

LESSON 3

GOD: HIS CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES

Prepare for Your Assignment

1. Download message #3, "God: What Is He Like?" from www.gty.org/fof.
2. Use your notebook to take notes on the message.
3. Work through the questions and tasks on the following pages.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the religions of today's world, there are many so-called gods and just as many opinions about what God (or god) is like. The Bible, on the other hand, claims to be the revelation of the one true God. The Bible never tries to prove that God exists; it simply states, "In the beginning God ..." ([Genesis 1:1](#)).

A. How does [Psalm 89:7-8](#) describe God?

God is to be feared; He is awesome and mighty.

B. What statement is made to point to the fact that there is only one God ([Isaiah 43:10](#))?

"Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me."

C. What is it that God will not give to another ([Isaiah 42:8](#))?

He will not give His glory or His praise.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING GOD

A. Jesus equated knowing God with what ([John 17:3](#))? Eternal life

B. Rather than boasting in wisdom, might, or riches, what one thing does God say a man should boast about ([Jeremiah 9:24](#))?

"That he understands and knows Me [God]."

III. HOW CAN ONE KNOW GOD?

A. What does Jesus say about the means for knowing God ([John 14:9-10](#))?

"Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?"

B. What does Paul say about Christ in [Colossians 2:9](#)?

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

C. The writer of Hebrews says that God has spoken to us in His Son. How is Christ described ([Hebrews 1:3](#))?

"He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."

IV. GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

A. What are attributes?

An attribute is a quality or characteristic that is true about someone. Studying God's attributes allows us to have a limited understanding of His Person. Even though some concepts exceed the limits of our comprehension, our ideas concerning God need to be as true as possible.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Holiness

Righteousness and Justice

Sovereignty

Eternality

Immutability

Omniscience

Omnipresence

Omnipotence

Love

Truth

Mercy

Note: These are just a few of God's attributes.

B. God's attributes defined

First look up the following Scripture verses, then write down the part of the verse that best describes the given attribute.

Second, in the Personal Application section, write out how that attribute personally applies to you based on your understanding of the attribute.

1. Holiness

God's attribute of holiness means that He is untouched and unstained by the evil in the world. He is absolutely pure and perfect.

- a. [Exodus 15:11](#) "Who is like You, majestic in holiness?"

- b. [Psalm 99:9](#) "Worship at His holy hill, for holy is the Lord our God."

Because God is holy, we are exhorted to be holy ([1 Peter 1:16](#)). We are to be set apart from sin unto God. Our lives are to shine as a reflection of God in an unrighteous world.

Personal Application:

2. Righteousness and Justice

Righteousness and *justice* are derived from the same root word in the original language of the New Testament. The meaning is being right or just.

Righteousness designates the perfect agreement between God's nature and His acts. Justice is the way God legislates His righteousness. There is no action that God takes in relation to man that violates any code of morality or justice.

- a. According to [Psalm 119:137](#), God's righteousness is displayed in His judgments.
- b. In [Psalm 89:14](#), righteousness and justice are referred to as the foundation of Your throne.

How does *your standard* of what is right and just compare with *God's standard*?

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

3. Sovereignty

The word *sovereign* means chief or highest, supreme in power, or superior in position to all others.

- a. [Isaiah 46:9-10](#) "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'"
- b. [Isaiah 45:23](#) "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance."

The idea of sovereignty is encouraging, for it assures the Christian that nothing is out of God's control and that His plans cannot be thwarted ([Romans 8:28](#)).

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

4. Eternality

Since God is eternal, there has never been a time when He did not exist. He had no beginning and will have no end.

- a. [Isaiah 44:6](#) "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me."
- b. [Isaiah 43:13](#) "Even from eternity I am He."

Being eternal, God is not bound by time. Having always existed, He sees the past and the future as clearly as He sees the present. With that perspective, He has a perfect understanding of what is best for our lives. Therefore, we should trust Him with all areas of our lives.

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

5. Immutability

God never changes in His nature or purpose.

- a. [Malachi 3:6](#) "For I, the Lord, do not change."
- b. [Hebrews 6:17-18](#) "the unchangeableness of His purpose ... it is impossible for God to lie."

The Bible contains numerous promises for those who belong to Him. He can be trusted to keep His Word.

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

6. Omniscience

God knows all things present and future. Nothing takes Him by surprise.

- a. [Job 34:21](#) "For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps."
- b. [Psalm 139:1-6](#) "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it."

Since God is omniscient, He knew all our sins (past, present, and future) at the time of our salvation. Yet He still forgave us and received us into His family forever. What does that say about the security of our salvation?

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

7. Omnipresence

God is present everywhere in the universe.

- a. [Proverbs 15:3](#) "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good."
- b. [Psalm 139:7-12](#) "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me."

Since God is everywhere, it is foolish to think we can hide from Him. This also means that a believer may experience the presence of God at all times and know the blessings of walking with Him.

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

8. Omnipotence

God is all-powerful, having more than enough strength to do anything.

