

**The Essence of God**

Passages: Jn 4:24; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 6:16; Heb 4:16; Ps 55:17; 1 Thess 5:16–18

*Memory Verse*

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
1. God is a spiritual being. 2. God is immortal. 3. God is self-existing.	1. God is above all. 2. God is through all. 3. God is in all.	Build a real and lasting relationship with God.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. The Meaning of “Essence”
- B. God Is Spirit
- C. Understanding God’s Essence

**Life Application:** Building Our Relationship with God

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** By understanding God’s essence, we have a better understanding of our own limitations and, in turn, of how thankful we should be for the blessings He has given us. When we recognize this and learn to worship Him in spirit and truth, we will be able to develop a true relationship with Him.

*Spiritual Teachings*

**A. The Meaning of “Essence”**

How would you define “essence”? The Oxford Dictionary defines “essence” as “a property or group of properties of something without which it would not exist or be what it is.”<sup>1</sup> Another dictionary describes it as “the most significant element, quality, or aspect of a thing or person.”<sup>2</sup> For example, a book cannot exist without words, making the writing its most significant element. Let’s try and think of a few more examples together.

*Teachers: Draw the following chart on the board and encourage the students to consider what the essence of each example is. They may need some guidance with this activity.*

The essence of ...	a book	is...	a collection of words.
	food		something edible.
	drama		conflict.
	good social skills		communication.
	freedom		the ability to choose.

So, from our understanding of this word, the essence of God is His identity. We know the characteristics of God—He is holy, loving, and merciful. He hates sin, and He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present. But how is He able to be all of these things? The answer is in John 4:24. Jesus says, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

**B. God Is Spirit**

First, what does it mean to be spirit? Let us begin by naming some things that are physical (*e.g., food, clothing, our planet, human beings*). On the other hand, something that is spirit is not from the world that we live in. What are some things that are spirit? (*Allow students to answer. Possible answers: God, angels, Satan, the Holy Spirit.*) Using our lists, let us compare the characteristics of physical and spiritual things.

Characteristics of Physical Things	Characteristics of Spiritual Things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary</li> <li>• Limited by time and space</li> <li>• Can be experienced using the five senses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not have a physical body, is invisible</li> <li>• Not limited by time or space, is eternal</li> <li>• Cannot be experienced using the five senses</li> </ul>

In this world, even things we cannot see are of a physical material. For example, air is composed of nitrogen and oxygen. But as the Creator of the universe, God existed even before the creation of the physical, so He surpasses the world that we currently live in. He is truly a spiritual being. Since we are bound by the physical, how can we possibly understand the consequences and effects of existing spiritually? Paul addresses the essence of God in his many letters, writing that “God [...] is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:6). Let’s unravel this description and try to understand God’s essence.

**1. God is above all**

God is “above all” because He is above time and space. Time has no meaning for God; neither does

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Essence, n.,” accessed March 20, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/essence>.

<sup>2</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “Essence, n.,” accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/essence>

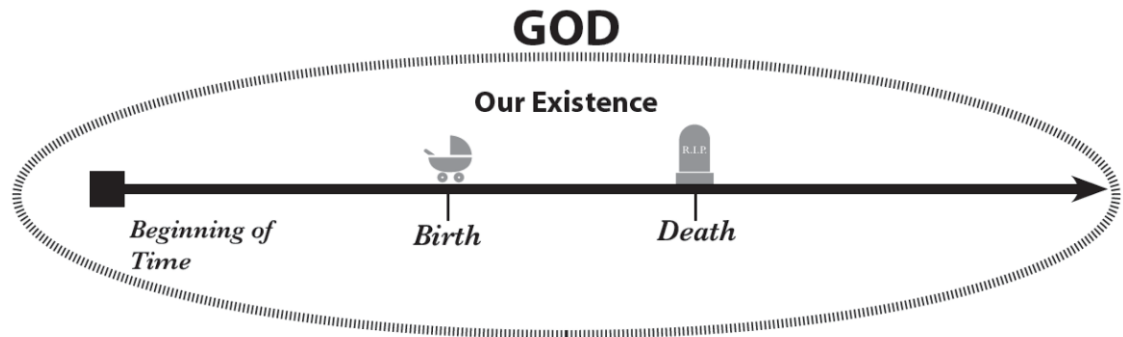
the physical world. He is above all because He is the Creator of all, and as our Creator, His power is limitless and beyond our comprehension. Physical limitations do not exist for Him. With this in mind, there are three key levels in which God is above all.

