

Doctrine

The Trinity

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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Good morning. Good morning. Today we are kicking off a new sermon series titled "Doctrine." And I know, even when I say the word "doctrine," that is not, like, a word that gets us all stoked. Maybe you're thinking, "Well, attendance was getting a little high; this should thin us out," you know? When we hear this word, you might think of a classroom setting or maybe some thick theology book.

I think of maybe two Christians arguing on Facebook, and both of them have way too much time on their hands. But the word "doctrine," it comes from a Latin word meaning "a teaching" or "to teach." And so Christian doctrine, it's the core body of teachings or beliefs from the Bible that define the Christian faith.

And so over this series, we're going to be looking at topics like the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; humanity; salvation; the Church; the last things. Fairview Missionary Church is part of a denomination called the Missionary Church, and the Missionary Church has listed out their core doctrinal beliefs from Scripture in something called the Articles of Faith.

So in your bulletin today, you'll see a QR code that you can scan with your smartphone that will take you to our website, to a page that has the Articles of Faith listed. If you're in YouVersion using the sermon notes, there's a link to that page as well. But I want to begin this morning by reading the introduction of that document and help set the stage for this entire series.

This is how the introduction reads: "The Bible tells one grand unified story, a true account of the lavish and relentless love of a holy God." It's a drama in four acts: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. It calls us not simply to be spectators, but to respond with living faith.

God calls us to believe, placing our trust in Him, personally committing ourselves to Him, and accepting the truth of the Gospel. He calls us to embrace certain truths that define us as a believing community and then embody those truths in how we live. "We must speak, then, of what we believe" the Articles of Faith" and how we should then live," which is a separate document known as the Articles of Practice.

"As the Missionary Church, we affirm the core truths of the Gospel, and then we enact those truths as a family of churches in Christian community, committed to love God fully, to love our neighbors truly, and to carry out the great commission for God's glory and the salvation of the world." What I want you to see before we ever get into this sermon series is that beliefs and actions have to be connected.

We've all met someone who has a lot of knowledge about God, and then their mean is dirt. They could tell you ten things that Jesus thinks is wrong with your life, and then their life looks nothing like the kingdom of heaven that Jesus described in the Beatitudes. We've seen people on the opposite side. We're always trying to live with passion for God, but they don't spend any time studying what is true.

They might tell you something like, "You know, being a Christian is not about Bible study. It's not about knowing a list of things. It's about loving God, loving people, and just following the Holy Spirit." And so their lives are marked by this passion. But unfortunately, great passion over time can become great passion for something

other than the one true God of the Bible, as He's revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures. It's not one or the other.

It's both. I want to give you an example. Imagine that I need to get from Angola, Indiana, to Fort Wayne, Indiana. There's a life-saving procedure, and we've got to get me there now. And so I work hard on getting all the details right. I'm thinking to myself, "Okay, I'm looking this up on Google Maps, and I've got my phone on my little magnetic stand here, and I've checked the gas gauge.

Yep, we've got enough gas, and yep, I've got enough time to get there if I leave now ." And then I hop in the car and I just sit there. I just sit in my car in the driveway, feeling quite happy that I have all my details together. It doesn't matter. I didn't go anywhere. I didn't make it to my destination, even though I had all the right details. The opposite could be true. Maybe I say, " You know what? I'm never going to get there if I don't drive." So this time, I hop in the car, I turn it on, I throw it in gear, and I'm pedal to the metal.

And I'm pretty sure I know the way because someone had said, " You know, take Highway 69 to Fort Wayne." And so I'm cooking. I'm swerving. I'm going to get there. But in my haste, I get on 69 going north. It doesn't matter how fast I drive, how urgently I am to make this journey. I'm going the wrong direction. I won't make it to my destination. My actions need correct information.

It's very possible to be passionately and honestly totally missing the point. Beliefs and actions are a package deal. And so we should, as a church, care about growing in our knowledge and understanding of the truth. And then we, as a church, should be deeply committed to living that out with one another into a lost and dying world.

And so my prayer through this series, each and every week as we study this truth, is that we would grow in our knowledge and understanding. But every week, my hope is that you would ask this question: "Holy Spirit, how should I then live? What do I do with this?" In our time together today, we're going to begin this series with the topic of the Trinity. But before we begin, I just want to take a moment and pray, and let's ask the Lord for His wisdom.

