

# Week 3: What is the Trinity?

## In Preparation for Small Group Discussion:

1. Listen to the message given at Kettlebrook on February 21, 2010 either live or on the web at: <http://www.kettlebrook.org/resources/index.htm> or via podcast on iTunes.
2. Read chapter 3 (pages 37-41) in Wayne Grudem's *Christian Beliefs*
3. Prepare your responses to the questions presented here in this study

## From Sunday:

What was the main point of the message?

How will this practically change your life?

## From Your Perspective:

If you could imagine a perfect relationship between two people, how would you describe it in your own words?

Now add a third person... does that change the dynamic? How?

If I said The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit – which one of these do you most often associate with the word “God.” Why?

Grudem defines the Trinity as the concept that “even though God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit have eternally existed as three distinct persons, there is only one God.” Karl Barth notes that “the doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian...in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God.” Having said that...

## From the Skeptic:

The Trinity:

- It is not logical.
- How can God be one and yet three?
- How can God be three and yet one?
- No analogy can perfectly help us grasp the concept. (though some try to use an egg or water/ice/steam)
- The word “Trinity” is never used in the Bible.
- Both Jews and Muslims deny the Trinity, but one cannot be Christian without it.

What is your biggest struggle with understanding the concept of the Trinity?

## From the Bible:

In the New Testament, Paul ends his second letter to the followers of Christ in Corinth with a benediction. Take some time to read this benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14.

What qualities does Paul associate with Jesus? God? Holy Spirit?

Why do you think that Paul would have structured his benediction like this?

In Paul's first letter to the followers of Christ in Corinth, he talks about the uniqueness of God. Take some time to read 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

Did Paul's understanding of who God is change between when he wrote his first and second letter? Is he contradicting himself? If so, how? If not, why not?

If you had to encapsulate and communicate the concept of the Trinity, how would you do it?

Mark Shaw says that there are four characteristics that define the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>:

1. Full Equality
2. Glad Submission
3. Joyful Intimacy
4. Mutual Deference (deference = respect due to a superior or elder)

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Shaw, *Doing Theology with Huck and Jim* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1993), p. 62

Why do you think that God would want to demonstrate the above four characteristics?

### **From the Book:**

According to Grudem, what are the distinct roles of the Trinity:

Father:

Son:

Holy Spirit:

### **Moving Forward:**

This week, what is one way that we could better reflect the relationship modeled by the Trinity in our own relationships with others? (Maybe pick one relationship and maybe use Shaw's helpful categories).

How can the group help you in this?

## Digging Deeper:

Some other passages that you may want to explore include:

- Genesis 1:26 – God says “let us” make man in “our” image.
- Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus commissions his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some other messages that you may want to listen to include:

- A whole list of messages on the Trinity:  
[http://www.monergism.com/directory/link\\_category/Trinity/Multimedia/](http://www.monergism.com/directory/link_category/Trinity/Multimedia/)

Some books that you may want to explore include:

- *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* by Stephen Seamands. (ISBN # 0-8308-3338-2)
- *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis (discussion on the trinity in the last ¼ of the book). (ISBN # 0060652926)