

The Independence and Simplicity of God

The God Who Needs Nothing and Is Not Made of Parts

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Big Idea: God needs nothing outside Himself (independence), and He is not built out of parts (simplicity). He does not have goodness, power, and love as pieces added together — He IS His goodness, power, and love, all at once.

Memory Verse: *“Nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” — Acts 17:25 (ESV)*

Contents

PART ONE

Teaching Outline (Leader Notes)

This lesson covers two closely linked truths about God: His independence and His simplicity. They belong together because both answer the same question — “What is God made of, and what does He rely on?” The answer, in both cases, is: nothing outside Himself. Part One is your full teaching material; Part Two is a handout to copy for students. It builds directly on the earlier lesson on aseity (God’s self-existence).

I. Lesson Objectives

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

1. State the difference between independence and simplicity in their own words.
2. Give at least two Bible passages for each truth.
3. Explain why “God IS love” means more than “God is very loving.”
4. Describe why these truths make God unchangeable and trustworthy.

II. Part A — The Independence of God

What the word means

Independence (also called God’s *all-sufficiency* or *absoluteness*) means that God does not rely on anything outside Himself — not for His existence, His happiness, His knowledge, or His power. He is completely full in Himself. If everything else vanished, God would be exactly as perfect and complete as He is right now.

How it relates to aseity: Aseity says God exists from Himself. Independence takes the next step — not only does God exist on His own, He is complete on His own. Nothing can add to Him or take from Him.

The Bible’s teaching

“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 tells the Athenians that God is not the kind of god who lives in temples and eats sacrifices because He is hungry. The pagan gods were needy; the true God is not.

God says the same in *Psalms* 50:12: “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.” Even the sacrifices Israel brought added nothing to God — He already owned every animal on earth.

- **Job 41:11** — “Who has first given to me, that I should repay him?” No one can put God in their debt.
- **Romans 11:35–36** — all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him. He is the source, not a receiver.

- **Isaiah 40:13-14** — no one taught God or gave Him counsel. His knowledge is His own, not borrowed.

What independence does NOT mean

It does not mean God is distant, cold, or uninvolved. A God who needs nothing is actually free to love perfectly — because His love is never selfish or needy. He does not love us to get something from us. He loves us out of His own fullness.

III. Part B — The Simplicity of God

What the word means

This is the trickiest idea in the lesson, so go slowly. “Simple” here does NOT mean “easy” or “basic.”

Divine simplicity means God is not made up of parts. He cannot be divided, taken apart, or assembled. He is not a mixture of ingredients.

Think of the difference this way:

A creature	Is made of parts. You are body + soul, and your body is arms + legs + organs. You HAVE strength, kindness, and knowledge — they are qualities added to you, and you could lose them.
God	Is not made of parts. He does not HAVE love, power, and holiness as separate pieces. He IS His love, He IS His power, He IS His holiness — fully and all at once.

The key claim: God’s attributes are not parts

When we say “God is loving, holy, just, and wise,” we are describing the one, undivided God from different angles — not listing four separate compartments inside Him. His justice is loving. His love is holy. His mercy is wise. You can never set one attribute against another, as if God had to choose between being just and being merciful. At the cross, His justice and mercy are the same undivided God acting.

Why the Bible points this way

“God is love.” ... “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

— 1 John 4:8; 1 John 1:5 (ESV)

Notice the Bible does not merely say God is loving or that God has light. It says God IS love and God IS light. His attributes are identical with His being, not add-ons to it.

- **Deuteronomy 6:4** — “The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” God is unified, not assembled from pieces.
- **Exodus 3:14** — “I AM WHO I AM.” God’s very being is His existence; He is not a thing that has existence added to it.
- **John 4:24** — “God is spirit.” He has no physical parts to divide.

Why simplicity matters (and how it protects other truths)

- **It protects God’s independence.** If God were made of parts, those parts would be more basic than God, and He would depend on them being put together. A God made of parts would need a “parts-assembler” greater than Himself.
- **It protects God’s unchangeableness.** Things with parts can gain, lose, or rearrange their parts. A God without parts cannot be broken down or built up. He is always fully Himself.

- **It protects God's perfection.** A whole made of parts is only as strong as the way its parts hold together. God is not held together — He simply IS, complete and whole.

IV. What the Church Has Taught

Both truths are ancient and confessed across the whole church.

