

Foundations Theological Training Course

Week 2 – Doctrine of God and the
Trinity

The Doctrine of God and the Trinity

I. The Knowability of God

* We can never know God unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us.

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” Romans 1:20 NIV

* God reveals Himself through general revelation which means He uses nature or creation and is revealed to all people.

“ All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Matthew 11:27 NIV

* We can never fully understand God because God is infinite and we aren’t.

“...these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.” 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 HCS

* We can know God truly.

“This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.” John 17:3 HCS

“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true One. We are in the true One—that is, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20 HCS

II. The Character of God

* **Incommunicable Attributes of God**. Those attributes that God doesn’t share or communicate to us.

* * **Communicable Attributes of God**. Those attributes that God does share or communicate us.

* There is no attribute of God that is strictly communicable or incommunicable.

“For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:9 NLT

* **The Incommunicable Attributes of God ~ How is God different that us?**

* Incommunicable attributes are attributes of we know the least about. God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes and promises, yet God does act, and

he acts differently in response to different situations.

1. God is independent.

- * God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything.
- * Aseity refers to the property by which a being exists in and of itself.
- * God is absolutely independent and self-sufficient.

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.”

Acts 17:24-25 NLT

- * God exists by virtue of His very nature, and He was never created and never came into being.

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”
Revelation 4:11 NLT

“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” ***John 1:3 NLT***

2. God is Unchanging (Immutability)

“God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations.” ~ Louis Berkhof¹

“In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.” ***Psalm 102:25-27 NIV***

- * God existed before the heavens and the earth were created and will continue to exist after they have been destroyed.
- * God is unchanging in His Being.

“I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”
Malachi 3:6 NIV

“Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.” ***James 1:17 NIV***

¹ “Systematic Theology” Louis Berkhof

* God is Unchanging in His Perfections

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.” Deuteronomy 32:4 NKJV

* God is Unchanging in His Purposes

“Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. I will call a swift bird of prey from the east— a leader from a distant land to come and do my bidding. I have said what I would do, and I will do it. Isaiah 46:9-11 NLT

* God is Unchanging in His Promises.

“God isn’t a mere man. He can’t lie. He isn’t a human being. He doesn’t change his mind. He speaks, and then he acts. He makes a promise, and then he keeps it.” Numbers 23:19 NIRV

Does God Change His Mind?

What about places in Scripture where God said He would judge His people and then because the people or their leader prayed and repented for the people He did not bring about judgment as He said He would?

Examples:

Moses prays to hoping to prevent the destruction of His people Israel. Exodus 32:9-14.

King Hezekiah prays for healing and God adds another 15 years to his life. Isaiah 38:1-6.

Nineveh repents after Jonah warns them about their sin against God and His coming wrath. Jonah 3:4, 10

* God responds differently to different situations.

Does God experience emotion?

Some theologians have spoken of God as not having emotions. This know as the “impassibility” of God.

* God does experience emotion, but does not experience sinful emotion.

Examples that God does experience emotion:

God rejoices-Isaiah 62:5

God is grieved-Psalm 78:4

God's wrath-Exodus 32:10

God pities-Psalm 103:13

God loves-Isaiah 54:8

3. God is Eternal

* Time does not have an effect on God's being, perfections, purposes or promises.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8 NKJV

* God is Timeless in His Own Being

* God has always existed.

"Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God. Psalm 90:2

* God continues to exist.

God replied to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you." Exodus 3:14 NLT

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I Am! John 8:58 NLT

* God does not depend on time. Time, like all creation, depends on God.

* God's memory never fails and is as vivid as when it first happened.

"To you a thousand years are like a day that has just gone by. They are like a few hours of the night." Psalm 90:4 NIRV

"Dear friends, here is one thing you must not forget. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day."

2 Peter 3:8 NIRV

"Remember what happened in the past. Think about what took place long ago. I am God. There is no other God. I am God. There is no one like me. Before something even happens, I announce how it will end. In fact, from times long ago I announced what was still to come. I say, 'My plan will succeed. I will do anything I want to do.'"

Isaiah 46-9-10 NIRV

* God stands above time and is able to see it all as present in His consciousness.

Examples in Scripture:

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem, those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.” Galatians 4:4-5 NKJV

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:30-31 NKJV

* God Sees Events in Time and Acts in Time

* God predicts His actions in one time and then carries them out in another time.

4. God is Omnipresent

* God is Present Everywhere

* Just as God is unlimited in respect to time, so is God unlimited with respect to space.

