

Who is the Christian God?

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[0 : 00] Who are you? If you were going to explain who you are in a few short sentences, how would you describe yourself?

Think about it for a moment. Talk to the person next to you. What kind of words would you use? I'm going to ask a couple of you in a moment. Five seconds.

Okay, does anybody feel like being asked, who are you? Anybody have an idea? Are you all very confused? We've got name tags now.

That should help. Okay, are you there? Jeff, who are you? How would you describe yourself, brother? I'm a very experienced professional.

An experienced professional? He even used the word very. Okay, interesting. Nolene? I was going to say, there's many different hats that we wear at different stages of our life, so it's very hard to put it into a very short context.

[1 : 24] Okay. But what words would you use? Well, I actually said before, I generally say I'm the mother of James and Olivia. Okay, okay.

That's very helpful. Mother. Mother. Okay. I'm going to choose one person from over there and one person from over here. Anybody? There's always my favorite people to pick on.

Tanya. Okay. Friends with God through my Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderful. One other person over here. Okay. I'll pick on you.

That's fine. I'll pick on Nick then. Okay, Nick. Yeah, come on. You know, I love you, so it's okay. How would you describe yourself, brother? I'm James' friend. James' friend. And what a delight that is.

Now, there's a common theme that has been running through all of these, and it's not me. The way we describe ourselves is often in relationship to others.

[2 : 21] Jeff talked about himself in relation to his work, to his profession with others. Tanya said she's about her relationship with God. Nolene said relationship to her children.

Nick said his relation to me, and what a delight that is. We use descriptors like this because this is who we are in relation to other people.

If I really want to get to know you, I need to do more than just spend time with you. I need to see you with other people, with your family and with your friends, to see the tribe of people who have made you.

Then I can understand who you are. Yesterday, it was my eldest child's birthday party, and on the way home from the birthday party, we were bringing back a number of kids.

And one of the kids, they were requesting songs in the car. And one of the kids showed me a lot about his father and mother. Because he was requesting songs.

[3 : 22] He requested a song by Michael Jackson, beat it. And a song by, it's the song Eye of the Tiger. And it revealed a lot about who his parents are.

They like old music. But I won't pick on who that child was. I'll just look at them a little bit. Who is the Christian God? How would you describe who the Christian God is?

Again, we'd probably use terms to describe him in relationships. He's loving. He's merciful. Would we say that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Is God as a Trinitarian God close to the front of our mind? Now, the Bible doesn't use the word Trinity. And it's easy to gloss over this concept.

That God is three in one. That he is one God with three persons. But this math doesn't add up. And is it possible that we don't really think of God as Trinity that much?

[4 : 33] I know, speaking with people of other faiths, like Muslims and Jews, that they don't understand this at all. They say, well, you just believe that you have three gods. The Apostles'

Creed that we say claims that we believe in a God who is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit.

But how important is this really? Is it just a piece of boring theology that's only relevant to look into when there's a heat wave outside or 400 mil of rain in one day?

Is this just an obscure piece of theology? This is what we are investigating today. Who our God is and what it means that he is a Trinity.

We're going to touch on God being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We're not going to dive too deeply into each of these. We're going to be doing that throughout the rest of this series. But we're going to look at God as a Trinity today.

And we're going to dip into a number of different parts of the Bible. So if you'd like to be flicking with me, you can be doing that. You can be following the slides on the screen. But as we look at God as a Trinity, let me pray for us.

[5 : 48] Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you so much that we are not stuck trying to figure out who you are, but that you have revealed yourself to us. Father, we get confused very easily and can struggle to understand what it means that you are three persons in one God.

Please help us to understand this this morning, Lord. Amen. So the Bible describes God as three in one. A Trinity in unity.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As I mentioned, we're going to have a number of Bible verses on the screen. I'm not going to be going into any depth into these, but because we'll be seeing these throughout the series.

God, firstly, God the Father, He's presented in the Old and New Testament as God the Father, the first person of the Trinity. In the book of Isaiah, it describes God as the Father who makes us all.

And we saw that with Jacob last week, as we saw that God is an almighty creator. In the book of John, one of the biographies of Jesus, he defines God in terms of relationship.

[7 : 00] In John 1.1, he begins by describing God. There it is. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. So we get this picture of Jesus. He is unique to God, but he is with God, and he's the Word of God.

He has been with God for eternity, but is somehow unique to him, but also united. In John 14, Jesus presents all three aspects of the Trinity in relationship to each other.

Jesus asks, he says, I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you, and to be with you forever.

