

What Is God Like?: Self-existent & Self-sufficient

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[0 : 00] What is God like? And over the next five weeks, we're going to be exploring ten of the qualities or attributes that we can recognize in God through Scripture.

And as we explore each of these qualities, we're going to look at a human understanding of them, as well as what they mean to the overall character of God, how they connect.

And we're also going to look at the unique characteristics and qualities of God, what those mean for us personally in our faith and in our lives. Last week, we looked at what it means to recognize that God is infinite and incomprehensible.

Do you remember that? And hopefully the sermon wasn't incomprehensible, but it seemed not, so that was good. We acknowledge that we can take comfort in the fact that in the limits of our own abilities, our own capacity, we have a limitless God who loves us infinitely.

And while our God is beyond human comprehension, as we also looked at, beyond human understanding, too awesome and too infinite for us to even begin to wrap our heads around, through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross, we've been welcomed into God's family.

[1 : 21] We can grow in our knowledge of Him. Remember that? I said we can't completely understand Him, perhaps, due to our human limitations, but we can gain in our knowledge of Him, gain our relationship, and our relationship will grow with Him.

And this morning, we're going to consider that God is self-existent and self-sufficient. So, you know how I like audience participation, so we're going to do some of that today.

What do you think it means for something to exist? What do you think some of the things that we might use to measure that? Measure whether something exists.

Time. Okay. Okay. Tangibility.

Okay. Thoughts? Go deeper. Be real deep and heavy and philosophical. Takes up space, right? That's a basic one.

[2 : 24] This exists because it takes up space. It has volume. It was made by something or created by someone. Right? That's how we measure, tend to measure existence.

And the idea of existence implies origin. It implies creation, right? Something is created, therefore it exists. So, to suggest that something exists is also to suggest that it, in the case of an object or a thing, or they, in the case of a person, came into being, had a starting point.

Right? And we have no broad frame of reference, as humans, for something to be self-existent.

Because you bake a cake.

You brought the cake into existence. And I will eat your cake. Happily. Although I'm trying not to eat cake lately. A child is born.

We can trace gestation and conception. And ultimately determine the parents. A tree grows from a sapling. From a seed.

[3 : 39] Planted from another tree. The germination of another tree. And we can trace those trees back and back and back to God's first trees.

So, we talked last week, as well, about our human need for boundaries and measurement. Do you remember that? And do you recognize that here again?

That we need to know. We're need-to-know people. We need to know where something came from. We need to know how it got here. We're inquisitive. Or we don't care. I've met people like that.

But we're need-to-know people. Michelle often calls me need-to-know guy. Why? Because I got questions. Oh, that's interesting. How did that happen? Where did that come from?

What's the point of that? You know, I've got questions. But how does this fit in with our understanding of God? How does it fit? Well, we can recognize that philosophers over time have tried to disprove the idea of the existence of God based on a simple argument.

[4 : 43] So, if God made everything, see where I'm going? Who made God? Have you heard that perspective before?

That argument? And people who hold that perspective tend to suggest that when someone responds, no one made God, God always existed, they seem to see that as a cop-out. They seem to suggest then, well, that's impossible for God to exist. Huh? See, that argument doesn't make sense either. Because the argument for those who have a view that God must have been created is usually stemming from, as we already touched on, that everything has an origin. It's gotta. Everything has a beginning. Everything has been created. Or at the very least, that belief that God has always existed somehow makes it impossible for him to exist at all?

Uh-uh. Do you see how both logical and illogical that perspective can be? Somehow the argument is that if we can't prove where God came from, or who created him, then he ceases to exist.

[6 : 05] Interesting. So what does Scripture say about the self-existence of God? Well, as Moses and God are interacting in Exodus 3, Moses is being difficult.

He's trying to negotiate his role as God's representative. God has chosen him to be his representative to the Israelites. And I believe Moses here is looking for some cred.

He's looking for some credibility. And God has already been clear to Moses that he can tell the Israelites that the God of their fathers sent him.

But that's not good enough for Moses. He asks God specifically for a name that he can use. I want a name.

