

BIBLE TRAINING INSTITUTE

To proactively accelerate the spiritual growth of Grace Bible Church for the purpose of knowing God more intimately and becoming more effective servants of God in the world

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Theology Proper III

The Divine Attributes, Part 1

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Introductory Concept

Transcendence and Immanence

- ✓ Transcendence: How God is ABOVE us
- ✓ Immanence: How God is WITH us.
- ✓ Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 23:23

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God Is Self-Existent

God depends on nothing else for existence, but has eternally existed without any external or prior cause ... He is the uncaused cause ... He is not tied to the universe metaphysically.

- ✓ He alone is Creator (Gen 1:1; Ps 33:6–9)
- ✓ He is prior to all things (Col 1:15–17)

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God Is Omnibenevolent

- ✓ God is love (1 John 4:8; Exodus 34:6–7)
- ✓ Compassionate—divine favor to those in distress or misery as opposed to the judgment they deserve
 - ❖ Mercy on sinners (Hos 11:1–3)
 - ❖ Mercy on His people (Ps 103:13)
 - ❖ Jesus' mercy on earth (Luke 7:13)
- ✓ Path to the cross—Titus 3:4-5

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God Is Omnibenevolent

- ✓ Gracious—God shows goodness toward the ill-deserving (i.e. unmerited favor)
 - ❖ Common Grace—God's goodness in sustaining creation (Ps 145:9; Col 1:17; Acts 17:28; Matt 5:43–45)
 - ❖ Saving Grace—God's goodness to the elect to eradicate spiritual enmity (John 1:14; Rom 11:6)
 - ❖ Sanctifying Grace—God's goodness to his people to equip them to follow him faithfully (Rom 12:6; 2 Cor 12:9)
 - ❖ Path to the cross—extension of unmerited favor without violating His holiness

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God Is Omnibenevolent

- ✓ Patient—God delays His wrath and pours out His love and grace on creation while sinners are brought to repentance
 - ❖ Sustains creation after the Fall
 - ❖ Withholds judgment (Acts 17:30; Rom 3:25)
 - ❖ Provides opportunity to repent (2 Pet 3:9, 15)
 - ❖ Path to the cross (Gen 3:15—provided a Savior instead of destruction)

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God Is Omnibenevolent

- ✓ Kind (*hesed*)—God has a love for His covenant people that emphasizes his kindness and faithfulness (245x in OI)
 - ❖ Most often associated with covenant with his people
 - ❖ Translated “lovingkindness” or “steadfast love”
 - ❖ Path to the cross—God will never break covenant with you

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God Is Omnibenevolent

- ✓ Faithful/True—God is the only authentic God, and all that He says and does is consistent with the reality as He has decreed it
 - ❖ Trueness (Is 44:14–20; 1 Thes 1:9)
 - ❖ Truthfulness (Tit 1:2)
 - ❖ Path to the cross—God said Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient—we can trust this and not hope in vain

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God Is Righteous

- ✓ God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right
- ✓ He epitomizes what is right (Deut 32:4; Ps 11:7; Ps 19:9)
- ✓ Jesus is THE Righteous One (1 Pet 3:18; Is 53:11)
- ✓ God is the final standard
- ✓ Path to the cross—the sacrifice for your sin had to be a perfect sacrifice made by an **inherently** righteous person

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God Is Just

- ✓ God's official righteousness in that He requires other moral agents to adhere to His standard
- ✓ God's judgment is final and correct (Rom 2:5; 2 Thes 1:5)
- ✓ Will punish evil (punitive justice) (Ps 7; 2 Thes 1:5–10)
- ✓ Will reward good (remunerative justice)—BUT only the **righteous** can truly do good (Rom 3:12)
- ✓ Path to the cross—God will never overlook sin—must be payment

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God Is Immutable

- ✓ God is unchangeable in his essence, character, and will
- ✓ Ways He does not change:
 - ❖ God's being (Ps 102:26) is immutable
 - ❖ His truthfulness (Num 23:19) is immutable
 - ❖ His plan (Ps 33:11) is immutable
 - ❖ His mercy (Ps 103:17) is immutable
 - ❖ His faithfulness (Mal 3:6) is immutable
 - ❖ His goodness (Jas 1:17) is immutable

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God Is Immutable

- ✓ **The Debate**
The Bible speaks of God changing his mind (Jonah 3:10; Ex 32:1–14; Judg 2:18; Ps 18:26–27; 106:45; Jer 26:19; Amos 7:3)
- ✓ Two extremes:
 - ❖ Classic Theology—God utterly incapable of any change
 - ❖ Open Theism—God adjusts and changes without having everything mapped out

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God Is Immutable

- ✓ How do we understand the biblical accounts of divine “change”?
 - ❖ Always in the context of personal relationships—if God is utterly incapable of all conceivable change, then how are relationships possible?
 - ❖ Always falls under the broader scope of his overarching plan
 - ❖ Never comes close to affecting the fact that God is unchangeable in his essence, character, and will
- ✓ Path to the cross—God promised in Genesis 3:15 to send a Savior; He always keeps His promises

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God Is Impassible

- ✓ (from Greek *APATHEIS*)—we get the English word “apathetic”
- ✓ All God’s actions flow from his own will; no experience can be imposed upon him from an external force
- ✓ God has emotions but transcends them (He always controls His emotions; His emotions never control Him)
- ✓ No part of His creation can inflict suffering, pain, or any distress upon God apart from his will

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God Is Impassible

“If God loves, it is because he chooses to love, if he suffers, it is because he chooses to suffer. God is impassible in the sense that he sustains no ‘passion,’ no emotion, that makes him vulnerable from the outside, over which he has no control, or which he has not foreseen.”

D. A. Carson, *Love of God*, 60

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- ✓ Path to the cross—The suffering of Christ was God’s choice

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