GOD'S ATTRIBUTES · STUDY NOTES

Study 4: God is one yet three

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

One God in three Persons

How can God be Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

In study 2 we learnt that God is Spirit. He does not have different parts, like our bodies, that perform different functions. The Bible teaches that God is one. This means that there is nothing in Him that is contradictory or that could cause any inner turmoil. He is never confused in His thoughts or uncertain about His will. He is firm and clear in everything He does.

1 **Look up Deuteronomy 6:4**

What does this verse say about the LORD?

Yet God reveals something more about Himself, which is very hard to understand. The Bible clearly teaches that there are three Persons in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

These three Persons are called the Trinity. It is very easy to misunderstand what this means. Through the ages people have tried to explain it, failed, and ended up teaching something the Bible does not say. For example, when someone says the Trinity means there are three Gods, that is wrong: there is only one God. Others have said the three Persons are not real distinctions. That is also wrong. So what can we learn from the Bible?

The word "Trinity"
The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible. It is simply a convenient word for the unique relationship within the Godhead. We must think of God only as He reveals Himself: in three Persons, yet one God – a "tri-unity".

The Bible teaches the Trinity

The Bible shows us that there are distinctions within God. We see this in several places.

2 **Look up 2 Corinthians 13:14**

Which three are named together in this blessing?

3 **Look up Matthew 28:19**

In whose name are disciples to be baptised?

We cannot fully grasp how God can be one yet three. God is Spirit, and there are dimensions to His existence beyond our understanding. But the fact that something is hard to understand is no reason to swap it for something simpler. Rather, it is a reason to worship and adore.

Each Person of the Godhead has the same attributes and character. We cannot say the Holy Spirit is everywhere but the Son is not, or that the Son is more loving than the Spirit, or that the Father is more holy than the Son. Each is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, personal and all-powerful. They are not in competition. They don't have to debate to reach agreement. There is harmony, in full and perfect agreement.

4 **Look up John 8:28–29**

What does Jesus say He always does?

5 **Look up John 6:38**

Whose will did Jesus come down from heaven to do?

6 **Read John 16:13–15**

What does verse 14 say about the Spirit?

So each Person of the Godhead always has the same things in mind, desires the same things, and works to the same end.

PART 2

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Can we say anything more?

Many people have tried to understand this high and holy relationship between the members of the Trinity. Christians have made these observations.

God the Father is usually placed first. This is not because He is greater in power or wisdom. But within the relationships of the Godhead, He is the initiator. You can see this in Ephesians 1:3–5.

7 **Read Ephesians 1:3–5**

What does verse 4 say the Father did?

God the Son is described as the eternally begotten Son of the Father. There is no date or time in history when He became the Son; He did not have a birth in the human sense. The Son of God has neither beginning nor end, and He does not depend on the Father for His deity. Yet the Bible still describes His relationship to the Father as sonship.

8 **Look up Hebrews 1:5**

What did God say to the Son that He never said to any angel?

9 **Look up John 1:14**

Whose glory does John say they saw?

But there was a point in history when the Son of God became the person we know as Jesus Christ. We will learn more about this shortly.

God the Holy Spirit is equally personal, and co-equal with the Father and the Son. His work is closely related to the world and to people. He brings people to know where they stand before God, convicting them of their need of salvation (Titus 3:5). He equips Christians to serve God (Acts 1:8). And He lives in Christians to make them more like Christ (Romans 8:12–17). The Bible describes Him as proceeding from the Father and the Son, which is deeper than we can fully understand. And like the Father and the Son, He is everywhere at all times.

10 **Look up John 14:26**

Who sends the Holy Spirit, and what will the Spirit do?

11 **Look up John 15:26**

From whom does the Spirit of truth proceed, and about whom will He testify?

When some people once lied to the Holy Spirit, they were told plainly that they had lied to God (Acts 5:1–4). So the Holy Spirit is no less God than the Father or the Son.

See also: Titus 3:5; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:12–17; Acts 5:1–4.

PART 3

To know God, we must know Jesus Christ

Knowing God

Study 1 showed us that God is real and can be known. This is not simply "knowing about God". We might finish this course thinking we know a lot about God. But the Bible tells us we can have a relationship with God, and this is where the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is central. He brings us to know God.

12 **Look up John 14:6**

How does anyone come to the Father?

13 **Look up John 17:3**

What is eternal life?

Fully God and fully man

We have said that God is Spirit and has no body. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a man, born of a woman two thousand years ago by a miraculous birth. He was miraculously conceived by a virgin, through the "overshadowing" of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). By this completely unique act, Jesus Christ, although He is the Creator and Sustainer of the world, needed to eat, drink and sleep, and had to walk from place to place.

14 **Read Mark 4:35–41**

What was Jesus doing in verse 38? What does that show about Him as a man?

15 **Read John 4:1–8**

What does verse 6 say?

So it is right to say of Jesus Christ that He is fully God and fully man.

