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a *Grace Notes* course

## Foundations I

by Rev. Drue Freeman

Foundations 103

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Web Site: <http://www.gracenotes.info>

E-mail: [wdoud@gracenotes.info](mailto:wdoud@gracenotes.info)

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Foundations I

**Foundations 103**

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## Lesson 6 – Interpret Based on Divine Essence

This principle recognizes the basic characteristics of God’s essence, also known as His attributes, as vitally important to correct interpretation. His essence is never compromised, nor inconsistent with itself. This principle is based on the fact that the more we fully appreciate the awesome nature of God (Php 3:10), the more skilled we will be in understanding what He has to say.

The fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all possess the same essence is Biblical proof of the Trinity. The term “Trinity” refers to the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations of one God. They have basically three roles. The Father is the Planner (Acts 2:23), the Son is the Agent (John 5:36), and the Holy Spirit is the Revealer (John 16:13). While we may study their different roles, we must not seek to divide the Trinity. There is only One God (Deut 6:4); since the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all share the characteristics that only God can possess, they are all God, and are One.

We will analyze the Trinity in much more detail in later lessons.

### TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINE ESSENCE:

In this lesson, the first bracket ( ) will denote the verses that refer to God the Father, the second < >, the verses for the Son, and the third [ ], the Holy Spirit.

#### 1 SOVEREIGNTY.

God is SOVEREIGN, meaning that He is King and acts accordingly. (Dan 4:17; 1 Tim 1:17; Ps 47:2,7), < Rev 19:16; John 5:21 >, [Zech 4:6; 1 Pet 4:14; 1 Cor 12:11].

Sovereignty is the exercise of supreme authority within a limited sphere. God, free from external control, is the supreme authority over all creation. He is the Creator, not the created (Rom 1:20,25).

God has the authority to establish His own plan, His own laws, and His own judgments. In short, He has the authority to act as He chooses to act, although His purposes may be hard to understand.

#### 2 RIGHTEOUSNESS.

God is absolute RIGHTEOUSNESS, meaning that He is perfect in every way. (John 17:25; 1 John 1:5), < 1 John 2:1; Luke 1:35; Heb 7:26 >, [Isa 32:15-18; Ps 143:10; Neh 9:20]. He is the standard of righteousness in every regard. He is morally complete, setting the standard we are to imitate (Eph 5:1).

#### 3 JUSTICE.

God is JUST. He is totally and completely fair. (Isa 45:21; Job 37:23), < John 5:22,30; Rev 19:11 >, [Isa 4:4; 28:6]. God’s justice is a response to the demands of His righteousness. God is not a “respector of persons” (Rom 2:11), He shows no partiality. Where sin, which is a violation of His law, occurs (Rom 5:13), His Justice must be satisfied.

Man is not able to satisfy the righteousness of God, and therefore needs a Messiah who can “propitiate” (appease) the Justice of God. This “propitiation” was accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross when He died to pay for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2).

#### 4 LOVE.

God is LOVE, meaning that perfect and unconditional love is found in Him. (1 John 4:8-10; Titus 3:4; John 17:24-26), < John 15:9 >, [Gal 5:22].

This characteristic of God is the basis for sending Jesus Christ to redeem mankind (John 3:16). Love is what kept the Lord on the cross to pay for our sins <Luke 23:34>; and it is the first element in the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit [Gal 5:22].

Love means doing what is right and best for others, even if doing so is accompanied with unpleasant feelings. Christians are to partake of God’s love and spread it to others so that all might come to know God (John 13:34-35).

#### 5 ETERNAL LIFE.

God is ETERNAL LIFE. He always has been and always will be. (Isa 57:15), < John 8:58; 1 John 5:11-12; Mic 5:2; Rev 1:8,17 >, [Heb 9:14].

Eternal life has no beginning or end. We as Christians actually possess everlasting life, which has a beginning point, but no end. God’s Eternal Life teaches that He is not ever subject to death.

