

THEOLOGY PROPER
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

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THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

*“We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously **purposed** from eternity to **redeem a people for Himself** and to make **all things new** for His own glory.”*

The Evangelical Free Church of America - Statement of Faith (Beliefs) **about God**

“What we believe about God is **the most important thing about us.**” --- A. W. Tozer

“Our belief or lack of it inevitably **translates itself into our actions and attitudes.**”

Know What You Believe – by Paul E. Little

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Is there a God? Does He really exist? How can we know that **for sure**?

The answer to these questions is found in “**revelation**”, **God’s revelation of Himself.**

HOW WE KNOW GOD EXISTS

1. **The Revelation of God In Creation (The Creative Word).**

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

The Psalmist states that, *“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth” (33:6), and “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded and it stood firm” (33:9).*

The Apostle Paul proclaims that nature or creation reveals to **all humanity** *“God’s invisible qualities - his **eternal power and divine nature**” (Romans 1:20).*

Therefore, **the evidence** revealed through nature or creation presents **rational arguments** which attest or prove the **existence of God.** **The two most common arguments are:**

THE EVIDENCE FROM CAUSE and EFFECT (Psalm 19:1-4)

For **everything that happens** (the effect) there is something **that makes it happen** (the cause). Since the universe is **an effect** there must be a **corresponding cause** that is **adequate** to bring it into **existence.** **That cause is God.**

This argument for the existence of God is sometimes referred to as the **cosmological** argument. The word cosmos comes from the Greek word *cosmos* which deals with **the order seen in the universe.**

THE EVIDENCE FROM DESIGN and PURPOSE (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3b)

Our world, whether seen through plant, animal, or human life, through microscope or telescope, **gives evidence of design and purpose.** That is to say, that the purpose for which various things were designed or made **is being fulfilled.** Therefore, it must be concluded that the **designer** or **creator** of this world **is an intelligent being.** **This being is none other than God.**

This argument for the existence of God is called the **teleological** argument. It is derived from the Greek word *teleo*, *having the thought of finished, complete and accomplished.*

2. **The Revelation of God In Scripture** (The Written Word).

The Bible is the **vehicle** through which God declares His will and counsel (II Peter 1:20-21).

The Scriptures do not begin by attempting to **prove** the existence of God. Rather, “They give **unqualified affirmation** to the existence of God. The opening phrase ‘In the beginning’ (Genesis 1:1) sets forth the **basic assumption** of the Bible (that God is or exists) which in the rest of the Scripture is **never denied or debated.**” Clarence H. Benson

The knowledge, miracles, and prophecies revealed in the Scriptures **declare the existence of God.**

3. **The Revelation of God In Christ** (The Living Word).

The Apostle John reveals Christ as the **WORD** (John 1:1) who **became flesh** or man (1:14) in order to **make God known** to mankind (1:18).

In reference to **Christ**, the **WORD** (*logos* in Greek) means “the one who **expresses** the mind of God to men.” The words **one** (John 1:14) and **only** (1:18), mean that Christ is “the **sole representation** of the **being** and **character** of the one who sent him.”

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3a).

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).

The **evidence** for the existence of God as revealed through creation, the Scriptures, and Jesus Christ is **so convincing** that only **the fool** says in his heart, “**There is no God.**” Psalm 14:1 and 53:1

FALSE VIEWS CONCERNING GOD’S EXISTENCE

- Atheism ----- teaches there is **no God**.
- Agnosticism - teaches the **impossibility** of knowing whether there is a **God** or a **future life** or **anything beyond the material universe**.
- Deism ----- teaches that God exists and created the world **but thereafter assumed no control over it or people’s lives**.
God is only **transcendent**. He is **not immanent** or **present** throughout the universe.
- Pantheism ---- teaches that **God is everything; everything is God**.
God is not a **personality**. All laws, forces, manifestations, etc. of the self-existing universe **are God**.
God is not **transcendent**. He is **not a surpassing, excelling, extraordinary God**.