“Am I a God near at hand,” says the Lord, “And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the Lord; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord. Jeremiah 23:23-24 NKJV

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.” Psalm 139:7-10 NKJV

b. God cannot be contained.

“But who can really build him a worthy home? Not even the highest heavens can contain him! So who am I (Solomon) to consider building a Temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices to him?” 2 Chronicles 2:6 NLT

* God Can Be Present to Punish, to Sustain, or to Bless

* God is present in different ways and in different places.

If God is good then how can He exist in hell?

* Sometimes God is present to punish.

Then I saw a vision of the Lord standing beside the altar. He said, “Strike the tops of the Temple columns, so that the foundation will shake. Bring down the roof on the heads of the people below. I will kill with the sword those who survive. No one will escape!

“Even if they dig down to the place of the dead, I will reach down and pull them up. Even if they climb up into the heavens, I will bring them down. Even if they hide at the very top of Mount Carmel, I will search them out and capture them. Even if they hide at the bottom of the ocean, I will send the sea serpent after them to bite them.

Even if their enemies drive them into exile, I will command the sword to kill

them there. I am determined to bring disaster upon them and not to help them.”
Amos 9:1-4 NLT

* God is present to sustain.

“He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.” ***Colossians 1:17***
NLT

* God is present to bless.

“You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.” ***Psalms 16:11 NLT***

5. God is Unity

* God Himself is unity, a unified and completely integrated whole being who is infinitely perfect in all of His attributes.

Communicable Attributes of God ~ How Is God Like Us in His Being?

a. Attributes Describing God’s Being

1. **God’s Spirituality** means that He exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our senses and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.

“For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” ***John 4:24 NLT***

2. **God’s Invisibility** means that God’s total essence, all of His Spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows Himself to us through visible created things.

* “Theophany” ~ An appearance of God in Scripture.

* The greatest manifestation of God was found in the person of Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?” ***John 14:9 NLT***

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” ***John 1:18 NIV***

“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” ***1 Corinthians 13:12 NIV***

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” ***1 John 3:2 NIV***

b. God's Mental Attributes

3. **Knowledge (Omniscience) of God** means He is all-knowing.

* God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible.

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 NKJV

* God is fully aware of everything.

4. **God's Wisdom** means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.

* God's decisions about what He will do are always wise decisions.

“All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.” Romans 16:27 NLT

“For God is so wise and so mighty. Who has ever challenged him successfully?” Job 9:4 NLT

* God's wisdom is seen specifically in creation.

“O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures.” Psalm 104:24 NLT

* God's wisdom is seen in His great plan of redemption.

“But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God....God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.” 1 Corinthians 1:24,30 NLT

“Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!” Romans 11:33 NLT

* God's wisdom is shown in individual lives.

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” Romans 8:28 NLT

“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5 NLT

5. God is Truthful and Faithful. This means that He is the true God, and that all His knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.

“But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.” Jeremiah 10:10-11 NKJV

“And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.” John 17:3 NLT

* All that God knows and thinks is true and is a correct understanding of the nature of reality.

“Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.” Psalms 36:5 NKJV

* God’s truthfulness is communicable in that we can in part imitate it by striving to have true knowledge about God and about His world.

c. God’s Moral Attributes

6. God’s Goodness means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.

“No one is good except God.” Luke 18:19b NIRV

“Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good. His faithful love continues forever.” Psalms 106:1 NIRV

* All God does is worthy of approval.

“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” Genesis 1:31a NKJV

* God is the source of all good in the world.

“The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.” Psalms 145:9 NLT

* God does only good to His children.

“For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.” Psalms 84:11 NLT

7. God’s Love means that He eternally gives of Himself to others.

“Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!” John 17:24 NLT

“The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands.” John 3:35 NLT

* God’s love is reciprocal.

“This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” 1 John 4:10 NLT

8. God’s Mercy, Grace, Patience can be seen separately or can be viewed as specific aspects of His goodness.

* God’s mercy means God’s goodness toward those who are in misery and distress.

* God’s grace means God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.

* God’s patience means God’s goodness toward those who sin over a period of time.

“As he passed in front of Moses, he called out. He said, “I am the Lord, the Lord. I am a God who is tender and kind. I am gracious. I am slow to get angry. I am faithful and full of love.” Exodus 34:6 NIRV

* God’s goodness (mercy, grace and patience) is communicable because we have the capability of showing them to others.

9. God’s Holiness means that He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking His own honor.

* God Himself is the Most Holy One.

“They were calling out to one another. They were saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord who rules over all. The whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3 NIV

* God’s holiness provides the pattern for His people to imitate.

