

Episode 243

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. We're going to be continuing our series on the attributes of God. So if you've not caught any of the previous episodes, I'd encourage you to go back and listen to those because they do kind of build on each other and we're trying to trace some similar themes throughout the episode.

Shea Houdmann

So today's episode is on what does it mean that God is omnipotent and what does it mean that God is omniscient? So joining me today again is Nelson, our director of video content, and Gwen, our associate editor and manager of volunteer services. So Gwen, Nelson, welcome back.

Shea Houdmann

These attributes, the omnis, and there's a few more omnis that we'll cover in future weeks, just talks about God is all of something, that he possesses this attribute to an infinite degree. Obviously linking it back to God being infinite. Omnipotent is the first one we're going to cover today. Talks about God being all-powerful. God possesses all power. And that's important to distinguish that being all-powerful. A lot of people will try to define it as God can do anything. And while that is true, as long as you qualify the anything, it's important to know that God can't do anything that would violate one of his other attributes. Obviously God cannot sin. There's multiple scriptures talk about God cannot lie. And we can even talk about God cannot do something that's logically impossible, like creating a square circle. Or a common question we get is, could God create a rock so big that he can't pick it up? Kind of putting his omnipotence against his omnipotence. So there are things that God can't do. That's not what God's omnipotence means. God's omnipotence means God's power is not limited. He has absolute power. He can do anything that is in agreement with his character, with his attributes, with who he is. But Nelson, as we studied, prepared for this week on God's omnipotence, what were some of the things that stood out to you?

Nelson Domingues

You know, the omnipotence of God is one of his attributes I think more people are familiar with than some of the others. Of course, it means that he's all-powerful. There is nothing outside of his grasp that he's not powerful enough to do. And the scriptures start out immediately displaying that. In Genesis, you know, we see in chapter 1, see that God created the heavens and the earth. When he spoke, let there be light, light was there. He's not the master

constructor. He's not the builder, although he can do all these things. But none of that existed before he spoke it with his power into existence, right? There was nothing beforehand. And by his power, simply by his voice, by his desire to create it, he spoke it into existence. We see that again in Genesis chapter 1.

Nelson Domingues

We see it in Psalm chapter 33, verse 6. And so we see the display of his power in creation and sustaining creation right now. He sustains the heavens and the earth, the stars, the orbit of the planets. He's the one who sustains life. He's the one who sustains the waters to be where they are and keeps them at bay. He's the one who sustains our heartbeats. He's the one who gives us breath. All power is from him. And so scripture so many times alludes to this. We see this constantly and we see it even in Jesus, of course, as God in the flesh. God was, there was nothing that he could not do. He raised Lazarus from the dead. I mean, that is power, right? And so there is nothing that he could not do. And we see the display of his power. And that is something that as believers, it's so again encouraging. We've talked about in the past that the attributes of God are just incredibly encouraging to us.

Nelson Domingues

And one of the things, one of the reasons beyond the fact that he's able to do all those things is the fact that he's able to keep me secure in the palm of his hand. Even though I fail, even though I fall, even though I have worse days and better days, he has the power to give me grace and mercy each and every day. He has the power to secure my salvation for eternity. When he guarantees something, he has the power to uphold that promise and that guarantee.

Nelson Domingues

And as we see in scripture, we see prophecy after prophecy, promise after promise. And we know because he is all powerful, that those things will happen as he said. And so again, this is such an encouraging attribute of God for me and I think every believer as well. What do you think Gwen?

Gwen Sellers

You know, I agree with you that it's surprising, but not surprising to me how often when I think about the attributes of God, it's like, oh, that just makes me feel so safe, or so secure, or so encouraged. And yeah, and I mean, I think they all do because we do live in this world of change and uncertainty. But God will always be God, as we've talked about before that he's unchangeable. But I think you're right that he's all powerful means he really can do it. He's not just some good loving God that hopes good things for you. He can actually

fulfill those. So knowing that God really has the power does make me feel secure.