- a. [Jeremiah 32:17](#) "Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You."
- b. [Revelation 19:6](#) "For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

God's omnipotence is seen in:

- ▶ His power to create ([Genesis 1:1](#))
- ▶ His preservation of all things ([Hebrews 1:3](#))
- ▶ His providential care for us ([Psalm 37:23-24](#))

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" ([Isaiah 41:10](#)). What can you learn from [Isaiah 41:10](#) about God's omnipotence?

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

9. Love

God is love. His love is unconditional; it is not based on the loveliness or merit of the object.

- a. [John 3:16](#) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
- b. [Romans 5:8](#) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Love expresses itself in action. God is our example. He demonstrated His love for us in sending Jesus to die in our place ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

10. Truth

God is the only true God.

- a. [Psalm 31:5](#) "O Lord, God of truth."
- b. [Psalm 117:2](#) "the truth of the Lord is everlasting."

God's truth is above all. He is truthful even if all men are found to be liars. Therefore, His words and His judgments always prevail ([Romans 3:4](#)). In light of this, how should you view God's Word and the truths it contains?

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

11. Mercy

God's great mercy is the practical expression of His compassion to those who have opposed His will.

- a. [Psalm 145:8-9](#) "The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works."
- b. [Psalm 130:3-4](#) "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

God's great mercy is contrasted with man's sin. His mercy is displayed in our salvation ([Ephesians 2:4-5](#)).

Personal Application: (Answers will vary)

V. APPLICATION

In light of the attributes of God discussed in this lesson, answer the following questions.

A. How will your prayers be affected? (Answers will vary)

B. How would you respond to a major trial in your life, such as:

1. The death of a close relative (spouse, child)?

(Answers will vary)

2. An accident that leaves you physically disabled? (Answers will vary)

The following list is from: Elwell, Walter A., and Douglas Buckwalter. *Topical Analysis of the Bible: With the New International Version*. Vol. 5. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996.

A. God Is a Unity (Is One)

Exod. 15:11; Deut. 4:35, 39; Deut. 6:4; Deut. 32:39; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Kings 8:60; Ps. 86:10; Isa. 42:8; Isa. 44:6; Isa. 45:5–6; Joel 2:27; Zech. 14:9; John 5:44; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:5; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Tim. 6:15; James 2:19

B. God Is Compassionate

Exod. 33:19; Exod. 34:6; Deut. 30:2–3; 2 Kings 13:23; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 102:13; Ps. 103:2, 4, 13; Ps. 145:8–9; Isa. 49:10; Isa. 63:7; Jer. 12:15; Lam. 3:22; Hos. 2:19; Joel 2:18; Jon 4:2; Mic. 7:18–19; 2 Cor. 1:3; James 5:11

C. God Is Eternal

Gen. 21:33; Deut. 32:40; Deut. 33:27; 1 Chron. 16:36; Neh. 9:5; Job 36:26; Ps. 29:10; Ps. 33:11; Ps. 41:13; Ps. 45:6; Ps. 48:14; Ps. 90:1–2, 4; Ps. 93:2; Ps. 102:25–27; Isa. 26:4; Isa. 40:28; Isa. 41:4; Isa. 44:6; Isa. 57:15; Lam. 5:19; Dan. 4:34; Hab. 1:12; Hab. 3:6; Rom. 1:20; Rom. 16:26; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Tim. 6:15; Heb. 1:10–12; 2 Pet. 3:8; Rev. 1:8; Rev. 4:8–9

D. God Is Faithful and Trustworthy

Exod. 34:6; Deut. 7:9; Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 7:28; 1 Kings 8:56; 2 Chron. 6:15; Ps. 25:10; Ps. 33:4; Ps. 36:5; Ps. 57:3; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 89:1–2; Ps. 91:4; Ps. 92:1–2; Ps. 100:5; Ps. 115:1; Ps. 138:8; Ps. 146:6; Isa. 25:1; Isa. 49:7; Lam. 3:22–23; Hos. 2:19; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18–20; 1 Thess. 5:23–24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23; 1 Pet. 4:19; 1 John 1:9

E. God Is Good

Gen. 1:31; Exod. 33:19; 2 Chron. 5:13; 2 Chron. 6:41; 2 Chron. 30:18; Ps. 25:7–8; Ps. 31:19; Ps. 34:8; Ps. 52:9; Ps. 73:1; Ps. 84:11; Ps. 100:5; ; Ps. 106:1; Ps. 107:1; ; Ps. 118:1; Ps. 119:68; Ps. 135:3; Ps. 145:7, 9, 15–16; Jer. 33:10; Lam. 3:25; Nah. 1:7; Matt. 5:45; Matt. 7:11; Matt. 19:17; Mark 10:18; Acts 14:17; Rom. 8:32; 2 Thess. 1:11; James 1:5, 17; 2 Pet. 1:3

F. God Is Gracious

Exod. 34:6; 2 Kings 13:23; 2 Chron. 30:9; Ezra 9:8; Neh. 9:17; Neh. 9:31; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 111:4; Ps. 116:5; Ps. 145:9; Isa. 30:18; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Rom. 11:5–6; 2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 1:6–7; Eph. 2:7; Col. 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:16–17; 2 Tim. 1:8–9; Titus 2:11–13; Heb. 4:16; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:10, 12

