

START

This week we're talking about: **Three.**

Who God is. The different parts of God, and what exactly that means.

John 3:16 is the most famous Bible verse of all time. It says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

But the question for a lot of people is, who *actually* is God? I know there's this God—he's in the sky and he created the world. But there are a lot of religions who have a different kind of god.

Who is *our* God? And what does that mean?

We can go all the way back to the first book of the Bible in the Old Testament, our history book of the world.

Genesis 1:1-2 says, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."*

So, the very first thing that happens in the Bible is God created everything. If you've never read the books of Genesis, read it. It talks about the power and amazement of God and shows how he created everything.

Just recently, scientists discovered a Galaxy next door to us? They'd never seen it before. Galaxies are really, really big, but somehow astronomers missed this one. It's like, "Wow. We're always discovering these amazing things that God does."

This topic is hopefully going to be mind blowing for you. And expand your mind to understand some of the mystery of the God.

We're talking about **God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.** We're talking about God. But God is not an easy thing to comprehend. Probably the most complex thing to understand in all the Christian faith is—Who is God?

Because **God is 3 in 1, not roles but 3 individuals in 1.**

People try to explain who God is various different ways. Take me for example, I am a father, I am a son, and I am an uncle. I have three different roles. All of them are me, but that's not how

God works. God doesn't have different roles. God is three completely different individuals, all in one. For us, **God defies logic.**

We can't really explain God. How would you explain God to someone?

Over time, many people have attempted to explain who God is. They try to say things like **1+1+1 = 1**. That doesn't really work in the math sense, and it doesn't really work for explaining God. If that equation works for you, then I think we both know that you struggled with math. Other scholars have compared the three in one of God to the equation **1x1x1 = 1**. That actually works mathematically, but it's not necessarily how God works either.

There are some other imperfect examples that some Bible scholars would reject and say, "Well, theologically and doctrinally these aren't exactly right." But, I have found these explanations are sufficient for the majority of humans to comprehend a deep, difficult concept that is not bound by our logic. God is not bound in our time. He is outside of our time and our logic.

We live in a three-dimensional world. But if we lived in a nine-dimensional world, and we were only three-dimensional beings, our minds would explode. Nine dimensions would just be too crazy for us to process.

So, we are going to focus our some explanations we can understand. I like to think about it like this—the three parts of God are like **an egg**.

An egg has a yolk, that white part, and the shell. Together they make an egg. They're all necessary, but they each have distinct characteristics. They can exist separately. Scholars say this example doesn't really work because you wouldn't call all three the egg. Well, at my house, they're all the egg. If there's yolk, I don't say, "Clean up the yolk." I say, "Clean up the egg." And I'd never say, "Clean up that white stuff." It's just the egg.

"Who left the egg in the sink?" That's usually what my wife says when I've broken a hard-boiled egg in the sink, but I've forgotten to clean it up. It's egg, not shell. That's kind of how God works. And people have been using this description for a long time to explain how all three parts exist together and they're all still one. God is still three in one, and each part is separate and unique, but they still also are all God.

Some people use an **apple**.

It's the same concept. You have the skin, the core, and the seeds. It's three in one.

I'm going to use **ice cream**—Neapolitan ice cream. With Neapolitan, there are three different distinct flavors of ice cream, but they're all still one. They all exist together as one in the carton.

What's your favorite flavor in Neapolitan? _____

If I take out the individual flavors of ice creams, they each have their own distinct purposes, but they're still ice cream. Their nature doesn't change if you separate them, but their taste does. There are three distinct ice creams. But they can exist completely separate from one another. But when you put them together, they still make ice cream. To me that's a great way to explain God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And you can decide which one resembles the strawberry.

But ultimately, that's how it works.

When you talk to people about God and they say, "Can you explain to me how God works?" You can use an egg, an apple, or Neapolitan ice cream to explain the concept of God being three in one. When your children are saying, "I don't understand who God is. Tell me about God. How is Jesus God? How is God God? How is the Holy Spirit God?" Think about it in these ways.

These are not and never will be perfect examples. There are scholars who will disagree if these are the most theologically and doctrinally accurate representations of the nature of God. We don't logically need all of that to have a simple conversation about God being three persons.

What we do know is that in Colossians 2:9, it says, "*For in (Christ) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*"

Colossians says Jesus is fully divine, fully God. That's important for us to understand. Because for the ancient Jews, God was God. And then this guy Jesus comes into the world as a prophet and teacher and says, "Oh, wait. I'm God."

Now for them, that was mind blowing. It should be for us too, because Jesus was God in man form. He lived on the earth. He was born as a baby. He completely resided here as a human, all while he was still God.

That became an issue for the early church. Because they had to decipher how to process this revelations of Jesus and his deity. Then came along this guy named Tertullian in 160-220 AD. He looked at verses like Isaiah 45:5, which says, "*I am the Lord, and **there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me.***" In the Old Testament there is no other God apart from God alone.

None.

