

The Essence of God

by

Dr. Craig P. Scott

The author of this study holds to a verbal-plenary inspiration of Scripture and uses the literal, historic-grammatical method of interpretation.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The fact that materials produced by other publishers may be referred to in this volume does not constitute an endorsement of their content or of their theological position.

All Scripture is quoted from the Authorized King James Version

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Purpose:

This video series is designed with the local church in mind. It can be used in a small group, or for personal enrichment. All one needs to do is print the notes and stream the video. If used in a small group setting, instruction can be handled in a variety of ways. One method is to have the video viewed before gathering together. The small group would then be used to discuss observations and questions. The second and more popular method is to view the lecture as a group, pausing at the end of each section for discussion (there are two sections to this video).

This study comes from a Basic Bible Doctrines class taught at a Bible College in New England. Originally the classroom lectures were tightly condensed and packaged for class review, and distant learning. They are also ideal for the church to use in small groups or in leadership development classes.

Suggested Reading:

Barackman, Floyd, H. *Practical Christian Theology: Examining the Great Doctrines of the Faith*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications. Fourth edition 2001. ISBN: 978-0-8254-2380

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Major Bible Themes, Revised*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974. ISBN: 9780310223900/0310223903

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology - 4 Vols. Unabridged*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications. 1993. 3000 pgs. ISBN: 0825423406

Evans, Williams. *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* Chicago: Moody Press, 1912, Reprint 1995. ISBN: 0-8024-3096-1

Geisler, Norman. *Systematic Theology - 4 Vols*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005. ISBN: 10:0-7642-2554-5

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999. 560 pgs. ISBN 08024-27340

Thiessen, Henry C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., Reprinted 1992.

The Essence of God

1. Essence defined:

Henry Thiessen defines essence as, “that which underlies all outward manifestations of reality itself, whether material or immaterial; the substratum of anything; that in which the qualities or attributes inhere.”¹ Essence is God’s Being, His attributes are those qualities, which come from the Life of Being. In this section we will be looking at the Essence or Being of God.

Essence includes the following elements:

- a. Life (Alive, Living, Source of life, Spirit, Invisible, a Person, Unity)
- b. Self-Existence
- c. Infinity and Immensity
- d. Eternity

2. Life defined:

Life is the quality of being alive. God is uniquely alive. Life itself is indefinable, but we can describe life by what it does, not by what it is.

a. **God is Alive.**

Jeremiah 10:10 says, “But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king.”

b. **He is the living God**

Joshua 3:10 says, “And . . . hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

- 1) God is alive in a way that nothing or on one else is. He is self-acting and self-existing. He does not have need of or depend on anything outside

¹ Thiessen, Henry. *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, Michigan Reprint 1975. pg. 119.

Himself for His life.

(a) Paul wrote to Timothy “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” - 1 Tim. 3:15

(b) Acts 17:24-25 says, “*Our* God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; ²⁵ Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.”

c. The Source of all life

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” — John 5:26

1) All physical life has its source in God and is maintained by Him. As Creator, God has an impersonal, metaphysical relationship with all His creatures.

2) As the Father of spiritual life God is the source of spiritual life

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” – 1 Peter 1:3

3) This new kind of life is given to all who trust in the Savior and His atoning work.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” – 1 John 5:11-12

2) This spiritual life is more than everlasting existence. It brings to all who possess it . . .

(a) New power (Phil. 4:13)

(b) New direction (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

(c) New purpose (1 Cor. 10:31)

- (d) New knowledge (1 Cor. 2:12)
- (e) New associations (1 John 1:3)
- (f) New character (Gal. 5:22-23)
- (g) New desire (Phil 2:13)
- (h) New activity (Eph. 2:10; 5:17)
- (i) New interests (Col. 3:1)
- (j) New expectation (Titus 2:13)
- (k) New destination (Phil. 3:20-21).²

d. God is Spirit.

- 1) God is a substance. However, He is not material substance, but a spiritual substance.
 - (a) Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The statement defines God’s nature as spiritual.
 - (b) Jesus said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having” (Luke 24:39).
- 2) Therefore God is spirit with an immaterial in incorporeal nature.

e. God is invisible

- 1) The Israelites saw “no manner of form” when the Lord appeared to them in Horeb. That is why they were not to make to themselves any image of God (Deut. 4:15-19)
 - (a) John 1:18 – “No man hath seen God at any time”
 - (b) Rom. 1:20 – “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,

² Floyd Y. Barackman. *Practical Christian Theology*. Kregel Publishing: Grand Rapids. 1981. Pg. 49.

even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”

- (c) Col. 1:15 – “Who is the image of the invisible God”
- (d) 1 Tim. 1:17 – “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
- (e) Exodus 33:20 “And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”

2) What about those who saw God? (Exodus 24:9-10; Isaiah 6:1)

