

Good morning. So happy to see each of you here this morning.

Listen, you received on your way in this morning a, what I would call a program, and there's a lot of information on it. You're gonna need this today because on the back is a place to take notes with lots of notes. I'm going to be coming to you today as more of a professor than as a preacher. We're going to be tackling a huge subject for the next five weeks, it's the subject of who God is; it's the subject of the Trinity. This is heavy-duty stuff and I wanted to give you a place to write, take some notes and write down these verses, and to dig in it.

You'll notice in the top right hand corner of this, I'm hoping you'll take a look at this, lots of great stuff coming. The next four weeks here at Calvary it's just like bang, bang, bang! Better, better, better—amazing stuff. I wanted to mention this thing that says Ozzy's Overnighter. If you have teens or you are a teen, you're a junior high'er, senior high'er, you've gotta go to this. When my kids were in junior high and high school they loved this. Go carts, laser tag, tons of food, friends—make sure your kids sign up for this. One of the things that's really cool this year that the Student Ministries did, if your son or daughter brings someone that's never been to this church they get to come for free. That's a big deal. I believe we've had 20 or 24 already take us up on that offer, so I would encourage you to just make sure your kids, just sign them up for this. You can go onto the web—CFDowningtown.com—all these things

are right there in the front page, just keep on scrolling down until you get to them.

Michael Jr. is coming. Michael Jr. is a Christian comedian. This is big. This is someone that, you know, not just any church can get in. We're blown away that he's willing to come here and do a comedy night, two weeks from last night I believe. And he's doing two shows, 3 and 7 p.m., and again, you just gotta go on there and sign up. You have to pay for that. It's, this guy, I think I

Source: <https://www.cfdowningtown.com>

often times I'll mention it, it's just wonderful to have someone that gives clean comedy, there's so much to laugh at it and it doesn't have to go dirty. This guy is just on top of it. You will love him. He's someone you can bring your friends to and just, uh, I don't know about you but sometimes I just wish I could just have a night and just laugh, and that's this guy.

But please, right below that, I hate to bring all these up but it's just one thing after another, it's just phenomenal. The Women's Conference is coming up in October 12 & 13. Kelley Minter is a nationally known speaker that is just outstanding. Ladies, if you're not signed up, sign up.

I'm pumped today. Eighty-eight of our men are at the Men's Retreat, and be praying for them. I'm just so excited about that, it's just so cool.

So anyhow, lots of great stuff going on here. And October 14th we're gonna be having a baptism. If you've not been baptized, I would love to do that and baptize you that day.

In the seat in front of you is a card and it says on there, "You Belong Here." On the back side is a place to put your name, address, and phone number. If you're new here or never filled one these out, we'd love to connect with you. We want to get to know you so please let us know that you're here and let us

say hello to you and welcome you. I hope that you've already felt welcome coming in, free coffee and bagels. And for those of you joining us on the Internet live stream, welcome. So glad to have you here this morning. So it's a fun day and I'm glad that you're all part of us and doing this. By the way, if you want to get involved in something here at Calvary, just write it on this card and put your name and phone number on there and we will be in touch with you.

My son's off to college for his first year this year, he's picked a church where he's going at and he said to me this week, "Hey, Dad, uhm, how do you get involved at a church?" [Laughter] And when he said that to me it dawned on me that probably some of you feel like that. It's like, we probably have like the world's, you know, best musicians in this room that just figure the team is set, or you probably have some phenomenal people could do some amazing things with our kids or our teens, or you wish you could be a greeter out there. We need everyone in the body serving, so fill that out. Listen, I don't have time to keep talking about that stuff, just be involved in everything going on here. Fill this out, put it in the bucket when the offering comes around.

Listen, here's what we're doing, we're starting today a new series called GROUNDED. Three years ago I on Wednesday night spent 17 weeks going through every major doctrine of the Bible.¹ I would spend one hour just doing a lecture on each of these major areas of doctrine. It was phenomenally received and it has been watched over and over and over online, and I've had more requests than anything else we've ever done people saying, "Could we do that on Sunday morning?" Well, the problem is most people don't come here wanting a one-hour lecture on Sunday mornings, that sounds miserable, and Stephen would be bored, so I-I, you know [Laughter], I-I, so, and we love the worship and I just believe worshipping God is a key part of what we're doing. So what we're gonna do is instead of a one-hour lecture, I'm just gonna break up one topic over five weeks and we're gonna talk about it for the next five weeks. And so we're going to begin with the topic of who God is and the subject of the Trinity, and believe me, that is more than what we can cover in five weeks. This is going to lead into what I hope to be for each one of you the study of a lifetime because getting to know God should be our desire.

