

In the *Bible Overview (OVE 100)*, we take a bird's eye view of God's Larger Story starting with *Beginnings* and concluding with *Restoration*.



In this series, we will delve deeper into God's Larger Missional Story through the following courses:

- *Introduction: Mission Defined* (INT 200)
- *Method: Divine Partnership* (MET 201)
- *Relevance: Mission for Today* (REL 202)
- *Motivation: Engaging the Mission* (MOT 203)

THE GOD OF MISSION

Genesis 1-2, Matthew 28:19; John 17:5; Romans 3:23

THE UNIFYING NATURE OF GOD

Since God's mission flows out of His fundamental nature and character as a relational being, a better understanding of Him will help us better understand the *work* and *goal* of His Mission. Although we can not fully comprehend God's nature and character, He does provide enough information in His Word to develop a good understanding of Him.

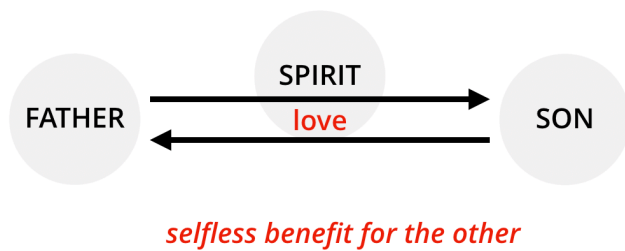
Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God..." Interestingly, the original Hebrew word for "God" in this phrase is *Elohim*, which is a plural form of the word for God. This continues throughout Genesis 1 and 2. As we peruse these two chapters, we find that pronouns and verb tenses referring to God are all in the singular. This indicates the unifying plurality nature of God. As we continue through the Bible, we see clear indicators that God exists as three

equal persons in substance, wholly united in their disposition toward each other, and united in their purpose for all things, including people. Jesus makes this unifying plurality nature of God clear in Matthew 28 when he instructs the Church to baptize His disciples in *the name* (singular) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Each of the persons of the Trinity are of the same substance and purpose that are unique only to them in all existence. Each of them belongs to the God-kind. Each has the complete attributes of the God-kind. Individually, each is God and, together, they form a unifying God-kind that is unlike anything else in existence.

THE RELATIONALITY OF GOD

When considering that God existed before creation, the question comes to mind, "What was He doing before creation?" Although the Bible does not speak to this explicitly, Jesus' prayer in John 17:5 seems to give a clue. There was a glory that Jesus had with the Father before the world existed and He was praying for the Father to restore Him to this former glory. Whatever this *glory* is, we know that, because of sin, all people fall short of that same glory (Romans 3:23). This begs the question, "What glory did Jesus have with the Father before the world existed that He did not experience fully in the flesh, but to which He was looking forward to being restored?"

When putting all the pieces together, this *glory* seems to be connected deeply to relationship. The only thing that existed before creation was the personal relationships between the Father and the Son and the Spirit. In this relational dynamic, the Father's love was always being directed toward the Son in deep, personal, experiential, in-his-presence kind of ways. In addition, the Son's love was always being directed back to the Father in the same way. Sin was not a barrier, distance was not a barrier, and distraction was not a barrier. The Father and the Son each had the same personal Spirit who was THE carrier, personalizer, and distributor



of the love between the Father and the Son.

This relational love was and is and will always be outgoing from each toward the other for the benefit of the other. I propose Jesus was praying for the restoration of this unhindered relational glory with the Father.

It's from this relational dynamic within the Trinity that all of creation was brought forth. It's from this relational dynamic that God defined and initiated His mission. Therefore, the mission must be inherently relational!

CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD AND MISSION

John 8:28-29, 12:49, 14:31; 1 John 4:8; Genesis 1:26-27

As mentioned above, the goal of God's mission is to have the earth filled with His image bearers who are deeply loving one another through ongoing relational dependence on Him. Jesus modeled this in His earthly ministry. He was under the direct authority of the Father for all that He did and spoke. He would often go off and pray to the Father, demonstrating His relational dependence on the Father. It was from this intimate relational dynamic between Jesus and the Father through the Spirit that Jesus put the Father's love on display as He ministered to the deep needs of others.

When we consider the relational nature of God within the Trinity,