Lord, we thank You that though You are beyond us and above us, God, You have made Yourself known to us. We will never fully comprehend who You are, and yet, God, we love to learn more who You've revealed Yourself to be. I pray that Your Holy Spirit would give us wisdom as we study today, that You would open our hearts and our minds to receive that which at times can be difficult.

We love You. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. So today we're talking about the Trinity. The Trinity, Trinity is a word we use in Christianity to describe God's triune nature. What do I mean by that? Triune, it's got the Latin prefix " tri," meaning three, and then " unus," meaning one. And so the doctrine of the Trinity is this belief that God is three in one.

The word Trinity is never used in the Scriptures. And so many critics of this doctrine will say, "Hey, if the word Trinity is never used, is that just kind of a later twisting of the biblical truth? Is this just something we've made up to help ourselves feel better?" I want to give you the example, though, of gravity. Long before anyone called it gravity, people were still falling on their faces.

There was a reality that we then put a name to, to describe in our understanding. The Scriptures are full of the work of the Trinity. The reality is there: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I want to read for you as we begin two specific passages where we see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all in the same passage together, just to give us a glimpse to say.

Jesus, after His resurrection, He's commissioning His disciples to go out, and He says this to them in 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." Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity. Another example happens earlier on in the book of Matthew, and this is at Jesus' baptism.

We read this in Matthew 3:16 and 17. It says, "As soon as Jesus, the Son, was baptized, He went up out of the water. And at that moment, heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God," the Holy Spirit," descending like a dove and alighting on Him.

And a voice," the Father," from heaven said,' This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'" The word of the Trinity, the word "the Trinity" is not found in the Scriptures, but that does not mean that "the Trinity" is not found in the Scriptures. It's just a word we use to describe what is true. So we're going to be talking about the reality of the Trinity this morning.

I want to begin now by reading the Missionary Church Articles of Faith about the triune God. It says this: "We believe in one God, eternally existing in three divine persons, equal in power and glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the creator and sustainer of all things.

His divine qualities, including love, holiness, justice, righteousness, faithfulness, infinite knowledge and power, self-existence, and omnipresence, they all harmonize perfectly in the unity of His being." Let's break this down in segments. Let's make it a little easier, bite-sized chunks. "We believe in God, in one God, eternally existing in three divine persons, equal in power and glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." As Christians, we believe in one God.

I don't care what the latest Muslim YouTuber will try and say, "Oh, those Christians, they believe in three gods." Maybe the Orthodox Jews that say, "Oh, they've got multiple gods. We've got one God." We do not serve three gods as Christians. Deuteronomy 6: 4 says, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." The God of the Bible is the one true God.

He's singular in His essence or being. And the one true God has eternally existed in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So we all ask the question: How can someone be singular in their essence or being and then eternally exist as three persons? When we say being or essence, we're talking about the what something is.

When we say person, we're talking about the who someone is. Give you the example of a chair in this room. That chair has being. It's real. You could sit on it. It's there. And yet it doesn't have personhood, doesn't have agency and rights. I am a human. I'm real. I'm a being. And yet I am Sam. I have personhood.

The one God of the Bible, in His essence, is one, and He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this is tough. This is tough to wrap our minds around. And I want to encourage you: don't get discouraged if you feel like, "What?" No human has or ever will fully comprehend the depths of who God is.

The finite, the creation is never going to fully wrap its mind around the infinite, the Creator. And yet God reveals Himself to us. He gives us these snapshots, these glimpses all throughout Scripture of this three-in-one nature. And throughout the Scriptures, we see the work of God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And so we do our best then, as finite humans, to describe that as He's revealed Himself to us.

It's important this morning that we also clarify: God has always been triune, three in one. We believe that God is eternal. He didn't have a beginning. He has no end. And that includes both the oneness of His nature, His essence, and the threeness of His person. God has eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's not like, "You know what?

We started with God the Father, and He decided,' You know what? I'm going to have a son.'" Now we have God the Son. And then they said," You know, let's add the Holy Spirit. Let's throw Him in the mix." God has forever been and will forever be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There's never been a time when the Father has existed without the Son and the Father and the Son without the Spirit. And the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they're equal.

They're equal in their power. They're equal in their glory. They're each fully and completely God. Sometimes, without even realizing it, we can begin to think of the different persons of the Trinity as greater or lower in

power and glory. But the Father is not more God than the Son. The Son is not more God than the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not somehow lesser in power and glory than the Son and the Father.

They're equally God in glory and power. And yet equality does not mean sameness. The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father. They're three distinct persons who share in one divine essence. And then Scripture then shows us how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they relate to one another distinctly, and they carry out distinct roles throughout creation.