G. God Is Holy

Exod. 15:11; Lev. 11:44–45; Deut. 32:4; Josh. 24:19; 1 Sam. 2:2; 1 Sam. 6:20; 1 Chron. 16:10; Job 6:10; Ps. 5:4; Ps. 18:30; Ps. 22:3; Ps. 30:4; Ps. 92:15; Prov. 9:10; Isa. 6:3; Isa. 40:25; Isa. 43:15; Isa. 52:10; Isa. 57:15; Ezek. 39:7; Hos. 11:9; Hab. 1:13; Luke 1:49; John 17:11; Heb. 12:10, 28–29; James 1:13–14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 1 John 1:5; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 6:10

H. God Is Impartial

Deut. 10:17; 2 Chron. 19:7; Job 34:19; Job 36:5; Matt. 5:45; Acts 10:34–35; Rom. 2:6, 11; Rom. 10:12; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; James 3:17; 1 Pet. 1:17

I. God Is Just

Exod. 34:6–7; Deut. 32:4; 2 Chron. 12:6; Neh. 9:33; Job 34:17–30; Ps. 33:5, 13–15; Ps. 36:6; Ps. 45:6; Ps. 58:11; Ps. 96:13; Ps. 97:2; Ps. 140:12; Isa. 30:18; Isa. 61:8; Ezek. 18:4; Zeph. 3:5; Matt. 25:21; Luke 18:7–8; Acts 17:31; Rom. 1:32; Rom. 2:7; Rom. 3:25–26; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 16:5–6

J. God Is Love

Exod. 34:6–7; Deut. 7:6–8, 13; Deut. 10:15, 18; Deut. 23:5; 1 Chron. 16:34; Job 7:17; Ps. 32:10; Ps. 36:7; Ps. 42:8; Ps. 59:17; Ps. 63:3; Ps. 86:5; Ps. 103:17; Ps. 106:1; Ps. 107:1, 8, 43; Ps. 136:1–5, 26; Ps. 138:2, 8; Ps. 145:8, 17; Ps. 146:8; Isa. 38:17; Jer. 31:3; Jer. 33:11; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Mal. 1:2; Matt. 3:17; John 3:16; John 5:20; John 14:23; John 16:27; John 17:24; Rom. 5:8; Rom. 8:38–39; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 2:4–5; Titus 3:4–5; Heb. 12:6; 1 John 3:1; 1 John 4:7–11; Jude 21

K. God Is Merciful

Exod. 33:19; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 13:17–18; Neh. 9:31; Ps. 25:6; Ps. 78:38; Isa. 55:7; Isa. 63:9; Jer. 3:12; Lam. 3:22–23; Dan. 9:9; Mic. 7:18; Zech. 1:16; Luke 1:50; Luke 6:35–36; Luke 18:10, 13–14; Rom. 9:16, 23; Rom. 11:30–32; Eph. 2:4; Heb. 4:16; James 5:11; 1 Pet. 1:3; Jude 21

L. God Is Omnipotent

Gen. 17:1; Gen. 18:14; Exod. 9:16; Exod. 15:6; Josh. 4:24; 1 Sam. 14:6; Job 42:2; Ps. 93:4; Ps. 111:6; Ps. 115:3; Ps. 135:5–6; Isa. 14:24–27; Isa. 44:24; Isa. 45:11–13; Isa. 46:4; Jer. 32:17–23; Jer. 32:27; Matt. 19:26; Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37; Acts 4:24–31; Rom. 4:20–21; Eph. 1:11; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 19:6

M. God Is Omnipresent

Gen. 16:13; Deut. 2:7; Deut. 4:7; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 46:1; Ps. 139:7–10, 17–18; Ps. 145:18; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23–24; Matt. 28:20; Acts 17:24, 27–28; Heb. 4:13

N. God Is Omniscient

Gen. 6:5; Exod. 3:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 2 Kings 19:27; 2 Chron. 16:9; Job 9:4; Job 12:13; Job 28:12–28; Job 37:16; Ps. 7:9; Ps. 33:13–15; Ps. 94:11; Ps. 104:24; Ps. 139:1–10; Ps. 147:4; Prov. 3:19; Prov. 5:21; Prov. 15:3, 11; Isa. 31:2; Isa. 40:28; Isa. 44:7–10, 24–28; Isa. 46:9–11; Jer. 10:7, 12; Jer. 17:10; Ezek. 11:5; Dan. 2:20–22; Matt. 6:8, 32; Matt. 10:29–30; Acts 1:24; Acts 2:23; Acts 15:8; Acts 15:17–18; Rom. 11:33; Rom. 16:25–27; 1 Cor. 1:18, 21, 24–25; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:7–8; Eph. 3:10; Heb. 4:13; James 1:5; James 3:17; 1 John 3:19; Rev. 7:12

