in the sense of what God has revealed to us, but it's not something we can experience, because it's more than just the length of time, it's more the quality of God's relationship to time and being above and beyond it. So, the fact that God is infinite, it's harder to understand. It's related to eternity, but it's not exactly the same thing. So, Nelson, on this one, what does it mean that God is infinite, and how do we relate to that attribute?

Nelson Domingues

Infinite, or the fact that He's infinite, relates to the fact that He has no limits. He has no boundaries. There's nothing that stops Him. There's nothing too heavy, there's nothing too hard, there's nothing too fast, there's nothing too slow, there's nothing too deep in knowledge, there's nothing too, you know, anything we can think in our mind, I'm just even struggling, there are no boundaries placed on Him. And that also means that there are no ends to what He offers and gives. For instance, His love, or His mercy, or His grace, He doesn't run out. He doesn't have only enough for a certain amount of people or for a certain amount of time. He is limitless in His ability to love and to care, but also in His ability to dole out wrath for sin and His rage against anger. He is unlimited in the idea where He doesn't and will never want to be around sin. He will forever be holy. And so when we think about that God is infinite, it's the idea that you cannot place any boundary on God. There is no boundary that He cannot cross. There is no boundary that can contain who He is. That's the things I think about immediately.

Gwen Sellers

I thought about, yeah, that idea of when God is infinite, that means all of His other attributes He has to the fullness. So like you were saying, Nelson, when God is gracious, He doesn't run out. That means I can, I mean, kind of with the journal, like I can trust God because He just is who He is, but then it's also, and He has all of that stuff. So, you know, I mean, we think of human love and a lot of it doesn't really run out. I mean, you think of like the way your parents love you, hopefully that doesn't like run out. But I mean, but the way God loves is so much deeper and even more. And I think of this as related to salvation, especially, and kind of linking back to eternity with that too of, you know, people talk about, okay, so our sin against God, since He's infinite, it's an infinite offense. And so therefore you need an infinite sacrifice and thus you have to have, like Jesus had to be fully human and fully God to make it work. But that to me is just, oh, salvation is complete because God has accomplished it. And the same, you know, I'm thinking with Him being eternal means like God can save me for eternity. It's not just, well, I can save you for

a time, but you know, like then it's over. So again, just that trust that we can have in God, because He is complete in a way that we can't even fathom completion is what infinite brings to mind for me.

Shea Houdmann

For sure. Studying for this, the Got Questions article, it links God being infinite to God's omniscience, meaning God has infinite knowledge. His omnipotence, meaning God has infinite power. His omnipresence, meaning God's present is infinitely everywhere at the same time. So Gwen, I like how you described it, how infinite is a way of almost an adjective for all of God's other attributes. God possesses love in infinite measure. God, grace and mercy, all those things, they're not limited in any sense.

Shea Houdmann

But when I think of the most famous quote in the pop culture for infinite, it's when Buzz Lightyear in Toy Story says, to infinity and beyond. That's a misunderstanding of infinity at its core. If it's something infinite, there can't be anything beyond that, because then if there's something beyond it, that's not infinity. So I think the key point Scripture is pointing to when it refers to God being infinite is that he is not limited, as Nelson said. Everything about him is to the absolute maximum that is possible. Can you even throw that word out there? With the word infinity, just God is limitless. You can see how that's applied.

Shea Houdmann

And as we go through more attributes of God later on in the series, we'll see how all of God's attributes are both holy, as we discussed in the last episode, and all of the attributes are absolutely perfect, free from taint. They're set apart from any other being's attributes, but also infinite, and God possesses them to an infinite measure, and absolutely no limit, no restriction whatsoever. And as both of you pointed out, both the eternality and God being infinite should comfort us in that we know we serve, we worship, we have a relationship with a God who can guarantee his promises because he is not limited, who can guarantee our eternal future because there's absolutely nothing that could prevent him from fulfilling his promises to us. So, both of these attributes today should provide us with comfort and enable us to trust God more and more because we know not only is he in the future, but he also has the power to guarantee the future that he's promised us in Christ.

Nelson Domingues

One of the things that bring me comfort about God being infinite is what that means in both his presence and his capacity to hear. In his presence, I mean, God isn't infinitely everywhere because he's so big that he just covers everything. Like, there's not part of God over there in Colorado and a part of

God over here in Delaware. God is fully present in each of our lives everywhere. His full spirit is fully present in all these areas, and so he's not divided and kind of scattered up between all his people. He's fully present, and he is fully able to hear every thought and every prayer from every person even at the same time. For us, you know, we think of that as an impossibility, but God can give you his 100% attention in a moment just like he can for anyone else because he's infinite, right? He has an infinite capacity to be present and to be paying attention to us.

Nelson Domingues

And so, sometimes we think like, well, I don't think I should pray about this or I should pray about that or these are two small things. I should only pray about the big things in my life. And God's capacity to care is infinite. He wants to hear about the very smallest details of your life, the smallest worries that you might have, and he loves to have that relationship. Again, his capacity to love is infinite as well, and so for him to spend time with us as we draw near to him, Scripture says that he draws near to us, is an amazing reality to know that as you're spending time with him, you're spending time with the fullness of God in prayer or in worship and in any other situation you can think of.

Nelson Domingues

For me, that's tremendously comforting. You know, Psalms 139 verses 7 through 10 reminds us, you know, where can I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to the heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me. And Matthew chapter 19 verse 26 reminds us, with man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. So not only is he everywhere, but he's able to do all things, no boundaries. That's tremendously comforting.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I love that connection that you're making, Nelson, of like seeing God's bigness as a way to know that, so the details of my life, like he's big enough for, not just, oh, he's so big and out there and, you know, I'm so tiny. It's like, oh, great. Like I get the fullness of God in the tiny little details of my day because he has that fullness in completion for everybody. That's an awesome connection.

