

45-Minute Small Group Bible Study

THE TRIUNE GOD

The Christian Faith, pages 4-6

Purpose: To know the one true God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and to see that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract puzzle but the identity of the God who creates, redeems, sanctifies, and brings us into his own life of love.

Main Truth: There is one true and living God, eternally existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons are distinct yet each fully God, equal in power, glory, and essence. This Triune God is love and acts in perfect unity to create us, redeem us in Christ, make us holy by the Spirit, and gather us into communion with himself.

1. Opening Prayer - 2 minutes

Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - you alone are God. Open our minds through your Word and lead us beyond our limited ideas about you. Help us receive with trust what you have revealed, rejoice in your saving work, and live as people baptized into your holy name. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion - 3 minutes

Begin with one or two questions:

1. When people hear the word “Trinity,” what questions or misunderstandings commonly arise?
2. Why might Christians be tempted either to divide the three persons too sharply or to blur them into one person?
3. What difference does it make that the God who saves us is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

3. Read the Doctrinal Statement - 2 minutes

Have one person read the doctrinal statement for “The Triune God” on page 4. Listen for four themes: who God is, how the three persons relate, what God is like, and what the Triune God intends to do for us.

4. There Is One True, Eternal, Holy God - 5 minutes

The chapter begins with the confession that there is only one true and living God. Before speaking about the three persons, Scripture insists on the unity, eternity, holiness, power, and unchangeableness of God.

Read: Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 6:4

God names himself to Moses as “I am who I am,” and Israel confesses, “The LORD is our God. The LORD is one.”

Discuss:

1. What do these passages tell us about God’s unique identity and self-existence?
2. Why must Christian teaching about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit never become belief in three gods?

Read: Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 147:5; Malachi 3:6; Revelation 15:4

These passages confess that God is eternal, unlimited in understanding, unchanging, and uniquely holy.

Discuss:

1. Which of these divine attributes most challenges the way we naturally imagine God?
2. How do these truths strengthen trust in God when our lives and circumstances are changing?

Read: 1 Timothy 6:13, 15-16

Paul praises the only ruler, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.

Discuss:

1. How does this passage protect us from reducing God to something we can master or fully comprehend?

Key Insight: The Trinity does not begin with three separate beings who somehow cooperate. Christian faith begins with the one eternal God, whose inner personal life he has revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

5. The One God Is Revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - 4 minutes

The doctrine of the Trinity arises from God’s own self-revelation. Scripture does not begin with a philosophical formula; it shows the Father, Son, and Spirit acting distinctly while sharing the one divine name.

Read: Matthew 3:16-17

At Jesus’ baptism the Son is in the water, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks from heaven.

Discuss:

1. What distinctions between the persons are impossible to miss in this scene?
2. At the same time, what single saving event are all three persons involved in?

Read: Matthew 28:19

Jesus commands Baptism into the one “name” of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Discuss:

1. Why is the singular word “name” important alongside the three persons named?
2. What does Baptism say about the identity of the God who claims us?

6. The Three Persons Are Fully God and One in Essence - 4 minutes

Read: John 5:23; 10:30

Jesus says that honoring the Son is inseparable from honoring the Father, and he declares, “I and the Father are one.”

Discuss:

1. Why can the Son not be treated as a lesser divine being or merely a messenger?
2. What would be lost in Christian faith if Jesus were not fully God?

Read: Ephesians 4:4-6

Paul speaks of one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father of all.

Discuss:

1. How does Paul hold together both distinction and unity?
2. Why is denying or ignoring one person ultimately a distortion of the one God?

Key Insight: The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. Yet each person possesses the one undivided divine essence. The church confesses this mystery because Scripture compels it, not because human reason could have invented it.

7. God Is Love: The Eternal Communion of the Three Persons - 4 minutes

The chapter moves from what God is in his attributes to who God is in his eternal personal life: “God is love.” God did not begin to love when he created the world. Love belongs eternally to his own life.

Read: 1 John 4:8-9, 13

John connects the confession “God is love” with the Father sending his only-begotten Son and giving us his Spirit.

Discuss:

1. How does the sending of the Son reveal rather than create God’s love?
2. What does the gift of the Spirit tell us about our participation in God’s love?

Read: John 3:34-35; 14:31

The Father loves the Son; the Son loves the Father and acts in that love.

Discuss:

1. How does the love between Father and Son help us understand that God is not lonely or needy?
2. What is different about receiving love from a God whose very life is self-giving love?

8. The Holy Spirit Comes from the Father Through the Son - 4 minutes

Read: Acts 2:33

Peter proclaims that the exalted Jesus received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him out.

Discuss:

1. How do Father, Son, and Spirit appear together in the gift of Pentecost?
2. Why is the Spirit never detached from the Father and the Son in Christian faith?

Read: 2 Corinthians 13:14

Paul blesses the church with the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Discuss:

1. What does this blessing suggest about how Christians actually experience the life of the Triune God?
2. Which words - grace, love, fellowship - especially help make the doctrine personal rather than abstract?

9. The Triune God Acts for Our Salvation - 4 minutes

The doctrinal statement says: “The Triune God alone created us, redeemed us, and makes us holy.” These works are not separate projects of three gods. The Father works through the Son in the Spirit, and the one God brings us from creation to redemption and holiness.

Read: Ephesians 1:17-18

Paul prays to the glorious Father for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that believers may know Christ and the hope and inheritance given in him.

Discuss:

1. How does Paul’s prayer itself have a Trinitarian shape?
2. What is the goal of this divine work - merely correct information, or knowing Christ and the hope God gives?

Key Insight: Trinitarian faith is inseparable from the Gospel. We know the Father through the Son, and we know and trust the Son by the Spirit. The doctrine tells us who the saving God actually is.

10. God’s Eternal Purpose Is Communion with Him - 4 minutes

Read: Ephesians 1:5; 2:16, 21; 3:11; 5:31-32

Across Ephesians, God adopts us, reconciles us in one body, builds us into a holy temple, fulfills his eternal purpose in Christ, and pictures Christ and the church as Bridegroom and bride.

Discuss:

1. What different images does Paul use for the people God gathers - family, body, temple, bride?
2. How does each image show that salvation is not merely individual forgiveness but incorporation into a people?
3. How does this fulfill the chapter's claim that God wants us to "see and share in God's glory"?

11. Bringing It Together - 2 minutes

The one God is eternal, holy, almighty, and unchanging. This one God is eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The persons are distinct but inseparable, equal in divine glory and essence. God is love in himself, and his saving work brings us into communion with him - adopted by the Father, united to the Son, and made the temple of the Holy Spirit.

12. Application Questions - 5 minutes

Choose two or three:

1. Which Scripture in this study most helps you confess both the oneness of God and the distinction of the three persons?
2. How does seeing God as an eternal communion of love change the way you think about the statement "God is love"?
3. How can Baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shape your daily identity and prayer?
4. Which image from Ephesians - family, body, temple, or bride - most helps you see God's purpose for the church?
5. How might the Trinity change the way you speak about salvation: from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit?

13. Closing Prayer - 2 minutes

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God forever: we praise you for revealing yourself to us. Father, thank you for choosing us in love and making us your children. Lord Jesus, thank you for coming from the Father to redeem us and unite us to yourself. Holy Spirit, thank you for giving faith, fellowship, and holiness. Keep us in the one true faith, gather us as your people, and lead us at last to share in your glory. Amen.