O. God Is Patient, Longsuffering, and Forbearing

Exod. 34:6–7; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 78:38; Ps. 103:8, 10; Isa. 7:13; Jer. 11:7; Hos. 11:9; Nah. 1:3; Matt. 23:37; Acts 13:18; Rom. 2:4; Rom. 3:25; Rom. 9:22; Rom. 15:5; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:9, 15

P. God Is Righteous

Gen. 18:25; Ezra 9:15; Job 4:17; Job 37:23; Ps. 7:9; Ps. 11:7; Ps. 25:8; Ps. 33:4–5; Ps. 36:6; Ps. 89:14; Ps. 92:12–15; Ps. 98:2; Ps. 119:137, 142; Ps. 129:4; Ps. 145:7, 17; Isa. 28:17; Isa. 45:21; Jer. 9:24; Jer. 12:1; Dan. 9:7, 14; Hos. 14:9; Zeph. 3:5; John 17:25; Rom. 1:17; Rom. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:8

Q. God Is Self-Existent

Exod. 3:14; Deut. 32:40; Isa. 43:10; Isa. 44:6; Jer. 10:10; John 5:26; Acts 17:24–25; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16

R. God Is Truthful

Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 12:6; Ps. 26:3; Ps. 31:5; Ps. 33:4; Ps. 40:10; Ps. 43:3; Ps. 86:11; Ps. 132:11; Isa. 45:19; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 9:13; John 3:33; John 7:28; John 8:26; John 14:16–17; John 17:3; John 17:17; Rom. 1:25; Rom. 3:4; Rom. 15:8; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; 1 John 5:20–21; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 15:3

S. God Is Unchangeable

Gen. 18:25; Num. 23:19–20; 1 Sam. 15:29; 2 Sam. 22:31; 1 Kings 8:56; Job 23:13–14; Ps. 33:11; Ps.

102:26–27; Ps. 103:17; Prov. 19:21; Eccles. 3:14; Isa. 14:24; Isa. 31:2; Isa. 46:9–10; Mal. 3:6; Matt. 24:35; John 5:17; Acts 4:28; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17–18; James 1:17

T. God Possesses Freedom (Sovereignty)

Gen. 24:3; Deut. 4:39; 1 Sam. 2:6–8; 2 Sam. 7:28; 2 Kings 19:15; Job 9:12; Job 41:11; Ps. 24:1, 10; Ps. 50:10–12; Ps. 75:6–7; Ps. 95:3–5; Ps. 99:1; Ps. 115:3; Ps. 135:6; Ps. 146:10; Eccles. 3:14; Eccles. 9:1; Isa. 45:9; Isa. 46:10; Isa. 61:1, 11; Jer. 18:6; Lam. 5:19; Dan. 4:35; Dan. 6:26; Mal. 1:14; Matt. 6:9–10; Matt. 11:25–26; John 19:11; Acts 4:24–28; Rom. 14:11; Eph. 1:11; Eph. 4:6; Heb. 1:3; James 4:12; Rev. 1:5–6

U. God Shows Loving-kindness

Exod. 15:13; Ps. 6:4; Ps. 18:50; Ps. 89:30–34; Ps. 103:8–10; Isa. 27:2–5; Isa. 54:7–8; Isa. 57:16; Isa. 63:7; Jer. 9:24; Jer. 31:3; Ezek. 16:42; Hos. 11:9; Mic. 7:8; Luke 6:35; Rom. 2:4; Rom. 11:22; Eph. 2:6–7; Titus 3:4–5

Kirk Cameron and Ray Comfort, *The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons: How to Share Your Faith Simply, Effectively, Biblically—the Way Jesus Did* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 2004), 311–312.

	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Called God	Phil. 1:2	John 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9	Acts 5:3, 4
Creator	Gen. 1:1; Isaiah 64:8	John 1:3; Col. 1:16	Job 33:4; 26:13
Resurrects	Gal. 1:1; 1 Thes. 1:10	John 2:19; 10:17	Rom. 8:11
Indwells	2 Cor. 6:16	Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20	John 14:17; Rom. 8:9, 11
Everywhere	1 Kings 8:27	Matt. 28:20	Psalms 139:7–10
All-knowing	1 John 3:20	John 16:30; 21:17	1 Cor. 2:10, 11
Sanctifies	1 Thes. 5:23	Heb. 13:12	1 Pet. 1:2
Life giver	Gen. 2:7; John 5:21	John 1:3; 5:21	2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 8:11
Fellowship	1 John 1:3	1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3	2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1
Eternal	Psalms 90:2	Micah 5:2; John 8:58	Heb. 9:14
Wills	Luke 22:42	Luke 22:42	1 Cor. 12:11
Speaks	Matt. 3:17; Heb. 1:1, 2	Luke 9:26	Acts 8:29; 13:2
Loves	John 3:16	Eph. 5:25	Rom. 15:30
Searches the heart	Jer. 17:10	Rev. 2:23	1 Cor. 2:10
We belong to	John 17:9	John 17:6	—
Savior	1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3	2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 3:6	—
We serve	Matt. 4:10	Col. 3:24	—
Believe in	Num. 14:11; John 14:1	John 11:26; 12:44	1 John 4:1, 2
Gives joy	Neh. 12:43	John 15:11	Gal. 5:22; 1 Thes. 1:6
Judges	John 8:50; Heb. 12:23	John 5:22, 30	—

