



DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT MONTH

Theology 1: Knowing God

Teacher: Dan Brewer

The Trinity (Tri-Unity) of God

Week 4 || January 28, 2024

1. The Trinity: A Great Mystery.

- a. Special Revelation.
 - God has revealed Himself as a tri-unity.
- b. Incomprehensible yet knowable.
- c. A doctrine that must be accepted by faith (Heb. 11:1).

2. The Trinity: A Foundational Truth.

- If our understanding of the Trinity wrong, our understanding of God and life will be wrong.
 - The doctrine of the Trinity: frequently misunderstood or misrepresented.
- a. A doctrine of the Bible.
 - Implicitly revealed in the Bible.
 - b. A term not specifically used in the Bible.
 - There are many theological words and terms that are not used in the Bible.

The question we need to ask is this:

Does the term Trinity, or tri-unity, accurately describe this doctrine of God that the Bible teaches?

- c. Origins of the term Trinity.
 - Early church leader Tertullian (AD 160-225).
 - Credited as the first person to use the word Trinity around 213-215 AD.
 - The term Trinity was confirmed and defined by the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.
 - Mostly unchanged for around 1,700 years!
 - However, the doctrine of the Trinity has always existed.

d. Trinity “defined.”

- Simple Definition:
 - God is one in essence and three in persons.
- A contradiction?
 - No.
 - A contradiction must claim to be one thing, while at the same time, claiming to be another thing that is entirely different.
 - The term Trinity is not claiming that at all.
 - God is not one and three in the same way.
 - He is one in His essence, and three in His persons.
- Essence: Being or substance.
 - God’s essence is what He is.
- Persons: Who God is.
- A helpful “definition”:

“God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”
-Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 226.

- CCFW Foundational Faith Statement:

3. How does God reveal Himself?

God reveals Himself as the only true and living God who exists in three co-equal, co-eternal Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:21–22; Jer. 10:10; 2 Cor. 13:14).

❖ <https://www.ccfw.org/foundationalfaith>

3. The Trinity: Three Crucial Truths.

a. There is only one God.

- The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God.
(Deut. 4:35; 6:4; 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 1 Kings 8:60; Ps. 18:31; Isa, 40:18; 43:10; 44:8; 45:5; 45:21-22)

- God consists of one undivided and uncompounded essence.
 - God is unified in His essence.

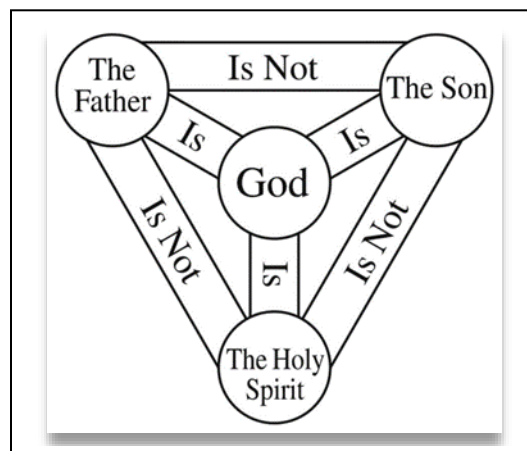
Deuteronomy 6:4
 “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”

b. There are three divine persons.

- God speaks of Himself in plural pronouns.
 (Gen. 1:26; Gen. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8).

Isaiah 6:8
 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall **I** send, and who will go for **Us**?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

- The Father is God (Phil. 1:2).
 - God the Father is the great architect of creation, redemption, and consummation, who plans, directs, and sends.
- The Son is God (Titus 2:13; Isa. 7:14; 9:6).
 - God the Son obeys the Father, accomplishes redemption, and with the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to apply the work He has begun.
 - In all things, the Son glorifies the Father.
- The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16).
 - God the Holy Spirit brings to completion the work planned by the Father and begun by the Son.
 - In all things the Holy Spirit works to glorify the Son.



c. The three persons are co-equal and co-eternal.

- Co-Equal:
 - Each person of the Trinity possesses the entire essence of God.
 - An accurate description of the Trinity **must** include this element.

- Co-Eternal:
 - God always has been and always will be.
 - God has always been and always will be three in persons.
 - There was never a time, nor will there ever be a time, when one of the persons of the Godhead did not exist.
 - An accurate description of the Trinity **must** also include this element.

4. The Trinity: Three Common Errors and Unhelpful Illustrations.

a. The error of tri-theism.

- A form of poly-theism: many separate gods.
- Bad illustrations: egg, clover, chain, tree
 - What people say: The Trinity is like an egg because it has three parts: shell, white, yolk, but is one egg.
 - What is wrong with this: Each part is only that, a part, and cannot be said to be the entire thing.

b. The error on modalism.

- Modalism says there is one God who appears in different forms, expressions, or modes.
- Bad Illustrations: water, people.
 - What people say: The Trinity is like water because it can be a liquid, solid, and steam while remaining H₂O.
 - What is wrong with this: Each part is never in the same form at the same time.

c. The error of subordinationism.

- Subordinationism claims that the Son and the Spirit are subordinate to the Father in essence.
- Another term for Subordinationism would be Arianism.
- Bad Illustrations: Sun, Star
 - What people say: The Trinity is like the sun because it is comprised of a body, light, and heat yet all are the sun.
 - What is wrong with this: Light and heat radiate and only exist because the body exists. Light and heat are generated from the body.

5. The Trinity: Bringing It All Together

a. The Trinity and Creation.

- Creation only has real meaning and purpose with a tri-une God.
- God is Love (1 John 4:8-10)
- God is relational.

“Reality is relational. Before time began, God existed in community—the sacred community of the holy Trinity. Reality is relational because God is social, communal, never once alone, but forever in intimate personal interaction within the Trinity.”

-Kellemen, *Soul Physicians*, 16.

- Creation: A Gift from the Father to the Son.
 - It's not about us!
 - Yet, we are a significant part of the Father's gift to his Son.

b. The Trinity and Salvation.

- As His adopted children, the Father invites us to come close to Him.
 - Jesus invites the little children to come close (Matt. 19:14).
- Union with Christ: God's Greatest Gift

c. The Trinity and our Mission.

- The Trinity is already on mission. It is what they do.
- Like Father, like son. Like Son, like disciple (Matt. 28:18-20)
- We join Jesus in evangelism and discipleship who is already on mission.
 - We become more and more like the image bearers that we were designed to be.

Recommended Resources:

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 2017

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2013

Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 1999

Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 2012

Joe Thorn, *Experiencing the Trinity*, 2015

Small Group Discussion Questions:

Relational & Transformational:

Think back over the material presented in this class.

- The Revelations of God.
- The Names of God.
- The Attributes of God.
- The Trinity of God.

1. What are some specific ways that your theology—your understanding of God—has changed from this class? (What did you learn)
2. How has your theology—knowing God—improved your relationship with God?

Missional:

3. How does knowing that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are on mission, change the way you think about evangelism and discipleship?
4. When someone that you are witnessing to tells you that they believe in Jesus, why is it so important to probe their understanding of the Jesus in the context of our three crucial truths about the trinity:
 1. There only one God
 2. There are three divine persons
 3. The three persons are co-equal and co-eternal