Gwen Sellers

And I think, you know, kind of like with eternity, eternality of seeing that contrast of here's this eternal God who chose to create time and work within it. And so like Shea brought up Psalm 90 and as it goes on, Moses says, you know, like teach us to number our days aright. So it's like our time is limited,

so we need to pay attention to it. And I think the same thing with God's infinity, like we are limited, but like that's okay. I can go to bed at night knowing the weight of the world is not on my shoulders, it's on God's. And like, so that kind of makes that creature creator distinction, which reminds us again of God's holiness, but also gives us that peace and trust of I can rest because somebody bigger is handling all of this and he's got it. And he's like, you're bringing up Nelson. He sees and cares about the details of my life. So like it's not going to slip his mind. Yeah. Just the way God like works together is cool.

Nelson Domingues

Yeah.

Gwen Sellers

That's why we love God.

Shea Houdmann

Maybe to close this episode, I know we've talked a lot about how God's God being eternal, God being infinite provides comfort. But what's something either for you personally or something maybe that you observed in answering a question for someone or attempting to counsel or encourage someone where you think a biblical understanding of God's eternity or infinity could be particularly helpful in something the person is struggling with?

Shea Houdmann

For me, I look to even as being the CEO of Got Questions. I love what I do 22 years, 22 and a half years now, been leading the ministry, but ultimately I do not know what tomorrow holds. I don't know. I don't know how long my life will be. I do not know how long God plans on using Got Questions, but I can trust that if I'm gone and Got Questions is still around, that God's in control of that just as much as he is in control of this moment. God is not only in control, but he's already there. And God is also infinitely powerful enough to continue to protect, to use, to empower Got Questions as he sees fit. So that's just something for me that I can let go and realize leading Got Questions, yes, ultimately God has placed me in this position for this time, but God is the one who's in control. And I do not have to feel like the weight of the entire ministry is on me, that I'm the one that has to keep this going. No, God will use and continue to use Got Questions for as long as he sees fit. And when and if that day comes where it's no longer a thing, God is still perfectly in control of that situation that time as well. So that's just a comfort as I was preparing for this conversation that God reminded me of in a powerful way. What about you two? What's a way that you can personally or practically with someone else apply God's infinity or eternity?

Nelson Domingues

I think, you know, sort of what I mentioned earlier, just find comfort. And I think it's comforting for others to know that God isn't learning anything about us. He isn't discovering new secrets. He isn't surprised by any events in history or by anything that happens. He doesn't ever think back and feel like he, you know, oh, that was a mistake or this person is a mistake. And I think that's really comforting for a lot of people who might end up in a situation in their life, who through maybe no direct action of their own, that they ended up there and to think that, hey, God is with you even right now. He knew this would happen. He allowed whatever situation in your life to happen. Maybe it was discipline. Maybe it was to teach you. Maybe it was to make you stronger. Maybe it was to make you more empathetic towards others. Whatever the reason might be, God has a very good reason. It wasn't a surprise.

Nelson Domingues

And there are no children who are surprised to God either, right? And so some people think like I was a mistake. My parents never wanted me, things like that. Like that doesn't happen. There's no surprises. There's no new things that happen that God is unaware of. He's in control of all things. Again, he's without boundary and his life is without beginning or end. And so he's there in all of it and has a purpose for every moment, every millisecond of our lives. Now, we can't sometimes describe why. And sometimes it's very difficult. And sometimes that can be challenging for some people to think, God allowed this in my life. But I think Job would have said the very same thing. And so many others would say the same thing. And I think on the other side of eternity, when God teaches you what he's known for eternity, you will agree with him that the path that he's given you in your life was the very best path for your life and for maybe the benefit of countless others perhaps. And so that I think is a very good comfort. There's no surprises with God.

Gwen Sellers

Yeah, I think those are both great. For me, it really is that sense of security, which I think you can apply for people in a lot of different ways. I think a lot of people have angst about the way the world is going. And just that idea of God is outside of this. And he is who he is. And he's infinitely who he is, this good and just God that he says he is. So that idea of we can rely on that. We don't need to rely on whatever's going on in our world, whether it be big world stuff or my life. How is my life going to turn out? Or my job going to turn out? Or my kid's life's going to turn out? Or all manner of little things in our lives that caused angst. I think that this can help.

Gwen Sellers

One thing that came to mind to me earlier today, which I wasn't really expecting, is the way these attributes are related to our view of death and therefore our view of grief. So when a believer dies, they're with the Lord, and that's forever. And they're getting to experience him in his fullness. And wow, how comforting to think of when we're missing a loved one who's died, to just rely on that of, oh, they're with this God who is so much bigger than I can fathom. And they're completely secure in him. And that that's one day where I'll be too. So I think it really just colors our view of daily life and how much angst we're going to have about it, but then ultimately our view of life in general and that this life on this earth is but for a moment. But it's all wrapped up in this God who is eternal and infinite and completely trustworthy.

Shea Houdmann

Exactly. Gwen, I don't think we use the word angst enough. I think it's a word that so perfectly describes what a lot of people experience. And yes, God's being infinite and eternal. That should cure us of angst, at least to the extent that a sinful world with sin-plagued bodies, we're never going to be perfectly free from that in this life. But to be able to trust God more and more. And Nelson, I do need to correct you on something you said earlier. I have to disagree with you on the fact that God is equally present in Colorado versus Delaware. I look out my window every day, and I can't agree with that statement. So Gwen, Nelson, thank you for joining me today for this conversation on what does it mean that God is eternal? And what does it mean that God is infinite? Got questions? The Bible has answers, and we'll help you find them.