THE NATURE OF GOD

The words **nature**, **essence** or **substance** have similar meanings.

Nature is “the basic qualities or characteristics that together **define the identity** of something.”

Essence or **substance** is “the real or essential part of anything; the fundamental nature of something; that which **makes something what it is.**”

In the words **unity**, **tri-unity**, **being**, and **attribute** we discover the basic qualities which together **define the fundamental nature of God.**

THE UNITY OR ONENESS OF GOD

Deuteronomy 6:4 declares the **unity** or **oneness of God.**

By unity we mean that there is but **one God** or **one Divine Nature** and this Divine Nature is **undivided** and **indivisible.**



- **Evidence For The Unity of God.**

“I (Jesus Christ) and the Father are one.” John 10:30

“Anyone who has seen me (Jesus Christ) has seen the Father.” John 14:9

These verses teach, **not that** Jesus Christ and the Father are the **same person**, but rather, that **they possess the same nature.**

- **False Views Concerning God’s Unity / Nature.**

Dualism ----- teaches that the world is composed of **two basic entities**, **good and evil.** God is **good.** Satan is **evil.** God and Satan are **co-eternal.**

Polytheism – teaches there are **many gods.**

THE TRI-UNITY (trinity) OF GOD

By **tri-unity** we mean that there are **three distinct persons in one Divine Nature** or **Essence** and known respectively as the **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

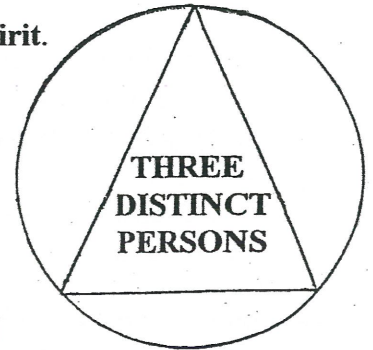
- **Evidence For The Tri-Unity of God.**

The **Father** is called God (John 6:27; 17:1-3);

The **Son** is called God (Hebrews 1:8);

The **Holy Spirit** is called God (Acts 5:3-4).

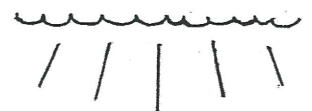
Matthew 3:16-17 (Evidence from John the Baptist - at Christ’s baptism.)



*“As soon as **Jesus** was baptized, he went up out of the water.”*



*“At that moment heaven was opened, and he (John) saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a Dove and lighting on him.”*



*“And a voice from heaven (**the Father**) said, ‘this is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”*

II Corinthians 13:14 (Evidence from the Apostle Paul's doxology.)

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God (the Father), and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

- **False Views Concerning The Tri-Unity (trinity) of God.**

Tritheism ----- teaches there are **three distinct Gods** - thus denying **the unity of God's Nature**.

Sabellianism ---- teaches a **trinity of revelation or manifestation** which denies the **Tri-Unity of God**.

God, at one time **acts as** (becomes) **the Father** (as in creation).

God, at another time **acts as** (becomes) **the Son** (as in redemption).

God, at another time **acts as** (becomes) **the Holy Spirit** (as in sanctification).

Macedonianism - The "Spirit Fighters"

Macedonius, a Bishop of Constantinople, taught that the **Holy Spirit** was **neither God** nor a **creature** like other creatures.

The Church Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. **affirmed the Deity of the Holy Spirit**.

[We believe] "--- and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is **worshipped** and **glorified** with **the Father** and **the Son**."

Unitarianism ---- teaches that God is **one person** - thus denying the **Tri-Unity of God**.

The Arian Controversy

Unit/Arian teaching stems from Arius (280-336 A.D.), a priest in Alexandria, Egypt. In his teaching of Jesus Christ, Arius agreed ---

That Christ **existed** before (His birth in) Bethlehem;

That Christ was **the agent** of creation;

That as the foremost of **created beings** Christ should be worshipped.

