

Bible Study:

Invitation to Oneness

The Trinity provides a model for unity.

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1. God has always existed as a Trinity: three distinct Persons contributing to one purpose. Even at creation, we see all three members involved. In Gen. 1:1, God the Father creates. In verse 2, what was the Holy Spirit doing? _____

2. What was the Son's role in creation?

Jn. 1:3 _____

Col. 1:16 _____

Heb. 1:2 _____

3. We see further evidence of the triune hand of God at work when the time comes to create man. In the following verse, circle the "surprising" pronouns God uses for Himself:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." —Gen. 1:26

4. When man fell, God again showed His triune nature. Circle the indication.

The LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." —Gen. 3:22

5. Did you see it? God, in reference to Himself, uses the plural pronouns *us* and *our*. However, God is also quite clear that He is not three gods. What does He affirm in the following passages?

Dt. 6:4 _____

Mk. 12:29-30 _____

6. We often focus on the commandment to love in these verses and skip over the affirmation that "God is one." Yet that statement from the Deuteronomy passage forms the beginning of the *Shema*, the centerpiece of Jewish prayer.

With this in mind, read Jn. 10:30. What might Jewish hearers have thought when they heard Jesus make this startling statement? (For a clue, keep reading through verse 33). _____

7. The fact that our God is three distinct Persons, yet one being, has implications for us. John 17:20-23 is a portion of Jesus' prayer to His Father just before the crucifixion. In it, what is Jesus' desire for us?

8. Jesus asks that His followers would experience the same kind of oneness with each other that He experiences with the Father: distinct persons, one being. What would this oneness among believers display (v. 23)?

9. This desire for unity—oneness among distinct persons—is not just found in Jesus' prayer in John. The Apostle Paul also pleads for unity among fellow Christians. Read Eph. 4:4-6 (note that all members of the Trinity make an appearance). What is Paul's rationale for asking for unity among the church?

10. The question remains, how do we live out this unity? Once again, relationships among the Trinity show us how. Read Phil. 2:1-11 and list the ways (vv. 3-7) that Paul tells us we can be "likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

11. How would these actions contribute to a unity of heart and purpose?

12. We've seen the value our triune God places on oneness among His people. We've seen some of the attitudes that lead to oneness. Now, consider your own experiences: When have you seen oneness in action among your fellow believers? For example, you might describe a time when you have seen fellow believers

- act with humility rather than ambition or conceit,
- consider others better than themselves,
- look to the interests of others or serve a fellow believer out of reverence for the Father.

13. This week, look for a way to demonstrate these attitudes that contribute to oneness. As you do, you'll be one of those who helps the world believe that the Father did indeed send the Son (Jn. 17:20-21).