

GOD

Part 2

LIFE-CHANGE OBJECTIVE

- To develop a sense of amazement about God that results in a decision to spend time getting to know him.

In this study, we're going to focus on three characteristics unique to the person of God.

We looked in the last study at the clearest expression of the truth that God is personal: the fact that he is our father. We are going to focus today on three additional aspects of God's person that we all need to know and understand. If God took a personality test, he would not be described with terms as limited as "sanguine", "dominant", or "introspective." The following three characteristics are unique to the person of God.

GOD EXISTS AS A _____

A FRESH WORD

Trinity

God is three and one – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is not three Gods, nor is he one God acting in three different ways. The Bible tells us that God has three different in distinct persons, and that these three different in distinct persons are one in the being of God.

PICTURES AND STATEMENTS REGARDING THE TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is not found in any single verse of the Bible. It is to be found in a study of the whole of the Bible.

St. Patrick's picture of the Trinity was the three-leafed shamrock.

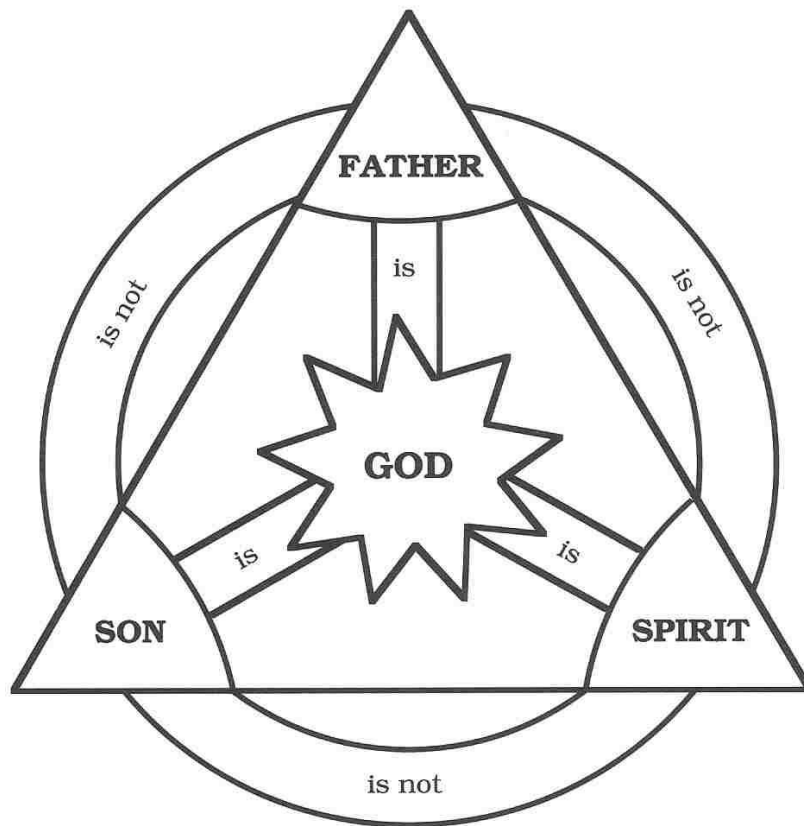
Some use the picture of the three forms of water: ice, liquid, and steam. Water under pressure and in a vacuum at a given temperature below freezing exist simultaneously as ice liquid and gas; yet it is identifiable always has water (H₂O), it's basic nature. In physics this is called the "triple point of water."

Others use a much simpler picture: Neapolitan ice cream! The three flavors are distinct and separate, yet without any one of them it would not be Neapolitan

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When I first began to study the Bible years ago, the doctrine of the Trinity was one of the most complex problems I had to encounter. I've never fully resolved it, for it contains an aspect of mystery. Though I do not totally understand it to this day, I accepted as a revelation of God.

- BILLY GRAHAM



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THE TRUTH OF THE TRINITY IS SHOWN BY THE BIBLE'S TEACHING THAT...

1. God is _____.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

ISAIAH 46:9

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”

2. Father, Son, and Spirit are all called God.

- The father is God.

