

I. Intro

A. Icebreaker

1. 30 seconds to share how you understanding the Trinity

B. Why this topic is important:

1. The Trinity is a fundamental belief of Christianity
 - a. God **acted** in a particular manner
 - b. Teaches us how to better **pray**
 - c. How to not make **mistakes** (Father/Son)
 - d. How to **engage** with other religions (JW, LDS, Muslim)
2. Today's goal:
 - a. Get a solid theological foundation
 - i. How to describe/talk about the Trinity (biblically/theologically)
 - b. Look at how the Trinity is the foundational and perfect **community/family**

II. The Theology

A. What is the Trinity?

1. **MONOTHEISM!** Its all about monotheism
2. Shema: Deut 6:4 HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE
 - a. Fundamental aspect of Judaism
 - b. 1st cent every male Jew would say this 3 x's a day

B. Basic Definition of the Trinity

1. The Bible teaches there is only **one** true God
2. The Bible identifies three eternal **Persons** as YHWH
 - a. The **Father** is called God
 - i. Col 1:3
 - b. The **Son** is called God
 - i. John 20:28; Titus 2:13; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:4-6
 - c. The **Holy Spirit** is called God
 - i. Eternal (Heb. 9:14)
 - ii. Omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-10)
 - iii. Omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11)
 - iv. Omnipotent (Luke 1:35-37)
3. But only **one God** exists - the **Persons** are not the same as each other
 - a. The Father is not the Son
 - b. The Son is not the Spirit
 - c. The Spirit is not the Father
 - i. These three **Persons** are the **one** true God

D. Illustrations

1. Helpful analogies
 - a. **Don't exist**
 - i. Illustrations break down
 - ii. H2O (Gas, Liquid, Solid)

- iii. Egg (shell, yoke, white)
- iv. Three links in a chain (the chains are 3 separate substances; God is 1 substance)
- v. Human Body, Soul, and Spirit
- vi. Vinnie (son, husband, teacher)
- b. Modalism
 - i. Or some other heresy
- 2. Illustrations usually **reject** the 3 distinct persons
 - a. God in different **modes/manifestations** (merely accomplishing a role)
 - b. Common Christian **error**
 - i. Try not to commit heresy
- 3. God's not an **analogy**
 - a. He's unique, one of a kind, infinite
 - b. NOTHING is "**like**" him
 - i. The infinite God of the universe is unique, nothing finite can equate
 - c. Nothing is analogous...just describe God **biblically!**

E. Safe Dialogue

- 1. Groups need to be **safe**
 - a. Not all opinions are true, but all people are to be **respected**
- 2. Correction (theologically) must be done with **respect**
 - a. Knowledge of which "hills to die on" (theologically)
 - b. If you **shame** someone you are no long the person who can shepherd them
 - c. You must **love** as you correct
 - i. Denise's workshop?

III. God is not abstract & distant - He's relational & interpersonal

A. The Trinity is not fully *comprehensible*, but is completely **graspable**

- 1. Difference:
 - a. *Comprehensible*: To understand fully, have complete knowledge of something
 - b. **Grasp**: To have a basic understanding or knowledge
 - i. An infinite reality cannot be fully understood by a finite creature
- 2. It's graspable because God has **revealed** Himself
 - a. Foreign/pagan gods don't reveal themselves, because they don't love

B. The Persons are distinct, can't exist/function apart from each other

- 1. The Trinity is a community in perfect **relation** with itself
- 2. God is love only because the Godhead has eternally loved and existed
 - a. Existed eternally
 - i. Person of the Father exists eternally (John 1:1, 14, 18)
 - ii. The Person of the Son exists eternally (John 1:1)
 - iii. The Person of the Spirit exists eternally (Heb 9:14)
 - b. Loved eternally

C. Because God is love, by nature, He has to be plural (in Person)

1. God is the eternal, self-existing one (Ex 3:15)
2. God is love (1 Jn 4:8)
3. God has no needs (Ps 50:8-15)
4. Therefore, God could only truly eternally express Himself within a **Godhead**
 - a. This means, by nature, Yahweh must exist in a **community/plurality**

IV. The Relational Trinity (The Economic Trinity)

A. Economics: “The ordering of **activities**”

1. Distinguished in part by the roles they play
 - a. God the Father **planned** everything
 - b. God the Son **implemented** and *carried out* that plan
 - c. God the Spirit **empowered** His people

B. The Trinity is:

1. Happily submitted to the plan of the Father
 - a. 1 Cor 15:20-28 ²³...Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

