

“God Is”—Trinity: One of Two Central Christian Mysteries, Part 2
ECO Essential Tenets Study for BYF - July 12, 2026
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1. Announcements and Prayer

2. Review of June 28 Lesson on “God Speaks—Scripture: The Authority for Our Confession”

- Defining the Trinity’s terminology and language to better understand
- Discussing the evidence for the Trinity in Scripture and the early church’s life

3. Today’s Lesson on the Trinity:

- Characteristics or Attributes of God
- Analogies/mistakes/errors/heresies of importance (especially the really fun ones)

4. Reading Section II.A, ECO Essential Tenets, from *Trinity and Incarnation: The Two Central Christian Mysteries*

The triune nature of God is the first great mystery of the Christian faith. **With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is both one essence and three persons.** God is infinite, eternal, immutable, impassible, and ineffable. He cannot be divided against Himself, nor is He becoming more than He has been, since there is no potential or becoming in Him. He is the source of all goodness, all truth and all beauty, of all love and all life, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. The three persons are consubstantial with one another, being both coeternal, and coequal, such that there are not three gods, nor are there three parts of God, but rather three persons within the one Godhead. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father, and the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. All three persons are worthy of worship and praise.

God has no need of anyone or anything beyond Himself. Yet in grace this Triune God is the one Creator of all things. The ongoing act of creation is further manifested in God’s gracious sovereignty and providence, maintaining the existence of the world and all living creatures for the sake of His own glory. He is the Holy One, the ground of all being, whose glory is so great that for us to see Him is to die. Yet He has made the creation to reflect His glory, and He has made human beings in His own image, with a unique desire to know Him and capacity for relationship with Him. Since our God is a consuming fire whom we in our sin cannot safely approach, He has approached us by entering into our humanity in Jesus Christ.

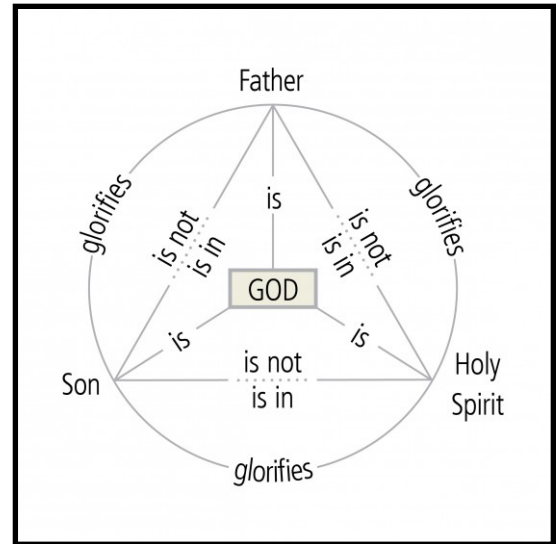
5. Characteristics or Attributes of God:

- Communicable: We can mirror or reflect these to some degree as part of being created in God’s image
 - Goodness, Truth, Beauty
 - Love and Life
 - Holiness, Mercy, Grace, Justice
- Incommunicable: We cannot mirror or reflect these
 - Infinite, Eternal, Self-existent
 - Immutable, Impassible, Ineffable
 - Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent

6. Analogies and Their Issues (and they all have them)

- H₂O as ice, water, and steam (can’t exist separately)
- Egg as shell, white, and yolk (unequal members)

- Sun as star, heat, light (heat and light come from star)
- Clover as three leaves and one stem (leaves can't exist independently from stem)
- Man as son, husband, father (like one person just with different relationships: son to parents, husband to wife, father to children, but can't be all three in relation to same person at same time)
- Mind as memory, understanding, will (Augustine: better in some ways from others)
 - To remember something, must understand and choose to remember
 - To understand something, must remember and choose to understand
 - To choose something, must remember and understand it



7. Main Heresies about the Trinity:

- Modalism:
 - God is in some way in three “modes”
 - Historically (first Creator, then Redeemer, now Sustainer), so can't be Creator and Redeemer at same time
 - Practically (only the Father creates, only the Son saves, only the Spirit sustains)
- Arianism
 - Named for chief proponent, Arius
 - Son first and best creation of the Father: Arius couldn't handle Jesus as fully God, fully human at same time
 - Jesus not eternal and pre-existent, but subordinate and bound by time
 - Same with Holy Spirit: created power and ability but not fully divine
 - Nearly won the day in early church battles: reason for Nicene Creed
- Unitarianism (one God without Jesus) and its related Subordinationism (if there's a Jesus, He's always a step lower—like powerful archangel figure, as in Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism)
- Polytheism (many gods—in Hinduism, pagan religion, and Mormonism)

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Think about the “communicable” attributes of God listed in the bullet points for #5. (Communicable means we can show them in our lives to some degree). Which one seems most needed for us to show to others and why?
- Of the “incommunicable” attributes of God listed in #5, which one seems most abstract or removed? Why is it important that God exhibits this attribute anyway?
- Of the analogies given that are used to explain the Trinity, which one would you use with a teenager? Why?
- How does modalism fall short in defining the Trinity? Why do you think this is true?
- What happens to your Christianity if Jesus is the way Arianism describes him?

8. Closing Prayer

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| July 19 | “God Comes Near“ | <i>Incarnation: One of Two Central Christian Mysteries Part 1</i> |
| July 26 | “God Comes Near” | <i>Incarnation: One of Two Central Christian Mysteries Part 2</i> |
| August 2 | “God Saves” | <i>God's Grace in Christ</i> |
| August 9 | “God Chooses/Sends” | <i>Election for Salvation and Service</i> |
| August 16 | “God Gathers” | <i>Covenant Life in the Church</i> |
| August 23 | “God Entrusts” | <i>Faithful Stewardship of All of Life</i> |
| August 30 | “God Forms” | <i>Living in Obedience to the Word of God</i> |
| September 6 | Stand-Alone Study | (Labor Day weekend) TBD |