ROMANS 1:7

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Jesus is God.

JOHN 20:28

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

JOHN 1:1 (NLT)

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- The Spirit is God.

JOHN 14:16–17

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“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

ACTS 5:3–4

“Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit . . . You have not lied to men but to God.”

3. Father, Son, and Spirit are _____ from one another.

- Jesus is distinct from the Father (He prayed to the Father in John 17).
- The Spirit is distinct from the Father (John 14:26).
- The Son is distinct from the Father (John 14:16-17).

Conclusion: God is one in being, but he exists in three persons.

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GLIMPSES OF THE TRINITY

- God speaks of himself as “_____” in four places in the Old Testament (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8).
- All three persons were involved in creation (the Spirit – Genesis 1:2; the Father – Hebrews 1:2; the Son – Colossians 1:15 -16).
- We are _____ in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
- All three persons were at Jesus’ and in Jesus’ _____ (Mark 1:10-11) and in Jesus’ _____ (Luke 1:35)
- The Bible tells us all three persons were the power behind Jesus’ _____. In John 2:19, Jesus said he would raise his body. In Romans 8:11 we’re told that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus. In Acts 3:26, the Father raised the Son. This makes sense only when you understand the truth of the Trinity. Only God can raise someone from the dead.
- Paul’s prayer in 2 Corinthians 13:14: *“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”*
- Jesus’ promise to his disciples in John 14:16–17: Jesus says he will ask the Father for the Spirit.

KEY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Why Is This Important?

Theologically: Understanding the truth of the Trinity prevents us from adopting inadequate views of God.

It prevents us from seeing Jesus and the Spirit as less than God; from seeing Jesus and the Father as exactly the same; and from thinking there are three gods rather than just one.

One of our inevitable temptations as human beings is to see God as less than who he is. The truth of the Trinity helps us to resist this temptation.

Personally: The Trinity is a reminder of the majesty and mystery of the God who gave himself for us on the cross.

You trust the truth of the Trinity:

- When you ask for salvation (the Spirit convicts – John 15:8; the Son sacrifices – Hebrews 10:10; the Father gives – John 3:16).
- Every time you pray (the Spirit communicates – Romans 8:26; Jesus intercedes – Romans 8:34; the Father answers – John 16:23-24).

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Relationally: The Trinity shows us that God in his very essence is relational.

Even before he created us, there was a perfect relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. God did not need to create us in order to have someone to relate to, because he already had the perfect relationship in the Trinity. Our ability to relate to one another and to enjoy our relationship with God grows out of his relational nature.

GOD IS ABSOLUTELY _____

Sovereignty refers not to God's attitude but to the reality of who he is. God is not someone with a dominating personality; he is a person who is absolutely dominant. God is not controlling; he is in ultimate control. God does not need to take charge because he always is in charge.

1. He is greater than and exists above his creation: He is

_____.

1 KINGS 8:27

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

EPHESIANS 4:6

One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

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- He is greater than time (Isaiah 57:15; Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:2).
- He is greater than place (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23; Acts 17:24-28).
- He is greater than circumstance (James 1:17; 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6).

Nothing _____ God (Psalm 139:2-4)

2. He never needs permission or help: He is _____.

ACTS 17:25

“And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”

ROMANS 9:20

But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’”

3. God can do anything he wants: He is _____.

PSALM 147:4–5 (NLT)

He counts the stars and calls them all by name. How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!

*56 times the Bible says that God is the Almighty One.

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A FRESH WORD

For just a moment, think about the words we've been using to describe God. These words are often misunderstood. They have taken on meanings that make us feel that God is a personal God. It should be no surprise since one of Satan's schemes is to twist and degrade the name and person of God in order to lessen his impact in the world and in our lives. Satan is at the head of an evil PR campaign that seeks to defame the character of God. Here's the truth about some of the words we commonly used to describe God.

Holy does not mean God is picky or judgmental or "holier than thou." To be holy, literally, is to be separate and distinct. Holy means God has perfect integrity. In fact, he is the only being in the universe with perfect integrity.