Video on Trinity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw>

WHAT TO AVOID WHEN DESCRIBING THE TRINITY

Modalism. Also known as *patripassianism and Sabellianism, modalism was deemed a heretical doctrine by the early church. To preserve the unity of God and at the same time make sense of the doctrine of the Trinity, modalist teachers like Sabellius taught that one God appeared in three distinct modes: the Father in creation, the Son in redemption and the Holy Spirit in sanctification.¹

Arianism. Arianism was a prominent heresy that denied that the preincarnate Christ (the Logos) was co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. Arius (d. 336) argued that Christ was created by God out of nothing and was therefore a creature. Christ was to be the instrument through which all subsequent creation would occur. Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria, Egypt, was disciplined and finally exiled by his bishop for his unorthodox views. As Arius traveled in Palestine and Asia Minor, Arianism gained many followers, including several influential bishops. Emperor *Constantine I called the *Council of Nicaea in 325 to resolve this controversy. In that first ecumenical council (all bishops were invited to attend and deliberate), Arianism was deemed heretical. The orthodox view, championed by *Athanasius, held that Christ was *homoousios*, of the same “substance” as the Father.²

Nestorianism. Condemned by the Council of Ephesus (a.d. 431), the view held by Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, that although Jesus Christ was one person (God and man united), his two natures (one human and one divine) existed side by side and hence were separable. One consequence of this view was that Jesus’ suffering for humankind was seen as an act of Jesus in his humanity but not in his deity.³

monophysitism. In the early church era, those who held that Christ had but one nature, the divine, were known as monophysites. The term gained importance after the *Council of Chalcedon in 451. The orthodox view held that Christ has two natures, human and divine, that exist in one person. Monophysitism was most powerfully articulated in the fifth century by Severus of Antioch, who feared that the Chalcedonian emphasis on the two natures of Christ would promote *Nestorianism. Three eastern Christian groups from Armenia, Syria and Egypt united under the monophysite banner.⁴

The Athanasian Creed

“We worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Spirit is still another. But the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, coeternal in majesty. What the Father is, the Son is, and so is the Holy Spirit. Uncreated is the Father; uncreated is the Son; uncreated is the Spirit. The Father is infinite; the Son is infinite; the Holy Spirit is infinite. Eternal is the Father; eternal is the Son; eternal is the Spirit: And yet there are not three eternal beings, but one who is eternal; as there are not three uncreated and unlimited beings, but one who is uncreated and unlimited. Almighty is the Father; almighty is the Son; almighty is the Spirit: And yet

* asterisks (*), has been provided to link articles that share common themes, names, etc.

¹ Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History: Over 300 Terms Clearly and Concisely Defined*, The IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 98.

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² Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History: Over 300 Terms Clearly and Concisely Defined*, The IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 16.

³ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 83.

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⁴ Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History: Over 300 Terms Clearly and Concisely Defined*, The IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 98.

there are not three almighty beings, but one who is almighty. Thus the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God: And yet there are not three gods, but one God. Thus the Father is Lord; the Son is Lord; the Holy Spirit is Lord: And yet there are not three lords, but one Lord.⁵

NT TRINITY PASSAGES

- [Matt 1:20](#) But when he had considered this, behold, an angel [of the Lord](#) appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who [has been conceived](#) in her [is](#) of [the Holy Spirit](#).”
- [Matt 3:16](#) After being baptized, [Jesus](#) came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and [he saw the Spirit of God](#) descending as a dove *and* [lighting](#) on [Him](#),
- [Matt 12:18](#) “BEHOLD, [MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN](#); [MY BELOVED](#) IN [WHOM MY](#) SOUL is WELL-PLEASED; [I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT](#) UPON [HIM](#), AND [HE SHALL PROCLAIM](#) JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.
- [Matt 12:28](#) “But if [I](#) cast out demons by [the Spirit of God](#), then the kingdom [of God](#) has come upon you.
- [Matt 28:19](#) “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name [of](#) the [Father](#) and the [Son](#) and the [Holy Spirit](#),
- [Luke 1:35](#) The angel answered and said to her, “[The Holy Spirit](#) will come upon you, and the power [of the Most High](#) will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy [Child](#) shall be called [the Son of God](#).”
- [Luke 2:26](#) And it had been revealed to him by the [Holy Spirit](#) that he would not see death before he had seen the [Lord’s Christ](#).
- [Luke 3:22](#) and the [Holy Spirit](#) descended upon [Him](#) in bodily form like a dove, and [a voice](#) came out of heaven, “[You are My beloved Son](#), in [You I am well-pleased](#).”
- [Luke 10:21](#) At that very time [He rejoiced greatly in](#) the [Holy Spirit](#), and [said](#), “[I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth](#), that [You have hidden](#) these things from *the* wise and intelligent and [have revealed](#) them to infants. Yes, [Father](#), for this way was well-pleasing [in Your sight](#).”
- [John 1:33](#) “I did not recognize [Him](#), but He who [sent](#) me to baptize in water [said](#) to me, ‘[He](#) upon [whom](#) you see the [Spirit](#) descending and remaining upon [Him](#), [this](#) is the One who [baptizes](#) in [the Holy Spirit](#).’”
- [John 3:5](#) [Jesus](#) answered, “Truly, truly, [I say](#) to you, unless one is born of water and [the Spirit](#) he cannot enter into the kingdom [of God](#).”
- [John 3:34](#) “[For He whom God has sent](#) speaks the words [of God](#); for [He gives](#) the [Spirit](#) without measure.
- [John 14:16](#) “[I](#) will ask the [Father](#), and [He will give](#) you another [Helper](#), that [He may be](#) with you forever;
- [John 14:26](#) “But the [Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom](#) the [Father](#) will send in [My](#) name, [He](#) will teach you all things, and [bring to your remembrance](#) all that [I said](#) to you.
- [John 15:26](#) “When the [Helper](#) comes, [whom I](#) will send to you from the [Father](#), *that is* the [Spirit of truth who](#) proceeds from the [Father](#), [He](#) will testify about [Me](#),