Gwen Sellers

And I love that you brought up creation, because that really is one of the biggest displays of his omnipotence. And Romans one even points that out, you know, like his divine, well, I think I have the verse, let me see. Yeah, Romans 1:20, says for his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, and the things that have been made. So it's like, this is one of those attributes that God has just made obvious. And you're right that in Jesus, we certainly see it.

Gwen Sellers

And what I love is, after Jesus ascends to the Father, he tells the disciples, wait, because you'll be clothed with power from on high. So we obviously don't have all power, but the Holy Spirit lives inside of us. So this is something that God shares with us. And his power enables us to do things too. I have some verses on that. But Shea, what are your thoughts about this just like as an attribute, and what it does for you personally?

Shea Houdmann

Something that Nelson said, particularly stood out to me that the fact that God's all powerful nature, we can be secure. And so something I often think of with God's omnipotence is Romans 8:38, and 39. It's where I'm sure that neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And we can be confident of that because God's omnipotent. There's nothing out there that can even rival his power. So nothing can separate us from God's love, and God's omnipotence plays an important part of that. And that's comforting to me. God's omnipotence, like we've talked about how God's holiness, God's omnipotence is holy. God's omnipotence operates in love, how all of God's attributes work together. God's omnipotence is sort of the, seems repetitive to say this way, but it's the power behind all the other attributes. That God's love is all powerful. God's holiness is all powerful. God's goodness is all powerful. And all those things, they're not limited in any stretch, so it provides the basis for why God's sovereign, and we can trust him that he's in control. So God's omnipotence to me is a tremendous comfort because it just, in a sense, kind of amps all his other attributes up to the maximum possible. I know that's using human terms, but to me that's, I'm so grateful that God's all powerful because then I know he can fulfill his promises. All those things, it all works together, and that's so, so encouraging to me.

Nelson Domingues

And we also see that he is the source of power, right? He's the source of our strength. He's the source of powers and leadership we see in scripture.

I love where Jesus is talking to Pilate in John chapter 19:11, and he says, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above. We see that God is the one who doles out. He gives out power to those in authority, and that brings up all sorts of questions, of course. If God hands out power, then what does that really mean? Does he empower just the just leaders, or does he also empower the non-just leaders? And I think those are very complicated questions, of course, and that has to do, you know, the answer falls down more the line of God's sovereignty and his ultimate plan for humanity.

Nelson Domingues

But yeah, he's the one who puts people in power. He's the one who removes people from power. Again, we see that in scripture, and we see him placing people in power in Moses in Egypt, and all sorts of different things we see happening constantly. And so again, we can look around our world today, and we can see even having gone through all these politics and political seasons with senators and presidential candidates and all that sorts of stuff, to think that this isn't just random. It's not just happening on its own. We know that God is in control, and he is in fact in power over all of these things, even over the judicial systems of our nation and other nations as well. And it is according to his love and his wrath, and his ultimate power and wisdom and idea of what he wants to do is why he offers different people place of power for a time. And again, it's important to note that he limits those powers as well. And we can be thankful for that, that he places limits on some leaders and some cruel rulers we've seen in history's past. And we're thankful that he offers more power to the weak, and giving them strength to rise up, to lead God's people, and to teach God's ways. And so yeah, he is also the origin of power.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I think that's a great point, especially, you know, we talk about kind of like good versus evil in this epic struggle, but it's not really a struggle. Like there is no equal foe. It's not like Satan and God are equal and battling it out. It's like, no, God is all powerful. There is no question. There is no contest. And so I love that you're saying like, yeah, when it's God who grants power, it's not these powerful people trying to, I mean, some people are trying to take over God's power, but their power is from God to begin with. So it's a losing battle.

Gwen Sellers

Here's the other place that God grants power is to believers like for our lives. It's 2 Peter 1:3 says his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. So God enables and equips us to live in relationship with him. I guess I find that comforting too.

Shea Houdmann

Similarly, like Philippians 4:13, one of the most out of context verses of all time, but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. It doesn't have the application that some people give us, but it does communicate the fact that through Christ, who is omnipotent, we can do all things. We have access to unlimited power. Obviously, that doesn't mean we're all powerful.