And then in 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul says, “*The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.*”

So the early church followers were like, “We’ve got to figure out what this means. What’s God been telling us this whole time?” And that’s where they came up with the **Trinitarian view**. What we call the Trinity.

Trinity just means—Three in One.

It’s important to know that even though we have **The Doctrine of the Trinity**, the word Trinity never actually appears in Scripture. Don’t ever go looking for it, because you’re not going to find it. No where in there does God say, “Here is the Doctrine of the Trinity.” He also doesn’t say that about many doctrines and dogmas that we have now. But we have the doctrine of the Trinity that explains a triune God.

The Triune God

In the name of God, we declare and confess before men that we believe in the only true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that these three are one—the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, and the Holy Ghost equal in essence or being with both; that this triune God created the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, visible as well as invisible, and furthermore sustains, governs, protects, and supports the same.”

To truly understand the trinity, we have to learn about the different persons/natures of God.

Do you struggle with understanding any of the three persons of God? The Father? The Son? The Holy Spirit? If so, which ones and why?

God the Father—that’s God. But also Jesus. He’s God too. So when I, as a pastor, say God, it means God (the Father), or Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. It also can just mean God the Father. And yes, that’s confusing. But that’s how it goes with our human logic and understanding.

In this chapter, when we're talking about God, we're going to restrict the reference to God the Father. God the Father has a very big role. God is the **creator**. He's the **reconciler** of humanity, of mankind.

That's not just all God the Father does, but that's the simple way I'm going to break it down for you today.

It's a bit more complex than that. But as we look at the nature of God we're going to see the distinct roles played out as distinct, autonomous persons.

John 6:27 says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

So Scripture, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, talks about God the Father. Jesus even refers to God as his Father. There's a great moment when Jesus is baptized and out of the sky—what we believe to be in the form of a dove—is the Spirit of God. And there's a voice that says, "This is my Son."

Learn more about Jesus's Baptism by reading, Matthew 3:13-17. Do you think it was an actual dove, or God's spirit that looked like a dove?

Now, that's awesome and powerful. If that happens at your baptism, it'll be mind blowing. But that is what happened when Jesus was baptized. We don't know if it was an actual dove or if it was the Spirit of God they saw. And even more exciting, this isn't the only time we see God's Spirit interacting in the world all throughout history. Some people incorrectly think, the Holy Spirit was first given to us when Jesus ascended, after he rose from the grave."

But, let's go back to Genesis 1.

In Genesis 1:1-2, we see the Spirit of God hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:1-2, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**"*

The Spirit also came at one of the most important moments in the history of the world: The Exodus. Read more about an event known as "The Passover" in Exodus 12-13. Verses 21-23 share about God's spirit passing through the land. *"21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. 23 When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians,*

he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down."

God's Spirit went down amongst the people. Whoever did not have the blood of the lamb on their front door, suffered the death of their firstborn.

Can you think of any other times in the scripture that shows the work of the Holy Spirit before Jesus' ascension into heaven?

We have Jesus in Colossians talk about his role. We have these Christophanies in the Old Testament, and we have God's Spirit appearing throughout time. Many early church fathers believe that Jesus appeared to Joshua as the commander of the Lord's army in Joshua 5:13-15 (ESV), *"13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" 14 And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped[c] and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" 15 And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."*

And some believe that Jesus was the fourth man who appeared in the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:24-25 (ESV), *"24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."*

Can you think of any other times Jesus might have appeared in Old Testament stories?

So, Tertullian was looking at all these things throughout the Bible, asking, "What is God trying to show us?" And that's how the doctrine of the Trinity came about.

Let's look at the person of **Jesus**. He is our **redeemer** and **savior**. He came into the world to provide a way for us to be redeemed. To be forgiven from sin, to be reclaimed by God, and to be saved from our transgressions.

That's Jesus. He loves you. He's your intercessor. He came to save you.

John 1:14 says, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

The Bible says the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word being referred is Jesus. He dwelt among us. One unique person of the three in one. I know it's really hard to think about how God can be three in one. I want to challenge you—you don't have to comprehend every imperceptible detail to know how God works. The apple, the egg, or Neapolitan ice cream might be your best way to not only recognize a triune God for yourself, but to also explain it to others.

The trinity works for God. God has worked that way for all of recorded history, and God will continue to work that way for all of eternity

I love the Book of Colossians. If you've never read the Bible before, I'm going to challenge you to read the Book of Colossians.

Will you accept the Colossians Challenge?

Will you read the book of Colossians in one week? YES NO

Colossians 1:15-17 says, *"(The Son) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."*

Jesus is God. God the Father is God. The Holy Spirit, still God. We can't understand all about how God loves us and pursues us unless we know the nature of God.

Since the beginning of time, God had planned for Jesus to come into the world for you, to reclaim it for you. And it's hard for our simple minds, because our concept of time does not fit God either. God is outside of our time.

Jesus was not only at creation, he helped with creation. Thanks to Genesis, we know the Holy Spirit helped with creation. And we know that God the Father was there.

