

An open Bible with a brown ribbon bookmark, resting on a dark surface. The Bible is open to a page with text, and the ribbon is placed across the middle. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Sunday 9AM Equipping Class

*Study the Foundations of Christian Theology*

*[Perimeter.org/SundayEquipping](https://Perimeter.org/SundayEquipping)*

Genesis 1:1

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In the beginning, God created the heavens  
and the earth.

God's transcendence

# God's Immanence

Put another way, there is a distinction between God's knowableness and his fathomableness.

## Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.4,4:

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“Most high, utterly good, utterly powerful, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, deeply hidden yet intimately present, perfection of both beauty and strength, stable and incomprehensible, immutable and yet changing all things, never new, never old, making everything new and ‘leading’ the proud ‘to be old without their knowledge’ (Job 9:5, Old Latin Version); always active, always in repose, gathering to yourself but not in need, supporting and filling and protecting, creating and nurturing and bringing to maturity, searching even though to you nothing is lacking: you love without burning, you are jealous in a way that is free from anxiety, you ‘repent’ (Gen. 6:6) without the pain of regret, you are wrathful and remain tranquil. You will a change without any change in your design.

## Augustine, *Confessions*, I.4,4: continued...

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You recover what you find yet have never lost. Never in any need, you rejoice in your gains (Luke 15:7); you are never avaricious, yet you require interest (Matt. 25:27). We pay you more than you require so as to make you our debtor, yet who has anything which does not belong to you? (1 Corinthians 4:7) You pay off debts, though owing nothing to anyone; you cancel debts and incur no loss. But in these words what have I said, my God, my life, my holy sweetness? What has anyone achieved in words when he speaks about you? Yet woe to those who are silent about you because, though loquacious with verbosity, they have nothing to say.”

## Group Question

Based on what you know from Scripture, if you had to describe God, how would you describe him in his essence?



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: A Definition

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Attributes that emphasize the absolute distinction between God (i.e., the Creator) and his creation

## God's Communicable Attributes: A Definition

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- a. Attributes that find some resemblance in humanity and creation.
- b. However, while there is some resemblance, these attributes exist infinitely and perfectly in God but only in a limited and imperfect manner in us.

# The Incommunicable Attributes

## *Independent or Aseity*

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“God is *independent* in the sense that He is determined by nothing and everything else is determined by him (Acts 17:25 and Rom. 11:36).”  
(Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 119)

John 5:26

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For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

## Acts 17:25

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<sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

## *Simple*

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“He is *simple*, not composite, wholly free of all compounding of spirit and matter, thought and extent, being and properties, reason and will, and like components, and all that He *has* also *is* pure truth and life and light.” (Bavinck, *Wonderful*, 119)

## Psalm 36:9

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For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.



## 1 John 1:5

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<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

## 1 John 4:16

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<sup>16</sup> So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

## *Infinite*

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*“God is not subject to limitations.” (Louis Berkhoff, Summary of Christian Doctrine, 35)*

## Job 11: 7-10

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<sup>7</sup>“Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? <sup>8</sup> It is higher than heaven<sup>[a]</sup>—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? <sup>9</sup> Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea. <sup>10</sup> If he passes through and imprisons and summons the court, who can turn him back?

## Psalm 145:3

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Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

## *Eternal*

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“He is *eternal* in that He transcends time and yet penetrates every moment in time with His eternity (Psalm 90:2).”  
(Bavinck, *Wonderful*, 119)

## Psalm 90:2

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Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

## *Immutable*

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“He is *unchangeable* so that He eternally remains the same, and all variableness and turning are owing to the creature and the relationship in which the creature places himself over against God (James 1:17).”  
(Bavinck, *Wonderful*, 119)



## James 1:17

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<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change

## Malachi 3:6

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<sup>6</sup> “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

## Hebrews 13:8

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<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

## *Omnipresent*

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“He is *omnipresent* in that He transcends all space and yet bears up every point of space by His almighty and ever-present strength.” (Bavinck, *Wonderful*, 119)

Psalm 139:7

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Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

## Acts 17: 27-28

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<sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for “In him we live and move and have our being’;<sup>[a]</sup> as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.’<sup>[b]</sup>

## The Author/Story Relation – From Gavin Ortlund’s *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals*, p. 96-97:

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“[F]or the purposes of stretching the human imagination, something of this blend of infinite distance and constant presence can be compared to an author/story relation. An author is both utterly foreign and eerily familiar to his story: he is himself beyond the story, and yet everything in the story is contained within him; he is visible nowhere and yet revealed everywhere. Tolkien, for instance, is not present in any “place” in Middle-earth, and yet all the places of Middle-earth are present to him (omnipresence). He is not located at any “time” in Middle-earth, and yet all the times of the story are equally open to him (eternality). In one sense we may say that the characters of Middle-earth have never met him; in another sense they have never done anything but meet with him. They are his characters and as such belong to him, but they are his characters and as such do not know him.

