"If you deny the Trinity, you'll lose your soul. But if you try and explain it, you'll lose your mind. In no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable."

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO 354-460

I don't think I know anyone who finds understanding the concept of the Trinity easy. It is finite man trying to understand the infinite God. It's easy in trying to explain The Trinity to inadvertently say something heretical (don't feel bad I've done so in the past). The Trinity is Good News and underpins our understanding of salvation.

The Trinity

We believe that the Godhead exists co-equally and co-eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And that these three are one God, sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption.

The word "Trinity" never appears in the Bible. The doctrine was first articulated in the 325 AD by the Council of Nicaea in response to false teaching and developed more fully by Athanasius later in the 4th century. Although this was the first time it was articulated, this does not mean the truth of the Trinity did not exist before then. The Trinity has existed eternally. (Newton first articulated gravity in 1666, but gravity has existed since creation.)

The doctrine of the Trinity articulates two essential strands of biblical teaching regarding the nature of God.

1. The Bible teaches that God is one

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! DT 6:4

I am the first and I am the last. Apart from me there is no God. ISAIAH 44:6

EXODUS 20:2-3; MARK 12:29; JOHN 17:3; 1 TIMOTHY 2:5; JAMES 2:19

2. The Bible teaches that God is three persons

There are three lines of evidence in the bible.

A. Verses implying plurality within the Godhead

Hear, O Israel, the Lord (that is Yahweh) our God is one.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

- The Hebrew word *echad* ("one") in DEUTERONOMY 6:4 can refer to a unified oneness; it means **one in harmony, one in mind, one in thought.** The same word for "one" is used way back in Genesis of a married couple, where the two become one flesh. They are still two persons, but their flesh has become one in harmony. It's not two separate individuals now, it's one. They are one couple.

- The divine name *Elohim* the word used throughout the Old Testament for God is grammatically plural.
    - El is the word for one God.
    - Eloha is the word for two.
    - But Elohim is a word meaning three.

GENESIS 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; PSALM 2:7; ISAIAH 6:8; JOHN 1:1-3; COLOSSIANS 1:15-19; HEBREWS 1:1-3

B. Verses affirming the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as divine

i) The Father is God

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father. TITUS 1:4

PSALM 89:26; ISAIAH 63:16; JOHN 6:27; 1 CORINTHIANS 8:6; GALATIANS 1:1; PHILIPPIANS 1:2;

ii) The Son is God

Who being in very nature God. PHILIPPIANS 2:6

MARK 2:8-10; JOHN 1:1; 1:18; 8:58; 20:28; ACTS 20:28; ROMANS 9:5; 10:9-13 (JOEL 2:32); 1 CORINTHIANS 12:3; COLOSSIANS 2:9; TITUS 2:13; HEBREWS 1:3, 8-12; 2 PETER 1:1; 1 JOHN 5:20.

iii) The Holy Spirit is God:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

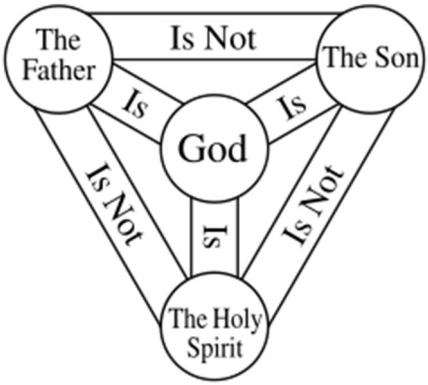
ACTS 5:3–4; 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17.

C. Verses speaking of the three together, yet as distinct persons

- Jesus' baptism: the Son is baptised, the Spirit descends, the Father speaks *(MARK 1:9–10)*.
- The Great Commission: one name, three persons *(MATTHEW 28:19)*.
- The benediction: one blessing from Christ, the Father, and the Spirit together *(2 CORINTHIANS 13:14)*.

Taken together, Scripture compels the conclusion that:

- The Father is God. The Son is God. The Spirit is God.
- The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Spirit. The Spirit is not the Father.
- And there is only one God.
- God is one in His "nature" or "essence"
- He is also three distinct "persons"



Co-Equal, Co-Eternal, One in Mission, One in mind, One in thought, One in harmony.

Elim Foundational Truth: *We believe that the Godhead exists co-equally and co-eternally in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and that these three are one God, sovereign in creation, providence and redemption.*

- Co-equal: each person fully possesses the divine essence.
- Co-eternal: none came into being; all are uncreated and eternal.
- Unified in action:
    - In creation: the Father speaks, the Son is the Word, the Spirit hovers.
    - In providence: the Father rules, the Son upholds, the Spirit gives life.

- In redemption: the Father sends, the Son saves, the Spirit applies salvation.

> *But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*
>
> *GAL 4:4*
>
> *I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent ME. JOHN 6:38*
>
> *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. JOHN 14:26*

Why analogies fail

- Every analogy ultimately fails: each one either collapses the persons into one (modalism) or divides God into parts (tritheism).
- Tritheism: the false idea of three distinct gods. The Trinity is not a pie chart divided into three making one. Nor a three leaf clover with each clover separate.
- Modalism: the false idea that there is just person in the Godhead playing three different roles (or modes). For example I could say I am a father, a husband, and a

brother. But I am not a different person when I am a father to when I am a husband or brother; I am just fulfilling a different role.

The late Bible teacher David Pawson says it's impossible to find an accurate analogy why do you think this is?

Why the Trinity matters

If Jesus is not God, Jesus was not the perfect sacrifice and we are not saved. If it was not God the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead then it was not He who declared us justified.

The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe Jesus to be God. What implications does this have for their understanding of salvation?

Does this shed light on why works are so important in their theology?

The Trinity shows us that God is a relational God. His character and very being is love. He did not create as an afterthought the Son and the Holy Spirit so love could exist. They have always existed in love together.

Salvation is an invitation to share His love!

In what way is God different from the gods of other religions, and what are the implications of this?

The Trinity is a pattern for Church. *Although we are many we are one body.*

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ROMANS 12:4-5

We should be one in harmony, one in thought, one in mind, one in love.

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. JOHN 17:20-21

What is the best way for someone (particularly an unbeliever to understand the Trinity?)

What thought are you taking away from this teaching on the Trinity?

If you can't get your head around the Trinity don't worry. Just thank God that because Jesus is God your salvation is guaranteed by God! Thank God you were created for a personal relationship with God who loves and cares for you. His character is LOVE. Something no other religion can say!