

JULY 26, 2020

LESSON 8

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

THE UNITY OF GOD (JOHN 17:23)

One of the requirements for participating in an organized sport is wearing a uniform. Your Little Leaguer can't show up to the game without having put on his or her uniform and expect to play. That's just part of being on a sports team: everyone dresses the same.

The word "uniform" sounds a lot like the word "united," doesn't it? (They're derived from the same root.) People who are united have the same goals. They're part of the same team.

Jesus' Prayer for Unity

Christians may not all dress the same, but we're definitely on the same team: the Lord's team. A local church assembly doesn't require that everyone dress the same (that would be really strange), but being part of a church family definitely requires us to be united. It is so important that Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, prayed for the unity of all believers, wanting us to:

"become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:23).

In fact, our Lord went on to say this love between him and his Father existed "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

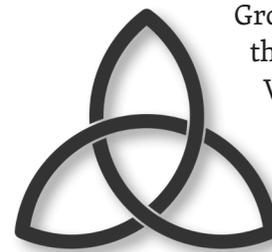
God is One

According to Deut 6:4, God is the one and only God. And yet, the Bible also tells us that Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God. How can God be one and yet be three different persons?

This is described by the term "trinity," which is never actually used in the Bible. But the concept of the trinity most certainly is. One of the easiest places to see it is in the Great Commission, when Jesus said people were to be baptized "in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**" (Matt 28:19). Paul frequently refers to all three members of the Godhead together, as in 2 Cor 13:14.

The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.

It is difficult for us to get our arms around the concept of the trinity for at least two reasons. One, people sometimes have the idea that the



Growing up, I used the New King James Version. On the cover of my NKJV was the triquetra (pronounced try-QWEE-truh), which is

Latin for "three-cornered." It is often used as a symbol for the Trinity.

We Are One

In John 10:30, Jesus said:

"I and the Father are one."

The Jews who heard this accused Jesus of blasphemy. They even intended to stone him to death (John 10:31). They knew that, by saying this, Jesus was claiming to be God.

John 16:13

When **the Spirit** of truth comes, **he** will guide you into all the truth, for **he** will not speak on **his** own authority, but whatever **he** hears **he** will speak, and **he** will declare to you the things that are to come.

The Holy Spirit is a person, not an “it.”

Holy Spirit is an “it”—but this is not true! The Holy Spirit is a “he” (see John 16:13). Also, the concept of three personalities being one in their essence is—mind boggling!

We’re talking about God here, though. God is Spirit (John 4:24); he is eternal and transcendent. We as humans are not going to fully understand everything about him and his nature. Fortunately, Scripture makes it clear that all three members of the Godhead are distinct personalities and yet one in their essence.

- All three members of the Godhead were present at creation (Gen 1:1-2; John 1:1-3).
- All three were present at Jesus’ baptism (Matt 3:13-17).
- All three share numerous divine attributes, including omniscience (Isa 40:13-14; John 2:24-25; 1 Cor 2:10-11).

God’s People Are One

As sons and daughters of God, we are to imitate our Father. This includes the characteristic of unity. We have so much in common:

- We are heirs of the same inheritance (Rom 8:15-17).
- We are all born of God (1 John 5:1).
- We are united in our faith (Eph 4:4-6; Jude 3).
- We are sharers in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Heb 6:4).

United in Purpose

Our church family must walk in lockstep with one another as we strive together for the gospel (Phil 1:27). Sometimes, churches have problems. People, after all, see things differently. This is why Paul tells us to strive to preserve unity among us (Eph 4:3).

United in Family

Because God is our Father, we are all each other’s brother or sister and members of the same household (Eph 2:19). This familial relationship is by God’s design. It binds us closer together than even our physical family connections (Luke 14:26). We are all, after all, going to receive the same inheritance from our Father (1 Pet 1:4).

United in Sharing

One of the most precious aspects of our unity is our care and concern for one another (Gal 6:10). We are servants of Christ, which means we are servants to one another. Paul says we should “outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom 12:10).

Of course, sometimes even physical families fight with each other. But imagine if we all had the same unity of spirit as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are so united together that they are one in their essence. This is what we as Christians must strive for.

1 Peter 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven **for you**.