

Connexions Theological LEs

The Nature of God – Triune Nature

Context: Individual

Focus: Christ/Competencies

God's triune nature is best defined by the statement, "God is one infinite spirit who eternally manifests Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit." God is one, not several. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. God has been three yet one for eternity. The function of one member may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not indicate inferiority in essence. This unity is incomprehensible to man, yet it is still absolutely true and taught in Scripture.

Truth No. 1: There is one God. There is no other.

Read the following scriptures: Exodus 20:3-4; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29-30; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19

As you read, ask yourself the following questions:

- In God's progressive revelation of Himself, what was His primary purpose in emphasizing His uniqueness?
- How necessary is it to reject false gods?
- What are some of the implications of belief in the one true God?

Truth No. 2: The Father, and the Son, and the Spirit is each the One God.

Read the following scriptures: 1 Cor. 8:6; Malachi 2:10; Ps. 2:7 (w/ Heb. 1:5); Eph. 4:4-6; Isaiah 9:6-7 (w/ Luke 1:30-33); Phil. 2:5-6, 11; Heb. 1:3, 8; and Acts 5:3-4.

As you read, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why is it necessary to read the OT references to Jesus the Son with the corresponding NT scriptures?

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- Have I failed to appreciate the importance of the Holy Spirit to my walk as a servant of God because I've not understood His deity?

Truth No. 3: The Father, and the Son, and the Spirit is each a distinct personal entity.

Read the following scriptures: Matthew 28:19; Genesis 1:26; 11:5-9; Isaiah 6:8 and 1 Peter 1:1-2.

As you read, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is God speaking to in the passages from Genesis and Isaiah?
- In whose image was man created (Gen. 1:26)?
- What distinct roles within the Trinity do you see in 1 Peter? What event do they relate to?
- What difference do you see in the OT scriptures and the NT scriptures when they speak of the plurality within the Godhead?

Exercises:

Day 1 – To begin our study of God's triune nature, do the following today:

1. Describe in 100 words or less your understanding of God's triune nature before today and how it did or did not have an impact on your daily life.
2. Review the statement of the doctrine of the triune nature of God and its three foundational truths. Read and meditate on the scriptures for each truth.
3. Decide if you would like to complete the extra credit assignment detailed at the end of this project. You may work together with one or more fellow Cx participant(s) if you would like.

Day 2 – Let's begin to apply Truth No. 1, God is one.

1. Read the following passages in order: Exodus 20:3-5; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Jeremiah 2:11-13; John 4:13-14. Write down your insights.
2. Now carefully read Judges 10:6-18 making observations about the following questions:
 - a. What was the situation?

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- b. What was God's response?
 - c. What was the result for Israel?
 - d. How did Israel respond?
 - e. How do we know Israel truly repented?
3. Bring it closer to home. Answer the following:
- a. Think about our culture today. What are some of the prominent false gods that we're faced with?
 - b. Reflect on your own life. What false gods have you held onto? What oppression has it brought? Cry out to God for your freedom? As you desire, discuss any problem areas with your pastoral coach.

Day 3 – Today we'll move onto Truth No 2, each person is fully God. Because each person of the Trinity is fully God, the nature of God (including His unique attributes) applies equally to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1. Review your project from last week on the attributes of God. Find specific attributes that are clearly shown in scripture to be shared by all 3 persons.
2. In the appendix you will find Table 2 where we have added the first 3 attributes for you. Fill in this table with scripture references for each person; in addition to those given last week you will need Matt. 18:20, Heb. 9:14 and 1 John 5:6. Add one additional attribute of your choosing with references to each person.
3. Turn in Table 2 to your Cx mentor next week.
4. Read John 8:48-59 and 10:22-33. Why did the Jews seek to stone Jesus both times?

Day 4 – Examine Truth No. 3, God is three persons, in more detail today. To do so, complete the following:

1. Jesus instructed His disciples to baptize new believers “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). How did they carry out this clear instruction? Read Acts 2:38; 10:48; and 19:5. Was this in contradiction to what Jesus had commanded them? What do their actions teach us about the 3 persons of the Trinity?