The Spirit of truth. So Jesus presents this picture, that there is a Father who is eternal. That there is Jesus who is eternal, and there is the Holy Spirit, and he will be with you forever.

[8 : 03] Jesus, before he dies on the cross, says that he will ask God to send us this counselor, this Holy Spirit, to remain with us. Jesus makes a claim about himself, that he is divine.

He says that he is God. And again, in John chapter 8, he's defending himself against a bunch, against a group of Jews. And Jesus says, very truly, before Abraham was, I am.

At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple. Jesus makes this claim about who he is.

He says that he has existed before Abraham, their forefather. And he uses this name of God, I am. He's claiming that he is God.

And the Jews who were there, they understood this massive claim of Jesus, that he was God. They thought he was blaspheming, and so they pick up stones to try and kill him on the spot. Paul describes Jesus in Colossians as having the fullness of deity dwell in him.

[9 : 13] And so Jesus, in the Bible, is depicted as fully man. 100% man. But also fully God. 100% God. Again, this math doesn't add up.

How can you be more than 100% of anything? I wonder if... See, the Bible doesn't see a contradiction here. It just says that Jesus is man, and he is God.

I wonder if it's almost like how I can be 100% a father, and also 100% a friend of Nick's. If I can just pick on him again. At no point is there a contradiction.

Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, came to earth and took on humanity. The Father is God. Jesus, the Son, is God.

Both are unique and different, but both are God. The Holy Spirit is also described as God. A God who is personal.

[10:12] Ephesians chapter 4 warns us about our sin because, verse 30, it grieves the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit is not just an impersonal force. This is not Star Wars that we're talking about here with the force. The Holy Spirit, just like the Father, just like the Son, is unique and personal.

And he's described, again, as God. In the book of Acts, Peter is rebuking a married couple and Ananias and Sapphira, and he's calling them to account for their sin.

Because they had given an amount of money to the church, but they lied about how much they'd given. They'd said they'd sold this property and given everything, but they'd kept some back from themselves.

There's nothing wrong with that, but the problem was that they'd lied about it. And so, in Acts, Peter said, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?

[11:16] Again, personal. They've lied to someone. And they've kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land. Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?

What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to a human being, but to God. They've described as lying to the Holy Spirit and in the same breath as lying to God.

And so we get this picture from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is unique and different to Jesus, the Son, and God, the Father. But we also see how all three work together.

Because God is in relationship and this trinity and unity works together. From Hebrews chapter 9, it's a wonderful picture of salvation. How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.

This is a beautiful picture of the trinity working together to bring out our salvation. Jesus' blood, through the work of the Spirit, cleanses our sinfulness and our evil conscience, so that we can be right before God.

[12:39] Father, Son, Holy Spirit. They are God. There are not three gods, but there is one God. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

The Father sends the Son. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to work at our salvation. There is one God, but there is also three persons.

In Matthew 28, just before Jesus goes to be with God after his resurrection, he tells his disciples what they are doing. One of the most famous parts of the Bible, Jesus tells them, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This is not the three names, in the name of the Father, and the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. This is the singular name of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Plural persons, three persons, but one God. And this Trinitarian work of God brings us into relationship with this Trinity itself.

[13:54] Galatians 4. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. The Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but God's child.

And since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. The Trinitarian work of our God makes us, like Jesus, a son of God.

So that we can cry out to God as his children. This is who the Christian God is. He is a Trinitarian God. He is a Trinity in unity.

Three persons in one. So we can agree with the Jews who, from Deuteronomy 6, have this phrase called the Shema, where they say, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

We can agree with that, because our faith is the same. That there is one God. He is also three persons. Now, there are a number of illustrations to try and understand how the Holy Spirit works together.

[15:02] Has anybody heard of the ice illustration of God? The way it goes is, the Trinity is like ice, water, and vapor.

You know how there's kind of three and kind of one. Well, you know, you have ice, and then it melts, and you've got water. And then when it gets hot, you've got vapor. Now, this is, it's not that helpful an illustration of the Trinity.

Because ice changes and becomes water. Water changes and becomes vapor. But God doesn't change. God is not a transformer, God.

God does not change from being the Father, and then when He comes to earth, He becomes the Son, and then He changes again to become the Holy Spirit. God doesn't change. That illustration, unfortunately, isn't that helpful.

There's also the illustration of the egg. Now, I love a good egg. The egg illustration is this picture of you've got the shell, and then you've got the egg white, and then you've got the best bit, the egg yolk.

[16:09] Amen? No? Everybody else is more of an egg white person? Okay. Again, this picture is saying that, you know, the egg shell is God, and the white is Jesus, and the yolk is the Holy Spirit.