Eternal does not mean that God is old or tired or out of date. God has always existed. He stands outside of time, able to see the entire history of the universe at a glance.

Transcendent does not mean that God cannot understand our needs and hurts. It does not mean, as in the Bette Midler song, that he's watching us "from a distance." The fact that God stands above and beyond his creation does not mean he stands outside his creation. He is both transcendent (above and beyond his creation) and immanent (within and throughout his creation).

Almighty does not mean that God does whatever he wants with no thought to the impact on us. He uses his power to create and to love his creation.

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All-knowing does not mean that God is some kind of cosmic Big Brother, watching and judging us but never really caring about us. We know that as human beings we cannot see all the pain in the world without somehow becoming numb to it, but God is not like that. He can see all that happens and still deeply care about everything that happens.

GOD IS _____

“God is good, all the time.”

“All the time, God is good.”

- He acts in _____ (Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:1-3)

ISAIAH 6:3

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

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- He relates in _____ (Exodus 34:6; Lamentations 3:22; James 5:11).
- His _____ can be trusted (Psalm 36:5; Hebrews 10:23)
- His _____ is unequaled (Psalm 34:8; 2 Peter 1:3)
- His _____ is impartial and fair (Isaiah 30:18; Luke 18:7-8).
- He reacts to sin in _____ (Genesis 6:5-8; Romans 2:5-9; Thessalonians 2:16)
- He is _____ (1 John 4:7-11; John 3:16)

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: God (Part 2)

KEY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Bible often talks about God's nature in terms of a personal challenge to us. We are created in his image (Genesis 1:27). What he is like in character is what we should become like. Some of God's attributes are his alone, such as omnipotence or eternalness, but we are to reflect others in our lives. How can that happen? A simple truth of human nature applies here: We become like those we spend the most time with. When I spend time with God, I inevitably become more like him.

His person empowers my character!

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: God (Part 2)

APPENDIX // THEOLOGY OF THE TRINITY		
<p>Here's a brief look at what we'll be studying together. This chart helps you to see the different levels of learning that go along with grasping a truth. Being able to quote a truth does not mean I've fully grasped that truth.</p>		
INTRODUCTION	<p>The word <i>Trinity</i> is never used, nor is the doctrine of Trinitarianism ever explicitly taught, in the Scriptures, but Trinitarianism is the best explication [detailed explanation] of the biblical evidence. It is a crucial doctrine for Christianity because it focuses on who God is, and particularly on the deity of Jesus Christ. Because Trinitarianism is not taught explicitly in the Scriptures, the study of the doctrine is an exercise in putting together biblical themes and data through a systematic theological study and through looking at the historical development of the present orthodox view of what the biblical presentation of the Trinity is.</p>	
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE TRINITY	<p>God is One Each of the persons within the Godhead is Deity. The oneness of God and threeness of God are not contradictory. The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is eternal. Each of the persons of God is of the same essence and is not inferior or superior to the others in essence. The Trinity is a mystery which we will never be able to understand fully.</p>	
BIBLICAL TEACHING	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
GOD IS ONE	<p><i>"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one"</i> (Deuteronomy 6:4; cf. 20:2-4; 3:13-15).</p>	<p><i>"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen"</i> (1 Timothy 1:17; cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; James 2:19).</p>
THREE DISTINCT PERSONS AS DEITY	<p><i>The Father: "He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'"</i> (Psalm 2:7).</p>	<p><i>"... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"</i> (1 Peter 1:2; cf. John 1:17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:11).</p>
	<p><i>The Son: "He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'"</i> (Psalm 2:7; cf. Hebrews 1:1-13; Psalm 68:18; Isaiah 6:1-3; 9:6).</p>	<p><i>'As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased'"</i> (Matthew 3:16-17).</p>
	<p><i>The Holy Spirit: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters"</i> (Genesis 1:1-2; cf. Exodus 31:3; Judges 15:14; Isaiah 11:2).</p>	<p><i>"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit ... ? You have not lied to men but to God'"</i> (Acts 5:3-4; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:17).</p>
PLURALITY OF PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD	<p>The use of plural pronouns points to, or at least suggests, the plurality of persons within the Godhead in the Old Testament.</p> <p><i>"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ... '"</i> (Genesis 1:26).</p>	<p>The use of a singular word "name" when referring to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit indicates a unity within the threeness of God.</p> <p><i>"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"</i> (Matthew 28:19).</p>