Arius coined the expression "**There was when - He - was - not**" in order to show that the Son was a **created being** who had a beginning.

The Church Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. settled the Arian controversy. The Council stated ---

[We believe] "**In one Lord Jesus Christ --- true God of true God, not made, of one substance with the Father.**"

Further, "But those (Arius) who say there was a when He was not, and before being begotten He was not --- these the Catholic Church **anathematizes**."

The **Athanasian Creed** states (in part) ---

"So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God and yet there are not three Gods but one God."

"We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." Athanasius (293-373 A.D.), Patriarch of Alexandria, and opponent of Arianism.

THE NATURE OF GOD (continued)

THE BEING OF GOD

Being, refers to existence – “to have life; to be alive; to have individual existence.”
We exist as **human beings**. What kind of a **being** is God?

God Is A Spirit Being.

Jesus described God as being **spirit** (John 4:24) and the Apostle Paul described Him as being **invisible** (Colossians 1:15). See also I Timothy 1:17, 6:16; Hebrews 11:27.
Jesus further describes a spirit (ghost) as a being who does not have **flesh and bones** (Luke 24:39).

From these scriptures we **can conclude** that:

- God **does not exist** in a body composed of **material parts**. He is immaterial, incorporeal. God is **free** from the **limitations** and the **corruption** associated with bodily existence. Those **expressions** that mention God as having bodily parts such as hands (Isaiah 65:2), feet (Genesis 3:8), eyes and ears (Psalm 34:15) are only **symbolical representations** to bring the infinite God within **our human apprehension**.
- God **cannot be seen or touched** by us who exist in a physical material body.
- Because God is **spirit**, which no one has or ever can see (John 1:18); I Timothy 6:16), there can be **no material representations, likeness, or images** of Him (Deuteronomy 4:15-19).
The **image and likeness** of God in man (Genesis 1:26-27) and the **exact representation** of God in Christ (Hebrews 1:3) are **personal and moral likenesses**, not material or physical.
- Although invisible, God has at times **revealed Himself** to human view in a **bodily form**. This is called a **manifestation** in which God reveals Himself, His will, and His purposes to mankind.

In the **Old Testament** these manifestations were through God the Son or The Angel of the Lord (Genesis 21:17-18, 22:11-12). This is called a **Theophany**.

In the **New Testament** the manifestation is in **human form** through God’s Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:18; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

God Is A Living Being.

God exists as the **living** (alive) God.

The name “I AM” (Exodus 3:14) is constructed from the Hebrew verb “to be” and **indicates** perpetual existence. Ours is the **Living God**. He has **life**. He is **alive**.

God exists as the **true** (real or genuine) and **eternal** (endless) God.

From these scriptures, Jeremiah 10:10a; Romans 16:26; I Thessalonians 1:9, we learn that our living, true, eternal God **stands in contrast** to lifeless, fabricated (non-genuine) **idols** (I Kings 18:16-39; Isaiah 44:9-20, 46:5-7).

God Is A Personal Being.

The fact that God is a **person** is clearly revealed in the Scriptures.

The following scriptures prove that God possesses the **three basic characteristics of personality**.

Intelligence
Psalm 139:1-3

Emotion
Nahum 1:2-3

Will
Ephesians 1:3-5

The specific **names** and **titles** attributed to God are **descriptive** of Him as a person.

Jehovah or Yahweh (YHWH - without the vowels) is derived from the verb **to be** and means “**the eternal self-existent one who reveals Himself.**” In our English Bibles Jehovah is usually rendered LORD - in capital letters.

This name, Jehovah, has special significance. From its **ten combinations** or forms in the **Old Testament** we learn of God’s **personal relationship** with His people.

