



God

Small Group Work Sheet
September 19, 2010

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

- If you were to ask someone on the street what God is like, what do you think they would say?
- As a group, name as many attributes of God as you can and explain what it means.

Part 2 - Review the sermon

- Pastor Kurt said there is *one* God. Behind the worship in other religions are demons, who are the object of that worship. Do you agree or disagree? When other religions talk about powerful spiritual experiences and miracles, how do you explain them? How does this change the way you look at other people, their right to their own religious beliefs and their eternal destiny?
- The Trinity is one God existing in three persons. It is impossible to understand how this can be true. What verses would you use to show someone the Trinity in Scripture. Write them down in your Bible.
- The Trinity, and the way we see the members of the Godhead relating to one another, is the source and definition of love. Pastor Kurt said that until we see how love is lived out in the Trinity, we cannot understand what love is or how to live it out. If this is true, what do we learn about love from watching the Trinity in action?
- Show one place in Scripture we see a "Trinity Party."
- Have you read *The Shack*? While it is a well written book, what did you learn that is dangerous about the theology behind the book?

Part 3 - Digg deeper ...*get the rest of the story.*

How does this study on the Trinity help in real life?

As we said earlier in this study. Theology is everything. Without a right understanding of God we will suffer in every way. I want you to have a right understanding of God so you can live the joy of a Trinitarian life.

- **Trinitarian life is connected to the Trinity.** As a Christian who repents of sin and trusts in Jesus, the division between me and God is removed through Jesus' death and resurrection. Where is the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life? In us! We are brought into a relationship with the Trinity. All of our life, worship, service, prayer and service is

by the Holy Spirit, through the Son and to the Father. If you are a Christian, everything about your life is Trinitarian.

- **Trinitarian life is loving.** Too many people have a screwed up understanding of love. They think it is a warm fuzzy feeling. It is not. Until we see love in the Trinity, we have no clue what it is. The Son loved the Father. He carried out the Father's will for our redemption by his own choice. He humbled himself to become a man. He died for our sin and he did this out of love for the father. Trinitarian love is honoring, serving and cherishing others, not using them.
- **Trinitarian life is community.** Before sin entered the world, one thing was not good. What was it? (All the guys should be able to answer this one!) It was not good for man to be alone. Loneliness is not what God intended. Relationship, community, friendship and connection is what God intends. God himself, in the Trinity, is a loving relational community, we have that desire for connection within us too. That is why it is not good to be alone.
- **Trinitarian life is transparent.** Did you know that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have no secrets? Nothing is hidden. They live in complete open, authentic, transparent community. God calls us to live the same way with one another. Doesn't that sound awesome!
- **Trinitarian life is humble.** Did you know there was never a day when Jesus was jealous of the glory of the Father? Did you know that there is never a day when the name of Jesus is worshipped and the Holy Spirit stands back in jealousy of his glory? The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all together humble and they live together for the well-being of the other.
- **Trinitarian life is submissive.** Jesus Christ, though equal to the Father, is submissive to the Father. He respects authority. If you are defiant, you're not Trinitarian, you're Satanic. Satan is the source of defiance.
- **Trinitarian life is happy.** No one is happier than God. Do you know that within the Father, son and Spirit there is nothing but unprecedented, unparalleled joy? Do you know why? There is no sin, no jealousy, no conflict. There's no disrespect, no lying, no hiding. There is perfect communication, perfect affection, perfect connection. That is God in himself, the happiest person who has ever existed.

How do people mess up the Trinity?

There are three ways to mess up your understanding of the Trinity.