Listen to these words. Paul said these words to Timothy in 1st Timothy 4:16; he says:

¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

~ 1 TIMOTHY 4:16 (NIV)

Let me unpack that real quick. Last week we ended a series called FAMILY MATTERS; you talk about your life, I mean, how do you deal with kids and wives and husbands and aunts and uncles, moms and dads, and homes and work and all that kind of stuff. God says I have created a plan for you in all that stuff, I have written about that, I've talked about that. And so that's my life. And so we want when we talk in here on a weekend like this, we want this [the Bible] to connect with our life so that we can look in the mirror of the Bible and say, "How's my life doing?"

**KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON
ALL YOU DO AND THINK.**

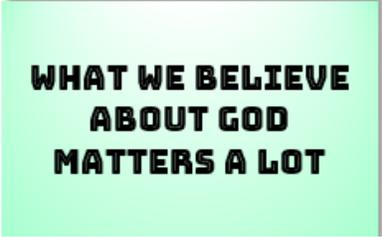
**STAY TRUE TO WHAT IS
RIGHT AND GOD WILL
BLESS YOU AND USE YOU
TO HELP OTHERS.**

~ 1 TIMOTHY 4:16 (TLB)

Then he says watch your doctrine closely, and the word doctrine just means teaching, what you're being taught. I don't know about you, I listen to a lot of podcasts. I listen to the little clips. My kids are constantly showing me memes. We're being constantly taught, right? There's teaching coming at us all the time. We can get tons and tons of teaching all the time—you gotta watch carefully what

¹ Doctrine 2015 teaching videos can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/cfdowntown/videos/page:20/sort:date> – page 20 contains Weeks 11-16; page 19 contains Weeks 4-10, and page 18 contains Weeks 1-3. Transcripts in PDF format are available at www.jetwriter.com/jet/hope.html – scroll down the page to “2015 Doctrine Special Teaching Series”

you're being taught. Unfortunately, I think one of the things that we're not being taught much about is who God is, and so I believe that over the next five weeks as we look into this you're gonna find this to be mind-blowing. And even what we're going to talk about today is just that, because in each one of our lives there is an absolute deep longing for something that cannot be satisfied outside of knowing who God is. Who is my God? Who is it that I believe in? Who do I worship? Who is it that I will see when I die? Who do I go to when I am in trouble, when I need help? And in those moments, how does He respond to me? How do I hear back from Him? How does He help me? And how does He have a role in my eternal destination? And I want to say this today: What we believe about God matters a lot, and so we better figure out what it is that we believe about God.



**WHAT WE BELIEVE
ABOUT GOD
MATTERS A LOT**

Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6, you ought to write it down on your piece of paper, and when you get home today find it in your Bible, underline it, highlight it, meditate upon it—this is good stuff. Hebrews 11:6:

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God,

— I understand here today, and we'll talk about this in just a second, when I go to Genesis that it takes faith to move to this step of understanding God. It takes faith to please God. It says here —

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

~ HEBREWS 11:6 (NIV)

I believe the majority of us coming into this room today know that we long for a touch from God. We want to hear from Him, that we want to know the direction that He has in our lives, and we're here to seek after Him.

Now I have met those who say, “I never think of God.” Never, ever, ever think about God—that blows my mind. I think about Him constantly. I'm constantly trying to understand Him, hear Him, be in connection with Him, but there are those who do not. But He says those of us who earnestly seek after Him, God rewards those. So we read our Bible and try to understand what God's saying. You get to know Him, we pray to Him, and seek His face to get to know Him. Your time of worship here today has been a time of trying to get to know Him. I saw some of you kneeling. I saw some of you sitting down praying. This is a place where we come to just shut down all the machines and all the noise and all the stuff of life for a moment to hear God. But my hope is this isn't the only place where you're trying to get to know God. If that's the case, one hour out of all these hours—craziness to consider that.