Reference	Name	Meaning
Genesis 16:13	Jehovah - El-Roi	The Lord (God) who sees me.
Genesis 22:14	Jehovah - Jireh	The Lord who provides.
Exodus 15:26	Jehovah - Rapheka	The Lord who heals me.
Exodus 17:15	Jehovah - Nissi	The Lord is my banner.
Exodus 31:13	Jehovah - M’Qaddishkem	The Lord who sanctifies – makes you holy.
Judges 6:24	Jehovah - Shalom	The Lord is peace - my peace.
I Samuel 1:3	Jehovah - Sabaoth	The Lord Almighty – The Lord of Hosts.
Psalms 23:1	Jehovah - Rohi	The Lord is my shepherd.
Jeremiah 23:6	Jehovah - Tsidkenu	The Lord our righteousness.
Ezekiel 48:35	Jehovah - Shammah	The Lord is there.

In the **New Testament** the seven “**I AMs**” attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ also have special significance in God’s **personal relationship** with His people. The name “**I AM**” reveals God as an “**immediate presence**” - **the God who is always there for His people.**

Reference	Name	Spiritual Truth / Application
John 6:35, 48	I am the bread of life.	The one who sustains us both spiritually and physically.
John 8:12, 9:5	I am the light of the World.	The one who provides spiritual wisdom and understanding.
John 10:7, 9	I am the gate.	The one who provides salvation and an abundant life.
John 10:11, 14	I am the good shepherd.	The one who sacrifices for His people.
John 11:25	I am the resurrection and the life.	The one who provides eternal life.
John 14:6	I am the way and the truth and the life.	The one who brings us to the Father.
John 15:1, 5	I am the true vine.	The one who enables us to be spiritually fruitful.

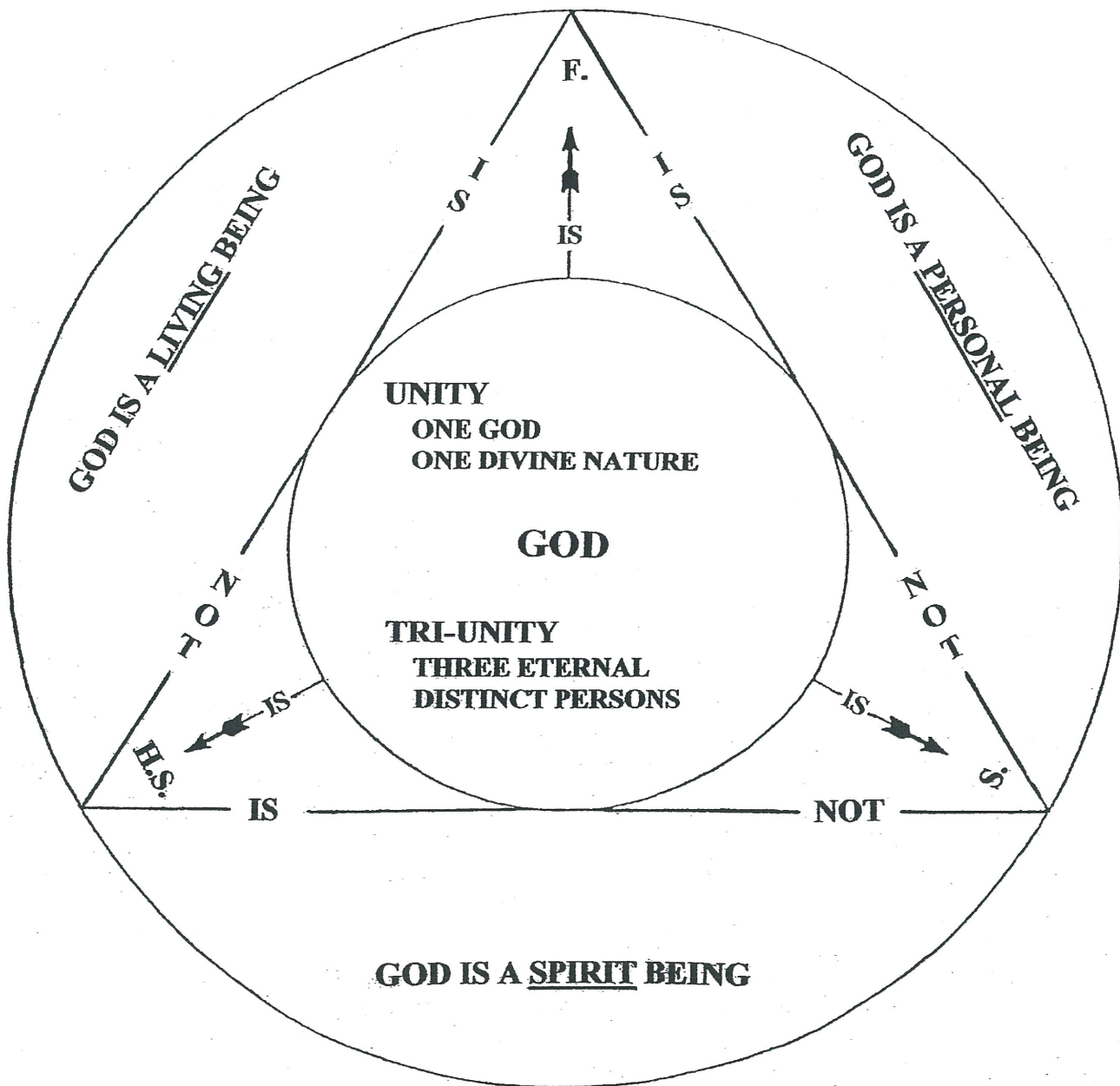
THE NATURE OF GOD (continued)

