

## The Triune God: Handout

### **Introduction:** Knowing, Loving, and Enjoying God

Psalm 16:11, Philippians 4:4, Revelation 21:3-4, Mark 12:29-31

### **Practical:**

The aim of the study of theology is that we would know God, love him, glorify him, and enjoy him forever. It is simple: **You can't know God unless you've seen and heard Him (Scripture). You can't love who you don't know. You can't glorify who you don't know. You can't enjoy who you don't know.**

All theology is practical, and is seeking to apply truth of who God is to our lives: James 1:22 *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

### **Prayer Memory Verse**

Psalm 119:18,36

<sup>18</sup>     *Open my eyes, that I may behold  
wondrous things out of your law...*

<sup>36</sup>     *Incline my heart to your testimonies,  
and not to selfish gain!*

## **The Triune God**

### **Introduction:**

The word *trinity* means "tri-unity", or "three-in-oneness"<sup>1</sup>. Although the word is not found in Scripture, the concept is. The word *trinity* summarizes the biblical teaching that there is one God, who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Outline:**

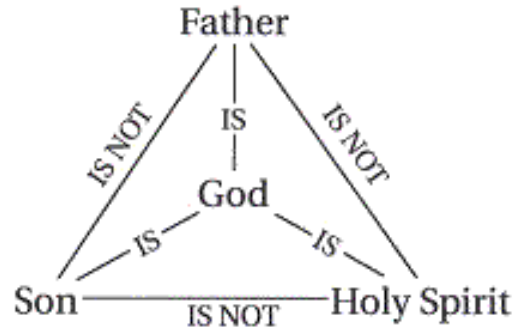
**Definition:** *"God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God."*<sup>2</sup>

The *unity of nature* and *distinction of persons* is helpfully illustrated below:

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Page 227.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page 226.



- i. There is one God
- ii. God is three Persons
- iii. Each Person is fully God
- iv. Each Person is Distinct
- v. Each of the Persons relate to one another eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

### I. There is One God

**God's 'one-ness' means both numerical and qualitative one-ness:** He is the only True God, and no other being is like him.

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5, ESV)*

*“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:5–6, ESV)*

*“Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:21–22, ESV)*

*“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told*

*you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”* (Isaiah 44:6–8, ESV)

*“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”* (1 Timothy 2:5, ESV)

### **Practical Application:**

**1. God has no rival and no equal!** We must worship the true and living God alone.  
*“ You shall have no other gods before me.”* (Deuteronomy 5:7, ESV).

### **2. There is only one Savior:**

*“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:11–12, ESV)

## **II. God is Three Persons**

**OT and Plurality:** From the beginning of Scripture we see that God, though He is one, is also a plurality:

*““Then God said, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness”* (Genesis 1:26, cf. 3:22; 11:7) .

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

*“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;”* (Psalm 45:6–7, ESV)

-God is the King of the Kingdom, and God has anointed God. There is one God, but more than one person who is God. The NT applies this verse to Christ:

*“But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.”* (Hebrews 1:8, ESV)

*“The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”*” (Psalm 110:1, ESV)

-Jesus understood the Lord to be God, not David’s son.

*“Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of*

David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet” ’? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.” (Matthew 22:41–46, ESV)

“But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.” (Isaiah 63:10, ESV)

-The Holy Spirit is a distinct person from God.

Three Persons made explicit in NT:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19, ESV)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14, ESV)

### **Holy Spirit:**

**i. Person (not impersonal power or force):** Holy Spirit referred to as “He” (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The Holy Spirit engages in personal activities, such as teaching (John 14:26), bearing witness (John 15:26; Romans 8:16), interceding of praying on behalf of others (Romans 8:26-27).<sup>3</sup>

## **III. Each Person is Fully God**

### **Father is God:**

“Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” (Matthew 6:9, ESV)

“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Philippians 4:20, ESV)

### **Son is God:**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:1–4, ESV)

“Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”” (John 20:28, ESV)

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 233.

