

# WHAT IS THE TRINITY?

by David F. Wells

**TO THE GROUP LEADER:** This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. If you have every tried to witness to people, one of the questions that almost always comes up is about the Trinity. How would you explain the Trinity to that? (5-7)

*Use this as the discussion starter. Make sure they answer this in the group the way they first answered before reading the booklet. Don't get too deeply into the discussion yet. Let that develop as you work through the booklet.*

What verses do you know in the Bible to which you can take a person to prove there is a Trinity? What verses do you know that would prove the deity of each Member of the Trinity individually? Add to this list as you go along in your reading.

*They probably didn't have many, if any, before reading. Help them develop a list and ask them to put this list in their Bibles so they can have this handy when witnessing.*

2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment forbids us from making images of God. Why was that so important to God? (7-8)  
*These is nothing we can ever make that would be anything like God. Everything would fall far short of showing us what He is like. Therefore, all images are, at best, great distortions of His real being.*
3. The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment forbids us to have anything more important than Him in our lives. What did idols look like in Bible times, and what do they look like today? Why is God is angry with them? (8-12)  
*God created everything with the desire to be glorified by them. When He is glorified, He pours out that much more of His love on His creatures. When we make anything more important in our lives than Him, we cease to glorify Him and instead glorify our new god. All sin is idolatry!*
4. How do you reconcile Deut.6:4 and 1 Cor.8:4 with Genesis 1:26, 3:22 and 11:7? (12-13)  
*These are just the beginning of showing the plurality of our one God. From here, the booklet will take us through the proofs for the deity of both the Son and the Spirit. There is no question about the Father being God.*
5. How might you be able to show Jesus' deity from His prayer in John 17:5, spoken a few hours before going to the Cross? (13-17)  
*If Jesus were a created being, He would not have existed before creation. Col.1:16 tells us Jesus was the One who actually brought creation into existence, again proving He had to be before all else.*
6. We call God our Father. But where do we get the idea He is our Father? (17-20)  
*The term and idea is present in the OT, but it is only when Jesus comes that He teaches us to call God “Father.” Paul elaborates more on this as he clearly teaches about the doctrine of adoption. The world has rejected God as their Father and instead have Satan as theirs (John 8:44). It is only when the Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts we are able to call Him “Abba, Father.”*

7. It is somewhat “easy” to understand how the Father and the Son can both be God, but how does the Holy Spirit fit? To answer that, look up each of the following verses. The first will reveal a truth about the Father, the second the Son, and the third, the Holy Spirit. What is your conclusion? (20-25)

Ps.90:2; John 1:2; Heb.9:14 = **Each is eternal.**

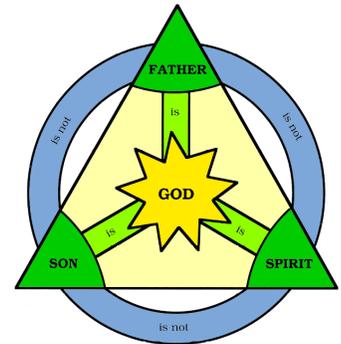
Rev.15:4; Acts 3:14; Matt.28:19 = **They are all said to be Holy.**

Eph.1:17; 1 Cor.2:8; 1 Peter 4:14 = **They all share in their Glory. (Read Isaiah 48:11.)**

John 7:28; John 14:6; 1 John 5:6 = **Truth is one of the attributes of God.**

8. How might you be able to use this symbol to explain the Trinity? (26-30)

**Use this symbol to get the group into the creeds. Divide into three groups. Have each take one section of each of the three creeds and list all the creed teaches about that member of the Trinity.**



After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

## APPLICATION

There is nothing better we can do than spend time with the Trinity. We were created to have fellowship with Them. Therefore, let's end this study with a time in prayer addressed to each member of the Trinity.

To God: Address this part of your prayer to our “Abba (dearest), Father” Who adopted us into His family and made us His children, whom He loves.

To Jesus: Thank Him for His work in bringing creation into being and for doing everything that was necessary to bring about our restored relationship with the Father.

To the Holy Spirit: Thank Him for caringly working in your life to change your heart and giving you the desire to seek Him and want to live for Him. Ask Him to always give you the words you need to speak in prayer, especially during those times you just don't know what to pray (Rom.8:26).

## For Further Study

*The Triune God*, Ronald L. Kohl, editor. P&R Publishing, 2014.

*Connected: Living in the Light of the Trinity*, Sam Allberry. P&R, 2013.

*The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, Robert Letham. P&R, 2004.

Find this and more at [www.pcabookstore.com](http://www.pcabookstore.com).

## THE ATHANASIAN CREED<sup>1</sup>

This creed is attributed to Athanasius, the fourth century bishop of Alexandria who was the strongest defender of the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. It defines the doctrines of the Trinity and the nature of Christ in very concise language.

Please note that the term "catholic" with the lower case 'c' is not a reference to the Roman Catholic Church but is a reference to the universal Christian faith since that is how the term was originally used.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one Eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three gods, but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet not three lords, but one Lord.

For as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge each Person by Himself to be both God and Lord, so we are also forbidden by the catholic religion to say that there are three gods or three lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three fathers; one Son, not three sons; one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

And in the Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another, but all three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved must think thus of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect man, of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching His godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood; who, although He is God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God; one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, He sits at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the quick and the dead. At His coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

## The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary;  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
Was crucified, dead and buried;  
He descended into hell;  
The third day He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty  
From thence He shall come to judge the quick  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

## The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
And of all things, visible and invisible.

And we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,  
Begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father  
by Whom all things were made,  
Who for us men and our salvation,  
came down from heaven  
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary  
And was made man,  
And was crucified also for us under Pontoius Pilate,  
He suffered and was buried;  
And the third day He rose again  
according to the Scriptures and ascended in heaven  
And is seated at the right hand of the Father  
And He shall come again with glory  
to judge both the livind and the dead  
whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life,  
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son together  
is worshipped and glorified,  
who spoke by the prophets.

I believe in one holy Christian and Apostolic church.  
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins  
And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.

Amen