The following diagram will help you visualize God's Nature - His Unity, Tri-Unity (trinity), and Being.

The triangle is the oldest known illustration of the "trinity". It dates from the 3rd - 4th century A. D.

At the top of the triangle, the **F.** represents **The Father**. At the bottom of the triangle on the right side, the **S.** represents **The Son**, and on the left side, the **H.S.** represents **the Holy Spirit**.

Starting at the top and then moving around the triangle you will notice that **God is the Father**, **God is the Son** and **God is the Holy Spirit** - depicting the **Unity** or **Oneness** of God. However, you will also notice that the **Father is not the Son** and the **Son is not the Holy Spirit** and the **Holy Spirit is not the Father** - depicting or picturing the **Tri-Unity** of God. **Three distinct persons in one Divine Nature.**



THE NATURE OF GOD (continued)

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

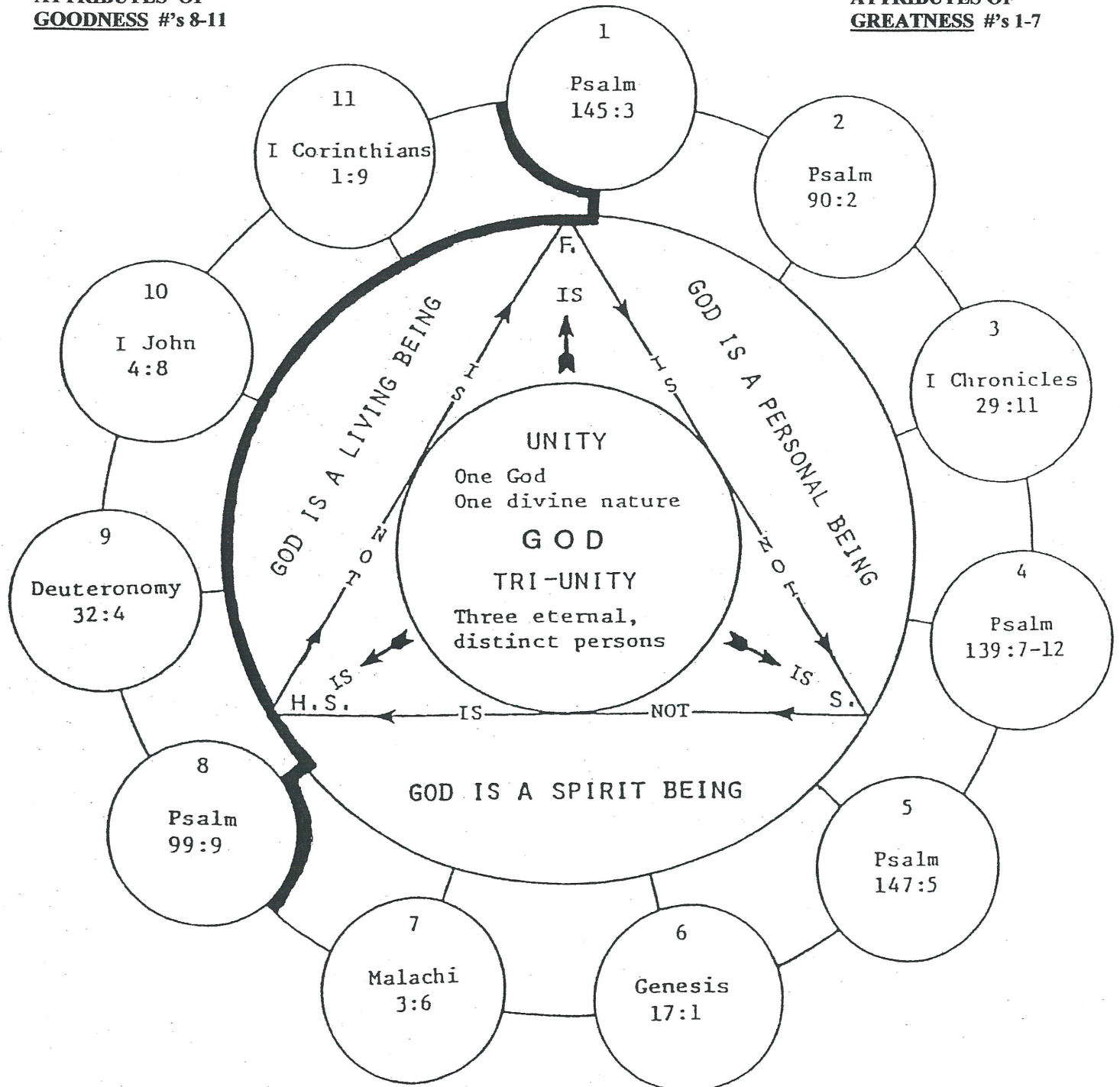
Attribute means, "Those **qualities / characteristics** which **distinguish one person or thing from another.**" In relation to God, attributes are those **distinctive qualities or characteristics** by which the **divine nature of God is described and manifested.** Using the **diagram below,** do the following:

- Look up each Bible reference **in the circles** numbered 1 to 11.
- **Write out the attribute or characteristic you discover about God.** Do this in the **space** provided in the circles or to the right of the circles. **Example:** Circle #1 - Psalm 145:3 - **God is great.**

You may **consult** pages 9 & 10 to be sure that you have the **right definition or meaning** of the attribute.

**GOD'S MORAL
ATTRIBUTES OF
GOODNESS #s 8-11**

**GOD'S NON-MORAL
ATTRIBUTES OF
GREATNESS #s 1-7**



“God’s attributes answer the question: **What is God like?** How might we expect Him to act?”

