

- (12) The next item on the agenda is, “fear God.” The word “fear” is the present middle imperative of the verb φοβέω (*phobéō*): “fear, reverence, occupation.”
- (13) The preceding imperative commands the believer to love his fellow believer unconditionally.
- (14) The ability to do this requires the preexisting capacity to love God personally. To do this requires orientation to His immutable authority.
- (15) Personal love of God includes complete orientation to the standards He possesses and which He commands believers to acquire and execute. The Lord commented on this relationship in several verses in John’s Gospel:

John 14:15 - “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

John 14:21a - “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.

John 15:10 - “If you love My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (NASB)

- (16) There is an innate correlation between “love” (*agapáō*) and “fear” (*phobéō*) in 2 Peter 2:17.
- (17) The terms used here are important to define. “Innate” applies to “qualities or characteristics that are part of one’s inner essential nature,” while “correlate” refers to “two things so related that one directly implies or is complementary of the other.” “Correlation” is the relationship between things “which occur together in a way not expected on the basis of chance alone.”¹

¹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.vv. “innate,” “correlate,” “correlation.”

- (18) Acquisition of personal love for God is the required attribute before unconditional love for fellow believers can occur.
- (19) Love for God is acquired over time by the consistent acquisition of His commandments in the *kardía* and their application to life and circumstances.
- (20) It is from this inventory of ideas that the believer is empowered to “honor all people” and “love the brotherhood.”
- (21) These two commandments in verse 17 require prerequisite love for God. But mankind and fellow believers are all imperfect. Just like you they are flawed with a sin nature and they use it.
- (22) You have no power to alter their condition with the lone exception of maintaining your personal love for God.
- (23) How you respond or react to them either mollifies their weaknesses or aggravates them respectively.
- (24) The reason members of a congregation are unable to get along is because they have not fulfilled the imperative of “loving the brotherhood”: problem-solving device number seven, personal love for God.
- (25) And how is this status acquired? Through acquisition of divine commandments, facilitating them into paths of least resistance, and applying them to interpersonal relationships.
- (26) Once personal love for God is acquired, then the ability to love the brotherhood unconditionally begins, but it, too, needs an underlying doctrine to maintain order.

- (27) This is where the commandment, “fear God,” comes into play. We are being ordered to fear God. Why does He mandate fear, which is a sin? Because the word does not relate to the sin of fear, but rather to respect, reverence, and assurance.
- (28) Loving God develops during the process of learning Who and what He is. He is our Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Patron and giver of life.
- (29) He is perfect and in His perfection He possesses certain attributes that define Him.
- (30) Composites of His attribute of love are righteousness, justice, and omniscience within the policy of grace.

Righteousness: God is totally and completely correct in all His thoughts, decisions, and actions. He is infinitely accurate since He has never been guilty of error nor subject to question. God's righteousness is independent and cannot be compared with someone else. Consequently, God's perfect righteousness rejects human standards of righteousness. Conclusion: God is the ultimate and absolute Standard of the universe.²

Justice: God cannot be unfair; He demands that all variance to His standards be condemned while all adherence be rewarded. He is objective, unprejudiced, and unbiased and is completely fair in His judgments. God's justice is expressed to the human race in two categories: (1) blessing and (2) cursing. Conclusion: God is the ultimate and absolute Judge of the universe.³

Omniscience: God knows all that is knowable. For all of eternity, God has known in the most intricate and minute detail all the thoughts, decisions, and actions of history, their causes and effects, and their relationships to each other.

In addition, God has always known all of the potentialities, probabilities, and alternatives of history and the ways they would have changed history had man's freewill decisions so chosen.

² Joe Griffin, *God Exists: Navigating the Web of Truth* (St. Charles: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 2010), 21–22.

³ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

God is not gaining in knowledge because there is nothing which He does not know. The English language uses the Latin prefix *ōmnis* to mean “all.” The Latin *scientīa* means “knowledge.” Thus “omniscience” means one who possesses knowledge of all things.

Logically, then, God’s knowledge cannot be limited by time or even human history. Of God’s omniscient knowledge, that portion which He desires for us to know is found in the completed canon of Scripture.

Conclusion: God is the ultimate and absolute Intellect of the universe.⁴

Grace: All that God is free to do for mankind without compromising His divine essence and includes favor, kindness, and mercy. Grace is free unmerited favor and love from God alone, not from works or because we are attractive to God.

Grace means that all things from God, including salvation by grace through faith, are received from God as a free gift totally apart from any form of human merit or any system of human works.

The virtue mandated of the believer is infinitely greater than morality. The inner life of virtue is not something we can do in ourselves. It is something that God has provided in grace.

Conclusion: God is ultimate and absolute Patron of the universe.

Love: God’s love is the motivator of His grace. God’s love can be described in two categories: Unconditional and personal. God has unconditional love for the entire human race (John 3:16). He has personal love for His children who believe in Christ for salvation. (Romans 8:37–38)

The love that God has for the unbeliever is unconditional and is stated in John 3:16, “For God loved the world so much that He gave His uniquely-born Son, so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The person who accepts God’s invitation to eternal life through faith in Christ becomes the recipient of His personal love as noted in 1 John 4:9, “We love because He first loved us.”

Conclusion: God is the ultimate and absolute Benefactor of the universe.⁵

(36) All of these attributes comprise the composites of the integrity of God which constitutes the love of God.

⁴ Ibid., 27–28, 29.

⁵ Ibid., 23, 24.