## The Author/Story Relation – From Gavin Ortlund’s *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals*, p. 96-97: continued...

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With respect to divine eternity and foreknowledge, one might say, leaving room for qualification, that Tolkien’s knowledge of Middle-earth is “simple” in the sense that the past and future events of that world are equally available to his present Oxford. As... divine foreknowledge is not really foreknowledge but simply knowledge in the eternal present, we might say that Tolkien’s knowledge of events in Middle-earth that are future with respect to Frodo or Saruman is not foreknowledge but simply knowledge in the Oxford present. Both God and Tolkien relate to their respective “creations” in a way that is better expressed by prepositions such as beyond or outside or above than the preposition before. Both are not simply older than the world they create but surround and penetrate that world in a unique relationship. Furthermore, just as...divine eternality does not cut God off from time in a frozen, static relationship, so Tolkien’s ability to see the entire story at once enables him to relate to it more freely, with a potentially infinite attentiveness to each moment in the story.”



# The Communicable Attributes

# Some Examples:

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- a. Knowledge
- b. Wisdom
- c. Power
- d. Goodness
- e. Justice
- f. Truth
- g. Love
- h. Holiness

## Herman Bavinck, *Wonderful*, 121:

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“[I]n God love far transcends the love of creatures. For the love in God is independent, unchangeable, simple, eternal, and omnipresent. It does not depend on us nor is aroused by us, but flows, free and pure, from the depths of the Divine being. It knows no variation, neither falls nor rises, appears nor disappears, and there is not even the shadow of turning in it. It is not merely a property of the Divine being alongside of other properties or attributes, and never gets into conflict with these others, but it also coincides with the Divine Being Himself. God is love, He Himself wholly and perfectly, and with His whole being. This love is not subject to time and space, but stands above it and comes down out of eternity into the hearts of the children of God. Such a love is absolutely reliable. Our souls can rest in it in every need, including death itself, and if such a God of love be for us, who can be against it?”

# The Trinity



## Westminster Larger Catechism:

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- a. Q8: *Are there more Gods than one?*
- b. A: There is but one only, the living and true God.
- c. Q9: *How many persons are there in the Godhead?*
- d. A: There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

## Group Questions

- a. Why do we confess this doctrine?
- b. Where in scripture does God reveal this about himself?
- c. If you only had the Old Testament and no knowledge of the New, could you know this to be true?

What is being revealed in the New Testament?



# The Distinguishing of Persons in the Godhead

## *The Incarnation of Jesus: Matthew 1:18-25*

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- <sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ<sup>[a]</sup> took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed<sup>[b]</sup> to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”(which means, God with us). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

## *The baptism of Jesus: Matthew 3:13-17*

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<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,<sup>[a]</sup> and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son,<sup>[b]</sup> with whom I am well pleased.”

## *The Great Commission: Matthew 28:19*

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Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in<sup>[a]</sup> the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

# The Unity and Equality of the Persons in the Godhead

*The Son*

John 1:1

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

## John 1:14

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<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son<sup>[a]</sup> from the Father, full of grace and truth.



John 10:30

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<sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”

## Hebrews 1:1-4

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**1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

# *The Spirit*

## Acts 5:3-4

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<sup>3</sup> But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? <sup>4</sup> While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”

## 1 Corinthians 3:16

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<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you<sup>[a]</sup> are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

## John 14:26; 15:26

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<sup>26</sup> 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 have said to you.

<sup>26</sup> “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

## Divine Attributes Attributed to the Spirit

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- a. Eternal (Hebrews 9:14)
- b. Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7)
- c. Omniscient (1 Cor. 2:11)
- d. Omnipotent (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

## Group Questions

Take Ephesians 1:3-14 and ask the following:

- a. What work(s) does each person of the Godhead do?
- b. Are those works at odd with each other? Why or why not?
- c. What does your answer reveal about their relationship with each other?



## 2 Corinthians 13:13

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<sup>13</sup> All the saints greet you.

# Make the Connection

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- a. Why do these things matter?
- b. What encouragement do they give us?
- c. What response should they evoke from us?