Bill Thrasher, Moody Bible Institute

GOD’S NON-MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GREATNESS

1. **INFINITE** ----- *“HIS GREATNESS NO ONE CAN FATHOM.”* Psalm 145:3
God is infinite, **unlimited** in every part of His character, **fathomless, inexhaustible**, too deep to be measured. All that God is, He is to a **perfect or infinite degree**.
God is a **boundless source** for all we need to live triumphantly.
2. **ETERNAL** ----- *“FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING YOU ARE GOD.”* Ps. 90:2
God is eternal, **not limited or affected** by time. Hebrews 13:8
God is without beginning and without end, **timeless**.
God exists apart from the material universe. I Timothy 1:17; 6:15-16
3. **SOVEREIGN** ----- *“YOU ARE EXALTED AS HEAD OVER ALL.”* I Chronicles 29:11
God is sovereign, the **supreme ruler of all**. Isaiah 46:10b
God has **unlimited rule / authority over all**. Revelation 19:16
God directs the events of the universe and the actions of His creatures in accordance with His plan.
4. **OMNIPRESENT** ---- *“WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE?”* Psalm 139:7-12
God is omni (everywhere) present – **unlimited presence at the same time**.
God is everywhere **personally present** and acting. Jeremiah 23:23-24;
Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6; Acts 17:27-28
God is both “At hand” and “Afar off” - **not limited with respect to space**.
5. **OMNISCIENT** ----- *“HIS UNDERSTANDING HAS NO LIMIT.”* Psalm 147:5
God is omniscient. He has **unlimited knowledge**. Matthew 10:30
God is the all knowing, all seeing, all wise God. Heb. 4:12-13; Ps. 139:1-4
6. **OMNIPOTENT** ----- *“I AM GOD ALMIGHTY.”* Genesis 17:1
God is omnipotent – all powerful. God has **unlimited power** to do what ever He wills to accomplish. Job 42:1-2; Jeremiah 32:27; Matthew 19:26; Ephesians 3:20
God can do all things except that which is contrary to His nature and will.
He cannot **deny** or **disown Himself**. II Timothy 2:13
7. **UNCHANGABLE** - *“I THE LORD DO NOT CHANGE.”* Malachi 3:6
God is unchanging and unchangeable. **He cannot alter His basic character**.
God is always true to Himself – to His word, His revelation, and His decrees.
Numbers 23:19; I Samuel 15:29; Hebrews 6:17-18; James 1:17

Now, read carefully Jeremiah 18:1-10. Then answer this question. Does God **change** or **repent**? No! His decision is **conditioned** upon the **variations** in His people’s **character** and **conduct**. God simply **carries out** whatever is **due** - **based on their decision**. If **they repent** of their evil He **will not** judge or discipline them. If **they do not repent** He most certainly **will** judge or discipline them. This is W. E. Vine’s explanation: **“These actions by God do not imply anything contrary to God’s unchangeableness but only that the aspects of his mind is changed toward an object that has itself changed.”**

GOD'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOODNESS

8. HOLY ----- *"THE LORD OUR GOD IS HOLY."* Psalm 99:9
God is **absolute perfection** - separate from **all impurity**. Leviticus 11:44-45;
Isaiah 6:3; I Peter 1:15-16
"God is of purer eyes than to behold evil." Habakkuk 1:3

9. RIGHTEOUS / ----- *"ALL HIS WAYS ARE JUST - UPRIGHT AND JUST IS HE."* Deut. 32:4
JUST
God **treats** all creation **fairly**. **He does not show favoritism**. Psalm 145:17;
Romans 2:5-9, 11

10. LOVE ----- *"GOD IS LOVE."* I John 4:8
"Love is the exercise of the Divine Will in deliberate choice without assignable cause." W. E. Vine

Divine Love is God **giving unconditionally** for our highest good. John 3:16;
I John 4:9-10; I John 4:16a

God's attribute of Love **includes** His Mercy, Grace, Longsuffering, and Goodness.

MERCY ---- God's love shown to those in **misery and distress**.
God **not giving** what **we do deserve**. Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5

GRACE ---- God's love shown to those who do not deserve it.
God **giving** what **we do not deserve**. Ephesians 2:8-9

LONGSUFFERING --- God **endures** evil men in spite of their disobedience
and seeks **to lead them to repentance**. II Peter 3:9, 15

GOODNESS – That **perfection** of God which prompts Him **to deal bounty-fully and kindly** with all His creatures (common grace).
Psalm 145:8-9; Acts 14:17

11. FAITHFUL ----- *"GOD IS FAITHFUL or TRUE."* I Corinthians 1:9
God is faithful or true **to His promises**. Deuteronomy 7:9; I Kings 8:56;
Psalm 145:13b
God is faithful or true **in His judgments**. Deuteronomy 7:10; Revelation
19:11

The promises or threats of God are always literally fulfilled if they are **unconditional** or **absolute**. If they are **conditional**, their fulfillment is dependent upon the obedience or repentance of the persons involved.