“It is written, “Be holy, because I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:16 (Leviticus 11:45-46)

10. God is Peace (Order) means that in God’s being and in His actions He is separate from all confusion and disorder.

“God is not a God of disorder. He is a God of peace.” 1 Corinthians 14:33a NIV

* God’s Peace is communicable because He gives us His peace as one of the gifts in the fruit of His Spirit when we give our lives over to Him.

“ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:23 NIV

11. God is Righteous and Just means that God always acts in accordance with what is

right and is Himself the final standard of what is right.

In English, the terms **“Righteousness”** and **“Justice”** are two different words.

However, in the Hebrew and Greek there is only one word group and speak of one word group.

Old Testament Hebrew for **“Righteousness and Justice”** is **“tsedek”** and the New Testament Greek for **“Righteousness and Justice”** is **“diakos.”**

***“He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just.
A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.” Deuteronomy 32:4 NIV***

* It is necessary that He punish sin.

When God does not punish sin, it seems to indicate that He is unrighteous, unless some other means of punishing sin can be seen.

This is why God sent Jesus as a sacrifice to bear the punishment of our sin.

* God sending His Son Jesus as a sacrifice for our sin was to show His righteousness.

“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:25-26 NIV

* Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins, is the final standard of righteousness.

12. God is Jealous means that God continually seeks to protect His honor.

“You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.” Exodus 20:5 NIV

“For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.” Isaiah 48:11 NIV

13. God’s Wrath means that He intensely hates all sin.

* We should feel no fear of God’s wrath as Christians, for though we were worthy of His wrath, we, through Jesus, are have been delivered from it.

“For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” Romans 5:10 NIV

“The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unending love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. Psalm

103:8-9 NIV

- * The delay of the execution of God's wrath upon evil is the for the purpose of leading people to repentance.

d. Attributes of God's Purpose

14. God's Will is His ultimate reason for everything that happens.

"Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan." Ephesians 1:11 NLT

- * All things were created by God's Will.

"You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased." Revelation 4:11 NLT

- * All events connected with the death of Christ were according to God's Will.

"In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will." Acts 4:27-28 NLT

- * Sometimes it is God's will that Christians suffer.

"Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!" 1Peter 3:17 NLT

- * All events in our lives are subject to God's Will.

"Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." James 4:13-15 NLT

a. Distinctions in Aspects of God's Will

1a. Necessary Will and Free Will.

- * God's necessary will includes everything that He must will according to His own nature.

God replied to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." Exodus 3:14a NLT

- * God's free will includes all things that God decided to will but had no necessity to will according to His nature.

“Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.” Isaiah 43:7 NLT

2a. Secret Will and Revealed Will

- * God’s revealed will is God’s declared will concerning what we should do or what God commands us to do.
- * God’s secret will usually includes his hidden decrees by which He governs the universe and determines everything that will happen.

15. God’s Freedom is that attribute of God whereby He does everything He pleases.

- * God is not constrained by anything external to Himself and He is free to do whatever He wants to do.

“Our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes.” Psalm 115:3 NLT

16. God’s Omnipotence” (All-Powerful, Sovereignty) means that God is able to do ALL His holy will.

“Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, invincible in battle.” Psalm 24:8 NLT

“I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?” Jeremiah 32:27 NLT

“Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones.” Matthew 3:9 NLT

There are somethings that God cannot do:

- * God cannot will or do anything that would be inconsistent with His character.
- * God is able to do all His Holy Will.

“So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.” Hebrews 6:18 NLT

“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” James 1:13 NKJV

- * God has made us creatures with a will.

e. Summary Attributes

Summary attributes are those that don’t necessarily fit into any other categories and apply to all

the attributes or describe some aspect them.

God's Perfection means that God completely possesses all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable to Him.

17. God is Perfect

"So be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48 NIRV

18. God is Blessed

"God will bring this about in His own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." 1 Timothy 6:15 HCS

* God is perfectly happy and is full of joy in Himself.

"Every good action and every perfect gift is from God. These good gifts come down from the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, who does not change like their shifting shadows." James 1:17 NCV

* We imitate God's blessedness when we find delight and happiness in all that is pleasing to God.

19. **God's Beauty** is that attribute of God whereby He is the sum of all desirable qualities.

"I'm asking God for one thing, only one thing: To live with him in his house my whole life long. I'll contemplate his beauty; I'll study at his feet." Psalms 27:4 The Message Bible

"Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth." Psalms 73:25 NLT

* We reflect God's beauty in our lives when we exhibit conduct that is pleasing to Him.