Again, that's saying that each of God is just part of God. But Jesus is God. And the Father is God. And the Holy Spirit is God. They're not part of God. Jesus is not one third of God. He is God.

Others, again, don't want to hold up Jesus as God.

They want to say that Jesus is just the firstborn of all creation, that He was made by God. But again, this is not the picture the Bible presents. The Bible presents a picture of Jesus as having existed forever.

John 1.1. He was with God in the beginning. The way forward is not to try and understand who God is on human terms.

[17:10] You know, we'll often try and figure out who God is with these illustrations like ice, or with an egg. That's not going to work.

We actually need to understand God as He has presented Himself in the Bible. There is one called the Father who directs and creates. There is the second person of the Trinity who is sent to take on humanity, to bring about salvation.

There is the third person of the Trinity who is sent by the Father and the Son to dwell in us. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. A Trinity in unity.

Different persons but one God. But why does all of this matter? Is it just a theological splitting of hairs? What value is there for us in knowing how God is made up?

Alyssa, my wife, and I have been married for 13 years. We celebrated our anniversary on Monday. Thank you. You don't need to clap. It's okay. And when I first met Alyssa 18 years ago, I got to know her.

[18:20] But if I only ever spent time with Alyssa, I would only get to know a part of who she is. Getting to see her family and her friends and how she interacts with them helps me to know her better.

So as I got to meet her parents, ah, that's why you have a strange sense of humor. Your dad loves Monty Python, English comedians.

Oh, that's why you sing all the time. Because your mom and dad love musicals. And your mom sings all the time. And now I wonder why my daughter sings all the time.

As I've seen my wife in relationships with other people, I've gotten to know her, to understand who she is, and to love her more.

This doctrine of the Trinity, it's a beautiful doctrine. As we get to know who God is in relationship with himself, we get to know him and to understand him and love God more.

[19:24] Having a robust theology of the Trinity, it's not just a side dish to the main course of the rest of the Apostles' Creed about how Jesus died for us.

The theology of the Trinity, it's a delight that nourishes us. The Trinity is like the egg in a small way in that in a recipe, it binds everything together to make something wonderful.

A good theology of the Trinity, it's like the sauce in a stir fry, which makes the rice and the chicken and all the veg just come together and taste delicious. Now, I'm kind of feeling a little bit hungry as we wait for lunch.

Don't get too distracted about that. But it is truly wonderful for us that we have a triune God. And we're going to see four short courses to understand the delight of this Trinity.

The first of these is God's creation of this world. The creation of this universe has a different meaning, a special meaning, because God is a Trinity.

[20:29] In many other religions, they're God's make out of a need. Other religions, God has a need, so he makes people so that they can love God, so that this God can get enough worship, so that this God can be happy.

But the picture in the Bible of our God is he's a Trinitarian God. He doesn't need anything. He is in perfect relationship, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

They have been in perfect relationship for eternity, loving each other. Our Trinitarian God didn't need to make this world. But God chose to out of the overflow of love.

The Bible shows that the Trinity is a God who is in perfect relationship with himself. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, simultaneously in relationship for eternity. The closest thing I see to that kind of peace is when my kids stop bickering and fighting for five minutes.

If you've got kids, have you ever experienced that peace that comes on you where all of a sudden you realize, the house is quiet. I'm sitting in this peace. This is delightful.

[21 : 45] And then as soon as you notice, it's gone. But this is the kind of relationship that God has had for eternity. That experience of peace that I have, that's not true peace.

That's not true love in relationship. That's just an absence of problems for a very short period of time. We get invited into this wonderful relationship of God's.

As we saw in Galatians 4, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. The Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So we are no longer a slave but God's child.

And since we are his child, we have been made God's heir. The Trinity works to bring us into his perfect, loving and eternal relationship.

In many movies, there is a particular scene or a particular trope, usually around Christmas, where someone is standing out in the cold and the snow, and they're looking into this bright and happy picture of a family.

[22 : 48] If you've seen the movie A Christmas Carol with Scrooge, Wendy, you want to put this photo up? Or if you've seen The Mother's One with Scrooge McDuck, this is a movie about someone who is, you know, usually very wealthy, but they don't have love and family.

And they're pictured on the outside in the cold and the snow, looking into something that is great. You know, the colors on the outside are gray and white, but in the inside it's bright.

There is a family who is loving each other. This is a picture of what happens with God. God has all that we are longing for.

He has a perfect family, a perfect relationship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who's been in relationship for eternity. And we are on the outside looking in, longing.

