

# No One Like Him

A  
Study  
of  
God's  
Perfections

Men of the Word  
2022-23

## Triunity

Wednesday,  
November 9, 2022

“The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.”

—C. H. Spurgeon, “The Immutability of God,”  
sermon preached on January 7, 1855



# I. Definition of Divine “Triunity”

---

## A. What triunity means.

- **The triunity of God refers to His *three-in-oneness*. God is eternally *one in essence but three in persons*.**
- The Bible teaches that there is *one* God. This singularity describes what theologians call the *essence, substance, or nature* of God.
- The Bible also teaches that this divine essence is possessed wholly and equally by three—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This plurality relates to *persons*.



Basil of Caesarea (AD 329–379)  
a.k.a Basil the Great

“The distinction between *ousia* [“essence”] and *hypostasis* [“person”] is the same as that between the *general* and the *particular* . . . . Wherefore, in the case of the Godhead, we confess *one essence or substance* so as not to give a variant definition of existence, but we confess *a particular hypostasis*, in order that our conception of Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear.





Basil of Caesarea (AD 329–379)  
a.k.a Basil the Great

“If we have no distinct perception of the separate characteristics, namely, fatherhood, sonship, and sanctification, but form our conception of God from the general idea of existence, we cannot possibly give a sound account of our faith. We must, therefore, confess the faith by adding the particular to the common. The Godhead is common; the fatherhood particular.



Basil of Caesarea (AD 329–379)  
a.k.a Basil the Great

“We must therefore combine the two and say, ‘I believe in God the Father.’ The like course must be pursued in the confession of the Son; we must combine the particular with the common and say ‘I believe in God the Son,’ so in the case of the Holy Ghost we must make our utterance conform to the appellation and say ‘in God the Holy Ghost.’”

—Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 236.6*

KEY CONCEPTS OF GOD’S THREE-IN-ONENESS		
“Essence”	One	<i>Singularity</i>
“Person”	Three	<i>Distinction</i>

- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each simultaneously and eternally God, possessing the divine nature without differentiation or alteration.
- At the same time, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct from one another in person, and thus distinct in how they interact with creation and distinct in how they are known by us.

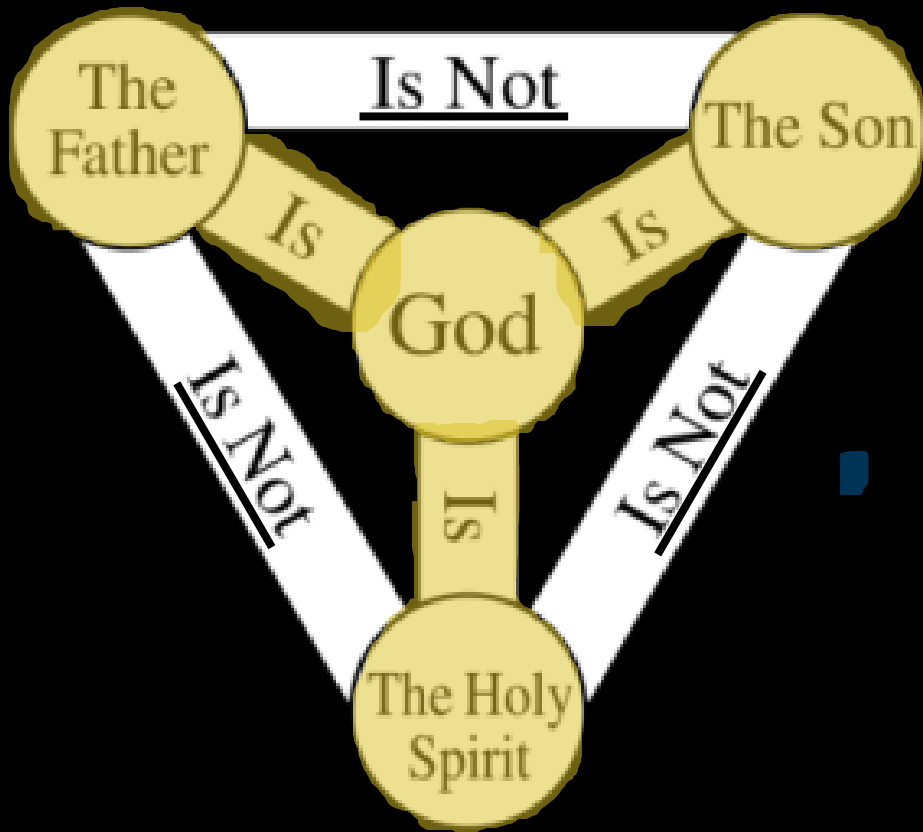


“There is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—each one of these is God, and all of them together are one God; each of these are a full substance and all together are one substance. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but the Father is purely the Father, the Son purely the Son, and the Holy Spirit purely the Holy Spirit. These three have the same eternal nature, the same unchangeableness, the same majesty, the same power.”

—Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.11–12



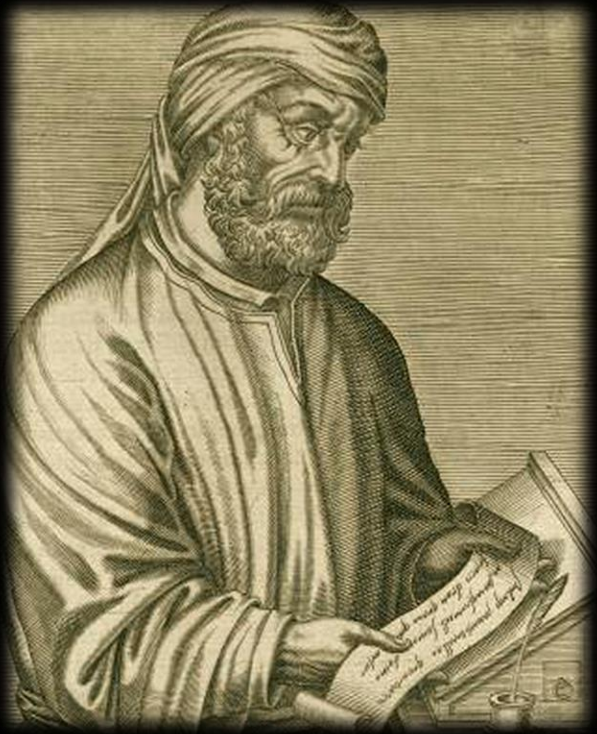




## ESSENTIAL TRINITARIAN PROPOSITIONS:

- There is one God—one divine essence.
- Each of the persons of the divine essence are truly God.
  - The Father is God.
  - The Son is God.
  - The Spirit is God.
- But each of the persons of the divine essence are distinguished.
  - The Father is not the Son or the Spirit.
  - The Son is not the Father or the Spirit.
  - The Spirit is not the Father or the Son.

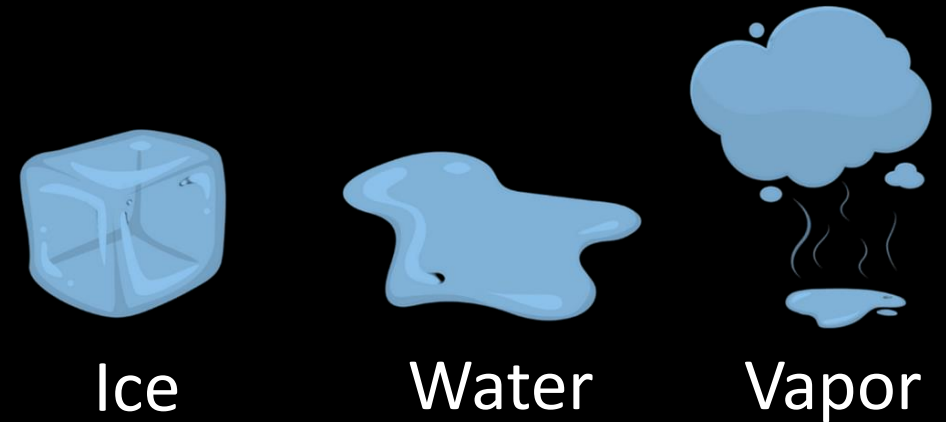
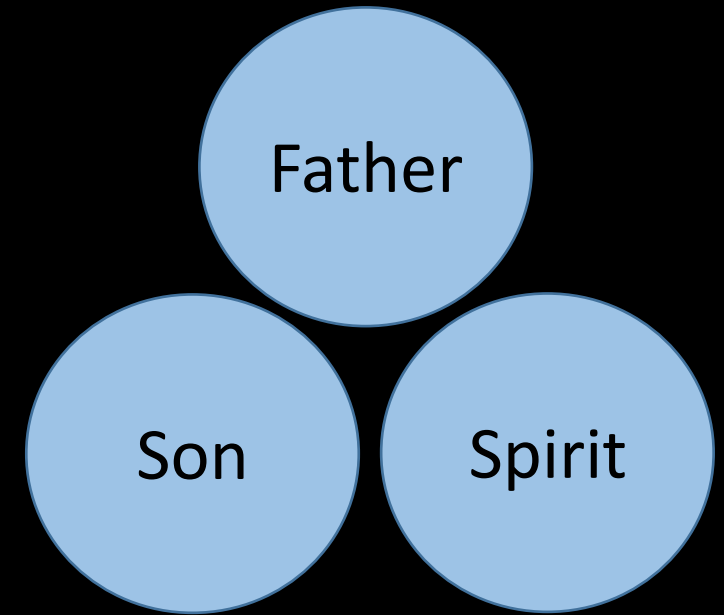
- To summarize this truth, early Christians began to use the word ***trinitas***: *trini* (three) + the suffix *-tas* (state of being).
- Our word “**trinity**” is derived from the Latin *trinitas*, which describes “**a threefold state of being.**”