Now if I ask you this, Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, what do those first 4 words say? Let me help you here, “*In the beginning,*” [Audience: “*God*”]. You got it right. Okay, now listen to me, have you noticed in that that it assumes the existence of God and the Bible never sets out to prove God? It assumes God. That there in the beginning as God is about to create all that we know and that we see, God already exists. He's already there. He is the Uncreated One. He has been there for eternity past. Let that sink in for a moment.

So when we come before this and we begin to talk on this subject, there is something inside of me that just steps back and says, “Whoa, God.” There is this concept from the Old Testament where with Moses we stand back and say, “Wow, I’m standing on holy ground.”² We’re talking about the God of the universe who existed, uncreated, eternally into eternity past.

Whenever I teach this subject I always go back to this quote and I thought about not throwing it in this week because I always use it, but I like quoting old, dead guys because there isn’t as much mean stuff written on the Internet about them as there is alive guys that are around. So A. W Tozer wrote this³ in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, this is what he says:

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God.

~ A. W. TOZER, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

So who do you say God is? I wrote that question in your notes in front of you. When you think of God, who is God? There are those who think of God in terms of He was merely an explanation for all the things that science has now figured out back in the old days, and so they discount Him quickly. Some say He’s just merely this force or power or this figment of your imagination to help give you that *oomph*, that strength to get through the difficult times in life. Others say, “You know, my idea of God is...” or they would say, “If I picture God, this is how I see God...” or they say, “If I was God, I would be like this... so I’m sure He...” And here’s what happens in that moment is the person explaining God in that way is merely doing this— making God up in their head and projecting upon this concept or idea of God who God is, but that’s who God is to them. It’s not based on any fact.

I asked someone recently when they were giving me that kind of thing, “Where’d you get that?” And they just sort of gave me a blank stare. “So you made that up in your mind.” “Well, yeah, but I’m sure it, like, came from the powers of the universe.” I’m like, “What?” Do you want to give your eternal destiny to that? You really are that smart? Some see God as just this angry father with a beard sitting on a big chair in Heaven [Laughter] waiting to just smack you down in that difficult moment. Psalm chapter 50, verse 21, Psalm 50:21, someone told me after last service I pounded through these verses too fast and they weren’t able to write them down as I said them, so I’ll try to give a little bit of a pause here. This is God speaking:

²¹ *These things you have done, and I have been silent;*

You know, sort of like what I just threw out, all these ideas of who we all think God is. Ever been in a moment where everyone’s running their mouth? No one knows anything, it’s just [*he mimics people jabbering*]. “*These things you have done, and I have been silent*”— and here’s what He says:

you thought that I was one like yourself.

— you thought I was just like you! —

But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.

~ PSALM 50:21

² See **Exodus 3:1-5**

³ Quote retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/463609-the-history-of-mankind-will-probably-show-that-no-people>

Here's what I'm gonna say: We need to get the right God. I hear people talking about God all the time and it's certainly not the God of the Bible. It's just the word "God" and so we all go, "Oh, wow, they believe in God, too."

WE
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TO
GET
THE
RIGHT

GOD.

You see, if we want to come before the true God of the universe, we've got to be careful that we're not bowing down before an idol. What was an idol? You know, you picture this little thing on a shelf. I don't care what it is, it's something that we have created in our own image out of an image that we worship, so even if it's a concept that we create in our own mind that now we call God, we've now, all we've done is just created an idol and we have not come to the real God. That's why we *have to* understand who the true God is.

Here's my fear and it's why we have to have this conversation. There are many who will come into this church every week who will sing to God and for them it's singing to the god of the universe, Mother Earth, and none of that is God. We need to understand who it is that we *are* worshiping, who it is that we are praising. You see, when we create that idol, that thing of our own making, something that we can imagine, something that we can create, here's what we're doing: We're creating a really, really small god. Now how many of you in here want to have a small god? Why? Why would you want a small god? I want a big God. I want a God that is bigger than me and my mind.