*“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30–31, ESV)*

*“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?” (Hebrews 1:1–13, ESV)*

*“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” (Colossians 2:9, ESV)*

### **Holy Spirit is God:**

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19, ESV)*

*“But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”” (Acts 5:3–4, ESV)*

### **Born of the Spirit is being ‘born of God’:**

*“Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:5–7, ESV)*

*“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.” (1 John 3:9, ESV)*

#### **IV. Each Person is Distinct**

##### **i. The Son is not the Father:**

John 1:1–2

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.”*

- ‘was with God’ shows that the Son is distinct from the Father

1 John 2:1

*“... But if anyone does sin, we **have** an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*

Hebrews 7:25

*<sup>25</sup>“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”*

-The fact that Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father, and intercedes on our behalf to God shows that he is distinct from the Father.

##### **ii. Father and Son are not the Holy Spirit:**

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19, ESV)*

*“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16:7, ESV)*

#### **Practical:**

**1.** Heresy of *modalism* denies distinctness of persons, and teaches they are simply different ‘modes of being’ of one God. That is, he takes on different personas at different times. Micheal Reeves calls this ‘moodalism’<sup>4</sup>, as if God takes on a different ‘mood’ at different times. This distorts God’s relationship of love within Himself. God is not ‘sometimes’ Father, but always.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity; Introduction to the Christian Faith*.

## **V. Each Person Relates to One Another Eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Love**

*“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8, ESV)*

Jesus tells us what God the Father was doing before creation, saying, “you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24). He was loving the Son.

**Loving Father:** The most foundational aspect of God is that He is a Father. Scripture equates God and Father:

*“For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.” (Isaiah 63:16, ESV)*

*“Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:17, ESV)*

*“that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:6, ESV)*

*“yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” (1 Corinthians 8:6, ESV)*

Before creating anything, or ruling over creation, he was a Father. He creates as a Father, and rules as a Father.

**Quote:** John Calvin:

*“We ought in the very order of things (in creation) diligently to contemplate God’s fatherly love... (for as) a foreseeing and diligent father of the family he shows his wonderful goodness toward us... To conclude once for all, whenever we call God the Creator of heaven and earth, let us at the same time bear in mind that... we are indeed his children, whom he has received into his faithful protection to nourish and educate... So, invited by the great sweetness of his beneficence and goodness, let us study to love and serve him with all our heart.”<sup>5</sup>*

**Loving Father:** *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:8–9, ESV)*

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.14.2, 22.

**Beloved Son:** *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”* (John 15:9, ESV)

*“And therein lies the very goodness of the gospel: as the Father is the lover of the Son and the Son the Beloved, so Christ becomes the lover and the church the beloved. That means that Christ loves the church first and foremost: his love is not a response, given only when the church loves him; his love comes first, and we only love him because he first loved us (1 John 4:19).*

*That dynamic is also to be replicated in marriages, husbands being the heads of their wives, loving them as Christ the head loves his bride, the church. He is the lover, she is the beloved. Like the church, then, wives are not left to earn the love of their husbands; they can enjoy it as something lavished on them freely, unconditionally and maximally. For eternity, the Father so loves the Son that he excited the Son’s eternal love in response; Christ loves the church that he excited our love in response; the husband so loves his wife that he excites her love to him back. Such is the spreading goodness that roll out of the very being of this God”<sup>6</sup>*

**Spirit of Love:** *“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.””* (Matthew 3:16–17, ESV)

-The Father declares his love for his Son, and his pleasure in him, and makes this known by giving His Spirit.

-God does the same things with Christians, *“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* (Romans 5:5, ESV)

It is through the ‘fellowship of the Holy Spirit’ that the love is experienced, in God himself, and in us as we commune with Him:

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”* (2 Corinthians 13:14, ESV)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Sonship and adoption:

*“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!””* (Romans 8:15, ESV)

*“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!””* (Galatians 4:6, ESV)

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Page 28-29



## Unity of Nature, Distinction of Persons

Each person of the Trinity is equal in nature and attributes. However, there is a distinction between persons, which we see displayed in the diversity of roles in their unified purpose.

### **Practical Application:**

1. Created in his image, humans have equal worth and dignity, as well as distinctions in responsibilities and roles, all with the purpose of glorifying God and loving one another. There is no dichotomy between diversity and unity. Indeed, as we see in God, there is a unity in diversity that is beautiful.

**The Gospel of Jesus Christ is where we see the life of the Trinity most clearly:**

**John 20:31 (ESV)**

*<sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**Quote:** “...when you proclaim Jesus, the Spirit-anointed Son of the Father, you proclaim the triune God.”-Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*.