But we don't need to be on the outside. God invites us into his love, expressed in relationship with God and with one another. When we have a Trinitarian theology, it gives us so much more meaning to what Jesus did in his incarnation when he became a man.

[24 : 07] The Trinity has been in perfect relationship for eternity. And then the Father sends the Son to earth to become part of creation, adding to his divinity humanity.

Not separating from the Trinity, but joining humanity to redeem us. God himself, the second person of the Trinity, shows his love that he would leave heaven to become a person.

The Trinity, the eternal, became temporary and died. He who created time became bound by it. The one who created physical and fleshly bodies took on one that could be destroyed.

All because this God wanted to reveal God. So that we could be brought into his relationship. The Trinity is so important for us that Jesus spends a significant amount of time talking about it in his last conversation with his disciples.

In John 14, that we've seen a little bit of today, these are Jesus' last words. John chapter 14 to 17. He is just about to go and be crucified. And he is talking with his disciples.

[25 : 24] And, you know, our last words often reveal what is really important to us. And Jesus's are the same. From verse 16. I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and to be with you forever.

The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. Jesus promises that he will send another. An advocate. A counselor. Someone who will act on our behalf. And this advocate, the Holy Spirit, from verse 26, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach us all things.

And will remind us of everything he has said. The Holy Spirit comes to remind us and teach us about Jesus. The Holy Spirit works as part of the Trinity to reveal Jesus.

And Jesus came to reveal the Father. This would have been a wonderful comfort for the disciples who are about to lose their friend and Lord.

[26 : 39] And this is a comfort for us too. So much so that Jesus says, it is actually for our good that Jesus went away. Many of us would think, just give me Jesus now.

If I could only see him. But Jesus says, it is better for us. It is for our good that he went so we could have the Spirit. Lastly, the Trinity teaches us about who we are as people.

In the very beginning, God made us in his image. And saw that it was not good for us to be alone. We are people who are made to be with people.

It doesn't matter whether you're an introvert or an extrovert. We are made to be with people. Back when I was in school, many years ago, we'd give someone that we didn't like the silent treatment. Anybody else heard this phrase, the silent treatment? I don't know what those kids these days are using. I could ask some that are over here. I don't know if they still use the silent treatment.

[27 : 41] But it really hurt when you're on the other end of getting the silent treatment. Mark, do kids still do this at school? Yes. Okay. Shame. It hurts to be ignored and cut off from a relationship with other people.

I see this if I'm using Facebook. When you send a message on Facebook, you can see when other people have read the message. And sometimes you can see that they've read it.

And then you wait for a response. And you wait. And it's like, why aren't you on the other end of this relationship? Why aren't you talking to me? Why are you giving me the silent treatment?

It hurts. One of the worst things in prison is solitary confinement. Because it takes away part of our humanity.

God is in relationship with himself. And he has made us to be in relationship with other people. God, in his perfect Trinitarian love, invites us into his family.

[28 : 45] And as part of that, we are to love others in the family of Christ. A Christian who knows this should love and have different relationships.

And it's that, again, that picture of Christmas, the picture of Scrooge on the outside looking in. We were on the outside. But when we follow our Lord, we are brought in.

Your place as a Christian is secure in the most loving family. And this is something that is worth celebrating. I'm looking forward to lunch today. Because when we eat together, we share our lives. And we do what our Trinitarian God has designed us to do. To love and to share in fellowship with one another. The beauty of the Trinity, its perfect love and unity, is something that we can hold out to others.

When we stand on the inside of that picture of Christmas, warming ourselves by the fire, laughing, smiling, eating, celebrating, there are others on the outside, longing for what we have with God.

[29 : 59] Are you longing to be loved by God? Are you longing to be loved? It is found in this God and in his family. Are you longing and looking for connection?

It is found in this God and in his family. Do you feel isolated from your family across the world? You have a family here, found in the relationships made by our Trinitarian God.

So who is our God? We believe that God is a Trinity. A Father, a Son and a Holy Spirit. Perfectly loving from eternity to eternity.

And who are we? When we believe in this God, we are part of God's family before anything else. Before my family, before my ethnicity, before my profession.

It means that I am a Christian father. A Christian mother. We are a Christian brother or sister. A Christian Aussie of European descent.

[31 : 05] A Christian Chinese. A Christian Gannan or Korean. A Christian high schooler. A Christian professional. This Christian family is what unites us in the diverse world that we live in.

We are no longer outsiders longing to be on the inside. But we have been ushered into the heart of the family that has been for eternity. And will continue for eternity.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray.

Let me pray. Let me pray.