Listen to what Isaiah 55 says, verses 8 & 9:

⁸ *For my thoughts*

— God speaking —

*are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

⁹ *For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

~ ISAIAH 55:8-9

I was thinking this week, there are preachers or communicators who are phenomenal with words and language. Have you ever been to one of those places where they just have a way of just escalating the rhetoric and expanding upon it and you just feel like you're going on an escalator? I mean, I'm thinking to myself, if somehow I could explain to you today how majestic and how holy and how awesome and how great our God is, that somehow you could get to that place where you're hitting that crescendo where it just would cause us each to just almost leap out of our seat and yell, "Praise God!" to a holy God. I wish somehow words would explain that. I mean, we're going to try somehow through knowledge and information what God says here in His Book of who He is, but I'm just gonna tell you that the words that we can put together, the words that we can read and understand, will never fully explain God until some day we are there face to face.

The book of Corinthians says, you know, it's like we see in a mirror dimly now, then he says, then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, and then all of a sudden it's gonna come clear and it's gonna make sense.⁴ It is so much greater, so much bigger than anything that we could ever imagine;

⁴ *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*
~ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

any of the ideas, any of the concepts, any of the metaphors, any of the theology, any of the language that we can create about Him.

The Bible tells us that God is holy, that's one of His attributes, to describe Him—explain that. Separate, other, beyond anything that we can even imagine; not just a bigger, better version of me. It's not who He describes Himself as. We need to change our mindset from having a small god that we have this way of beating up on all the time that just—I don't know, I struggle with that. I struggle with titles of books that say stuff like, *Disappointed with God*. I'm not disappointed with God. How in the world can little me be disappointed with the One who hung the stars in the universe? Who makes the Sun come out every day? Who makes all the air and the particles and all the formulas that all of you know better than I do, way better than I do, work? How is it that gravity still holds us down? All the stuff that's working around us, even the stuff that's moving on, happening in our body, all the things that are firing to make it even possible for us to keep breathing in this spot, and we think somehow we have control of any of that?

It starts raining and we're nervous. We hear there's a hurricane or a tornado coming in and we're all losing our minds and the God of the universe has everything perfectly in position. You see, the only thing that we know about God is what He has disclosed or revealed to us, and you and I need to begin to think about when we hear things about God is that something that was disclosed and revealed by God to us or was that someone else's noise and musings that they said that sounds really cute and fancy but it isn't God what said about Himself. So over the next four weeks we're gonna try to figure this out. We're gonna try to learn this.

The only thing that we know about God is what He has disclosed or revealed to us.

The word theology, simply, theology is the “study of theō” – God, so the study of God, that's what we're going to be doing over the next few weeks. If you ever met someone that is really big into theology, they sit and they read these really big, thick books and then they talk like they're really, really smart and you feel like you don't understand them. Listen, I don't know how to do that. I just find that exhausting and miserable, so I'm not gonna do that with you or for you. I was talking to a friend just this week and we were talking about that and I said to him, “All those guys do is they just read some really heady book that doesn't make any sense, and then they try to spit it back at you. And they look really smart but it's just the one book that they've read, they haven't read anything else.” So we're gonna try to understand the study of God over the next few weeks, but let me say this about theology.



Theology should not just merely create a full notebook, although at the end of this I'm hoping that you're going to have four or five pages of notes from the backs of these programs that we write down. It shouldn't just create full notebooks. Theology, and I was talking to a friend a couple weeks ago and in just the middle of the sentence he said this and I don't even think he knew what he was saying, I mean, he knew what we was saying but I don't think he meant to say it to me, I wrote it down: “Theology always leads to doxology.” Let me break that down: The study of God always leads to the praise of God.

You see, the reason why you should be able to worship and sing your hearts out in here today is because you have understood the truths that we're singing about and now you have an opportunity to express them to holy Almighty God. If your time in here in time of worship is merely getting to the talk or your time in worship is just sort of more looking and deciding whether the singers or the musicians are a 5 or a 9 this week, or if this one's better than last week's, or if it's like why are they so excited when everyone else is just sort of sitting here, let me tell you what. My prayer is, and we've talked about it a lot with the team, we're not looking for a group of people to come up here and pretend to be something, to pretend to

be a rock band. Here's what we want is a group of people that have been moved by Jesus throughout the week, who have been studying their Bible, have been in the Word, and who are in love with Jesus.