- (a) Moses saw the backside of God (Exodus 33:20-23)
- (b) No Spirit can be seen in invisible form. The appearances of God were either a reflection of His glory or a Pre-incarnation of Jesus.
- (c) R. A. Torrey said, “A man may see the reflection of his face in a glass. It would be true for the man to say, ‘I saw my face,’ and also, ‘I never saw my face.’”³
- (d) So it seems that men saw the reflection of His glory, but they did not see His essence.⁴

3) Theophanies and the Angel of the Lord

- (a) **Defined:** Manifestations of deity in visible form.
- (b) Examples:
 - To Abraham – Gen 18:1, 13-33; 22:11-18
 - To Hagar — Gen. 16:7-14;
 - To Jacob— Gen. 32:30

f. God is a Person —

- 1) This life God enjoys includes, feeling, power and activity. He speaks, sees,

³ R. A. Torrey, What the Bible Teaches (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), p. 15.

⁴ Thiessen, p. 120.

grieves, hears, is jealous and is compassionate.

- 2) Other aspects of personality:
 - (a) Intellect /Consciousness — Acts 15:18
 - (b) Volition/Will — John 6:38
 - (c) Sensibility/Emotion — John 3:16

g. God is one in number—Unity.

- 1) God has one divine nature; three Persons of the Trinity are one God, not three Gods.
 - (a) Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD”
 - (b) 1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”
- 2) Having a divine nature that is spirit, the true God does not have parts as our human nature does. The Scripture uses anthropomorphisms to graphically convey truths about God with term we can understand (Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 9:20; 27:5), but these are only figurative expressions. We will discuss the Tri-unity of God and the roles within the Godhead later in our lectures.

3. Self-Existence defined:

- a. The eternal Being existing without beginning or end.
- b. God as the absolute Spirit exists independent of time. Time, with the universe conditioned by it, is dependent on Him. Acting in time God remains through all its succession and changes immutable and the same.
- c. He is not in the chain of causes and effects. In His being and His essential attributes as personal Spirit, He is immutably the same, the eternal One from whom all succession is possible. He is the I AM.

Scripture:

Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 41:4; John 8:58 "The I Am"

Exodus 6:3 "Jehovah" means, "The Self-Existent One."

4. Infinity and Immensity defined:

In relation to space, God is not limited or slowed. All space is dependent upon Him. He is above space.

- a. Therefore, God is not limited and is everywhere present (1 Kings 8:27). This quality makes God without bounds in His nature and attributes.
 - 1) Psalm 18:30 says, “As for God, his way is perfect.”
 - 2) Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”
 - 3) Isaiah 40:25 “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.”
- b. There is never any shortage of His attributes
Psalm 145:3 “. . . His greatness is unsearchable.”
- c. He never tires or has need
Isaiah 40:28 “God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”
- d. Being spirit, God’s nature is immeasurable. He cannot be contained or limited by a universe, regardless the size. This truth points to God being above, outside, separate from and something other than the universe He created.

Psalm 113:4-6 “The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who *is* like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, ⁶ Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth!”

5. Eternity defined:

In relationship to time, there is no beginning nor end with God (Micah 5:2 & Rev. 1:17-18).

- a. God always existed. But time began with creation and will continue forever because God has promised “that in the **ages** to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” - (Ephesians 2:7).

- b. God being eternal is timeless, hence His name, “I AM.” Psalm 90:4 says “For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.” And in 2 Peter 3:8 we are told “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”
- c. There is no succession of events within the relationships of the Godhead. However God does observe time with his dealing with His creation. As His creation we will always experience the succession of events.
- d. A comforting ramification of God’s eternity is the confidence that God has never, nor will He ever cease to exist; therefore His sustaining, providential control of all things and events is assured.⁵

⁵ Charles C. Ryrie. *Basic Theology*. Chariot Victor Publishing: Colorado Springs, 1999. Pg. 37.

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Essence is God’s _____, His attributes are those _____, which come from the Life of Being. In this section we will be looking at the Essence or Being of God.

Essence includes the following elements:

- a. _____ (Alive, Living, Source of life, Spirit, Invisible, a Person, Unity)
- b. Self-_____
- c. _____ and _____
- d. _____

2. _____ defined:

Life is the quality of being _____. God is uniquely alive. Life itself is indefinable, but we can describe life by what it does, not by what it is.

- a. **God is _____.**

Jeremiah 10:10 says, “But the LORD is the true God, he is the _____ God, and an everlasting king.”

- b. **He is the _____ God**

Joshua 3:10 says, “And . . . hereby ye shall know that the _____ God is _____, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

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1) God is alive in a way that _____ or on one else _____. He is self-_____ and self-_____. He does not have need of or depend on anything outside Himself for His life.

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3) This new kind of life is given to all who _____ in the Savior and His _____ work.

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f. God is a _____

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_____. He speaks, sees, grieves, hears, is jealous and is
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- b. There is never any _____ of His attributes

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