Shea Houdmann

And that reminds me of, Gwen, you'll notice that the place office here in Colorado Springs used to be, there was a pizza place that I'd frequent. I'd go there almost once a week to pick up a small pizza for lunch. And so the person who worked there saw the Got Questions logo on my shirt and started asking me questions every week that I'd show up. And one week he asked me, so, okay, so if I'm a Christian, that means God lives inside of me, right? I'm like, yes. So if God's all powerful, then doesn't that make me all powerful? And I was like, huh, it's actually a really good question. And his spiritual background, I don't know if he was a believer or not, but it was a lot of pretty wacky beliefs. So I'm trying to figure out how do I communicate this to him? And so I actually came back the next week and explained it as, you know, it's like plugging a toaster into a nuclear reactor. Yes, the toaster ultimately has access to a lot of power, but the toaster's not actually designed to be able to handle that much power. So yes, we have access to an unlimited source of power through our relationship with Christ. That doesn't mean we can do all the things that God can, because that's not what we're designed for. So we're never lacking access to power, but God only gives us the power through the things he calls us to do. And that's not some of the things that some people would like to be able to do with the power of God.

Shea Houdmann

So it's that, yes, through Christ we can do all things, but all things through the limits that God has designed us for, similar to how, Nelson, you were saying, how God limits his use of power to his attributes. So I think that's a powerful reminder. Yes, there's no limit to what our ability to fulfill God's plan for us. And that to me is another big encouragement that if God calls me to do something, I know he will empower me and enable me and strengthen me to be able to do that thing.

Nelson Domingues

I was just about to say that same thing. I think sometimes we're worried that we aren't able to do the task that we feel that God has placed on our heart. And scripture, again, is very clear that God enables us to do all things that he's called us to do, no matter how difficult it may seem or how much strength it may require. And we see this in so many different circumstances, just from stamina to actual power, like in Samson, you know, when the hope and the spirit came upon him, he was able to do supernatural things by the power of God. And we see many other examples throughout scripture.

Nelson Domingues

And so if God has called you to it, you know, the phrase, he will see you through it. Right. And that's absolutely true. Whatever he's called you to, whatever he's placed on your heart, if he has told you to do it, he will enable you to do it because he has the power to offer.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I love the analogy you gave, Shay, because it like that toaster has to be plugged into the reactor. It's not just, oh, here's like God gave you power. Now go do it. Like God is actually with you in doing it and enabling you in the moment. So it's not. Yeah. So like so God does equip you, but like with you in it. And I just love that.

Gwen Sellers

And, you know, for me, the other thing about God's omnipotence, I mean, it's hugely encouraging and makes me feel secure, but it's also pretty exciting to think about the things that God might do, you know, like with salvation with me, and it seems impossible, but with God, all things are possible. Or Ephesians 3:20 through 21 is one of my favorite passages. So it says now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. So just that sense of, wow, if God can, can do everything, what have we not seen yet? We have the promises of the Bible and we know the incredible things that are going to be happening and, and that God will do them. But, but in our lives, looking at the ways that God shows up and displays his power is yeah, exciting to anticipate.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, for sure. I love that Gwen. And maybe like John 15, I'm the vine, you're the branches, as long as we're connected to the vine, but apart from him, we can do nothing. So, we need to be plugged in to our, the correct power source in order to do the things that God has called us to do.

Shea Houdmann

But let's jump from omnipotence into omniscience. And wow, I think Nelson, you said it well, that most people are familiar with omnipotence and they're even comforted by it. I kind of get a different feel for omniscience. That means that God knows everything. God knows everything about everything, about everything, both actual, both possible, both theoretical, all of those things. A lot of people are not comforted by God's omniscience because they look at it as, well, God knows everything that I do and everything that I think, and that can result in guilt. Or even go a more theological route of God knows everything. Does that mean, including the future, does that mean my life is set? That there really, I'm not actually making free decisions because if God knows what I was going to do, did I actually decide anything? So there's a lot of negative connections for a lot of people when it comes to omniscience.