**a. God rules over all**

The Bible tells us that God reigns on high. He has established His throne in heaven (Ps 103:19), for “of Him and through Him and to Him are all things” (Rom 11:36). He is the one who created and sustains everything we see, and eventually, He will end this world as well. He has complete authority over all that He has made and created. God is above all, because all creatures owe their very existence to Him, including mankind.

**b. God is self-existing and immortal**

God once told Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:14). God is “I AM” because He has always existed and will never stop existing. He simply *is*. Humans, on the other hand, have a beginning and an end. Our lives are temporary, but God has no beginning or end. It can be difficult to truly comprehend His timeless nature, but it is what makes God so different from us. Let us look at a diagram to help us better picture the difference between our existence and God’s existence:



From this diagram, we can see that God is not limited by time, but actually surpasses time. Because God is Spirit, death does not exist for Him. As the only immortal being who exists, He is able to give the same eternity to us, who were once bound by death and sin.

**c. God is an unapproachable light**

God is also above all because we can neither approach nor truly see His glory. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, God permitted him to see only a glimpse of His presence, “for no man shall see [God], and live” (Ex 33:20). As a result of this brief glimpse, “the skin of [Moses’] face shone while he talked with [God]” (Ex 34:29). No words can truly describe what occurred on the mountain between Moses and the Lord, but Paul describes that Jesus alone “has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16). Let us read a testimony that will help us to understand what this means.

**Testimony**

*A sister in Taiwan was praying diligently during a student spiritual convocation. There were many things in her heart and on her mind that were burdening her, and she wanted to pour out all of these things to the Lord. Suddenly, the Lord opened her eyes to see a vision. In the vision, she saw herself standing in front of a big red door, and her clothing was all muddy and wet. When she looked up to the sky, she saw that it was gloomy, and it was the falling rain that made her clothing wet and muddy.*

*As she was standing there before the door, she was in great despair over her situation. At this point, she knelt down before the door, and she suddenly saw the hands of God giving her a white robe. In that instant, she felt so warm, and then the door before her opened. She saw a glorious and bright light shining, but she was unable to enter into it. She knew right away that God was dwelling in the light. It was in this moment that she understood that God was comforting her and that He was always watching over her.*

– Anonymous

As the sister realized in her vision, we cannot enter the light in which God dwells. But He nonetheless watches over us and cares for us, entering our time and space so that we can see and understand Him better. He is above us all, but He has lowered Himself for us, offering a glimpse into the glory of His salvation.

## **2. God is through all**

Paul's second description of His essence is that God is "through all." His works pervade all of creation (*BSG: Ephesians, 7.1:4*). He uses this world to fulfill His purpose (cf. Rom 8:28).<sup>3</sup> From the moment He created it, everything in this world has existed and acted for His will. He is in every event that occurs, in every trial we encounter, and in every birth and death, including our own. God's decision to create you and me was a part of His plan from the very beginning, and God is within all that happens around us, enacting His will for our sakes.

Being "through all" means that God is able to dwell among His people and move among them. He is not only a God who is high above, but also a God who is able to enter into the physical world that He created. We might not be able to see Him, but God is always close by and present for His children. He dwells among those who worship Him. When we encounter danger, He is there to help us and watch over us as we live our lives.

### **God can manifest Himself**

As we learned earlier, God dwells in unapproachable light. So how can we come near to God and "see" Him? God is able to manifest Himself, to make Himself known to us. For example, God appeared personally before both Abraham and Jacob as a man (Gen 18:1–2; 32:24) and called to Moses from a burning bush (Ex 3:4). He also manifested as a "small voice" to Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:12–13), and as a light from heaven before Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3). There are many similar instances of God appearing to His people. However, the ultimate manifestation of God is Jesus Christ, whom we know as God in the flesh. Even today, God shows Himself to His believers, showing that He is truly through all, using us and the world around us to enact His purpose.

## **3. God is in all**

Lastly, God is "in all" because He is able to dwell within us through the precious Holy Spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit, it is actually God dwelling within us, helping us to overcome the trials and temptations that we encounter in life. He also perceives our innermost hearts and minds. God sees us for who we really are, and there is nothing that we are able to hide from Him! Though we cannot know how God is able to be everywhere at the same time, we do know that He is the only one who

---

<sup>3</sup> TJC Literary Ministry, "Unity and Growth of the Church", *Bible Study Guide: Ephesians* (TJC: Malaysia, 2012), [https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc\\_bsg\\_lesson/ephesians-5/?guide\\_id=510](https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc_bsg_lesson/ephesians-5/?guide_id=510), 7.1: 4.

can do so. This is because He is God, and He is spirit. There is no one else like Him!