⁵ Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

[John 16:15](#) “All things that the [Father](#) has are [Mine](#); therefore [I said](#) that [He takes](#) of [Mine](#) and [will disclose](#) it to you.

[Acts 1:4](#) [Gathering](#) them [together](#), [He commanded](#) them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the [Father had promised](#), “[Which](#),” *He said*, “you heard of from [Me](#);

[Acts 2:33](#) “Therefore [having been exalted](#) to the right hand [of God](#), and [having received](#) from the [Father](#) the promise [of](#) the [Holy Spirit](#), [He has poured forth](#) this which you both see and hear.

[Acts 7:55](#) But being full [of the Holy Spirit](#), he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory [of God](#), and [Jesus](#) standing at the right hand [of God](#);

[Acts 10:38](#) “*You know of* [Jesus](#) of Nazareth, how [God](#) anointed [Him with the Holy Spirit](#) and with power, and *how* [He](#) went about [doing good](#) and [healing](#) all who were oppressed by the devil, for [God](#) was with [Him](#).

[Rom 1:4](#) who [was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord](#),

[Rom 8:9](#) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed [the Spirit of God](#) dwells in you. But if anyone does not have [the Spirit of Christ](#), he [does](#) not [belong to Him](#).

[Rom 8:11](#) But if the [Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead](#) dwells in you, He who [raised Christ Jesus from the dead](#) will also give life to your mortal bodies through [His Spirit](#) who dwells in you.

[Rom 15:16](#) to be a minister [of Christ Jesus](#) to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel [of God](#), so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by [the Holy Spirit](#).

[Rom 15:30](#) Now I urge you, brethren, by [our Lord Jesus Christ](#) and by the love [of](#) the [Spirit](#), to strive together with me in your prayers to [God](#) for me,

[1 Cor 6:11](#) Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name [of](#) the [Lord Jesus](#) Christ and in the [Spirit of](#) our [God](#).

[1 Cor 12:3](#) Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by [the Spirit of God](#) says, “[Jesus](#) is accursed”; and no one can say, “[Jesus](#) is [Lord](#),” except by [the Holy Spirit](#).

[2 Cor 3:3](#) being manifested that you are a letter [of Christ](#), cared for by us, written not with ink but [with the Spirit of the living God](#), not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

[2 Cor 13:14](#) The grace [of](#) the [Lord Jesus Christ](#), and the love [of](#) [God](#), and the fellowship [of](#) the [Holy Spirit](#), be with you all.

[Gal 4:6](#) Because you are sons, [God](#) has sent forth the [Spirit of His Son](#) into our hearts, [crying](#), “[Abba! Father!](#)”

[Eph 2:18](#) for through [Him](#) we both have our access in one [Spirit](#) to the [Father](#).

[Eph 2:22](#) in [whom](#) you also are being built together into a dwelling [of God](#) in [the Spirit](#).

[Phil 3:3](#) for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship [in the Spirit of God](#) and glory in [Christ Jesus](#) and put no confidence in the flesh,

[2 Thess 2:13](#) But we should always give thanks [to God](#) for you, brethren beloved by [the Lord](#), because [God](#) has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification [by the Spirit](#) and faith in the truth.

- [Titus 3:6](#) [whom He poured out](#) upon us richly through [Jesus Christ](#) our [Savior](#),
- [Heb 9:14](#) how much more will the blood [of Christ, who](#) through [the](#) eternal [Spirit](#) offered [Himself](#) without blemish [to God](#), cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve [the living God](#)?
- [Heb 10:29](#) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the [Son of God](#), and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the [Spirit of grace](#)?
- [1 Pet 1:2](#) according to the foreknowledge [of God the Father](#), by the sanctifying work [of the Spirit](#), to obey [Jesus Christ](#) and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.
- [1 Pet 4:14](#) If you are reviled for the name [of Christ](#), you are blessed, because the [Spirit of glory](#) and [of God](#) rests on you.
- [1 John 4:2](#) By this you know the [Spirit of God](#): every spirit that confesses that [Jesus Christ](#) has come in the flesh is from [God](#);
- [Rev 2:7](#) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the [Spirit](#) says to the churches. To him who overcomes, [I will grant](#) to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise [of God](#).'

