

# FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

## The Nicene Creed 325

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

## 1. God is *Three* Persons

*The personhood of each member of the Trinity means that each person has a distinct center of consciousness.*

*Thus, they relate to each other personally—the Father regards the Son and Holy Spirit as “You”. Likewise the Son regards Himself as “I”, but the Father and the Holy Spirit as “You”.<sup>12</sup> (Matt Perman)*

- *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)*
- *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)*
- *...But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)*
- *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)*
- *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 have said to you. (John 14:26)*
- *And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:27)*
- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)*
- *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)*

How can a right understanding of the 3 Persons of the Trinity strengthen our intimacy with God?

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<sup>12</sup>Matt Perman, “What is the Doctrine of the Trinity?”

How can a right understanding of the 3 Persons of the Trinity strengthen our missional activity?

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## 2. Each Person is Fully God (The Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit)

### The Deity of the Father

- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)*
- *Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. (Matthew 6:9)*
- *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)*
- *Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." (John 6:27)*
- *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:29)*
- *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come... this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:1-3)*
- *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... (Ephesians 1:3)*
- *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1)*

### The Deity of the Son

The belief in the deity of Christ is derived directly from statements concerning Him in the Bible. The references are so many and their meaning so plain, that Christians of every shade of opinion have always regarded its affirmation as an absolute and indispensable requisite of their faith.<sup>13</sup> (F. F. Bruce)

- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)*
- *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)*
- *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27-28)*
- *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7)*
- *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Colossians 2:9-10)*
- *...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:2-3)*
- *But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom." (Hebrews 1:8)*

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<sup>13</sup>F.F. Bruce & W.J. Martin, *The Deity of Christ*. (Manchester: North of England Trust, 1964), 24.

## The Deity of the Spirit

He is not a lesser or different kind of Being than God the Father or God the Son. The Spirit is God...This is vital to remember. When we forget about the Spirit, we really are forgetting God.<sup>14</sup> (Francis Chan)

- Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (**Matthew 28:19**)
- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (**Genesis 1:1-2**)
- 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 men but to God." (**Acts 5:3-4**)
- ...For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (**1 Corinthians 2:10-11**)
- Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (**1 Corinthians 3:16**)

How can a right understanding of the full deity of each Person of the Trinity strengthen our intimacy with God?

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How can a right understanding of the full deity of each Person of the Trinity strengthen our missional activity?

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### 3. There is One God (Monotheism)

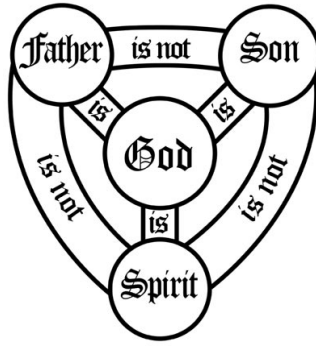
Scripture is abundantly clear that there is one and only one God. The three different persons of the Trinity are one not only in person and in agreement on what they think, but they are one in essence, one in their essential nature. In other words, God is only one being. There are not three Gods. There is only one God.<sup>15</sup> (Wayne Grudem)

- Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (**Deuteronomy 6:4**)
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. (**Isaiah 45:5-6**)
- And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one. (**Zechariah 14:9**)
- And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (**John 17:3**)
- Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one. (**1 Corinthians 8:4**)
- For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (**1 Timothy 2:5**)
- You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (**James 2:19**)

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<sup>14</sup>Francis Chan and Danae Yankoski. *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 238.



How can a right understanding of the *oneness of God* strengthen our intimacy with him?

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How can a right understanding of the *oneness of God* strengthen our missional activity?

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**What are the gospel implications of the Doctrine of the Trinity?**

1. God the Father *wills* salvation
2. God the Son *accomplishes* the will of the Father
3. God the Holy Sprit *applies* the finished work of the Son

*God is triune; there are within the Godhead three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and the work of salvation is one in which all three act together; the Father purposing redemption, the Son securing it and the Spirit applying it.*<sup>16</sup> (J. I. Packer)

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*When God designed the great and glorious work of recovering fallen man, and the saving of sinners, to the praise of the glory of his grace, he appointed, in his infinite wisdom, two great means thereof: The one was the giving his Son for them, and the other was the giving his Spirit to them. And hereby was way made for the manifestation of the glory of the whole blessed Trinity; which is the utmost end of all the works of God.*<sup>17</sup>

John Owen

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<sup>16</sup>J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20.

<sup>17</sup>John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 3. (Philadelphia: The Leighton Publications, 1862), 23.