...."that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27)

It is a good thing to be in Christian fellowship in which His character is manifested, because when we delight in the godliness of God's people, we are ultimately delighting in God Himself.

20. **God's Glory** is the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of Himself.

In one sense of the word "glory" it simply means "honor" or "excellent reputation."

"Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." Isaiah 43:7 NKJV

In this sense, God's glory means the actual bright light that surrounds His presence.

This “attribute” is really not an attribute of God in the sense that the others were. Here we are speaking not of God’s own character but of the created light or brilliance that surrounds God as He manifests Himself in creation.

Nevertheless, God’s glory is something that belongs to Him alone and is the appropriate outward expression of His own excellence.

Scripture often speaks of this type of glory:

“I will praise the Lord. Lord my God, you are very great. You are dressed in glory and majesty. You wrap yourself in light as if it were a robe. You spread the heavens out like a tent.” Psalm 104:1-2 NIRV

“An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified.” Luke 2:9 NIRV

“There in front of them his appearance was changed. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became as white as the light.” Matthew 17:2 NIRV

* This glory of God is the visible manifestation of the excellence of God’s character.

* God has made us to reflect His glory.

*“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!”
Matthew 13:43 NLT*

III. God in Three Persons: The Trinity

* The definition of the Trinity is: God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is only one God.

* The word “Trinity” is never found in scripture, but is implied throughout both the Old Testament and New Testament.

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” Genesis 1:26 NIV

“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 alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:16-17 NIV

* God the Father was speaking.

* God the Son was being baptized.

* God the Holy Spirit was resting on the Son.

“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.” Matthew 28:19 NIV

We seen in this passage that Jesus is affirming that all three persons of the Trinity are distinct.

1. The Meaning of the Trinity

* Each person of the Trinity is distinct but each person of the Trinity is fully God.
God the Father is shown from the first verse of the Bible. “In the beginning God...”
(Genesis 1:1)

The Son came to earth as Jesus Christ and is fully God. “In Him the who fulness of the deity dwells bodily.” ***(Colossians 2:9)***

The Holy Spirit is also fully God. This is seen when Jesus gave the great commission. “Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.”
(Matthew 28:19)

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

* There is only One God, not three.”

* Nothing in creation is like God’s being.

* The Trinity is something we will never fully understand, for parts are beyond our comprehension.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”
Deuteronomy 29:29 NIV

2. The Distinct Roles of the Trinity

* All three members of the Trinity have different roles.

a. Creation

* God the Father spoke the earth into being. (Genesis 1:9-10)

* God the Son carried out the words of God the Father. (John 1:3)

* God the Holy Spirit sustained and manifested God’s presence in creation. (Genesis 1:2)

b. Redemption

* God the Father loves us and sent God the Son for our redemption. (John 3:16)

* God the Son took on the punishment of our sins for our redemption. (John3:16-17)

* God the Holy Spirit was sent by God the Father and God the Son to bring completion to the work the Father and Son had started. (John14:26 and John 16:7)

Examples of the Trinity Reflected in Life:

* In marriage ~ two distinct individuals come together and become one flesh.

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” Ephesians 5:31 NLT

* In the Church ~ many distinct individuals with different gifts make up “one body” known as the Church.

“The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12 NLT

* The unity and diversity that exists in the world is simply a reflection of the unity and diversity that exists within the Trinity.

IV. Christ ~ The cause and nature of the atonement.

1. **The Atonement** ~ the work Christ did in His life and death to accomplish our forgiveness.

a. **The Cause of Atonement** ~ Why did we need atonement?

* Scripture points to two causes of Atonement ~ Love and Justice of God.

““For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 NLT

“God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.” Romans 3:25 HCS

* “Propitiation” is a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath so that He that is favorably disposed to us.

* Jesus laid down His life as a perfect sacrifice for the punishment we deserved for our sin.

Both the love and justice of God were the ultimate cause for the atonement.

b. **The Necessity of Atonement**

It was not necessary for God to save people at all.

It is out of His great love for us that He made a way for us to made right with Him.

* There was no other way to redeem us than to do it through the death of His Son.

Atonement is necessary because it is a consequence of God's decision to save men from the punishment for sin.

*"He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."
Matthew 26:39 NLT*

This passage shows it was not possible for Jesus to avoid death on a cross.

If He was going to accomplish the work the Father sent Him to do, and if people were going to be redeemed, then it was necessary for Him to die on the cross.

"Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. 26 Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" Luke 24:26 NLT

Jesus fully understood that God's plan of redemption made it necessary for the Messiah to die for the sins of the people.