Shea Houdmann

But Gwen, set us straight. What does the Bible say about God's omniscience and why should it be a comfort and encouragement to us rather than something that we're not big fans of this attribute?

Gwen Sellers

Well, you know, I think you're right, that it is, can be a fearful thing. I've been thinking about Jesus as the light of the world recently and thought about the way, you know, like when light shines into something, it exposes it. And so we don't really want our sin to be exposed. So there is that fear of, ooh, God knows everything I'm thinking, and I'm not always thinking good things. But in Christ, that's covered. And I think that's what's so comforting is God knows every single thing about you and he loves you. There's nothing that he's going to find out and be like, oh, actually, I don't want you. I don't want to save you. Instead, he already knows that. And in Christ, it's covered. But I mean, yeah, if we reject Christ, that is a scary thing because God knows. I think of, well, yeah.

Gwen Sellers

So here's the verse I came upon while studying for this. So it's Jeremiah 32:17 through 19. And I love how we see God's power and his knowledge in this. And this also speaks of God knowing us, but it's not just like for punishment, it's for reward. So, ah, Lord God, it is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them. Oh, great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.

Gwen Sellers

So, you know, this kind of goes back to justice too, of if God knows everything, he also knows all of the ways that you've been hurt and he can take those. Nelson, what do you, do you find omniscience comforting, scary, a little though?

Nelson Domingues

So comforting for me. I get the questions behind it, of course. And we struggle with those questions, but sometimes they're really good for us to think through. I think the first thing that is a comfort to me is that he knows me completely. And I love that he knows me better than I know me. You know, it's, you know, we've all had that moment where we're talking to someone and they reveal something about us that we didn't see. They saw it in us, maybe through behavior or something that we said. And it's like, it's a revelation. I mean, it's so interesting to hear. And sometimes it's so beneficial for us.

Nelson Domingues

God knows us so much better than that, infinitely better than that. And he knows my tendencies. He knows my thoughts. He knows my actions. He knows my true desires. He knows all of these things. And so, yeah, it's tremendously comforting because he says that he loves me. Even though he knows everything there is to know about me, we all have aspects of our life that we don't want the world to see. I'm not perfect. And I don't think anyone I've ever talked to would ever claim they are perfect. And, but God knows that. And through, again, through his mercy and through his grace, he knows all my secrets and all my past and my sin. He knows where I failed, but he also knows the heart I've had. He knows my desire to worship him and to love him and to seek him and to do his will. He's seen the struggles that I've had to pursue godliness and Christ likeness. He sees all of that because he knows me intimately. And I think that is, again, such a comfort to us and to me. Scripture reminds us that he knew us even before we were born. I mean, this is an amazing reality that no one is a mistake to God, that no one is unknown to God.

Nelson Domingues

I think we get confused or worried about God seeing everything. And I think the fear is that we don't have a choice in our thoughts or in our actions. But we need to remember that God created what we understand time, right? With the earth revolving around the sun, we call it, you know, we have days and seasons and all these different, that didn't exist until God made it exist. We know just from physics, if someone travels the speed of light away from the planet earth, they will age differently than the people who are on earth. And that's amazing, right? Because just how that works, God stands outside of all of that. And so he is looking down on us and he's not looking at

us, he's not watching things unfold. He sees the whole thing. It's just like when we have a microscope and we might be zooming in on a piece of string, but if you would really back up, you see this whole intricate art, you know, like a rug or something like that. And it's just so much more to the story that you couldn't see because you're only able to pinpoint one exact moment. Well, God isn't limited by anything. He's able to see everything. And that's part of his omniscience. He's able to know it all because he stands outside of time. He sees the decisions that we've made and have made and will make because he's outside of time. And so with him knowing that, and again, still choosing me, still calling me, tremendously comforting. This is again, yeah, this is a very, again, comforting attribute of God for me.