- Historians suggest it was the early church theologian **Tertullian** (AD 155–230) who first utilized the term.
- Tertullian used the term to help protect the church from the growing influence of false teachers who denied God’s three-in-oneness.

## B. What God's triunity does not mean.

- That God is triune does not mean that there are three gods (tritheism).
- That God is triune does not mean that God merely manifests Himself in three ways—sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Spirit (modalism).

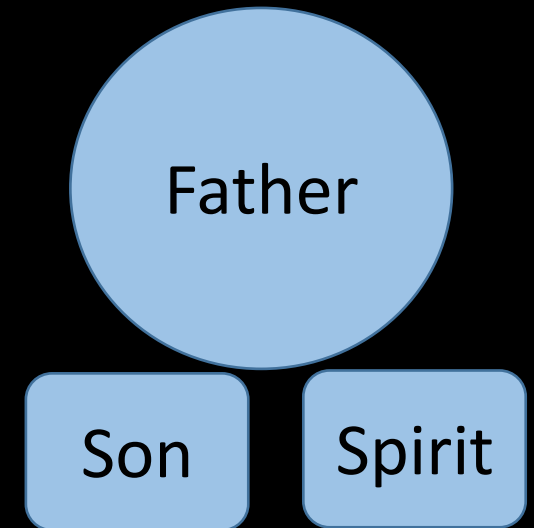
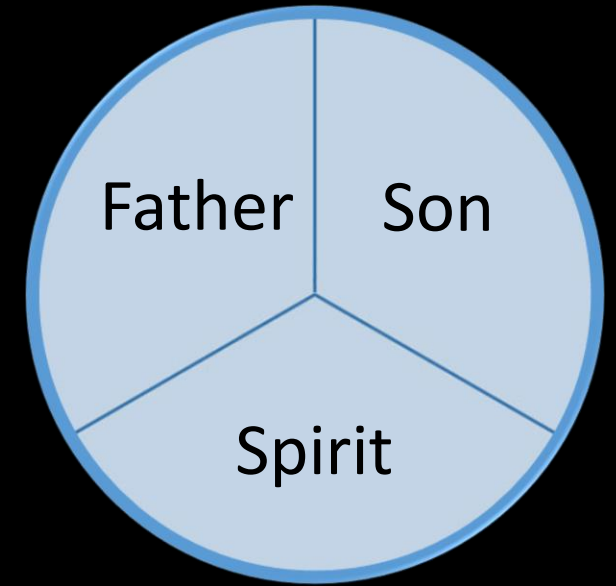




“Many—perhaps most—in the evangelical movement today are perfectly willing to ignore the lessons of Scripture and history, set aside the whole disagreement as something entirely nonessential, and embrace contemporary Sabellianism [Modalism] as a legitimate expression of authentic Christian faith. For at least a decade now, evangelical best-seller lists have included a steady stream of works by authors and musicians who deny the doctrine of the Trinity. They hold to a distinctive version of modalism. That is the official position of “Oneness Pentecostals” and the United Pentecostal Church International. As these groups and their popular spokespersons have found increasing acceptance in the evangelical mainstream, modalism is suddenly being accepted as if it were a valid evangelical option.”