Ladies, if you're here and you've got one of the men on a retreat this weekend, here's why they're going to come back changed: Because they've spent three whole days in their Bible. If we would do that every week, we'd be changed. And when God, we learn about Him, when we know Him better it responds in praise. I know in this room today there are many of you who have come here and you feel like you're empty, you feel like that jumper cable wanting to grab onto that battery going, "Give me some of that. I want to know God." And when you get to know a little more about God it's why you leave here pumped up. It's not because you just had this mountaintop experience and the worship guy and the pastor did their church thing or their preacher thing. I heard someone say to me a while ago, "Do your preacher thing today," and they just meant sort of, you know, give me what it takes to get me through Monday. But when we get to know the God of the Bible, He changes us.

Listen to Romans 11:36:

*³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever!
Amen.*

~ ROMANS 11:36 (NIV)



But, we go back to where we started: Who is God? I'm gonna ask you that for the next four weeks. We're gonna review it, you better have your notes, you better keep on the top of this, we want to get this into our heads, but who is God? And here's what I'm gonna start teaching in this idea of the Trinity—to understand the God of the Bible we are going to have to understand the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Tertullian, who lived in late 100s–early 200s, tried to grab what he learned in the Bible about the Father about the Son, about the Holy Spirit, and tried to put them together in an understandable package and he called that the Trinity; the tri-unity, three, unity of God. So I'm going to give you a definition of the Trinity here and let you begin to chew on that a little bit. Here's the definition of Trinity: One God who eternally exists as three distinct and equal persons. We're not talking about a force here. Some will go, "I believe in a greater power, a greater force." That's not God, folks. He is a person, three distinct and equal persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, who are each fully and equally God.

Definition of Trinity:

One God who eternally exists as three distinct and equal persons —Father, Son, and Spirit— who are each fully and equally God.

Augustine, one of the Church Fathers, says if you deny this, you'll lose your soul, but if you try to understand this, you're gonna lose your mind. I just want you to know today this subject of the Trinity is absolutely crucial to our understanding of knowing a great big God, but because he's a great big God this is mind-blowing and doesn't make sense. So in some ways some would want to say, "Well, then let's discount it, something must be wrong if I can't fully understand it." I ask the question: Wait a minute, do I want a little god or a big God? Do I want a god that looks just like me that I understand just like me, or do I want the God that is beyond me but yet who has tried to reveal Himself and explain Himself so that I *can* come before Him and allow my life be changed by the one true God?

You say, "But wait a minute. You just said to me that he is Father, Son, Holy Spirit, that this isn't just a force but these are three distinct persons. How can I come before the one true God?" The Scripture is clear—and this would be the main point we get to today, we're not going to get much further and we'll continue to wade through this in the weeks to come—the Scripture is clear that there *is* only one God. It's hard, right? One God, three distinct persons, yet one God. Listen to Deuteronomy 4:35:

³⁵ *To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him.*

~ DEUTERONOMY 4:35

Isaiah 43 says this:

^{10b} *Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. ¹¹ I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.*

~ ISAIAH 43:10b-11

Think about the Ten Commandments; the first of the Ten Commandments goes straight to this issue: “*You shall have no other gods before me.*”⁵ Yeah, I want to just talk about first things, those priority things that you've gotta get into your head before you go anywhere else. I'm just going to take you right back to where we started here today from Hebrews 11:

⁶ *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists . . .*

~ HEBREWS 11:6 (NIV)

“*You shall have no other gods before me.*”

~ EXODUS 20:3 & DEUTERONOMY 4:7

It is primary that we understand that there is one God. Figure that out, believe that, live for that, accept that in faith like Hebrews says, and then we can begin to build upon that.

Okay, there's one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons. That's what we're struggling with right now and the Scripture gives us a few things that'll help us understand that a little bit. Genesis chapter 1, again, let me take you there.

¹ *In the beginning, God . . .*

~ GENESIS 1:1

So that word “God” in Genesis 1 in the original Hebrew is the word *Elohim*, and that word is plural—can you capture that? It's plural. We would know that because it's God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. *In the beginning, God—Elohim*, plural.

