

God

1) Who is God?

- A) God is spirit. Jesus said, “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24; cf. John 1:18; Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17). God is not composed of matter or energy, and He does not have the limitations involved with a physical body.
- B) God is personal. God has the characteristics of personality: intellect, emotions, and will. He creates, thinks, feels, knows, plans, and acts (Isa 57:15–21; Jer 3:12–13). He is conscious of His own existence (Exod 3:14), and He does whatever seems best to Him (Ps 115:3). The fact that God is personal means that it’s possible to have a relationship with Him.
- C) God is infinite. When describing God’s infinity, we use words like eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent:
- (1) Eternal—God had no beginning and will have no end. He has always existed and will always exist (cf. Ps 90:2; 93:2; Rev 4:8).
 - (2) Omniscient—God is all-knowing. God doesn’t learn anything, for He knows everything (Ps 147:5; Isa 40:13–14; 1 John 3:20). God knows what will happen *before* it happens (Isa 14:24; 46:9–11), and He knows everything that *could have* happened (Exod 13:17; 1 Sam 23:8–14; Jer 23:21–22). Nothing takes God by surprise!
 - (3) Omnipotent—God is all-powerful. Nothing is difficult or challenging for God (Matt 19:25–26; Rev 19:6). He has no limits *except that He never acts contrary to His own nature and character*. It’s important to understand this clarification, because there are many things God cannot do: lie, break his word, deny himself, etc. (Heb 6:18; 2 Tim 2:13).
 - (4) Omnipresent—God is present everywhere. There is nowhere you can go to escape God’s presence (Ps 139:7–10; Isa 66:1), and nothing happens that He does not see (Jer 23:24; Heb 4:13). Nothing can be hidden from God!
- D) God is unchanging. In His nature, attributes, and character, God never changes (Mal 3:6). He is the “I AM”—the immutable, eternal, fixed, changeless and invariable God of the universe (Exod 3:14). He always loves what is right and hates what is wrong. God may alter His decisions based on man’s response (cf. Jer 18:7–10; Ezek 33:13–15; Jonah 3:4–10), but God Himself is unchanging.
- E) God is holy. The prophet Isaiah repeatedly referred to God as “The Holy One of Israel” (Isa 1:4; 5:19; 12:6; 29:19; 30:11; 41:14; 54:5; 60:9). The angels cry, “Holy, holy, holy” before God continually (Rev 4:8). God’s holiness is the unique excellence of his character. He is the standard of moral perfection, and His actions are marked by

integrity and goodness.¹ He is completely separate from evil, and all His ways are righteous (Ps 145:17).

- F) God is love. The apostle John said, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love...God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:8, 16). Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Paul said, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Charles Wesley, the great hymn writer, said it well: “And can it be that I should gain, An int’rest in the Savior’s blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! how can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”
- G) God is a Trinity. The doctrine of the “Trinity” (lit. “a unity of three”) comes from the fact that the Bible clearly affirms the existence of three distinct Persons that are all identified as the one God of the universe. This is not a contradiction, for the Bible does not teach that God is both one person and three persons. Nor does it teach that God is both one God and three Gods. Rather, it reveals that God is one in essence and three in person.²
- (1) A diagram is often helpful to explain the Trinity (last page of lesson). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all God; they are not three names for the same person. The Persons are distinct: the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father.

2) How does the Bible teach that God is a Trinity?

- A) If there is only one God, yet there are three distinct Persons who are called God, then it follows that God is a Trinity: one God who exists as three Persons who share the same nature. Here is how the Bible teaches the existence of the Trinity:
- (1) There is only one God.
- (a) “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (Deut 6:4).
- (b) “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa 46:9).
- (2) The Father is God.
- (a) “Grace to you and peace from God our Father...” (2 Thess 1:2).
- (b) “For when he received honor and glory from God the Father...” (2 Pet 1:17).

¹ *I Believe: Fundamentals of the Christian Faith*, written by the Bible Faculty of God’s Bible School and College (Revivalist Press, 2006), p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

(3) The Son is God.

(a) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh...” (John 1:1, 14).

(b) “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30–33).

(4) The Holy Spirit is God.

(a) “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ... You have not lied to man but to God’” (Acts 5:3–4).

(5) The Father, Son and Spirit are distinct Persons.

(a) “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10–11).

(b) “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me” (John 15:26).

(6) Conclusion: God exists as three distinct Persons who share the same nature.

3) What are some misunderstandings about the Trinity?

A) Misunderstanding #1: The word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible, therefore it cannot be true.

(1) It’s true that the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible, but there are many biblical concepts which are not mentioned directly in Scripture. For example, the words “omniscience,” “omnipotence,” and “omnipresence,” are not found in the Bible, but we use them to describe the attributes of God. A specific word doesn’t have to be in the Bible in order for the concept it describes to be true.

B) Misunderstanding #2: Christians believe there are three Gods.

(1) Because Christians refer to the Father as God, the Son as God and the Holy Spirit as God, some people think Christians believe in three gods. This is not true! Christians believe in *one God who exists in three Persons*. Over the centuries, people have tried to come up with simple illustrations for the Trinity. There are limits to every illustration, but you may find some of them to be helpful. For example, God is NOT $1+1+1=3$, God is $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. St. Patrick is thought to have used the shamrock as an illustration of the Trinity: a leaf with one stem but 3 lobes.

C) Misunderstanding #3: Jesus is not God.

- (1) Jesus IS truly God. He accepted worship as God and claimed to deserve the same honor as the Father (Matt 14:33; 28:17–18; John 5:22–23; 9:38). He claimed to be the divine Son of God, a title the Jews rightly understood to be a claim to equality with God (John 5:17–18; 10:30–33; 19:7).

D) Misunderstanding #4: The Father, Son and Spirit are just different ways that God has revealed himself.

- (1) Not true. The Bible clearly shows that the Father, Son and Spirit are distinct Persons.
 - (a) The Father sends the Son (Gal 4:4; 1 John 4:14).
 - (b) The Father sends the Spirit (John 14:26).
 - (c) The Father and the Son count as two witnesses (John 5:31–37; 8:16–18).
 - (d) The Father and the Son glorify one another (John 17:1, 4–5) and the Spirit glorifies Jesus the Son (John 16:14).

4) What are some modern religious movements that deny the doctrine of the Trinity?

- A) Examples of major religious movements that deny the doctrine of the Trinity include the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormonism), the Unitarian Universalist Church, and Oneness Pentecostalism.
 - (1) Jehovah's Witnesses—they believe the doctrine of the Trinity has no explicit basis in Scripture, and they deny the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - (2) Mormons—they believe that the Godhead consists of three distinct beings who are one in purpose but not one in nature. Mormonism affirms the existence of many gods.
 - (3) Unitarians—they deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the deity of the Holy Spirit.
 - (4) Oneness Pentecostals—they believe that the Father, Son and Spirit are merely manifestations of a single God, not unique Persons within the Trinity.