#### 6 OMNIPOTENT - ALL POWERFUL.

God is OMNIPOTENT, meaning that He has the power to do anything. (Mark 14:36; 1 Pet 1:5), < Matt 28:18; Rev 19:6 >, [2 Tim 1:7; Rom 15:13].

An example of His Omnipotence is found in the creation of the heavens and earth (Gen 1:1). We are told that the “word of His mouth,” created the heavens, and His “breath,” all their hosts (Ps 33:6).

#### 7 OMNIPRESENT - AT ALL PLACES.

God is OMNIPRESENT, meaning that He is everywhere at the same time with the same intensity. (Prov 15:3; 2 Chr 2:6), < Matt 18:20; 28:20 >, [Ps 139:7-16]. This does not mean that God is everything (Pantheism), but that He is everywhere. This concept shows us the personal nature of God.

We also see from this characteristic that God is in all places at the same intensity (Ps 139:7-17). The fact that He is Omnipresent means that He could manifest Himself at more than one place at the same time.

#### 8 OMNISCIENT - ALL KNOWING.

God is OMNISCIENT. He knows everything: past, present and future. (Ps 139:1-6; Heb 4:13), < John 2:24-25; 18:4; Matt 9:4 >, [1 Cor 2:10-11; Isa 11:2].

He knows the outcome of all things; not only the actualities, but all the possibilities. He knows all of the effects, throughout all of time, that each decision will bring. His eternal plan has considered all of these factors (Rom 8:28-30).

#### 9 IMMUTABLE - UNCHANGING.

God is IMMUTABLE, meaning that the aspects of His Essence never change. (James 1:17; Heb 6:17; Mal 3:6), < Heb 13:8 >, [1 Cor 12:4; Eph 1:13].

This characteristic is beneficial to mankind since God must always do what He promises. He will not change His mind; since He said, “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1), we can be fully confident that He will not change His mind. He promised eternal life to those who trust in Jesus Christ, therefore, we know that He will not amend this gospel (John 3:16). If God did alter His promises, then He would be a liar, thus unrighteous (Heb 6:17-18).

Everything else in the universe is changing. God is the only constant. This is why hope in him can be an “anchor” for our souls (Heb 6:19).

#### 10 TRUTHFUL.

God is absolute TRUTH. (Deut 32:4; John 7:28; 17:3), < John 14:6; 1 John 5:20 >, [1 John 5:7,8; 4:6; John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13].

This characteristic tells us that everything God utters is totally believable (Num 23:19). It is in fact impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2).

The Truth is that God manifested Himself in the person of Jesus Christ <John 14:6>. Throughout history truth has been sought simply in the form of an idea (what one thinks may be truth), a statement (what one claims to be truth), or a principle (a fundamental belief). This is why anything that mankind deems to be truth, must be compared with the words of Jesus Christ <1 Tim 6:3>.

### Lesson 7 – Interpret Christologically

In order to interpret Christologically, we must realize that all of history is focused around Jesus Christ. This principle recognizes that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things (John 1:1,3,14; Col 1:16-17), the Alpha and Omega - “the beginning and end” (Rev 1:8), the one and only God who became man (Php 2:6-8).

As we seek to understand God’s Word, we must determine how our interpretation of a given passage conforms to the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. One way to do this is to determine what each person, place, thing or event in Scripture teaches us about our Lord. We are encouraged to study and look for “the good things,” the real truth, our Lord Jesus Christ; not just to look to the old Law, which was merely a “shadow” of these good things (Heb 10:1, Jn 14:6). All of the people, places and events in the Old Testament were placed there by God as examples to help us understand and learn about Him (1 Cor 10:1-6).

An example of a person teaching us about the Lord would be found in the prophet Jonah. As you may remember, Jonah did not want to go to the Assyrians as he had been commanded by God. Instead, he got on a ship and went in another

direction. A storm occurred and Jonah was thrown overboard where he was swallowed by a great fish and three days later vomited up on an Assyrian beach where he then decided to comply with God's commands. The three days and nights came to be the "sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt 12:39-40) which spoke of the time that Jesus would be in the tomb.