The Old Testament refers to God as **EI**. Or **Elohim**. Elohim is the plural version of the word EI. There are times that Old Testament writers refer to God in plural. We'll talk about that more in a few paragraphs.

The **Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit, one of the three persons of God, has a unique role. He's the **sanctifier** and **advocate**. The Holy Spirit is here with us.

You can't see the Holy Spirit and you can't feel the Holy Spirit. One of the things that has bothered me as a pastor is when people say, "Yeah, I feel the Holy Spirit with us." If two or more Christians are together, the Holy Spirit is there. Matthew 18:20 (NIV), "*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*"

The Bible is clear about that how the Holy Spirit works. It's not like we have to say, "Oh, we better open the door to let the Holy Spirit in." It doesn't work that way. The Holy Spirit is with us when we're believers, because it resides in us.

Essentially, if I'm alone in my room having prayer time with God, the Holy Spirit is there with me. I don't have to wait on the Holy Spirit to show up. I don't have to call the Holy Spirit here. He's there. The unique person of God that is the Holy Spirit is with me because I have given my life to my God.

It doesn't work the same for people who haven't given their lives to God. The Holy Spirit is not living and active in their life in the same way, because they haven't given their life to Christ.

The Holy Spirit, when you're a believer, is your sanctifier and your advocate. It's the person of God that helps you understand and grow. When you're grieving, he helps comfort you. The Holy Spirit teaches you to acknowledge God, understand the truth of God, navigate the world around you, and also helps your mind process and comprehend Scriptures that you're studying.

The word Sanctify means to make us holy, to set us apart. It allows us to become more and more and more like God overtime. The Holy Spirit helps us. When you're feeling convicted right before you're about to sin, it's the Holy Spirit convicting you, to help you become more and more reclaimed and like God.

Have you ever felt convicted before? YES NO

What were you convicted/guilty about?

We see this in John 14:26, *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

The Holy Spirit plays a very important role for us today. Even though the Holy Spirit is invisible, it’s a powerful part of our connection with God. Especially as we talk about prayer. We’re going to talk about prayer in a few lessons. When we talk about prayer, it’s important for you to know the roles of God, because it’s important for you to know how prayer works. How do you have the power to pray? How does it work? Who do you pray to?

The trinity has an amazing amount of complexity. God is not just some simple concept. God is a very complex God.

But even though God is complex, God is love.

Do you feel that God loves you deeply? Why or why not?

It says in 1 John 4:8, *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”*

When we talk about the Trinity, we talk about the three parts of God, and we have to understand that the three in one is for you. So God can love you more fully. So God can love you and assist you in having a relationship with him. And that personal relationship is what allows you to spend an eternity with him.

All this complexity is **to explain one simple thing . . . God loves you.**

He does. He loves you. And however you try to get your mind around God, God loves you. God cares about you. God has cared about you since the beginning, since the moment he created this world, since he sent his Son Jesus to save you, and since he left the Holy Spirit for you—

God loves you.

So what does this mean for you?

You have to understand that **our mind blowing God loves you.**

One of the things I think people struggle with the most when they start their relationship with God is, they don't understand *who* God is. They don't really understand God loves them where they're at and is pursuing them. They don't truly understand how much God loves them.

Do you understand how much a triune God loves *you*? YES NO

1 John 4:16b says, "*God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*"

God is love. Christians are called to "Love God and Love People," because we have a God who loves us. And God asks us not only to love others but to love him back. That's powerful!

Your job as a very first believer is to love God back.

Know who God is, know that he loves you, and know that you're supposed to love him back. That's it. That's the **Start**.

All this other stuff: prayer, fellowship, reading your Bible - it's important and we're going to get into that in future weeks. But what's most important is that you know God loves you and you know that he wants you to love him back.

If you get that, you're well on your way to having your life transformed eternally. To be able to have a testimony that shares who you were, and how God was able to reclaim your life. His love and power has made you into something different. Something better. Something more amazing. Because God **can** do that.

I mentioned about El and Elohim in the Old Testament. Some Israelite scholars used the plural of God as a form of respect and admiration. There are others who say that God has been peppering the truths, revealed in the New Testament, through the way he lived and interacted with the world's people. God was foreshadowing the physical entry of Jesus and the ethereal coming of the Holy Spirit.

Then after Jesus comes, we have the Apostle Paul who writes his many letters. And we get a bigger, better picture of what God had been doing for 1,000 years or 2,000 years or more. And it's exciting. You can see that even from the beginning, God was three in one. He was three in one for you, and for me. And that's the **Start**.

If you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, if you haven't said to him, "I believe. I want to know you. I want to be loved by you. I want to understand more about who you are. And that you're pursuing me."

Don't let another day go by without a relationship with God. If you haven't committed your life to God, are you ready to now? YES NO N/A

Know that you can recognize in your heart that God is real, and then tell someone, "I believe in a God that's three in one because he loves me. And I want to love him back."