"To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? I am God, and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me." Isaiah 46:5, 9

O Wonder of wonders!! This God lives in those who believe in him. John 14:15-17, 23

Note To Teachers: Promote discussion / interaction with your students **over each attribute**.

Examples: Since God is Sovereign (#3) and Love (#10), why does He allow war, suffering, death, etc.?
If God were not Omniscient (#5) or could change (#7), how would that affect our lives?

SUBORDINATIONISM

Subordination means, "To make obedient or subservient to." Subservient means, "Service in an inferior or subordinate capacity." It refers to "one who occupies an inferior or subordinate position that furthers another's ends."

In theology, subordinationism is the teaching that the second and third persons of the Trinity (The Son and Holy Spirit) are subordinate to the first person (The Father). It refers to the **distinctive roles** played by the persons of the Godhead. That is, how they agreed **to operate** or **function** in relation to one another in the **redemption** of mankind.

The Father's Role

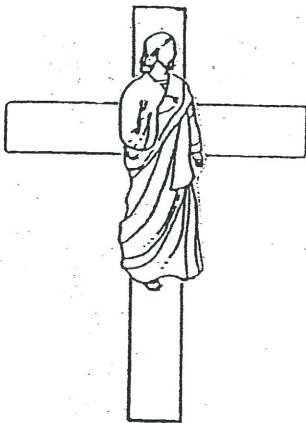
The Father accepted the role of the "**Producer**", the **production manager** of the plan of redemption. Galatians 4:4-5; I John 4:9-10

The Son's Role

The Son accepted the role of the "**Servant**" of the Father. In the plan of redemption this is referred to as the "Generation" (bringing into being; producing; begetting) of the Son by the Father. Hebrews 10:5-10

As the God-Man, Christ surrendered the **independent exercise** of some non-moral attributes, such as, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. They were **hidden** or **veiled** and only seen as the Father granted Christ the exercise of them.

Philippians 2:6-11 presents the clearest understanding of the **subordination of the Son** to the Father.



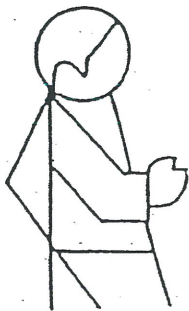
Christ – **The Servant** of The Lord --- Philippians 2:6-7
Isaiah 53:1-12; John 1:1, 14, 18 and 6:38

Christ – **Our Savior** --- Philippians 2:8
John 3:16-17; Romans 3:22-24, 5:6-8, 10:9-13; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-9;
Titus 3:3-7; I Peter 1:18-21

Christ – **Our Resurrected / Exalted Lord** --- Philippians 2:9-11
Acts 2:23-24; I Corinthians 15:1-8; Ephesians 1:19-23
Our Mediator / High Priest I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16

The Holy Spirit's Role

The Holy Spirit accepted the role of the "**Guidance Counselor**" in God's plan of redemption. The Holy Spirit is referred to as "Proceeding" from the Father and the Son (John 14:16a, 26a, and 16:7). **He acts:**



As **Our Counselor**
John 14:26

As **Our Teacher**
John 14:26

As **Our Guide**
John 16:13-15

As **The Seal or Guarantor** of Our Inheritance;
Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30; II Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:5

As The One Who **Empowers Our Lives** For Godly Living;
Ephesians 4:17-5:20

As The One Who **Forever Indwells** Those Who Believe.
John 14:16, 23