Gwen Sellers

I love that you brought up God knows us better than we know ourselves. And yeah. And so he can reveal our hearts to ourselves. But I also think of one of the deepest human longings is to be known. And I know for me, sometimes I have trouble even expressing in words, like, what is this experience that I'm having or this feeling that I'm having or this thought that I'm having? And I mean, it's great as family and friends are like, sometimes you just can't quite convey what you're trying to convey. And, but God already knows. And I just, I find that comforting as well. He really gets it on the deepest level.

Shea Houdmann

For sure. Nelson, I like what you hinted at as well about the, why God's omniscience should be comforting rather than discouraging or threatening in a sense. For me, ultimately, if God didn't know everything in the future, then how could I have total confidence that he's in control of the future? How would, maybe something's going to happen in the future that would change something about one of God's promises. No, God makes a promise knowing it's going to be fulfilled. Or even just from a theological perspective that if God doesn't know the future, then he doesn't know anything, everything.

Then he's not actually omniscience. As things happen, he'd be learning more things that he didn't know. So no, God's omniscience is, it has to be true because without it, he's not God. And then you just link it to all the other attributes. Again, how could God be promised that he is always going to be just when he's might not be aware of something's going to happen in the future that would require him to be unjust and those sorts of things.

Shea Houdmann

So God's omniscience plays perfectly with all the other attributes and guarantees that no, God knows everything and knows both our destiny, everything that's going to happen, and how that's going to impact everyone else and is in control of it all. So it's a beautiful tapestry of God's attributes.

Shea Houdmann

This one is just as necessary as all the others. I get it.

I get the questions, especially the God knows what I'm going to choose. Am I actually choosing? And I don't know that I have ever heard a perfect explanation how that works, but it's not a, it's not threatening to me.

It doesn't make me feel like a robot. It provides me with, you know, kind of like what Gwen was focusing on, that God knows everything about me and loves me anyways, and chose me anyways, and chooses to use me anyways. And to me, that's a tremendous comfort. And God's omniscience guarantees that nothing can change that, that when God offers a promise, not only does he have the power to guarantee the promise will be fulfilled, he also knows that it will be fulfilled because he's already there. And so that's, that's why to me, I look at God's omniscience, yes, it starts out some interesting questions, maybe more so than omnipotence, but it's not discouraging me to any sense because I know how necessary it is to work alongside all the other attributes.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I love that the way, yeah, God's omniscience really does guarantee that, that he knows the beginning from or the end from the beginning. And so we can trust him when he says something and we can trust who he is. And yeah, like you said, I love how all the attributes play together. And here's something for me about omniscience is, okay, so I can trust God big picture, but that also makes me think, huh, I can trust what he says in his word. Like when he says, this is the best way for you to live. Like I called you to love other people. And that's actually the best thing I can trust that because he knows. So I'm wondering, do you guys think about God's omniscience when you're like seeking discernment or wisdom in a particular situation?

Nelson Domingues

Yeah. I mean, that's, I think one of the benefits of prayer, obviously. And, and, you know, one thing I should say, when we pray, we're spending that time with God and he does speak to us. He comforts us. He brings scripture to mind. He brings us peace in a decision. He offers encouragement through other people and through the church, perhaps through a timely message. We've all sat in a sermon one day and thought, man, I don't know how, but they're preaching to me today. Like, I feel like this is just for me. And I think God orchestrates these things. I know God orchestrates these things for different events and times in our life.

Nelson Domingues

And so, yeah, you know, when we think about his knowing everything, one of our fears is not knowing, right? Some people are afraid of the dark because they don't know what's there. People get anxiety because they're worried

about what might happen. And scripture calls us to call God, to trust on God because he knows. There's nothing that he doesn't know. And so when we totally have our faith and trust in the Lord, no matter our limited perspective or view or even environment, he's there, he's present, he knows, and we can trust him that he's mapped out the perfect road for us. And so all we need to do is pray for his power to walk in intelligence and obedience to go, you know, walk according to his plan. And that's not saying it might be the easiest path, but it is the right path. And we know that because we know he knows all things.