- **Polytheism or Tritheism** - We learned in the sermon there is one God that exists eternally in three persons. Some people try to understand this by thinking there is more than one God. This would include Mormonism, which says that there are multiple gods and that Jesus was a man who became God, not God who became a man. It's a complete inversion. Mormonism says there are multiple gods and that men and women, like Jesus, have the opportunity to become God. The Bible says that Jesus is not a man who became God, he's God who became a man. That's totally different! Mormonism is also polytheistic. They believe in multiple Gods.
- **Modalism** - This is an error that goes the other way. This is denying that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all distinct persons in the godhead. These people claim that God sort of puts on a mask and plays a role. So in the Old Testament he acts like the Father, in the days of Jesus he acts like the Son, and then from Acts

onward he acts like the Holy Spirit. This is one of the heretical teachings in *The Shack* where Papa *claims to be Jesus*. It is also the problem with the analogy of the Trinity being like water and appearing in three different forms: ice, water and steam. This analogy breaks down because the persons of the Trinity are distinct, not just three different forms of the same God. The evidence of this breakdown is seen in the passages of Scripture that show all three persons of the Trinity appearing at the same time, such as in Christ's baptism. The people who teach this today (beside the author of *The Shack*) is the United Pentecostal Church. They are a whole denomination who claim to be Christian but deny the Trinity because they say there is one god who wears three different masks.

- **Arianism** - While we don't use the label Arianism today, this is the name of the ancient heresy that was declared as untrue. It is denying that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all equally God. This is what the Jehovah's Witnesses believe today. They believe that Jesus is not God but a created being and that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force. It sounds reasonable, but as you saw in the sermon, it is not what the Bible teaches.

What is the difference between the imminent and economic Trinity?

One of the best ways to understand love in the Trinity is to see the Trinity in economic functionality. What do I mean by that? Many of the older theological textbooks make a distinction between the imminent and economic functioning of the Trinity. The imminent Trinity is how God is within himself. The economic Trinity is how God works in history. Regarding our salvation, we see love demonstrated in the economic functioning of the Trinity.

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 1 Peter 1:2 (ESV)

Peter is saying that God the Father foreknew who he would save. God the Son came and shed his blood in our place for our sins. God the Spirit takes up residence in the Christians to sanctify us, to cleanse us, to transform us to be more and more like Jesus. The whole Trinity is involved in our salvation but they are each playing different roles in our salvation.

Ephesians 1:3-14

This will blow your mind. In the Greek text, these verses are *one* thought. It says again that our whole salvation is Trinitarian. The Father predestined us for salvation before the foundations of the earth, the Son entered history, died in our place for our sins. He rose for our salvation. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in Christians regenerating our heart, renewing our minds and being the seal upon us that guarantees our future inheritance.

Does God have limited knowledge and power?

One of the changes from the old Free Church Statement of Faith to the new one we will be adopting is the addition of the phrase, "...*having limitless knowledge and sovereign*

power...” to the statement about God. This is added to address questions about the openness of God, usually called Open Theism. The open theist believes that “*God can’t foreknow the good or bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates these people and they, in turn, create their decisions.*” This is a serious departure from the orthodox view held by the Christian church for the last two thousand years.

Open Theism has arisen as an attempt by some theologians (such as Gregory Boyd and John Sanders) to respond to passages in the Bible where it appears that God has changed his mind or made a mistake. Their hope is that this open view of God would provide hope in the face of tragedy because they believe God did not see the tragedy coming. This hope does not materialize because God’s inability to handle the future wipes away the only hope that can be possessed by those who are wounded and grieving (Gen. 50:20). That is, the hope that God’s sovereignty is able to bring good out of the tragedy.

The testimony of Scripture is clear. God governs all the events in the universe and he does this without sin nor without removing man’s responsibility for his actions. The Bible teaches that God works all things in conformity with the purpose of his will. This includes the rolling of dice (Prov. 16:33), falling sparrows (Matt. 10:29), failing sight (Ex. 4:11), financial loss (1 Sam. 2:7), the decisions of kings (Prov. 21:1), the sickness of children (2 Sam. 12:15), the suffering and slaughter of saints (1 Peter 4:19; Psalm 44:11), repentance (2 Tim. 2:25), faith (Phil. 1:29), life and death (1 Sam. 2:6) and the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 4:27-28). The testimony of Scripture is that from the smallest element to the greatest event God governs all for his wise, just, and good purposes (Isa. 16:10).