Got Questions Ministries. *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered*. Vol. 2. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2014–2021.

Question: Is the Trinity taught in the Old Testament?

Answer: The word *Trinity* is not used in the Bible, but the doctrine of the tri-unity of God is clearly taught in the New Testament. The Old Testament does not explicitly teach the doctrine, but the concept of the Trinity is hinted at in certain places. We could say that the Old Testament lays a foundation for the later revelation concerning the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in the Hebrew concept of plurality in unity:

[Deuteronomy 6:4](#) is a verse that seems, at first, to wholly negate the doctrine of the Trinity: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Interestingly, the singular *Yahweh* is coupled with the plural *Elohim* in this verse.) The word translated “one” is *ehad*, which means “one” or “unity”; however, the word is also used in other contexts to suggest a plurality within unity. For example, the word *ehad* also appears in [Genesis 2:24](#), which considers two persons as one: “[A man] is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one [*ehad*]” (NLT). Obviously, the husband and wife are distinct persons, but they are called “one”—there is diversity within the unity.

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in the names for God:

The very fact that God reveals Himself using multiple names in the Old Testament could be a clue pointing to His triune nature. Two of the names show up right away: *Elohim* in [Genesis 1:1](#), and *Yahweh* in [Genesis 2:4](#). Some scholars believe the multiple names for God imply a diversity within the Godhead.

One of the Hebrew names for “God” in our Bible, *Elohim*, is plural in form. The *-im* suffix is plural, and *elohim*, when not referring to the One True God, is translated as “gods” (plural) in Scripture. The plural form of a name for the One God could be seen as implying a perfect unity of Persons and is certainly consistent with the New Testament teaching of the Trinity.

Adonai, translated in our Bibles as “Lord,” occurs about 300 times in the Old Testament. This title for God is also plural. One writer comments on the word *Adonai*, “It is significant that it is almost always in the plural and possessive, meaning ‘my Lords.’ It confirms the idea of a trinity as found also in the name of Elohim” (Stone, Nathan, *The Names of God*, Moody Publishers, 2010, p. 35).

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in the appearances of the Angel of the Lord:

In several places, the Old Testament records encounters with someone called “the Angel of the Lord.” This supernatural presence speaks as if He is God, identifies Himself with God, and exercises the responsibilities of God. For example, in [Genesis 16:10](#), the Angel of the Lord says to Hagar, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.” Of course, God is the One who blesses Ishmael, but it’s the Angel of the Lord who personally makes the promise to his mother.

The same Angel of the Lord appears to Abraham and assumes the role of God, saying, “Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld *from me* your son, your only son” ([Genesis 22:12](#), emphasis added). See also [Exodus 3:2](#); [Judges 2:1–4](#); [5:23](#); [6:11–24](#); [13:3–22](#); [2 Samuel 24:16](#); [Zechariah 1:12](#); [3:1](#); [12:8](#). In several passages, those who see the Angel of the Lord fear for their lives because they had “seen the Lord.” It’s clear that the Angel of the Lord was no mere angel. Viewed through the lens of the New Testament teaching of the Trinity, it’s easy to conclude that the Angel of the Lord could be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in its descriptions of the Spirit of God:

The post-exilic Levites speak of the Spirit of God as being sent by God and speaking for God: “You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them” ([Nehemiah 9:20](#), NKJV); and “For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets” ([Nehemiah 9:30](#)). Both verses seem to make a distinction between God and another personality called the Spirit of God. See also [Isaiah 48:16](#) and [Isaiah 63:10](#).

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in God’s self-references:

Most of the time, God speaks of Himself using singular pronouns (e.g., [Exodus 33:19](#); [Hosea 11:9](#)); at other times, He uses plural pronouns:

“Then God said, ‘Let *us* make mankind in *our* image, in *our* likeness’ ” ([Genesis 1:26](#), emphasis added).

“And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of *us*, knowing good and evil’ ” ([Genesis 3:22](#), emphasis added).

As sinful humanity was erecting the tower of Babel, God said, “Come, let *Us* go down and confuse their language” ([Genesis 11:7](#), BSB, emphasis added).

In [Isaiah 6:8](#), God refers to Himself in both singular and plural terms: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall *I* send? And who will go for *us*?’ ” (emphasis added).

We could assume that, in each of the above passages, God is simply using the majestic plural to emphasize His power and greatness. Or we could also assume that there’s something more going on—viz., that these statements hint at discrete personalities existing as a unified whole.

