

The Aseity of God

God's Self-Existence — The God Who Depends on Nothing

A Teaching Lesson · Seminary-level content, high-school-level clarity

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Big Idea: God exists completely on His own. He was never made, never began, and never needs anything outside Himself to keep existing. Everything else depends on Him; He depends on nothing.

Memory Verse: *“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” — John 5:26 (ESV)*

Contents

PART ONE

Teaching Outline (Leader Notes)

This section is for you, the teacher. It gives the doctrine in full, with the definitions, Scripture, history, and answers to hard questions you will need. Part Two is a student handout you can copy and hand out. Teach at a pace your class can follow — the ideas are deep, but the words are kept plain.

I. Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define aseity in one clear sentence.
2. Point to at least three passages of Scripture that teach it.
3. Explain why aseity means God is not “lonely” or “needy.”
4. Describe how the doctrine changes the way we worship and pray.

II. What the Word Means

Aseity (say it: “*ah-SEE-ih-tee*”) comes from two Latin words: **a se**, meaning “from himself.” To say God has aseity is to say that God exists *from Himself* — out of His own being — and not from anything or anyone else.

Two other terms mean almost the same thing, and you will hear them used together:

Aseity	God exists “from Himself.” He is the source of His own being.
Self-existence	A plainer word for the same idea: God simply is, on His own.
Independence	God does not rely on anything outside Himself — not the world, not us, not time or matter.
Necessary Being	God cannot not-exist. His non-existence is impossible. Everything else is a “contingent being” — it could have not existed.

The simplest way to say it to a class: **Everything you can name got its existence from something else. God got His existence from nothing and no one. He just is.**

III. The Name That Points to It: “I AM”

When Moses met God at the burning bush and asked for His name, God answered with a sentence about His own being.

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.’”

— Exodus 3:14 (ESV)

God does not say “I am the one who came from...” or “I am the one who was made by...” He defines Himself only by Himself: I AM. His name is His existence. The covenant name of God, Yahweh (LORD in most Bibles), is built from this same Hebrew verb “to be.” God’s very name announces that He simply is.

IV. The Biblical Foundation

Aseity is not a word the Bible uses, but it is an idea the Bible teaches on nearly every page. Walk your class through these lines of evidence.

1. God has life in Himself

“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.”
— John 5:26 (ESV)

We have life given to us. God has life in Himself — it belongs to His nature. Notice too that this is said of both the Father and the Son, so the whole Godhead shares this self-life.

2. God needs nothing from anyone

“The God who made the world and everything in it... is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”
— Acts 17:24-25 (ESV)

Paul says it plainly to the philosophers of Athens: God does not need us. The traffic runs one way — He gives to us; we cannot add to Him.

3. God is the source of everything, so He cannot depend on anything

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”
— Romans 11:35-36 (ESV)

If all things come from God, then nothing that God relies on could exist before Him. There was nothing to give Him anything. Notice the question just before this verse: “Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” The expected answer is: no one, ever.

4. God is eternal and unchanging — He never began and never runs out

“Before the mountains were brought forth... from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (*Psalms* 90:2). “I the LORD do not change” (*Malachi* 3:6). A being who was caused would have a beginning and would depend on its cause. God has neither.

5. God alone possesses immortality by nature

God is the one “who alone has immortality” (*1 Timothy* 6:16). Angels and human souls live forever only because God keeps them; God lives forever because of what He is.

V. Thinking It Through: Why It Must Be True

You can help older students see that aseity is not just stated in the Bible — it also has to be true if God is really God. Use this simple chain of reasoning:

1. Everything that begins to exist was caused by something else.

2. If God had been caused, then whatever caused Him would be greater than He is — and that thing would really be “God.”
3. You cannot keep asking “and what caused that?” forever. The chain has to stop at something that was never caused.
4. That uncaused, self-existent Being — the one who simply must exist — is what we mean by God.

Teaching tip: Draw a row of dominoes on the board. Each domino falls because the one behind it pushed it. Then ask: “What pushed the first one?” Something had to move on its own. God is the One who moves on His own and needs no push.

VI. What the Church Has Taught

This is not a new or fringe idea. The church has confessed it from the beginning.