I need to be able to say, who sent me? And I've thought of this before as Moses looking for personal credibility, right? He's looking for the ability to name drop for his own sake and to soothe his insecurities.

[7 : 12] I went to university with Nathan Fillion. If you know who Nathan Fillion is, he's an actor. He's been in movies and TV shows, and he and I were in choir together.

And yes, I can prove it. So, you know, there's a perfect example. People find out that I went to university with Nathan Fillion, and they go, you know Nathan Fillion? Do you see that?

That connection of name recognition. That connection of, oh, I know somebody. I know somebody who knows somebody else. See, we love that stuff, right?

But in Exodus 3, verse 14, we read that God said to Moses, I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites.

I am has sent me to you. And I think God anticipates further, yeah, but from Moses, because he continues in verse 15.

[8 : 15] God said to Moses, say to the Israelites, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

This is my name forever, by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation. Friends, in our world of changing morals and values and laws, our God remains I am.

The same yesterday, today, and forever. Psalm 90, verses 1 and 2 reminds us, Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world, this is a song lyric now, these days, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

That's powerful truth in the unknown, isn't it? I am. I am. I was. I am. I will be.

[9 : 26] All in those two words. We read in Daniel 6, verse 26, that the Persian king Darius, a foreign ruler of all people, sent out a decree to the people of his kingdom that they must show fear and reverence for God.

Not just any God. Daniel's God. I am. And he said in his decree, for he is the living God, and he endures forever.

His kingdom will not be destroyed. His dominion will never end. Perhaps the greatest passage of Scripture that declares this self-evidence, self-existence, pardon me, of God is found in John 1, 1-3, where John declares Jesus as the living word to be the Son of God.

And here's God at work, because Leah picked that song not knowing this was here. But God knew. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. God did it all.

[10 : 51] Okay, this is where we get heavy. In theological terms, the concept of the self-existence of God is known as aseity.

Drop the D off deity and add A-S, aseity. Aseity is the view that God is entirely self-sufficient. He's not dependent or contingent upon anything else. He's it. In other words, he is the eternal, the independent, and personal cause of the universe, creator.

God exists beyond our human ability to pin him down. We've talked about that many times in sermons. God has no creator.

He always existed, and he always will. And so do you see how this connects with our exploration of God being infinite last week?

[11 : 57] They're connected. And in many ways, infinity, the infinite nature of God is at the core, I didn't mention this last week, is at the core of so many of his other qualities, and we'll unpack that a bit as we go.

But tied together intimately with the idea that God is self-existent, that he's always existed, is the idea that God is self-sufficient.

audience participation time again. When we talk about something being self-sufficient, what are the things that come to mind? Thank you.

I won't make eye contact if that makes it easier. Others, self-sufficient. Good.

Provides for itself. Operates, functions, runs on its own. Independent, as the young lady in the back seat.

[13 : 09] Doesn't need anything beyond itself. That's self-sufficient. And the reality for us is that we're not self-sufficient.

Right? Everybody go, well, that's not true. I'm totally self-sufficient. If we truly think about it, we rely on other people for most, if not everything, in our lives.

Don't we? We may be able to provide for some of our own needs, for sure, absolutely, but likely not all of them. As much as we try.

And how stressful when we try. And we may actually be more dependent on other people than we even realize. We may think we're dependent, we may think, or sorry, independent, or self-sufficient, or we even have ourselves convinced that we are.

Stubborn people, raise your hands. But in striving to be self-sufficient, can you recognize pride? I can do it myself.

[14 : 17] I don't, no, I'm good. I can do it myself. I don't need anybody's help. I don't want to ask. I don't want to be obligated to anyone. Or bitterness? I can't believe that no one offered.

No one offered to help. Nobody showed up. Nobody helped out. Did you ask? Were you able to swallow your pride enough to accept someone's generosity?

While God is self-sufficient as his created people, we are definitely not. But we need to recognize that that's okay.

God created us, friends. He created us for community, for fellowship, to be there for one another, to support one another, to walk together through our faith journeys, to care for one another.