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	ATTRIBUTE	FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
PERSONS OF THE SAME ESSENCE: ATTRIBUTES APPLIED TO EACH PERSON	Externality	Psalm 90:2	John 1:2; Revelation 1:8, 17	Hebrews 9:14
	Power	1 Peter 1:5	2 Corinthians 12:9	Romans 15:19
	Omniscience	Jeremiah 17:10	Revelation 2:23	1 Corinthians 2:11
	Omnipresence	Jeremiah 23:24	Matthew 18:20	Psalm 139:7
	Holiness	Revelation 15:4	Acts 3:14	Acts 1:8
	Truth	John 7:28	Revelation 3:7	1 John 5:6
	Benevolence	Romans 2:4	Ephesians 5:25	Nehemiah 9:20
EQUALLY WITH DIFFERENT ROLES: ACTIVITIES INVOLVING	Creation of the World	Psalm 102:25	Colossians 1:16	Job 33:4
	Creation of Man	Genesis 2:7	Colossians 1:16	Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13
	Baptism of Christ	Matthew 3:17	Matthew 3:16-17	Matthew 3:16
	Death of Christ	Hebrews 9:14	Hebrews 9:14	Hebrews 9:14
<small>Source: Taken from <i>Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine</i> by H. Wayne House. Copyright© 1992 by H. Wayne House.</small>				

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did you find yourself thinking more about God as your Father this week? Share the place or circumstance in which you were reminded that he is your Father.

2. Share what you experienced in the four worship exercises from the last study mentioned in the bullets below.
 - After reading through the passages of Scriptures in which God speaks about his own reality, what truths hit you?
 - As you took some time to concentrate on God's power and control by remembering some of the significant things he has done in your life, what did you remember?
 - What did you write about how you can see God's hand in human history?
 - Share with the group your experiences as you took some time to consider God's beauty and creativity by thinking about or taking a closer look at his creation.

3. It's easy to react to the teaching of the Trinity with a feeling of, "Who cares - just so I know Jesus loves me." How has this study helped you see why the truth of the Trinity is important?
 - What false teachings about God does the truth of the Trinity combat?
 - How does (or how could) this truth help you personally?

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: God (Part 2)

4. How does the truth that God is greater than time or place or circumstance help you to deal with a specific situation you're facing right now?

5. As we come to the end of our look at the person of God,
 - What new thing did you learn about God?
 - What did you learn that made God seem a little closer, a little less distant?
 - What did you learn about God that made you smile, made you able to enjoy him more?
 - What did you learn about God that made you feel more loved by him?
 - What did you learn about God that helped you understand his greatness in a clearer way?
 - What did you learn about God that increased your desire to devote your life to him?
 - What did you learn about God that increased your sense of security in everyday life?

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: God (Part 2)

6. The ways that God acts toward us are an obvious guide for how he wants us to act toward others. While we cannot have many of the characteristics of God (none of us is all-powerful or perfect), all of us can develop more of the character of God (compassion, love, goodness, forgiveness) and display it to the world around us.

God desires for his character to be shown in the world. One of the ways we express faith as believers is to pray that his character will be revealed through us in the world. Use the following questions to develop a prayer list that will be a part of your "group prayer list." One of the most exciting things that you will experience as a group is the way that God will answer many of the prayers you put on this list.

- Where in this world (or in your world) would you most like to see people recognize God's compassion?
- Who do you most hope could tie into God's wisdom?
- Who or what are you counting on God to be patient with?
- What relationship would you like to see God make right?

(Be specific in your prayer requests. If your concern is for your sister, don't say "my family." Let the group in on the details of what you would like them to pray for.)