- **The early fathers** (such as Irenaeus and Augustine) taught that God is not composed of parts and lacks nothing. Augustine wrote that in God, “to be” and “to be great” and “to be good” are all the same thing.
- **Thomas Aquinas (13th c.)** gave the fullest treatment: God has no parts, no body, and no distinction between what He is and that He is. His essence just is His existence.
- **The Reformed and Baptist confessions** state both plainly. The Westminster Confession (1646) and the Second London Baptist Confession (1689) describe God as “a most pure spirit... without body, parts, or passions” and as “all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made.”

The two phrases to memorize: **God is “without body, parts, or passions” (simplicity) and “all-sufficient” (independence).**

V. Common Confusions (and How to Answer Them)

“If God is ‘simple,’ how can He be three persons?”

Simplicity does not deny the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Spirit are not three parts of God, and they are not three ingredients that combine to make God. Each person fully is the one undivided God. Simplicity actually guards the Trinity from being misread as “God in three pieces.”

“Doesn't the Bible list many attributes? Doesn't that mean parts?”

The many names describe the one God from different directions, the way you might describe the same sun as bright, warm, and life-giving. Those are not three parts of the sun — they are one sun seen in different ways. So with God: many descriptions, one undivided Being.

“If God needs nothing, does He care about me?”

Yes — more purely than anyone. Because God gains nothing from you, His care for you cannot be selfish. His love is pure gift, not a trade. A needy love says “I love you because I need you.” God's love says “I love you though I need nothing from you.” That is the safest love in the universe.

The one-sentence guardrail

God is not built from parts, and He is not filled from the outside. He is whole and full in Himself.

VI. Why This Matters for Us

- **God is completely reliable.** Because He is not made of parts, nothing in God can wear out, come loose, or fall apart. His promises rest on a Being who cannot be diminished.
- **God's love is pure.** He does not love you to fill a need. He loves you from His fullness, which means His love has no hidden strings.

- **We never have to “manage” God.** We do not balance a merciful side of God against an angry side. He is one, undivided, and consistent in all He does.
- **Worship becomes rest.** We come to God not to complete Him but to receive from His endless fullness.

PART TWO

Student Handout

The Independence and Simplicity of God. Fill in the blanks and follow along as we work through the lesson together.

The Big Idea

God needs nothing outside Himself (independence), and He is not built out of parts (simplicity). He does not HAVE love, power, and holiness as separate pieces — He IS His love, power, and holiness, all at once.

Two Words to Know

- **Independence** (all-sufficiency) — God relies on nothing outside Himself and is complete on His own.
- **Simplicity** — God is not made of parts. “Simple” means “not divided,” not “easy.”

Key Verses

- **Acts 17:24-25** — God is not served “as though he needed anything.”
- **Psalms 50:12** — “The world and its fullness are mine.”
- **1 John 4:8; 1:5** — “God IS love”; “God IS light.”
- **Deuteronomy 6:4** — “The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

Creature vs. Creator

A creature	Is made of parts and HAS qualities that can be gained or lost.
God	Is not made of parts. He IS His qualities, fully and all at once.

Fill in the Blanks

1. God is not served “as though he _____ anything.” (Acts 17:25)
2. “Simple” means God is not made of _____.
3. The Bible does not just say God is loving; it says God _____ love.
4. Because God gains _____ from us, His love for us has no hidden strings.

Discussion Questions

1. Name a machine that stops working when one part breaks. Why can that never happen to God?
2. What is the difference between “God is very loving” and “God IS love”? Why does it matter?

3. Have you ever pictured God as “part loving, part angry,” having to choose between them? How does simplicity correct that?
4. If God needs nothing from you, does that make His love feel more or less safe? Why?

One Sentence to Remember

God is not built from parts, and He is not filled from the outside.

This Week

Memorize Acts 17:25. Each day, finish this prayer: “Lord, You are complete without me, yet You love me anyway — thank You that Your love is pure gift.”

Sources & Further Study

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

- Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4; Job 41:11; Psalm 50:12; Isaiah 40:13–14; John 4:24; Acts 17:24–25; Romans 11:33–36; 1 John 1:5; 1 John 4:8.
- Augustine, *On the Trinity* and *The City of God* (in God, being, greatness, and goodness are one).
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, QQ. 3–4 (divine simplicity and perfection).
- Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), ch. 2; Second London Baptist Confession (1689), ch. 2 — God “without body, parts, or passions... all-sufficient.”
- For modern treatment: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* vol. 2; Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*; James Dolezal, *All That Is in God*.