Now right here at the beginning, verse 2, listen to what we read:

² *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

~ GENESIS 1:2 (NIV)

So right there at creation we see the Spirit of God. So *Elohim*, one God, plural. Verse 2 we see the Spirit of God, and in Colossians chapter 1, verses 15 & 16,⁶ you'll have to look those up on your own but write down those words. Colossians says:

⁵ “*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*” ~ EXODUS 20:1-3 and DEUTERONOMY 5:5-7

⁶ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*
~ COLOSSIANS 1:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁶ *For by him,*

— speaking of Jesus —

and through him all things were created,

~ **COLOSSIANS 1:16a**

Jesus was at creation.

Genesis chapter 1, verse 26, this is God speaking, and we don't believe from the context that He's talking to Himself. He says this:

²⁶ *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,*

~ **GENESIS 1:26a (NIV)**

Referring here to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Genesis chapter 3, verse 22, says this:

²² *And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us,*

~ **GENESIS 3:22a**

So let me continue to try to describe this three-in-one thing because that's, still, it's just really hard to get our brain around. Deuteronomy 6:4, which the Jewish people used as their basic confession of faith for many years, it was called The Shema. The word Shema is the first word in this verse in the Hebrew, but it says this:

⁴ *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*

~ **DEUTERONOMY 6:4**

Now I want to take that word "one" and I want to help us with that. The Lord our God is one, that word "one" in the Hebrew is *'echād*. We find that word two other places in Scripture. The first place we find it in Scripture is in Genesis chapter 1, verse 5, where He says the night and the day will become one day, "one" being *'echād*. So you have two things, night and day, becoming one, or are one. Night is separate, day is separate, yet they are one together, *'echād*. If you go to Numbers chapter 13, verse 23, it describes with the word *'echād*, "a cluster; one cluster of grapes." So you picture a cluster of grapes; you have one cluster but many grapes within that. Again, what's so hard with explaining the Trinity, a lot of people have tried to find different metaphors to describe what the Trinity is, "Well, maybe it's like this," or "It's like this," to try to understand three in one, and yet every time those things break down. But here when it speaks of God being one, remember, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one*" it's speaking of this plurality, this one in three and yet three separate distinct persons.

So let me read the definition again: One God who eternally exists as three distinct equal forces, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and I said forces because I wanted to say it's **not** forces, it's persons. Let me say that again: One God who eternally exists as three distinct and equal persons—not forces—Father, Son, and Spirit, who are each fully and equally God in power. You put that together and you have this idea of tri-unity, which is the method in which a church tries to describe one God, three persons, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Not one-third, one-third, one-third equaling one, that's what's so hard about this, but rather each being fully and equally God in power and authority and in knowledge.

So here's how I want to wrap it up. Why would we teach on this Trinity? Why is the teaching on the Trinity something that matters to us? First of all, if we don't understand and believe the Trinity, if we don't believe in the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, then what the Bible tells us is the basis and

foundation of our salvation is totally pulled away. So I'm gonna throw this out to you. The Father chose us before the foundations of the world to become His sons. The Son came and hung and died on the cross to forgive us of our sins. The Holy Spirit regenerates us, takes our sinful self and makes us new again. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. The Holy Spirit gives us the gifts to serve within the body. All three are absolutely essential to our salvation. All three are God.

Here's what I've observed in the world in which we live, there are many who get God wrong because, as I mentioned earlier, they just see God as everything or God as a force and so they say, "Well, I believe in God." I talk to people all the time and I say, "Is this person a Christ follower that you're dating?" And they go, "Well, uhm, yeah, they believe in God. Yeah, oh, yeah, absolutely." "Oh, no, no, no no. I asked you are they a Christ follower? Have they put their faith and trust in Jesus alone for their salvation?" "Well, they believe in God." "Well, what is their definition of God?" "Well, I don't know, I mean, stop it, Pastor." This is why we have to get to these basic teachings in here so we understand this.

I have a lot of people I say, "Where do you stand with Jesus?" "Well, I don't like Jesus, but I believe in God. I believe in God. Don't get me wrong, and I'm sure that's good enough, but I don't believe in Jesus." By the way, the Scriptures say that the cross of Christ is a stumbling block⁷ to those who are in the world around us, so that's why oftentimes when the name of Jesus is brought up everyone sort of backs off and shuts down.