### **C. Understanding God's Essence**

Now that we better understand the meaning of "God is Spirit," how is this knowledge important to us? Once we recognize the essence of God, we can come to Him faithfully in confidence, knowing that we can cast our cares upon Him. He will care for us because He is above all, through all, and in all. We know that we can fully rely on Him because He has complete authority over all things, is not bound by space or time, dwells among us, and understands our needs. By understanding God's essence, we have a better understanding of our own limitations and, in turn, how thankful we ought to be for the blessings He has given us.

#### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. What are the differences between physical and spiritual things?**
  - a. Characteristics of physical things: temporary; limited by time and space; can be experienced using the five senses.
  - b. Characteristics of spirit: does not have a physical body, is invisible; not limited by time or space, is eternal; cannot be experienced using the five senses.
- 2. What does it mean that God is immortal?** God is free from death. He is the only one that is truly immortal. As the only eternal being who exists, He is able to give the same eternity to us, who were once bound by death and sin.
- 3. What does it mean that God is self-existing?** God has always existed and will always exist.
- 4. How is God "through all" of creation?** He uses this world to fulfill His purpose. From the moment He created it, everything in this world has existed and acted for His will, including us.
- 5. Why is it important to understand the essence of God?** Once we recognize the essence of God, we can come to Him faithfully in confidence, knowing that we can cast our cares upon Him, and that He will care for us because He is above all, through all, and in all. We know that we can fully rely on Him because He has complete authority over all things, is not bound by space or time, and is everywhere we are.

#### *Life Application*

---

##### **Building Our Relationship with God**

Because God is Spirit, we know that He is capable of doing things beyond our imagination. We will never be able to understand His power or His plans, yet we know that we can always turn to Him for all our needs. But our relationship with Him cannot be limited to our needs and requests. If we consider our many relationships with our family and friends, they take effort from both sides. For example, if we tell our best friend how bad our day was, they may respond with words of comfort or sympathy. It is a two-way relationship. Our relationship with God must be the same.

God wants us to have a meaningful relationship with Him that is not based on our needs, but on our love for Him. God is Spirit, so we must also worship Him in spirit – that means loving Him with our hearts, our minds, and our souls through communion with Him and submission to His truth. Our relationship with Him needs to be "REaL" – Rich, Everlasting, and Life-changing. But what does a "real" relationship with God look like?

##### **1. A rich relationship**

To have a rich relationship with God requires effort, just like any other. The Bible records: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). When we communicate with Him on a daily

basis and actively seek to follow His word, then God will answer in kind. We know we have a rich relationship with God when we instinctively turn to Him in times of happiness or sadness, and when we make decisions based on what He wants of us, instead of what we want.

What was your solution when you were faced with a test you did not prepare for? When you got into an argument? When you wanted something you could not have? When you had to choose how to spend your free time? Those who turn to God first and choose to prioritize Him over the world are those who have a rich relationship with Him, because He is always foremost on their minds.

## 2. An everlasting relationship

We form many types of friendships during our lives, but few of these friendships are enduring. Many of the friends you make today will no longer be as close the next year, or the year after. It is natural to lose touch with people you knew well when you were younger, especially when you move on to high school or college. But God never moves on. He never loses touch, and He is always thinking of and taking care of us. He is always ready to listen to us and always waiting for us to listen to Him.

**Discuss:** Think of your best friend, either in the past or present. What made them such a good friend? What do you think are the qualities of a good friend? Now consider a few of God's qualities and write them down. Is He faithful? Is He always there for you? Have you experienced His comfort?

## 3. A life-changing relationship

To have a life-changing relationship with God means allowing the Spirit to touch our hearts and affect our everyday decisions and attitude, whether in times of peace or tribulation. God loves us so much, and He understands what we are going through. We can always come "boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). When we choose to turn to God for all of our problems, every aspect of our lives will change. We will become less anxious about problems at hand, feel at peace when faced with conflict, and face tribulations with confidence in God's power. When we allow our relationship with God to grow, we are letting Him enrich our hearts with His love and mercy. And just as Moses' face shone from his communion with God, we too can reflect His glory in our lives.

To develop a rich, everlasting, and life-changing relationship, we must learn to communicate with God better. Are your prayers focused, or are they aimless? Do you pour out your troubles in your prayers, or does your mind wander? One way to deepen our relationship with God is by having mindful prayers. This means having prayers that are focused on God and on increasing His presence in our lives. Here is a quick testimony from someone who learned the value of having mindful prayers.