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2. Yet, God the Father is not God the Son. God the Son is not God the Holy Spirit. They are distinct persons. Cite 3 examples from the life of Christ that clearly show the distinction of persons within the triune Godhead.
3. Read Psalm 45:6-7. Now read Hebrews 1:8-9. The author of Hebrews applies Psalm 45:6-7 to whom? Knowing this, what else do you see in Psalm 45? Was it apparent without the reference in Hebrews? Now read John 15:26-27. Compare and contrast the clear revelation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in John 15 with the reference to plurality within the Godhead found in Psalm 45.

Day 5 – Let's dig a little deeper into the truth that within the Trinity the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each have a distinct role and function.

1. Read the following: Genesis 1:2; 2:7; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 102:23-25; Colossians 1:12-16; and Hebrews. 9:14
2. Using Table 1 in the appendix as a guide, decide which specific work of God each scripture refers to and also which person of the Trinity it is attributed to. Fill in Table 1 and turn this in to your Cx mentor next week.
3. Read John 14-17. As you read the chapters again answer the following questions:
 - What specific roles do the Son and the Holy Spirit have in the revelation of God to man?
 - What role did the Father have in the coming of the Son & the Holy Spirit?
 - Who obeys whom within the Trinity? Who glorifies whom?
 - Though equally God, what do the Son and the Holy Spirit understand about their role in the Trinity?
 - Is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit able to be shared with followers of Christ? How do we participate in this fellowship?

Day 6 – Today we will compare the triune God with the view of God found in Islam, which is strictly monotheistic.

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1. Read the first 25 pages of *In Him Was Life* by Malcolm Webber. What was God doing in eternity (John 1:1)? What are the implications of the nature of God due to the trinity?

2. Here are two verses from the Koran that express their view:

And when Allah will say: O Isa son of Marium! did you say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah he will say: Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind, surely Thou art the great Knower of the unseen things. (Surah 5:116)

Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (person) of the three; and there is no god but the one God, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve. (Surah 5:73)

Note: “Isa” here is a reference to Jesus and “Marium” to Mary. (Because of the predominance of Catholic teaching at the time this was written, Mary is assumed here to be the third member of the Christian trinity.)

3. In one or two paragraphs contrast the nature of God as fellowship against the implications of strict monotheism (such as Islam)?

Day 7 – Before we wrap up our project we need to look at a common misperception about the triune nature of God. This misperception states that God is not three distinct persons in one but only one person who appears to creation in different forms or “modes” at different times (e.g. God revealed Himself as the Father in OT, the Son in the Gospels, and the Spirit in the ongoing life of the church). Today, do the following:

1. From the reading done so far, find instances where each of the 3 persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are mentioned in both the OT and NT. Add these scriptures in the appropriate boxes of Table 3 which is found in the appendix. Turn Table 3 in to your Cx mentor next week.
2. Read the account of Jesus’ baptism in Matthew and Luke (Matt. 3:16-17; Lk. 3:21-22).
3. What conclusions can be made about the idea of God as one person appearing in different forms at different times?

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Team Assignment:

Develop a concise, 1 1/2 hour teaching on the triune nature of God using the 4 As. Each team will present their teaching plan to Brian. The strengths of each plan will be combined to create a presentation for a Wednesday night workshop later in the year.

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APPENDIX

| Work of God | Role of God the Father | Role of God the Son | Role of God the Holy Spirit |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Creation of World | | | |
| Creation of man | | | |
| Vicarious Death of Christ | | | |

Table 1 – Distinction of Role and Function within the Trinity

| Attribute of God | God the Father | God the Son | God the Holy Spirit |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Eternal | | | |
| Omnipresent | | | |
| Truth | | | |
| | | | |

Table 2 – Attributes of God Shared by 3 Persons

| | Old Testament References | New Testament References |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| God the Father | | |
| God the Son | | |
| God the Holy Spirit | | |

Table 3 – Old and New Testament Mention of 3 Persons