C. The Result of Atonement

Christ lived a perfect life and died a horrific sinner's death as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

"And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21 NLT

* Jesus overcame the separation we have from God because of our sins, by paying the penalty we owe.

* He freed us from sin's bondage.

Because of Christ's work on the cross, we are no longer slave to sin and we can have a relationship with God.

*"For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins."
Colossians 1:13-14 NLT*

V. The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit Empowers

a. He Gives Life

* The Holy Spirit gives life to all creatures.

“All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” Psalm 104:27-30 NIV

* The Holy Spirit not only gives life, He gives eternal life.

“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’” John 3:6-7 NIV

* The Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in the womb of Mary.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit... But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:18, 20 NIV

* The Holy Spirit will give new resurrection life to the believer’s mortal body.

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.” Romans 8:11 NIV

a. The Holy Spirit Gives Power for Service

Examples of power from the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament:

Joshua with leaderships skills (Numbers 27:18, Deut. 34:9)

Samson with physical strength. (Judges 13:25)

Saul with military strength against the enemies of Israel (1 Samuel 11:6)

David when he was anointed as King over Israel (1 Samuel 16:13)

God’s people Israel and enabled them to overcome their enemies. (Isaiah 63:11)

* The Old Testament predicted a time when the Holy Spirit would anoint a Servant-Messiah.

“The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.” Isaiah 11:2-3 NIV

Examples found in The New Testament

* He anointed and empowered Jesus at His baptism; through His temptation; entering into ministry; in His miracles; His moral purity.

“And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.” Mark 1:11 NLT

* The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 NLT

* The Holy Spirit empowers all followers of Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, “This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord; I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Hebrews 10:15-16 NLT

He empowers Christians for service by empowering them to overcome spiritual opposition.

“Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:7 NLT

2. The Holy Spirit Purifies

One of the primary activities of the Holy Spirit is to cleanse us from sin and “sanctify” (make us holy).

“Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:11 NLT

3. The Holy Spirit Reveals

He gave revelation to the Prophets and Apostles.

“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.” 2 Peter 1:20-21 NLT

He reveals evidence of God’s presence.

“Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or

tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.” Acts 2:2-3 NLT

4. The Holy Spirit Guides and Directs His People

He gives words of guidance to people.

“So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.” Galatians 5:16 NLT

5. The Holy Spirit brings God’s peace to situations in which He is active.

“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God’s holy people.” 1 Corinthians 14:33 NLT

6. The Holy Spirit gives us assurance.

“For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true. And you know of our concern for you from the way we lived when we were with you.” 1 Thessalonians 1:5 NLT

The Holy Spirit abides in us and we abide in Him. His presence gives us assurance.

“And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.” 1 John 4:13 NLT

7. The Holy Spirit Teaches and Illumines

“But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.” John 14:26 NLT

8. The Holy Spirit Unifies

“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.” Ephesians 4:3 NLT

9. The Holy Spirit gives evidence of the Presence and Blessing of God.

10. The Holy Spirit can be grieved.

He can cease to bring blessing in sinful situation.

“And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30 NLT

11. The Holy Spirit can be quenched.

We can delay response of the Holy Spirits by sin and attitudes.

“Do not stifle the Holy Spirit.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19 NLT

12. The Holy Spirit can be offended and will remove His presence in a life.

Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven. But the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

“So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven—except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.” Matthew 12:31-32 NLT

This statement was made by Jesus to the Pharisees who willfully and maliciously attributed to Satan the powerful work of the Holy Spirit that was evident in Jesus.

“I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences.” He told them this because they were saying, “He’s possessed by an evil spirit.” Mark 3:28-30 NLT

13. The Holy Spirit Fills Christians.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the immediate presence of God Himself.

We will feel what God feels ~ we will desire what God desires ~ we will do what God wants ~ we will speak by God’s power ~ we will pray and minister in God’s Strength ~ we will know with the knowledge that God Himself gives.

It is important that we depend on the Holy Spirit’s power.

“Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.” Romans 8:12-16 NLT

Discussion Questions

- 1.** Can we really know God? How much of God can we know?
- 2.** How do we define the character of God?
- 3.** What is the difference between “Incommunicable and Communicable Attributes of God”?
- 4.** What are some Incommunicable Attributes of God? What are some of the communicable attributes of God?
- 5.** How can God be three persons, yet one God?

6. Was it Necessary for Christ to die? Did Christ's entire earthly life earn us any saving benefits for us?

7. What are some of the distinctive activities of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Bible?