

# Dear God | Are you Three or One? | Discussion Guide - Deut 6:4; Matt 28:19

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*Is there one God or are there Three?* Orthodox Christian Churches typically hold to a Doctrine referred to as the Trinity. It is the reason we often talk about having only ONE God, but then talking about Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That can be confusing and often when we encounter something that requires a bit of reflection, we are tempted to just shelve it. The danger in such an attitude is that it doesn't care to know God. And, it could be argued that a person who doesn't care to know God, likely doesn't. So today we ask the question...

## What is the Trinity?

Here are seven simple statements meant to state the belief. (1) There is only one God. (2) The Father is God. (3) The Son is God. (4) The Holy Spirit is God. (5) The Father is not the Son. (6) The Son is not the Holy Spirit. (7) The Holy Spirit is not the Father.

These simple statements are profound in that they may seem contradictory. The challenge is that they describe a reality about God for which no natural reference exists. *God is three distinct and equal persons that exist in such communion that they are one.* This belief rejects a number of lesser ideas about God. God is not three Gods. God does not merely use the Spirit and the Son as impersonal arms to interact with our world. The Father, Son and Spirit are not just different names for the same God acting in different roles. And, most importantly, The Father is FULLY God, Jesus Christ is FULLY God, and the Holy Spirit is FULLY God.

Our God is ONE God, in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It should not be confusing, but it should evoke wonder.

## Is the Trinity in the Bible?

*NO... Not the Word, "Trinity".* "Trinity" is just a word constructed to describe something for which there is no reference. There have been many attempts to describe God without the idea of the "Trinity". And, they make some sense and even may sound more logical. But in order to make sense they make God less by reducing the Son and the Spirit to mere manifestations of God, roles of God, or impersonal attributes of God. Making God less in an effort to understand Him is not a good idea. What is the problem? What were they trying to describe? Consider these Scriptures.

**Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)** "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

**Matthew 28:19 (NLT)** Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

There are so many scriptures like this in the Bible. These verses present God as One AND as a Father, as a Son, and as a Spirit. This understanding of God should help us connect with Him much more deeply. We are more able to *mentally* comprehend God our Father. We have the joy of an *emotional* connection with God the Son. And, of course we share a deeply *spiritual* union

with God the Holy Spirit. So when our need for relationship with the Divine is considered, the critical nature of this belief comes into focus. But is that all? So we must ask...

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## Why Does it Matter?

**Genesis 1:1-3 (NLT)** In the beginning **God (Elohim)** created the heavens and the earth. 2 ...And the **Spirit** of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God **said**...

**John 1:1-3 (NLT)** In the beginning the **Word** already existed.

*The Trinity matters for creation.* To Write God's Story, there was no outside influence. God the Father, Son and Spirit decided to create. They did not do it because they needed to, or were lonely, or were bored. They created because it was righteous to create, because it was LOVE to create and God IS Love.

**1 Peter 1:2 (NLT)** God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and His Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed Him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ...

*The Trinity matters for the Good News.* The Gospel is Distinctly Triune or Trinitarian. Why is it important? Christianity, with its understanding of God as three in one, is THE only faith that allows for *diversity AND unity*. Only Jesus is able to redeem a people without the destruction of their culture. Missionary efforts that have done so in the past, fell short of what was possible.

*The Trinity matters for relationships.* Community is more than a buzzword, it is an expression of God *IN* us. God lives in perfect communion. God lives in us. It is a Trinitarian faith that founds miraculous relationships even to the extent of loving one's enemies.

**Ephesians 3:14-15 (NLT)** When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.

*The Trinity matters for Worship.* "Father" isn't a term we *invented* to describe God's relationship to us. God IS Father. We come to the Father through the Son because He is the one mediator between us and God. (**1 Timothy 2:5**) We come to the Father in the Spirit because the Spirit draws our hearts to Christ, to the Father, and to one another (**1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:22**). These are foundations for real worship.

We have discussed the Trinity today. It may appear boring to some, but to discuss Trinity is to discuss LOVE, communion, relationship, and the Gospel. And, these are the greatest things to learn and enjoy! *Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!*

## Discussion:

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- What are your initial thoughts regarding the Trinity? What illustrations have you heard in the past to describe it? How do those illustrations help? How do they fall short?
- Discuss the seven statements regarding the Trinity made in this guide. Do they help? Are they confusing? How would you explain it to someone else?
- Review Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-2; 14:15-17; 15:26. Discuss the different relationships we are able to have with each person of the Trinity. (Emotional, Spiritual, Etc)
- God created the World. What questions does that raise for you? God IS Love **1 John 4:8**. Discuss Love *IN* the Trinity before Creation. Does LOVE answer those questions?
- Discuss the challenges to the competing values of Unity and Diversity. How does God as Three Persons answer those challenges?

- Discuss God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in regard to Worship. How do these different persons of God contribute to your worship?
- Did anything stand out in your reading today that you could share with someone else?