—John MacArthur, *Truth War*, 117

- That God is triune does not mean that the divine essence has three “parts”—one part consisting of Father, one of the Son, and one of the Spirit (partialism).
- That God is triune does not mean that there is a hierarchy in which God (the Father) creates two lesser “gods”—the Son and the Holy Spirit (Arianism).





“The great challenge facing us with this dogma [the Trinity] is to see to it that the unity of the divine essence does not cancel out the Trinity of the persons or, conversely, that the Trinity of persons does not abolish the unity of the divine essence. There is always the threat of deviation either to the right or to the left and of falling either into the error of Sabellius or that of Arius.”

—Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.288–289



TRUTH			
"Essence"	→	One	→ <i>Singularity</i>
"Person"	→	Three	→ <i>Distinction</i>

HERESY			
"Essence"	X	One	→ <i>Singularity</i> → Modalism
"Person"		Three	→ <i>Distinction</i> → Arianism

## II. Biblical Testimony to God's Triunity

---

A. SINGULARITY: The Bible teaches that there is *one divine essence*.

- The doctrine of the Trinity begins with the recognition of *monotheism*.
- **Genesis 1:1** – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
- **Exodus 20:2-3** – “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.”
- **Deuteronomy 6:4** – “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”

- **Isaiah 44:6** – “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.’”
- **Mark 12:29–30** – “The foremost [commandment] is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’”
- **1 Corinthians 8:4–6** – “Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.”
- **James 2:19** – “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”



**B. PLURALITY: The Bible teaches that in God there is a *plurality of persons*.**

- Distinct persons are associated with the divine essence, revealed progressively through Scripture as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- **Genesis 1:1–2** – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”
- **Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7** – God addresses Himself using *plural pronouns*: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”; “Behold, the man has become like one of Us”; “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language.”

- **Psalms 110:1** – “The LORD [*Yahweh*] says to my Lord [*Adonai*]: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’”
- **Isaiah 42:1** – “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”
- **John 1:1–3** – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

- **John 14:26; 15:26** – “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. . . . When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth* who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.”
- **2 Corinthians 13:14** – “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”
- **Ephesians 4:4–6** – “*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”



C. DEITY: The Bible teaches that all three persons possess *the devine* *perfections*.

- Whatever divine qualities describe the Father are also used to describe the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- **John 1:1** – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
- **John 5:17–18** – “But He answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.’ For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

- **John 8:58** – “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am [ἐγὼ εἰμί].’”
- **Romans 10:9, 11, 13** – “. . . if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved . . . . For the Scripture says, ‘WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED . . . for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’”
- **Colossians 2:9** – “For in Him [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”
- **Hebrews 1:7–8** – “And of the angels He [God] says, ‘WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.’ But of the Son *He* [God] says, ‘YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.’”

- **John 14:16–17** – “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”
- **Acts 5:3–4** – “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? . . . Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”
- **Acts 13:2, 4** – “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ . . . So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

- **1 Corinthians 2:11** – “For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”
- **Hebrews 9:14** – “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”
- **Hebrews 10:29** – “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

D. UNITY: The Bible teaches that all three persons are *of one essence*.

- Scripture often joins the Father, Son, and Spirit together in an inseparable union, and attributes to each of them the same works.
- **Matthew 28:19** – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name [*singular*] of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”
- **John 10:30–31, 38** – “‘I and the Father are one.’ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. . . . ‘The Father is in Me and I in the Father.’”
- **Romans 8:9** – “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