We're going to begin to unpack those over the next three weeks if you come back. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let's continue reading. "God is the creator and sustainer of all things. God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the singular creator and sustainer of everything.

Creation and providence, they're the one work of the triune God ." The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they're not three separate creators doing different pieces of work. And yet Scripture does reveal distinct ways in which they each function within creation. We're going to unpack that over the next three weeks. We read on.

"His divine qualities, including love, holiness, justice, righteousness, faithfulness, infinite knowledge and power, self - existence, and omnipresence, they all harmonize perfectly in the unity of His being." In other words, we don't divide up the qualities of God between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The qualities belong to one God.

It's not like, "Okay, God the Father is righteous and just, and He's kind of always a little ticked off. God the Son, He's loving and He's faithful, and so He's always like, ' Oh, don't be so upset.' And the Holy Spirit? No, we don't talk about the Holy Spirit." No. God the Father is loving. God the Son is loving. God the Holy Spirit is loving. God the Father is holy. God the Son is holy. God the Holy Spirit is holy.

The Father is righteous and just. The Son is righteous and just. The Holy Spirit is righteous and just. You can take this whole list: love, holiness, justice, righteousness, faithfulness, infinite knowledge and power, self - existence, and omnipresence, and apply these divine attributes fully to each of the three persons of the Trinity. They're not qualities of three separate gods.

They're the attributes of the one true God who has eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So some deep truth to try and wrap our minds around. So you may begin to ask the question: Why is the doctrine of the Trinity important? I'm glad you asked. Let's discuss a few reasons that the Trinity is truly essential to the Christian faith.

Number one, the Trinity reveals that love has existed eternally within God's very being. Scripture tells us that God is love. And love requires relationship. You have the subject, the one who loves. And then you have the object, the one who is being loved. There's relationship, affection, self - giving in love.

And throughout the Bible, we do read that God loves us. That's wonderful. I don't mean to downplay that this morning, but I want you to understand something even more important. God's love did not begin with creation. God didn't create humanity because He was lonely. God didn't create the world so He could finally have someone to love.

Before there was a universe, before there were angels, before there was humanity, before anything existed other than God, God was already love. Because God has eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And in that perfect relationship, there is the loving affection of His being. Love belongs eternally to who God is.

And so that means when God loves us, He's not becoming something new. He's expressing towards you and me something that has eternally been a part of who He is. God was love before creation. So this means if you and I want to truly understand what is love, how do I love, we have to know God as He's revealed Himself to be: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Number two, the Trinity is essential to the Gospel. It's not some side theological issue that Christians just kind of disagree on. The Trinity is woven right into the Gospel narrative all throughout Scripture. The Father, the Son,
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and the Holy Spirit, they're each essential to the good news of salvation. There's no Gospel without God the Father sending the Son. There's no Gospel without God the Son. There's no Gospel without God the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is one work of the triune God. And yet Scriptures do show us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they're distinct in the way they function in salvation. The Father sends the Son. The Son lives and dies and rises again to defeat the power of sin and death. And the Holy Spirit becomes the one who makes us a new creation as we place our faith in Jesus and then dwells within us to make us into the likeness of Jesus.

And we're going to unpack how they distinctly operate in salvation over the next three weeks. But they're not carrying out three separate salvation plans. It's one God accomplishing one work of redemption as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not some optional doctrine that you can choose to believe or not believe and still claim to worship the one true God of the Scriptures and to have the good news of Jesus Christ.

It's at the very center of who God is. It's at the very center of the good news of the Gospel. So this morning, then we ask: What do we do with this? As we close, I want to encourage you with two main categories that should move us to action as a church. The first is truth matters. Commit to knowing and growing in the truth.

If you want to know God more, you have to commit to learning who He's revealed Himself to be. Fall in love with God's Word. Make it a part of your personal life. Make it something that you do collectively with other believers. Get to know it. Read it. Love it. Love God. Study the map so you don't find yourself passionately going in the wrong direction, thinking all the while that you're doing the right thing.

Truth matters. Commit yourself to the family of believers. The enemy loves to separate people from Christian fellowship because there's moments where we need each other in the truth. We need someone to say, "Hey, have you thought about this verse?" Sometimes we're confused about the meaning of something. When we come together as a family of believers, we can grow in our understanding of the truth.