A place can also teach us about the Lord. Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) which means "house of bread." Jesus was indeed bread, that came down out of heaven and the Person who would sustain spiritual life (John 6:35).

There are many things which are directly designed to teach us about the Lord. The Tabernacle and Temple fall into this category. If we just consider the Holy Place where the Table of Shewbread, the Golden Lampstand, and the golden Altar of Incense were located, we can easily determine that they represent Jesus. Again, He is the Bread (John 6:35). He is also the "Light of the world" (John 8:12) and the One who hears our prayers (incense represents the prayers of the saints {Rev 8:3-4} and prayer is a "sacrifice" {Heb 13:15-16}).

Events like the offerings made by the Levitical priests also teach us about the Lord. All of the offerings (described in Lev 1-7) were designed to point us to Jesus as the "one offering for all time" (Heb 10:10-12). He indeed was the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

The student can also look at the main themes of each book in the Bible and see that Jesus Christ is the main subject.

Genesis He is the Creator and Seed of the woman. (1:1; 3:15)

Exodus He is the Lamb of God slain for sinners. (Ch. 12)

Leviticus He is our High Priest. (entire book)

Numbers He is the Star out of Jacob. (24:17)

Deuteronomy He is the Prophet like unto Moses. (18:15)

Joshua He is the Captain of the Lord's Hosts. (5:13-15)

Judges He is The Judge. (11:27)

Ruth He is our Kinsman Redeemer. (Ch. 3)

Samuel He is the Lord of Kings. (2 Sam 7:18-20)

Kings/Chronicles He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. (Entire books)

Ezra He is the Restorer. (1:1)

Nehemiah He is Faithful. (9:32)

Esther He is our Mordecai. (Ch. 10)

Job He is our Risen and Returning Redeemer. (19:25)

Psalms He is the Blessed Man of 1.

He is the Son of God of 2.

He is the Crucified One of 22.

He is the Risen One of 23.

He is the Coming One of 24.

He is the Reigning One of 72.

He is the Leader of Praise of 150.

Proverbs He is our Wisdom. (Ch. 4)

Ecclesiastes He is the Forgotten Wise Man. (9:14-15)

Song of Solomon He is "my Beloved." (2:16)

Isaiah He is our Suffering Substitute. (53)

Jeremiah He is the Lord our Righteousness. (23:6)

Lamentations He is the Man of Sorrows. (1:12-18)

Ezekiel He is the Throne Sitter. (1:26)

Daniel He is the Smiting Stone. (2:34)

Hosea He is David's Greater King. (3:5)

Joel He is the Lord of Bounty. (2:18-19)

Amos He is the Rescuer of Israel. (3:12)

Obadiah He is the Deliverer upon Mount Zion. (V17)

Jonah He is the Buried and Risen Savior. (Entire book)

Micah He is the Everlasting God. (5:2)

Nahum He is our Stronghold in the Day of Wrath. (1:7)

Habakkuk He is the Anchor of our Faith. (2:4)

Zephaniah He is in the Midst for Judgment and Cleansing. (3:5,15)