Shea Houdmann

When I look at a verse like James 1:5, it says, if any of you lacks wisdom, ask God, and he will give generously. And that's a very common thing for me. Probably the most frequent prayer that I utter to God is, God, give me wisdom. Help me to make a right decision. And when I ask that, God's omniscience is a comfort because I know he knows what the right decision is. And then it's also a comfort to me knowing that even when I make the wrong decision, God knew that and is already orchestrating to bring about good as a result of my mistake.

Shea Houdmann

I know that Romans 8:28, that God works all things together for good, is often thrown about, not entirely used in context, but it does provide comfort that even when, even bad things, even mistakes, even sins, decisions made that weren't wise, that weren't godly, that weren't right, that God can still work together good because he sees the infinite number of possibilities of the results and still steers the whole ship in the direction that it needs to go to bring about his sovereign plan. So here you see again all the attributes working together. So knowing that God knows the right answer, and generally speaking, he wants us to know the right answer, and so he gives us the wisdom when he asks for it.

Shea Houdmann

Then also the trust, knowing that, okay, yeah, I blew this one. God, please redeem my mistake for the good and lead me in how to best rectify, so he knows both what the right decision was and how to fix it when the wrong decision is made. To me, that's another tremendous comfort. What about you, Gwen? What's maybe most practically relevant to you in terms of God's omniscience?

Gwen Sellers

You know, I think it is that guidance thing. I mean, that is something that I seek often, too, and yeah, I am comforted that God's already accounted for what's going to happen, so he knows. It really also helps me trust in the

waiting because sometimes, well, so a women's group that I was at last night talked about Proverb 3:5-6, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. And so we thought about you know ok what does that really mean? But sometimes the paths don't seem all that straight or clear. And we know that life is hard. So sometimes I'll feel like, ok God said this, but this isn't playing out how I thought it would. But it's like, well God already knows. And he knew that. So it helps me to be able to trust God that he really is fulfilling his purposes. He told me the right thing. He didn't make a mistake. He knew the right answer. And so now I am just waiting to see the fruit of that answer. I mean if I did make a mistake in hearing Him, then He already knows that and he's going to fix it. So ya. I think it is that practical feeling secure in God. Feeling that sense that He knows me and loves me. And also he wants to guide me. And his guidance is correct because He already knows everything.

Nelson Domingues

Ya I agree with you. I feel the exact same way. That is truly the most comforting thing. And this is one of His attributes that just for me really boggles my mind. To be all powerful for me is easier to comprehend than for him to know all things. Things are always changing. There's so many factors that are always changing. Just knowing all sand on the beach right, every grain. I went to the beach a couple times. I took a lot of sand home with me. Like He's able to keep account each and every one because He's just able to. I mean, it obviously just breaks our mind to think how anyone can keep track of all these different things. And that's why this attribute is important. He can keep track of even the simplest thing like a grain of sand. And knowing its exact location at all times on planet earth or wherever. If he can do that he can certainly know whether or not I need to apply to this college or that college. Whether or not I need to offer a word of encouragement or a stern word of discipline. He was the one that knows all these things. And he gives us access to him. Ask for wisdom and be pointed in the right direction. And so its incredible to think that we have access to this infinite wisdom. All we have to do is seek him. And should he find us worthy, and if the timings correct, then His part he offers and grants that wisdom. It's amazing.

Shea Houdmann

And like all the other attributes of God, the purpose of us doing this series is to ultimately we want to get to know God better. Who he is. What He's like. And practically speaking why we should trust Him. I think you can hear all three of us saying that God's omnipotence, the fact that He's all powerful, God's omniscience, the fact that He's all knowing, provide us with comfort. Even just looking at the promises of God, God makes a promise, he has all the power necessary to fulfill that promise. And he knows that promise will be fulfilled. And so you can see the beauty of those attributes working together. So I hope our conversation today on the omnipotence of God and the omniscience of God have been helpful for you. Its been a great study for us as we have been digging into God's word and what the scripture says about these two attributes. Truly they are to us a tremendous comfort. And we hope they are to you as well. So Gwen, Nelson, thank you for joining me today. This has been the Got Questions podcast on what does it mean that God is omnipotent and what does it mean that God is omniscient? Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.