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in Messianic passages:

In [Psalm 110:1](#), David writes, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’ ” (NKJV). Here is an example of *Yahweh* speaking to *Adonai* and giving Him the place of highest honor in heaven. Jesus pointed to this psalm as proof that the Christ is more than David’s descendant—He is the pre-existent Lord and much greater than David ([Matthew 22:41–45](#)).

Another Messianic prophecy is found in [Psalm 45:6–7](#): “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” The psalmist, addressing *Elohim*, suddenly speaks of “your God” who honors and anoints the Addressee.

The doctrine of the Trinity finds support in the Old Testament in the repetition of God’s qualities or His name:

In [Isaiah 6:3](#), the angels surrounding God praise Him as being “holy, holy, holy.” The threefold repetition expresses the intensity and completeness of God’s holiness. Some scholars also infer from the angels’ words an expression of the triune nature of God, as the three Persons of the Godhead are each equal in holiness and majesty.

Similarly, we have a threefold repetition of God’s name in [Numbers 6:24–26](#):

“The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

The blessing’s appeal to “the Lord ... the Lord ... the Lord” is seen by some scholars as providing a glimpse of the Trinity.

In many ways, the Old Testament gives a preview of the New Testament’s fuller revelation, including the doctrine of God as a triune Being. While the Trinity is not clearly seen in the Old Testament, there are certainly indicators of that truth.

Does God Exist? Is There Evidence for the Existence of God?

The existence of God cannot be proved or disproved. The Bible says that we must accept by faith the fact that God exists: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). If God so desired, He could simply appear and prove to the whole world that He exists. But if He did that, there would be no need for faith. “Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’ ” ([John 20:29](#)).

That does not mean, however, that there is no evidence of God’s existence. The Bible states, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” ([Psalm 19:1–4](#)). Looking at the stars, understanding the vastness of the universe, observing the wonders of nature, seeing the beauty of a sunset—all of these things point to a Creator God. If these were not enough, there is also evidence of God in our own hearts. [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) tells us, “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.” Deep within us is the recognition that there is something beyond this life and someone beyond this world. We can deny this knowledge intellectually, but God’s presence in us and all around us is still obvious. Despite this, the Bible warns that some will still deny God’s existence: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’ ” ([Psalm 14:1](#)). Since the vast majority of people throughout history, in all cultures, in all civilizations, and on all continents believe in the existence of some kind of God, there must be something (or someone) causing this belief.

In addition to the biblical arguments for God’s existence, there are logical arguments. First, there is the ontological argument. The most popular form of the ontological argument uses the concept of God to prove God’s existence. It begins with the definition of God as “a being than which no greater can be conceived.” It is then argued that to exist is greater than to not exist, and therefore the greatest conceivable being must exist. If God did not exist, then God would not be the greatest conceivable being, and that would contradict the very definition of God.

A second argument is the teleological argument. The teleological argument states that since the universe displays such an amazing design, there must have been a divine Designer. For example, if the Earth were significantly closer or farther away from the sun, it would not be capable of supporting much of the life it currently does. If the elements in our atmosphere were even a few percentage points different, nearly every living thing on earth would die. The odds of a single protein molecule forming by chance is 1 in 10243 (that is a 1 followed by 243 zeros). A single cell is comprised of millions of protein molecules.

A third logical argument for God’s existence is called the cosmological argument. Every effect must have a cause. This universe and everything in it is an effect. There must be something that caused everything to come into existence. Ultimately, there must be something “un-caused” in order to cause everything else to come into existence. That “un-caused” cause is God.

A fourth argument is known as the moral argument. Every culture throughout history has had some form of law. Everyone has a sense of right and wrong. Murder, lying, stealing, and immorality are almost universally rejected. Where did this sense of right and wrong come from if not from a holy God?

Despite all of this, the Bible tells us that people will reject the clear and undeniable knowledge of God and believe a lie instead. [Romans 1:25](#) declares, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.” The Bible also proclaims that people are without excuse for not believing in God: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” ([Romans 1:20](#)).

People claim to reject God’s existence because it is “not scientific” or “because there is no proof.” The true reason is that once they admit that there is a God, they also must realize that they are responsible to God and in need of forgiveness from Him ([Romans 3:23, 6:23](#)). If God exists, then we are accountable to Him for our actions. If God does not exist, then we can do whatever we want without having to worry about God judging us. That is why many of those who deny the existence of God cling strongly to the theory of naturalistic evolution—it gives them an alternative to believing in a Creator God. God exists and ultimately everyone knows that He exists. The very fact that some attempt so aggressively to disprove His existence is in fact an argument for His existence.

How do we know God exists? As Christians, we know God exists because we speak to Him every day. We do not audibly hear Him speaking to us, but we sense His presence, we feel His leading, we know His love, we desire His grace. Things have occurred in our lives that have no possible explanation other than God. God has so miraculously saved us and changed our lives that we cannot help but acknowledge and praise His existence. None of these arguments can persuade anyone who refuses to acknowledge what is already obvious. In the end, God’s existence must be accepted by faith ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). Faith in God is not a blind leap into the dark; it is safe step into a well-lit room where the vast majority of people are already standing.