Satan hates Jesus because Jesus is the one who hung and died on the cross and His blood forgives us of our sins. You cannot have eternal salvation without Jesus.

YOU CANNOT HAVE ETERNAL SALVATION WITHOUT JESUS

We talked about the Holy Spirit, I have people that even attend our church that whenever the name Holy Spirit is brought up in one of the songs they're like [*gasp*], "Oh, be careful. I don't know, I just, I feel a little bit uncomfortable with that." And I get why *they* say they feel uncomfortable by that. They've seen the excesses, they've seen the wrong things, they've watched some of the stuff on TV, and they think *that's* what the Holy Spirit is. When I told you a moment ago that the Holy Spirit regenerates us, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, the Holy Spirit gives us the gifts to serve the Lord, the Holy Spirit's constantly teaching us how to obey God. All of a sudden you go, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! That's a whole lot different than what I saw on TV." It is. It's absolutely important that we study and understand three distinct equal—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

I also need to tell you that one of the things you're gonna find is you're gonna get a knock on your door one of these days by an organization that has the word "Jesus" in their name, or has the name "Jehovah" in their name, so like Jehovah Witnesses. They don't believe that Jesus is God. That is a deal killer. So whatever they're teaching is not God because it's not the God who revealed Himself in the Bible. And you can't say, "Well, they sort of get it and I'm sure God's cool with that."

Well come looking for me by name here this week and Pastor Bob shows up at the front desk and you say, "I asked for Pastor Lee." Well, he's a pastor, right? He's tall like Lee is. It's cool, right? I mean, he's one of the same, right? Guys, probably close to the same age. [*He whispers*, "He's actually younger than me."] Uhm... [*he coughs*]. "No, no, no, no. I asked for Lee, Pastor Lee." When you ask for God and then you say, "but I don't believe in Jesus," you've got the wrong god, and as a result you can't be saved. It's a lie. It's not truth.

⁷ For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ~ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-24

The Mormons, and we could go into a greater discussion on this, you know, they throw Jesus Christ into the name of their church and we're all supposed to go, "Wow," but what they will say is that somehow Elohim, God, had many celestial wives and Jesus is an offspring of those wives. That's not what my Bible says. They even say Satan is an offspring of those wives thus making Jesus and Satan half-brothers. It's not what the Bible says. And so this is why we have to come and get to the very basics of this.

And then again, you know, maybe you haven't gone off onto one of those tangents, but again, all of us have a tendency to put something in our lives as our god ahead of God. And the Bible talks about this throughout the Scripture as idols and giving up our idols, even talks about idols in the temple and we stand back and we go, "Wow, that's horrible." And yet all of us have those things, those idols that have become our functional god. And in Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 17, it says actually those idols are no gods at all⁸ and it says this, it says they are demons; 32:17 of Deuteronomy, you gotta look it up and check it out.

Second Corinthians 11:14 says:

¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

~ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:14

DECEIVER

Satan is called the angel of light, comes masquerading as truth, comes masquerading as light, when in point of fact all he's trying to do is hide the fact that he's trying to lead you astray. We need to know who God is.

My time is up. I want to conclude with the last couple verses of the book of Jude. I would encourage you to read Jude, but I read this because it brings and highlights the greatness and power and hugeness of our God. I'll invite the worship team to come up as I read this. I love these verses. Jude chapter 1, verse 24:

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

~ JUDE 1:24-25

Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus,

We come before You; we want to praise You, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. We want to become overwhelmed by your greatness and your power and your majesty. We are so far from that; our earthly roots tie us down and hold us back. Our heads have been down this week; we want to lift them up, we want to praise You, and we thank You for revealing just a little bit more of who You are today. And so we grab on to You, our Father. We thank You for choosing us.

We've come before You, Jesus. Thank You for saving us by your shed blood on the cross. The Holy Spirit, thanks for regenerating us. Thank You so much for giving your gifts to be able to do your work here on this earth and for teaching us every day how You want us to live.

Right now, Lord Jesus, as we bring our tithes and our offerings before You, we are humbled that we could bring something before the God of the universe to His praise and glory.

⁸ They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, ~ DEUTERONOMY 32:17a

It is in Your Name we pray. Amen.

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/291378953>

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/OwIEEq2Wn5M>

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