The enemy also loves to keep us out of Christian fellowship because then you are just one emotional moment, one life crisis, one mood change away from being way in left field in your faith. But when you have a family of believers that you're living with, you're doing life with, there's collective strength and wisdom. I want to give you a specific caution this morning as we talk about truth matters.

If a so-called church or person does not affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, they do not worship the one true God. They might say, "You know what? I love the God of the Bible ." They might say, "I'm all about loving God and loving people ." They'll say, "I have faith ." That faith is not a way to salvation. I want to give you some real practical examples here.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the Mormons, they believe that Heavenly Father is the supreme God and Father, but they deny the eternal and equal lordship of Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They deny the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not worship the one true God. I can't put that any more clearly to you.

There is no salvation in the teaching of the Mormon Church. This is going to sound blunt, but it's ultimately the work of Satan. Masquerading as an angel of light. Run. Run from that. Jehovah's Witnesses, who believe that Jehovah alone is Almighty God and that Jesus is just a created being and that the Holy Spirit is just kind of God's active force. He doesn't have distinct personhood.

They deny the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not worship the one true God. There's no true salvation in the teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses. It is ultimately a work of Satan. Masquerading as an angel of light. And you might say, "Man, that's really harsh ." We all know people.

Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, really nice people that will tell you, "I just want to love God, and I want to love others." And they live moral lives, and they're good neighbors. They're good people. But it goes back to our first point of truth and action. You can be very, very sincerely and passionately going the wrong direction and not headed towards the truth. It matters to know the truth.

Satan is okay if you are a passionate person about loving others and being a great neighbor as long as you totally miss knowing and being transformed by the one true God. And so he loves to bring this deceit so that we find ourselves not arriving at our true destination. Truth matters. Number two, you were made for love and relationship.

First, to love and know God, and second, to love and know others. Scripture says that we're made in the image of God, the one God who is love. Your capacity to truly love others will never be greater than your love for God. What do I mean by that?

I think all of us in this room could say, "I don't think that's true because there's plenty of times where I have loved something or someone more than my walk with Jesus." Yes, you can prioritize people or things in your life more than your relationship with God, but true love, true love, it flows from God's being. And so to truly love one another, it must first flow from the work of God in your life.

You want to truly love your husband or wife? Fall deeply in love with the Lord. You want to truly love your kids more? Be impacted by who God is in your life more. The more you're impacted by the love of God personally, the greater your capacity to share that with the people around you will be. I want to encourage you, if you're here this morning and you've never begun a relationship with the one true God of the Bible, I want you to know God loves you.

The Father sent His Son to live and die for your sin and my sin. And He was raised on the third day, and He offers the free gift that if you place your faith in Him, God the Holy Spirit will make you a new creation, and you can know the one true God. You can grow in love and truth.

John 3:16 - 18 says this: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they've not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

You can be free from condemnation. You can know the one true God. If you feel the Lord stirring on your heart this morning, that's not because of the message. That's not specifically because of the music. That's because God the Holy Spirit is working in your life. He's illuminating your heart to the reality of His love for you, and He wants to make you a new creation. Today's the day. You don't have to wait.

We would love to pray with you and walk with you through that decision and then stand by you in the days to come as you grow in truth and practice. Members of our prayer team will be at the sides of the stage. There's staff that will be here after the service. We would love to pray with you. There is no embarrassment. There is no shame about making that decision. It's the best decision you could ever make. You may also be here this morning and you say, "You know what?

I have a faith relationship with Jesus. I've been made a new creation by the Holy Spirit, and I'm trying to grow in that, but I'm hurting." Something that happened in your life, in your marriage, in your family, in your relationships this week, you just say, "I'm coming with a heavy heart today. And I want to learn. I want to grow, but I also need just someone to hug me, to pray with me, to encourage me." We would love to pray with you as well. It doesn't have to be just a first-time faith decision.

That could be with the members of the prayer team. That could be with someone close to you who you know, who maybe has some context of what you're walking through. Don't miss the blessing of the family of believers today. Let's close our time in prayer this morning. Lord, thank you, thank you, thank you that You love us. And yet, God, it's not dependent on us.

You were loved before we were ever brought into being. I thank You for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross that we could have new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, today, for those who You're stirring in their hearts, would You just give them the boldness to say yes? God, pull the

blinders off our eyes in the categories of our own lives, in the categories of our culture where the enemy would seek to just twist it just a little bit.

We don't want to passionately be driving in the wrong direction. God, we want to know the truth, and we want to live in the truth. Help us these coming weeks as we unpack this further. In Jesus' name, amen.