



What We Believe: Solid Doctrine for Everyday Life

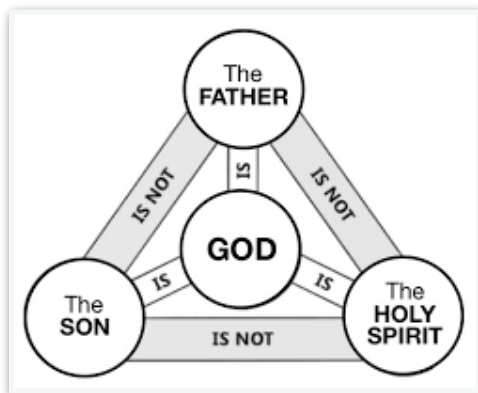
The Doctrine of God

“There is only one true God. He is infinite in his being and perfection. He is invisible, without body, parts, or passions. He is unchanging, immense, eternal, and beyond human comprehension. He is almighty, most wise, and most holy. He is completely free and absolute, working everything according to the council of his own unchanging and righteous will and for his own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful,

and long-suffering. He is abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He rewards those who diligently seek him. He is just and fearsome in his judgments. He hates sin and will not clear the guilty.

“God is the source of all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness, in and of himself. He alone is all-sufficient in and unto himself. He does not stand in need of any of the creatures that he made, nor does he acquire any glory from them. Rather, he reveals his glory in, by, to, and on them. He alone is a fountain of all being. All things are from him, through him, and to him. He is sovereign over all things, to do by, for, and on them whatever he pleases. He sees all things, and nothing is ever hidden from him. God's knowledge is infinite, without error, and without dependence on anything he created. For God there is no chance or uncertainty. All his purposes, works, and commands are holy. He is due whatever worship, service, and obedience he is pleased to require from angels, people, and every other creature.

“In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is neither begotten nor proceeds from anyone. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son.”^{1 2}



Question: What's your initial reaction after reading this?

“In the beginning, God...” (Genesis 1:1)—the most important words ever written.

- Distinction between Creator and creatures.

-Transcendence & Immanence

(Isaiah 55:8-9; Malachi 3:6; John 1:18; Acts 17:24-28; Exodus 34:6-7)

Question: There's so much we as finite humans can't comprehend about the mystery of who God is. However,

why do you think it's important to be careful and confident in what we *can* say truly about God? (Put another way, what are ways we can go wrong when talking about God?)

Trinity

God is a Trinity of persons, but all of one substance: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These are not descriptions of three different functions of God. There is One God (Deuteronomy 6:4), in three distinct persons (Matthew 28:19; 3:16-17, 2 Cor. 13:14, etc.)

“No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendor of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One,” (Gregory of Nazianzus, 381 A.D.)

Community, Love, and for our Salvation (1 John 4:7ff; Hebrews 9:14)

“Nothing is more humbling than acknowledging God’s Existence.”

Question: Why is it good news, that I am not God?

- Romans 1:18-23

- Definition of Faith in God: Hebrews 11:6

This is our God! But it’s easy to get desensitized & dull to this reality!

Atheism & Practical Atheism

“*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’*” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1)

Discuss & Pray: Confess together... In what ways are you prone to live as a “practical atheist”? When you’re stressed or rushed? When you’re disappointed? When you try to be in control? When your heart is drawn after some idolatrous love? When you’re enjoying some good gift from God—friendship, good conversation, food & drink, the beauty of nature, etc.? Pray for one another. Then read **Psalm 103:8-14** together.

Come, thou Fount of every blessing;
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it,
mount of God’s unchanging love!

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I’m constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here’s my heart; O take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.

Recommended Resources

- The artwork comes from, *Do You Believe?: 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life*, by Paul Tripp, on which this class is loosely based.
- “The Immutability and Impassibility of God,” online essay by Matthew Barrett, www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/immutability-impassibility-god, and other accessible essays on doctrinal questions.

Endnotes

¹ Paul Tripp’s paraphrase of the doctrine of God as found in parts of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chap. 2.

² Gen. 17:1; Ex. 3:14; 34:6-7; Deut. 4:15-16; 6:4; 1 Kings 8:27; Neh. 9:23, 33; Job 22:2-3; Pss. 5:5-6; 90:2; 115:3; 145:17; 148:13; Prov. 16:4; Isa. 6:3; 46:10; 48:12; Jer. 10:10; 23:23; Ezek. 11:5; Dan. 4:25, 34-35; Nah. 1:2-3; Mal. 3:6; Matt. 28:19; John 1:14, 18; 4:24; 5:26; 14:11; 15:26; Acts 15:17-18; Rom. 11:34-36; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 4:13; 11:6; 1 John 5:7; Rev. 5:12-14.