



God the Glorious Trinity

John 14:1-31

By Thomas L. Trevethan

We believe in the only true God, the almighty Creator of all things, existing eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, full of love and glory.

This intimate dialogue in [John 14:1-31](#) between Jesus and his disciples takes place on the night of his betrayal and under the approaching shadow of his death on the cross. Read [John 14:1-14](#) aloud. Because it is a dialogue, consider assigning parts to Jesus, Thomas, Phillip and Judas.

1. Jesus begins by calming the disciples (v. 1). What was troubling them? Look at [John 13:33-38](#) for Jesus' statements that may have created anxiety for them.
2. Jesus' instructions in John 14 divide naturally into two segments: vv. 1-14 and vv. 15-30. What is distinctive about each section? What similarities can you notice? What title might you give to each section to summarize its theme and remind you of these verses?
3. What *promises* did Jesus make to his troubled disciples to comfort them? How do these promises comfort you today?
4. What *challenges* did Jesus give his disciples (vv. 15-24)?
 - What is the relationship between love and obedience in this chapter?
 - Why is this challenge particularly important for the future of these disciples?
 - How can these verses make a difference in your InterVarsity chapter or church?
5. In this chapter, what *statements* did Jesus make about his identity? Where in the text are these claims found? How would you summarize them?
6. Look through the entire chapter and observe the relationship between Jesus and the Father.
 - What does the Father do?
 - What does Jesus do?
 - How are they distinct from another?
 - What do they do that is a simultaneous action? Write down your observations.
 - How do the statements in v. 28 and 30 compare with the statements in vv. 1, 7, 9 and 10? It could appear that Jesus is less divine than the Father when he says "the Father is greater than I" or "I do exactly what my Father has commanded me?" When you consider all of these verses together, how would you describe the relationship between the Father and the Son?
7. Jesus focuses on teaching his disciples about the Holy Spirit in vv. 15-30. Observe everything you can about the identity and deeds of the Holy Spirit in these verses.
 - What statements indicate that the Spirit is a Person and not a thing or a force?
 - If the Spirit is a Person, does that indicate that "he" is, therefore, less than fully God?

- In what ways does the text indicate and suggest that the Spirit is indeed fully divine? Write down your observations.
8. Review the whole chapter and summarize your observations about the relationship between the Father and the Spirit and between Jesus and the Spirit. Again, write down these observations.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

In discussing the doctrine of the Trinity, Gerald Bray writes:

“The Christian doctrine of the Trinity did not emerge from some kind of philosophical speculation about God, but from the realities of the Christian spiritual experience of him. From the beginning, that experience was definitive for the new faith, and so it has remained ever since. To confess God as a Trinity is to worship him in our hearts, as those hearts are stirred by the Spirit of the Son, crying, “*Abba! Father!*” ([*God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*](#), p. 84)

- How is the truth about the Trinity related to your mission on campus? Think specifically about the promises and challenges of John 14.
- How should the knowledge that God is a Holy Trinity shape the way you pray?
 - How might this awareness direct your praise to “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in glory everlasting?”
 - How are the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit involved in your prayers? To whom do we address our petitions?

Spend time praying together and worship God in his greatness, mystery, and tri-personal reality. Sing a hymn of praise to the Trinity, such as the familiar hymn, [“Holy, Holy, Holy.”](#) Claim the promises of John 14, especially [vv. 12-14](#), as you plan to lead your fellowship. Seek the love and obedience that mark the disciples of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of the Father.

GOING DEEPER

Defining the Doctrine of the Trinity: Notice that questions 5-8 above introduce the main aspects of the Trinity, which can be summarized in the following statements:

The whole Bible teaches and assumes that there is one Creator God whose majesty and glory necessarily exceeds our greatest human capacities to understand. The knowledge of God revealed in the Bible is true, but all of those truths lead us to an awe-filled mystery before the uncreated greatness of the Most High God.

- In the Bible, especially in the New Testament, we encounter three distinct, fully divine persons, all of whom are worthy of our praise and worship.
- These three persons in the one God relate to one another in the fullness of eternal love.

- The three persons have differing and distinctive roles and works in achieving the salvation of sinners.

Discussion Questions:

- Which of these doctrinal truths are clearly raised and discussed by Jesus in John 14? Which ones are only alluded to or briefly mentioned?
- Which doctrinal truths are not mentioned at all in John 14? How do you account for this absence?

Other Scripture passages that will supplement your understanding of the Trinity:

- Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 1:10-11; John 1:1-3,14; Isaiah 11:1-4, 61:1-2; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Colossians 1:15-20, Acts 5:3-4, Titus 3:4, Hebrews 1:1-4.

TOOLS FOR FURTHER GROWTH

Michael Reeves, [*Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*](#), InterVarsity Press, 2012. Here is a rich and enjoyable portrayal of the basic beliefs of Christianity that opens up the profound and life-changing truths of our faith.

Brian Edgar, [*The Message of the Trinity*](#), InterVarsity Press, 2002. This excellent survey of the whole Bible expounds the main passages relevant to the conviction that the living God is triune.

[*God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*](#), ed. Timothy George (Baker, 2006). A collection of essays written by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant scholars that demonstrates the centrality of the Trinity to the entire Christian tradition and considers some of the contemporary challenges to this foundational Christian teaching and conviction.

Gerald L. Bray, [*The Doctrine of God*](#) (InterVarsity Press, 1993). Bray addresses the full range of the doctrine of God, but he focuses his exposition on the Tri-unity of God in a wonderfully insightful way. This is a tremendous resource for more advanced study.

Listen to a three-part audio series on [Enjoying the Trinity](#) by Michael Reeves at [Theology Network](#).