V. The Roles of the Godhead

A. The Father

1. Planned everything
 - a. Creation (Rev 4:11)
 - b. Delighted in sending the Son (Isaiah 53:10)
2. In the OT “father” is used to describe the close kinship that God enjoys with His people
 - a. “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him” (Ps. 103:13)
 - b. God is a “father to Israel” (Jer. 31:9)
 - c. Speaks of Israel as His “son” (Exod. 4:22; Hos. 11:1)
3. Jesus & the Apostles referred to God as father
 - a. Our Father (Matt. 6:9)
 - b. Father of mercies (2 Cor. 1:3)
 - c. Father of lights (James 1:17)
 - d. Father of glory (Eph. 1:17)
4. The Father title in relation to the Son
 - a. Christ claims to have come in His Father’s name to reveal that He was God’s unique representative (John 5:43)
 - b. He shares the Father’s authority and works done in His Father’s name bear witness to this special relationship (John 10:25)

c. Christ has provided a full revelation of God because He has declared His name (John 12:28; 17:6)

5. The Father's will is to give His chosen people to the Son

a. In order that they might be raised up on the last day (John 6)

B. The Son

1. Implemented & carried out the Father's plan

a. John 3:16

b. Acts 2:22-24; 4:27-28

2. Filled OT offices of:

a. Prophet (Heb 1:1-2)

i. Proclaiming God's word to his people

ii. Calling the people of his time to repentance

b. Priest (Heb 5:1)

i. The priests' role was to mediate before Yahweh

c. King (Luke 1:31-33; Rev 1:5)

i. He rules over all creation for all time

ii. One day all peoples will bow to his royal authority (Phil 2:9-10)

3. He saves His people (John 6)

a. Bread of Life (6:31-35)

b. Loses none (and raises up) those that the Father gives Him (6:37-40)

4. Reigns as King (Rev 4-5; 7:17; 22:1)

a. Empowers God's people to sit on the throne & reign over creation with him (Rev 20:6)

C. The Spirit

1. Empowers God's people to fulfill the Father's plan

a. Christ's incarnation (Luke 1:35)

b. Human regeneration (John 3:5-8)

c. Empowers gospel preaching (Acts 1:8)

The Spirit at work in key events throughout salvation history

a. Creation (Gen 1:2)

b. The believer's intercession (Rom 8:26-28)

c. The inspiration and illumination of Scripture (1 Tim 3:16)

d. Comforts/Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7)

e. Teaches (John 14:26; 1 Cor. 2:13)

f. Determines the distribution of spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:11)

VI. The Model Community

A. Tri-unity

1. A better description?

2. God works together in community

a. Eternal Koinonia (Fellowship, communion, joint participation, sharing one's possessions, giving liberally)

b. A selfless relationship in which the purpose is to serve and love each other

B. Self-glorification

1. In everything God does He is self-glorifying

John 17:4-5 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

2. If Yahweh is the perfect model for relationship, and has the purpose of self-glorification, then we too should strive after this model and **be in relationships** that are Yahweh-glorifying

C. The Trinity IS the first & perfect community

1. He does not need our love in order to be fulfilled

2. Therefore: The Trinity, by nature, is a relational family

a. Which means we are invited to participate and be part of this perfect family

b. When we are adopted as sons of God we are adopted into the perfect family

i. Eph 1:5 ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

VII. Conclusion

A. Theology Matters

1. Knowing about the Trinity is important, not just theologically, but **practically** (and devotionally)

B. God is not distant

1. Yahweh stepped into his own **creation** (John 1:14), in order that the son might **reconcile** it to the Father (2 Cor 5:18)

C. Yahweh is the perfect family, and we're adopted into that family!

2. And because we are in this perfect **family**, we are invited to **participate** in God's reconciling the world to himself, as we engage as God's **ambassadors** (2 Cor 5:19-20)

Appendix

I. Biblical Basis for the Trinity

A. The term Trinity

1. The word itself isn't found in the Bible
 - a. It's a word used to describe what the Bible teaches about God

B. Trinity Scripture Reference

1. There is only one God
 - a. Deut 32:39; 2 Sam 7:22; Ps 86:10; Isa 43:10; 44:6-8; 46:9; John 5:44; 17:3; Rom 3:29-30; 16:27; 1 Cor 8:4; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Thes 1:9; 1 Tim 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; 1 John 5:20-21; Jude 25
2. The Bible identifies three Persons identified as God
 - a. The Father is identified as God
 - i. John 6:27; Eph. 4:6; Col 1:2-3; 2 Pet 1:17
 - b. The Son is identified as God
 - i. John 1:1; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28; Phil 2:6; Col 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1
 - c. The Holy Spirit is identified as God
 - i. Gen 1:2; John 14:26; Acts 5:3-4; 13:2, 4; 28:25; Rom 8:11; Eph 4:30; Heb 9:14
 - d. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct and distinguishable persons
 - i. Matt. 28:19; Luke 3:22; John 15:26; 16:13-15; 2 Cor. 13:14.
3. But there is only one God
 - a. Isaiah 43:10; Deut. 6:4

II. Further Study:

"The Forgotten Trinity" (James R. White)
"Systematic Theology" (Wayne Grudem)
"The Forgotten God" (Francis Chan)
"The Deep Things of God" (Fred Sanders)
"Knowing God" (J.I. Packer)