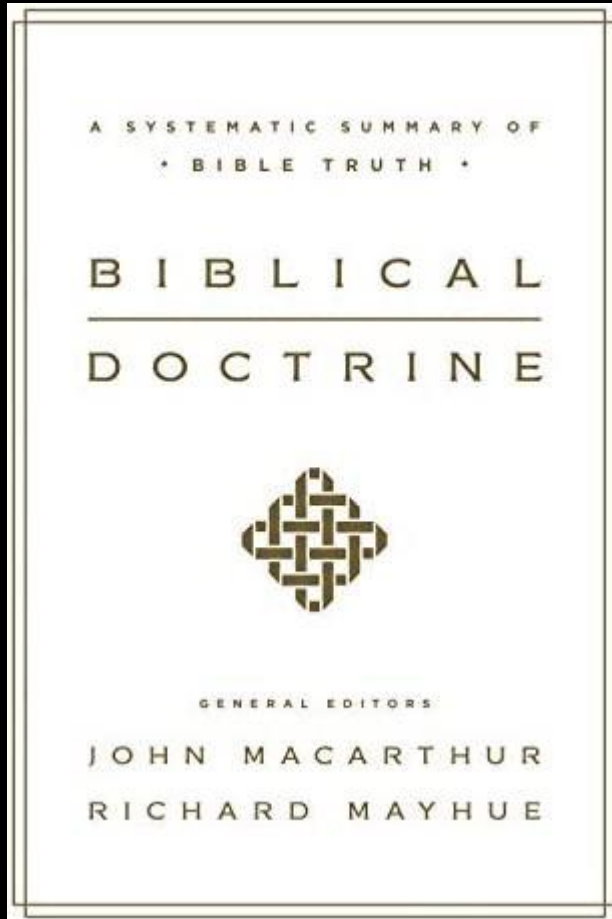


- **1 Corinthians 8:6** – “yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.”
- **1 Corinthians 12:4–6** – “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*.”
- **2 Corinthians 3:17–18** – “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”
- Paul’s use of the title “Savior” to refer to both Father and Son in Titus.

“But if we hold, what has already been demonstrated from Scripture, that the essence of the one God, pertaining to the Father, Son, and Spirit, is simple and indivisible, and again, that the Father differs in some special property from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit, the door will be shut against Arius and Sabellius, as well as the other ancient authors of error.”

—John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.22





“Based on biblical evidence, the unprejudiced mind cannot doubt the existence of a plurality of persons in the Godhead without impugning the clarity, the inerrancy, and the inspiration of the Scriptures. Any accurate discussion of the Trinity must begin and end with what the Bible declares.”

—John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 236

# III. What Triunity Demands from Us

---

## A. Embrace the doctrine of the trinity by faith.

- The doctrine of the trinity is one of the most striking aspects of the incomprehensibility of God (Isa 40:18, 25; 44:8; 46:5).
- We trust in God as God not because we can figure Him out and fit Him in our minds, but because we *cannot*.
- God's word often tells us only the "that" but not the "how." This certainly applies to the doctrine of the trinity. Scripture reveals *that* He is triune, but does not explain *how* that is possible.
- Do not fall for the demand to "prove" the Trinity—other than from God's own testimony in His word.

“This truth is a great mystery. Let it be enough to receive and believe it, and let us ever abstain from all attempts at explanation. It is childish folly to refuse assent to things that we do not understand. We are poor crawling worms of a day, and at our best, know little about God and eternity. Suffice it for us to receive the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, with humility and reverence, and to ask no vain questions. Let us believe that no sinful soul could be saved without the work of all three Persons in the blessed Trinity, and let us rejoice that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who co-operated to make man, do always co-operate to save him. Here let us pause. We may receive practically what we cannot explain theoretically.”

—J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Matthew*, 412



## B. Marvel at the profundity of the Godhead.

- Let this doctrine carry you to its rightful destination: *adoration*.

“That doctrine [of the trinity] is a mystery. No human mind can fathom it. Yet what a blessed mystery it is! The Christian’s heart melts within him in gratitude and joy when he thinks of the divine love and condescension that has thus lifted the veil and allowed us sinful creatures a look into the very depths of the being of God.”

J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith*



“No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of anyone of the three I think of him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.”

—Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 330–389)

## C. Prioritize unity in your relationships.

- **Ephesians 4:1–3** – “walk in a manner worthy of the calling . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- **Ephesians 4:4–6** – “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*”

Practical Life:  
The unity of the church

Doctrinal Basis:  
The unity of the Godhead

“The doctrine of the Trinity reminds us that relationships are central to the Christian faith. . . . We must not pretend to know the triune God while living in broken relationships with others by failing to do what is in our power to reconcile. Instead, we should strive for peace, harmony, unity, partnership, and deep friendships with God’s saints.”

—Joel Beeke & Brian Cosby, *None Else*, 58

No  
One  
Like  
Him

**“The grace of the Lord Jesus  
Christ, and the love of God, and  
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all.”**

**—2 Corinthians 13:14**