



SERMON REFLECTION GUIDE

Christian Doctrine, Part 1: God Exists (The Doctrine of the Trinity) - Genesis 1:1
August 16, 2026

SERMON OUTLINE

Intro - big books that no one ever reads, assuming we know more than we do, and how ignorance becomes contagious and then dangerous.

When it comes to a Christian's understanding of God, a *generic* God sooner or later becomes a *shadowy* God which sooner or later becomes a *fictional* God.

Without the biblical definition of the Christian God, "*only the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.*" - John Calvin

God According to Biblical, Historical Christian Doctrine

A. God is Absolute

- He is *self-existent, self-sufficient, self-revelatory, immutable, fundamental, and eternal*.
- He possesses within himself all of his divine attributes to the highest degree of perfection.
- When we think of God's *goodness, power, wisdom, holiness, righteousness, love, justice, wrath, etc.*, we know that he is not made up of these attributes - but contains each to a complete perfection.
- Ps. 147:5, Prov. 21:30, Is. 43:11-15, Rom. 1:20, 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:15-16, Acts 17:24-26

B. God is Personal

- He is a *living* God who *thinks, chooses, speaks, and acts intentionally* towards others.
- *Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it, yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.* - Deuteronomy 10:14-15
- *If anything is to exist at all, then the original thing must be, not a principle nor a generality, much less and 'ideal' or a 'value', but an utterly concrete fact.*" - CS Lewis
- Already, we rule out *atheism, agnosticism, polytheism, deism, pantheism*.

C. God is Trinity

- Only God's Triune nature accounts for the combo of his absolute-ness and personal-ness.
- "Try to deny the Trinity, and you will lose your soul. Try to explain the Trinity and you will lose your mind." - Unknown
- *We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.* - Athanasian Creed
- Gen. 1:1, 26; Num. 6:24-26; Is. 48:16; Mark 1:10-11; Matt. 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14
- Common Trinitarian Heresies
 - *Polytheism* - denying the singular essence of God, viewing Trinity as three separate gods.
 - *Arianism* - denying the eternal nature of Christ, thinking the Son was a created being.
 - *Modalism* - denying the three persons, thinking God changes one expression for another

D. God is Love

- God is *relational* in his very nature, meaning that love and loving relationships are part of the fabric of reality, proceeding from God's fundamental existence.
- Trinitarian Salvation in *Ephesians 1:3-14*:
 - The Father *predestines*, the Son *redeems*, the Spirit *seals*
- *"We do not hold the doctrine of the Trinity because it is self-evident or logically cogent. We hold it because God has revealed that this what he is like"* - Millard Erickson



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When you think about God, what are the most common characteristics that come to mind? Are those biblical attributes or simply abstract descriptions?
2. What are the dangers of only believing in a generic God that you cannot describe in any concrete way?
3. When you think about God being *absolute* - how does that make him different from us as human creatures? For example, does he ever have to choose between exercising grace and justice?
4. Why is it important to acknowledge that God is both absolute and personal? What are the dangers of leaning too far in either direction?
5. Read the excerpt from the Athanasian Creed that is printed above in the outline - does that make sense to you? If not, what question would you ask?
6. Which person of the Trinity are you most familiar with? Which person are you least familiar with?
7. How can we speak of attributes that distinguish the Father, Son, and Spirit? What about essential attributes that each of the three shares?
8. What role does each person of the Trinity play in the drama of human salvation?