16 **Look up 1 John 1:1**

The "Word of life" is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. How had the apostles come to know Him?

In John 1:1–14 too, "the Word" means Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

17 **Read John 1:1–14**

What does verse 14 say?

Why He became man

We will never understand how God could take human nature to Himself. But it was necessary if human beings were ever to know God and have a relationship with Him. For we have sinned against God in thought, word and deed, and God's perfect holiness and justice demand that the punishment for sin is death.

So by coming as a perfect human being, who never sinned in thought or deed, Jesus Christ was able to die on behalf of sinners, in their place. He died on a cross, a form of execution devised by the Roman Empire. Being a perfect human being who truly died – voluntarily and willingly – He was able to pay the price that God's broken law required of us.

Now people can be forgiven their sin if they believe in Jesus Christ. By believing in Him they receive the benefits of His death. Through faith in Him we really can know God and have eternal life. Only Jesus Christ can do this.

See also: something to read and consider: John 1:1–18; John 14.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you really know God? What evidence do you have for your answer?

2. Had you ever understood that Jesus Christ is God and man?

3. Do you know that you have put your faith in Jesus Christ?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 4

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES · STUDY 4 · MEMORY VERSE

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

2 Corinthians 13:14

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Deuteronomy 6:4** *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One.*

2 **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 all of you.*

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

4 **John 8:28–29** *28So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own, but speak exactly what the Father has taught Me. 29He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him."*

5 **John 6:38** *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me.*

6 **John 16:13–15** *13However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come. 14He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you. 15Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is Mine and disclose it to you.*

7 **Ephesians 1:3–5** *3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. 4For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love 5He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will,*

8 **Hebrews 1:5** *For to which of the angels did God ever say: "You are My Son; today I have become Your Father"? Or again: "I will be His Father, and He will be My Son"?*

9 **John 1:14** *The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

10 **John 14:26** *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you.*

11 **John 15:26** *When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—He will testify about Me.*

12 **John 14:6** *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

13 **John 17:3** *Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.*

14 **Mark 4:35–41** *35When that evening came, He said to His disciples, “Let us cross to the other side.” 36After they had dismissed the crowd, they took Jesus with them, since He was already in the boat. And there were other boats with Him. 37Soon a violent windstorm came up, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was being swamped. 38But Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke Him and said, “Teacher, don’t You care that we are perishing?” 39Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the sea. “Silence!” He commanded. “Be still!” And the wind died down, and it was perfectly calm. 40“Why are you so afraid?” He asked. “Do you still have no faith?” 41Overwhelmed with fear, they asked one another, “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”*

15 **John 4:1–8** *1When Jesus realized that the Pharisees were aware He was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John 2(although it was not Jesus who baptized, but His disciples), 3He left Judea and returned to Galilee. 4Now He had to pass through Samaria. 5So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Since Jacob’s well was there, Jesus, weary from His journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” 8(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

16 **1 John 1:1** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands—this is the Word of life.*

17 **John 1:1–14** *1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. 4In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6There came a man who was sent from God. His name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that through him everyone might believe. 8He himself was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. 9The true Light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. 11He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of blood, nor of the desire or will of man, but born of God. 14The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says ‘man’, ‘he’ or ‘brothers’ where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 4: God is one yet three

> **Memory verse:** “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:14). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Understand, as far as Scripture reveals, that God is one in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Avoid the common errors (three gods; one person in three roles).
- See that we know God only through Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, who died in the place of sinners.

Suggested timing (about 75 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **25 min** Part 1 video (3 min); Deuteronomy 6:4, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Matthew 28:19, John 8:28–29, 6:38, 16:13–15.
- **20 min** Part 2 video (3 min); Ephesians 1:3–5, Hebrews 1:5, John 1:14, 14:26, 15:26.
- **20 min** Part 3 video (4 min); John 14:6, 17:3, Mark 4:35–41, John 4:1–8, 1 John 1:1, John 1:1–14.
- **5 min** Summary and closing prayer.

Tips

- Analogies (water, ice, steam; a man who is father, son and husband) usually teach one of the errors; use them sparingly, if at all.
- It's fine to say "we can't fully understand this"; the right response is worship.
- Keep the study personal: knowing God means knowing Jesus Christ.

Answers to watch for

- **Deuteronomy 6:4:** the Lord is one.
- **2 Corinthians 13:14:** grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, love of God, fellowship of the Holy Spirit.
- **Matthew 28:19:** baptise in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- **John 8:29; 6:38:** the Son always does what pleases the Father.
- **John 16:14:** the Spirit glorifies the Son.
- **Ephesians 1:4:** the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
- **Hebrews 1:5:** "You are my Son..."
- **John 14:26; 15:26:** the Spirit sent from the Father; He teaches and testifies about Christ.
- **John 14:6; 17:3:** no one comes to the Father except through Jesus; eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ.
- **John 4:6:** Jesus was tired; truly man.
- **1 John 1:1; John 1:14:** the Word of life was seen and touched; the Word became flesh.