- **The early church fathers** taught that God alone is “unbegotten” and “without beginning.” They fought hard against any idea that God was made or came from something prior to Himself.
- **Augustine (4th–5th c.)** and later Anselm (11th c.) described God as the Being than which nothing greater can be thought — a Being who exists by His own nature and cannot be conceived not to exist.
- **Thomas Aquinas (13th c.)** argued that in God, “essence” and “existence” are the same thing. In us, what we are and that we are are two different facts; in God, His nature simply is to exist.
- **The Reformed and Baptist confessions** state it directly. Both the Westminster Confession (1646) and the Second London Baptist Confession (1689) say God is “a most pure spirit... who is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things.” They also say He is “all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them.”

The key confessional phrase to memorize: **God is “the alone fountain of all being.”**

VII. Common Confusions (and How to Answer Them)

“If God has no needs, was He lonely before He made us?”

No. Because God is three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — there has always been perfect love and fellowship inside God Himself. He did not create us to fill an empty spot. He created out of the overflow of a love that was already full. This is why aseity and the Trinity fit together so beautifully.

“Then why did God make us at all?”

Not out of need, but out of freedom and generosity — to display His glory and to share His goodness. A gift given from fullness is more loving than a gift given from need. God gains nothing from us; we gain everything from Him.

“Does God change when He answers prayer or becomes angry?”

God really relates to us and responds to us, but He is never improved, completed, or made needy by us. His love toward us flows from who He already is, not from something we supply. Be careful here: affirm that God truly loves and acts, while denying that He depends on us to be complete.

The one-sentence guardrail

Everything depends on God. God depends on nothing. If a statement flips that around, it is wrong.

VIII. Why This Matters for Us

- **It makes God worthy of worship.** We do not worship a bigger version of ourselves. We worship the One who needs nothing and gives everything.
- **It makes God perfectly reliable.** A God who needed nothing can never be drained, distracted, or dependent on conditions outside Himself. His promises rest on His own unchanging being.
- **It humbles our pride.** We bring nothing to God that He needed first. Even our best works add nothing to Him — which frees us from trying to earn His favor and lets us receive it as a gift.
- **It reshapes prayer.** We do not pray to supply God with information or resources. We pray to a full God who delights to give from His fullness.

PART TWO

Student Handout

The Aseity of God — God's Self-Existence. Fill in the blanks and follow along as we work through the lesson together.

The Big Idea

Everything that exists got its existence from something else. God got His existence from nothing and no one. He simply IS. Everything depends on God; God depends on nothing.

Words to Know

- **Aseity** (ah-SEE-ih-tee) — from Latin *a se*, “from himself.” God exists from Himself.
- **Self-existence** — God just is, on His own.
- **Independence** — God relies on nothing outside Himself.
- **Necessary Being** — God cannot not-exist. Everything else could have not existed.

Key Verses

- **Exodus 3:14** — “I AM WHO I AM.” God's name is His existence.
- **John 5:26** — The Father and the Son have “life in themselves.”
- **Acts 17:24-25** — God is not served “as though he needed anything.”
- **Romans 11:35-36** — “From him and through him and to him are all things.”

Fill in the Blanks

1. God's name at the burning bush was “I _____ WHO I _____.” (Exodus 3:14)
2. God has _____ in Himself, and He gives _____ to everything else.
3. Everything _____ on God. God depends on _____.
4. God did not create us because He was _____; He created out of His _____.

Discussion Questions

1. Name three things you depend on to exist right now. What do all of them have in common that God does NOT share?
2. If God does not need us, does that make Him cold and distant — or is there a better way to understand it? (Hint: think about the Trinity.)
3. How should it change your prayers to know you are praying to a God who lacks nothing?
4. Why is a gift given out of fullness more loving than a gift given out of need?

One Sentence to Remember

Everything depends on God. God depends on nothing.

This Week

Memorize John 5:26. Each day, name one thing you are thankful for, and finish this sentence in prayer:
“Lord, You did not need to give me this — thank You for giving it out of Your fullness.”

Sources & Further Study

Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV). Key passages and classic sources referenced in this lesson:

- Scripture: Exodus 3:14; Psalm 90:2; Malachi 3:6; John 5:26; Acts 17:24–25; Romans 11:33–36; 1 Timothy 6:16.
- Augustine, *Confessions* and *On the Trinity*; Anselm, *Proslogion* (the argument for a Being that cannot be thought not to exist).
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q.3 (God's essence is His existence).
- Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), ch. 2; Second London Baptist Confession (1689), ch. 2 — God as “the alone fountain of all being... all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures.”
- For modern treatment: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* vol. 2; Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*.