### Testimony

*Growing up, I had visited various Catholic churches and services through friends of my parents and family, but nothing ever stuck. I was not a person of faith when I started going to high school. But one day, a friend showed up in class, and she had a Bible with her. She was late because she was at a Bible study. A few days later, she invited me to go to her church. Because of her sincerity and care, I started participating in the youth Bible study every week. During the next few months, I learned who Jesus Christ was. I had accepted the Bible to be true. However, something was still missing. I did not know how to let Jesus come into my heart. I did not understand what it meant to have a real relationship with God.*

*My life before Christ had no meaning. I feared many things, and I was very attached to this world.*

*But after my friend told me I had to invite Jesus to come into my heart, everything changed. I began talking to Jesus; I told Him about my fears, my worries, and my struggles. I treated Jesus as if He was my best friend, and I poured my heart out to Him. It felt really good knowing that there is a God out there caring for me. I held on to the promises in the Bible, and I began to see that my path and the decisions I made had God's guidance and blessings! He is real, and He is everything to me. Now, I have a hope and a future. He is my Lord and King! Thank you, Jesus!*

– Anonymous

Try writing down two mindful prayers to God: one that you can use in times of peace, and another that you can use in times of tribulation. Here are two examples:

For times of peace:

*Dear Father, thank You for blessing me with all that I need, and for giving me a smooth and trouble-free week. Help me to take this opportunity to draw closer to You and to meditate on Your word, so that I can know Your will. I'm no longer satisfied to know You from a distance. I want to know You intimately and deeply. Help me never to forget that all that I have is from You. Thank You, Lord!*

For times of tribulation:

*Dear Father, I know You're here with me when I pray. Please draw near to me so that I can feel Your presence. I am facing certain temptations in school this year, so I need to spend more time with You, hear Your words, and receive Your guidance and protection. Please reassure me in my prayers so that I know that You're with me wherever I go, and that You will help me resist temptation. Thank You, Lord!*

God wants to be involved in everything we do. He wants us to have fellowship with Him, which means communicating with Him throughout the day by praying, reading the Bible, and meditating on His teachings. God has already shown His great love for us in opening a way for us to receive salvation through Jesus Christ. By loving Him in return, spending time with Him, and being thankful for what He has done, we can grow closer to God. Being a Christian is all about living a vibrant, spirit-filled life in Christ. Are you ready to build a "REaL" relationship with Him?

### Memory Verse

---

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

### Meaning

1. As we have learned in the life application, worshipping God in spirit means developing a rich, everlasting, and life-changing relationship with God. But this is only possible if we are baptized in the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11; Acts 2:33), receive new life in the Spirit, and quench our souls with the Spirit (Jn 4:14). Then, even though we are physical beings, we can learn how to worship God in spirit and draw closer to Him.
2. We can also find the truth in God (Jn 1:17), for He is the truth (Jn 14:6), and He desires that we become righteous and holy in His truth. To do so, we must meditate constantly on His word and draw closer to Him in order to receive wisdom of His knowledge. Then, we can be genuine worshippers from the heart and live a life that is in accordance with His will.

### Conclusion

---

The essence of God is that He is Spirit, and this fact makes it possible for Him to do the impossible. We

## Junior 1 Year 3 Book 2 Lesson 1

know that we can fully rely on Him because He has complete authority over all things, is not bound by space or time, dwells among us, and understands our needs. By understanding God's essence, we have a better understanding of our own limitations and, in turn, of how thankful we should be for the blessings He has given us. When we recognize this and learn to worship Him in spirit and truth, we will be able to develop a true relationship with Him.



Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to worship God in spirit?  
*It means to develop a rich, everlasting, and life-changing relationship with God. But this is only possible if we are baptized, receive new life, and quench our souls in the Spirit.*
2. Paul wrote that there is “one God and Father of all, who is \_\_\_\_\_ all, and \_\_\_\_\_ all and \_\_\_\_\_ all” (\_\_\_\_\_ 4: \_\_\_\_\_).  
*above, through, in, you, Ephesians, 6*
3. In what way is God self-existing?  
*He has always existed and will never stop existing. He simply is.*
4. Explain in your own words how God is “through all.”  
*His works pervade all of creation, which means He uses this world to fulfill His purpose. From the moment He created it, everything in this world has existed and acted for His will. He dwells among His people and is there to help and watch over us.*
5. How can you have a “mindful” prayer? Write down three specific things that you are going to talk to God about this week.  
*By pouring out our troubles to God, and by having prayers that are focused on God and on increasing His presence in our lives.  
Personal answers.*