And God also, maybe you're recognizing this now, he created us to need him. That's not chance.

That's not weakness to cry out to God in your need, to cry out to God for comfort or provision.

[15 : 29] As you recognize who he is and what he's done for you in your life, it's how we are wired. That's why the world aches.

The world is seeking to fill these gaps that only God can fill with other things, with substance, with relationship, things that are not designed to fill that God-shaped hole in our lives.

Acts 17, verse 24, is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. And it actually has an asterisk by it in the margin of one of my Bibles.

It says, The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

And he is not served by human needs as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

[16 : 37] This passage reminds us that not only does God not need anything from us, everything that we are, everything that we have, our daily bread and our daily breath, you've heard me say that phrase before, come from him.

God is sufficient. This means that God is enough all by himself. God exists and is sustained before us, after us, and independent of us.

God needs nothing to supply everything we need. He needs no support.

He needs no resources because they are his and he created them and they are at his disposal. God is not dependent on, reliant on any resources beyond his own. God is the only entity in the universe that is self-sustaining. He's not, simply not, dependent on anything else to exist.

[18 : 00] Can you imagine that? I hope it blows your mind. Not needing oxygen to breathe, not needing, like just think of our limited understanding, not needing a job to pay our bills, not needing to feel half-decent most days so that we can even function.

All of our limits are foreign to God and yet not because through Jesus he gets it. He gets what human restriction, human limitation is.

And he loves us because he created us that way. Not only is God the source of life for everything, everything owes its existence to him.

Isn't that amazing? This building was built by someone who had skills that came from God, who had skills that they learned from someone else who passed them on.

Ultimately, God is the source for all things. Marg tends the church garden and there's a beautiful, amazing bounty of that garden that we enjoy every year at this time.

[19 : 12] Marg does a huge amount of work and volunteers work with her. But God grew those plants. God grew those vegetables that we enjoy. It's amazing to me.

God is also not obligated to anyone else. Do you recognize that? Often we feel indebted to someone else for their gratitude or for their provision for us, for something that they've done for us. And feeling indebted isn't a bad thing all the time. Sometimes we hear that word and it's got a guilt connotation to it. Oh, I'm indebted to that person. I owe them something.

But God is not obligated to anyone. He does what he pleases. We often say according to your will, God, when we pray because he'll do what he wants.

He will hear our prayers. He will be moved by our prayers. But ultimately God will act according to his will, not ours. In God's perfect self-sufficiency, he's not obligated to humanity.

[20 : 21] Not in any way. unless he chooses to be. Unless he chooses to provide. He's not in our debt. He doesn't owe us anything.

Do you recognize the power of that? He doesn't owe us anything and yet he gives us, has given us, will give us, everything.

And that's not some weird, twisted, he will give me everything I want that will make me perfectly happy. no, according to his will.

And so recognizing that, that God does what he chooses, his choices are not determined by anything else, are not shaped by anything else.

If God does something for us, it's because he chooses to. That's also awfully powerful. God doesn't need us.

[21 : 20] He doesn't rely on us. But you know something? While God doesn't need us or rely on us, our self-existent and self-sufficient God waits for us.

He's eternally patient. He calls to us. you've probably experienced that call in your life. And I'm not talking about a call to be up here versus being there.

A call to you in your life, to direct your path, to lead you. God longs for relationship with us.

Not because he needs us, but because he created us, and because he loves us.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you that you are the self-sufficient one, the self-existent one. Lord, in your need for nothing, we recognize and we thank you for providing for our everything, our needs, our day-to-day things that we need to function, Lord.

[22 : 39] Our breath, our bread, our lives. And Lord, we thank you through your son, Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity through his sacrifice on the cross, that we have the opportunity to not just know you in a head knowledge, but know you in deep relationship.

Lord, that is the greatest possible gift, not just at Christmas, but every day. And so, Lord, thank you for your love. Thank you for who you are and your nature.

Thank you for your son. And we pray all of these things in the name of him, Jesus Christ, our God, our Lord. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, Pastor.