Haggai He is the Smiting Shepherd. (2:17)  
 Zechariah He is the Branch. (3:8)  
 Malachi He is the Sun of Righteousness. (4:2)  
 Matthew He is the King of the Jews. (2:1)  
 Mark He is the Servant of Jehovah. (Entire book)  
 Luke He is the Perfect Son of Man. (3:38; 4:1-13)  
 John He is the Son of God. (1:1)  
 Acts He is the Ascended Lord. (1:8-9)  
 Romans He is our Righteousness. (3:22)  
 1 Corinthians He is the First-Fruits from the dead. (15:20)  
 2 Corinthians He is made Sin for us. (5:21)  
 Galatians He is the End of the Law. (3:10,13)  
 Ephesians He is our Armor. (6:11-18)  
 Philippians He is the Supplier of Every Need. (4:19)  
 Colossians He is the Preeminent One. (1:18)  
 1 Thessalonians He is our Returning Lord. (4:15-18)  
 2 Thessalonians He is the World's Returning Judge. (1:7-9)  
 1 Timothy He is the Mediator. (2:5)  
 2 Timothy He is the Bestower of Crowns. (4:8)  
 Titus He is our Great God and Savior. (2:13)  
 Philemon He is the Prisoner's Partner. (1:9)  
 Hebrews He is the Rest of Faith and Fulfiller of Types. (9-11)  
 James He is Lord of Sabaoth. (5:4)  
 1 Peter He is the Theme of Old Testament Prophecy. (1:10-11)  
 2 Peter He is the Long Suffering Savior. (3:9)  
 1 John He is the Word of Life. (1:1)  
 2 John He is the Target of the Antichrist. (1:7)  
 3 John He is the Personification of Truth. (1:3-4)  
 Jude He is the Believer's Security. (1:24-25)  
 Revelation He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (19:11-16)

(The above adapted from R.T. Ketcham, DD; found in J. Edwin Hartill's Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics)

### Lesson 8 – Interpret the Differences

This principle instructs us to consider differences where God establishes them. In other words, we are to recognize the Biblical difference between such concepts as faith and works, salvation and sin, law and grace, and many others. The Bible makes many distinctions. Our challenge is to realize these differences in our interpretation.

An example of realizing differences is exemplified in the study of faith and works. We are told in Ephesians 2:8-10:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Clearly salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. Yet the importance of works is not negated. Works are not meant for salvation, but are important to the Christian life.

Faith has no merit in itself, because all the merit is found in the object of the faith. For one to have faith in faith is actually to have trust in oneself. We know that we all have sin and thus trusting ourselves is really not a wise choice of objects (Rom 3:23).

If a heavy adult were going to swing from cliff to cliff over a large hole and someone handed him a small piece of twine that is attached to a small branch, it would be difficult to have faith because there would not be sufficient merit in the object. However, if a strong rope were attached to a large branch, the faith would be easier to have because there is sufficient merit in the object.

Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His body on the cross and rose from the dead, has more than sufficient merit to be the object of our faith.

Works involve actions that are good in their very nature, such as helping the poor (Gal 2:10). But, even good actions will not save us (Titus 3:5).

Works are designed by God to be a display of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, we will give an account for the works we have done in the name of Jesus Christ, and we will be rewarded for them accordingly (2 Cor 5:10). Works should be done out of thanksgiving for what the Lord has done for us. They should not be done with an attitude toward personal gain.

Another difference we might consider is between the security of the Believer's salvation and the reality of sin in his life.

We are told that the Lord did the greatest work for us when He died to save us even while we were His enemies. Should we expect any less of Him now that we are members of His family (Rom 5:6-10)?

The Bible makes it clear that Believers can and do sin after they are saved.

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10).

It should be clear that this passage refers to Believers. We do not have to read very far in the New Testament to discover the warnings to Believers against our tendency to sin. The question arises, do we as Believers lose our salvation when involved in sin, or not?

In the book of Romans, as well as many other books of the Bible, salvation is attested to be an eternal fact. Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom 8:1-2). The Corinthian church became heavily involved in a multitude of sins. Paul called them "fleshly" (1 Cor 3:1-2), but never referred to them as "unsaved." He even refers to them as a "church" composed of "saints" (1 Cor 1:2).

Clearly, Christians may fall into sinful lifestyles. Equally clear is that our salvation cannot be lost: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful" (2 Tim 2:13).

A Christian's sinful lifestyle is certainly not without repercussions (consequences). It leads to loss of rewards: "if we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Tim 2:12). The immediate context confirms that we will not reign with Him, if we deny Him.

From these two illustrations, we can begin to see certain differences that God has established within His Word. We will spend a lifetime discovering them and seeking to understand the relationships between the various concepts involved with them.