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2023 Winter Conference with Dr. Ryan McGraw

Session 1 Outline, Transcript

“What Do We Know, and What Should We Know, about the Trinity?”

Intro: The Bible is a story in which its Author is the chief character. We either know Him or we need to know Him. We learn the Trinity like children learning to speak: we use language and ideas before developing grammar and structure. Thesis: We know God as Triune in our devotion, and we need to learn how to speak of Him well. This material divides evenly between what we know already and what we should know.

- I. What do We Know? (this point takes what we know as well as expands it)
 - A. We are Trinitarian in prayer (we worship all three when we depend on the work of each)
 1. To the Father (Matt. 6:9)
 2. Through the Son (Matt. 18:19; John 14:6, 13)
 3. By the Spirit: For the Spirit (Lk. 11:13); In the Spirit (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20); By the Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27)
 4. Application: How do we teach children to pray? How does prayer relate to all three persons?
 - B. We are Trinitarian in evangelism
 1. We direct people to the Father (Jn. 3:16; Jn. 14:6)
 2. We call people to faith in Christ (Acts 4:12)
 3. We pray for the Spirit to glorify Christ (*Jn. 16:8-15)
 - C. We are Trinitarian in worship (Jn. 4:21-24 and context)
 1. We worship the Father
 2. In Spirit
 3. In Truth
 4. Baptism (Matt. 28:19)
- II. What Should We Know? (or, How Should We Make Sense of What we Know?)¹
 - A. *Oneness*: There is one God (co-essentiality; Butner)
 1. Essence: What makes a thing what it is (numerical oneness)
 - a. Simplicity: God is what he is (oneness of simplicity)
 - b. Unique Oneness (Triune and indivisible oneness)
 2. Perichoresis:
 - B. *Plurality*: The Father, Son, and Spirit are the one God (WLC 11)
 1. *Processions*: Procession, defining personhood, involves the order of subsistence in the Godhead by communication of the divine essence to the Son and the Spirit
 - a. The Father is God of none, having life in Himself.
 - b. The Son is God of the Father, having life from the Father. Jn. 5:26. (eternal generation)
 - c. The Spirit is God of the Father and the Son, having what He has from the Father through the Son. Jn. 16:11-15. (eternal spiration, or procession)
 2. *Persons*: Personhood is an incommunicable property, by which an individual rational being is distinct from others in the same category, distinguished by origin.²
 - a. Personhood as order of subsistence in God.
 - b. Order is not subordination: (Augustine on the form of God and the form of a servant; Christ became man to be made under the law. Phil. 2:5-11; Gal. 4:4-7)
 - C. *Manifestations/Missions*: We see who God is through the missions of the Son and the Spirit (Acts 2:33)
 1. *Opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*³ (Augustine or Athanasius? Letham improperly divides the tradition on this point)⁴
 2. Manifestations refer to God's *ad extra* works without a visible external mission of the Son or Spirit (Creation as an example. Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6)
 3. Missions focus particularly on the redemptive work of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of salvation. Acts 2:33; Jn. 16:8-15.
 4. We know the processions through the missions (economic and ontological Trinity?)
 5. God does what He does because He is who He is.
 - D. *Appropriations*: Appropriation “attributes a divine attribute or action to the divine person with Whom one most closely associates it.”⁵
 1. Power, Wisdom, and Goodness⁶
 2. Effectual calling in John 6; 2 Thess. 2; etc
 3. 1 Jn. 4, Eph. 3, and Rom. 2 on divine love
 4. *Vestigia Trinitatis* (Augustine set the tone on this question in the West. See Bavinck's balanced approach)

Conclusion: C. S. Lewis wrote, “*You must translate every bit of your Theology into the vernacular. This is very troublesome, ... but it is essential. It is also of the greatest service to your own thought. I have come to the conviction that if you cannot translate your thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts were confused. Power to translate is the test of having really understood one's own meaning.*”⁷ This is admittedly hard to do when we are talking about God. The church gave us a unique set of terms with their own meanings to describe a unique God. Let us search the Scriptures thinking in these terms so that we can find God in them more easily. What is the bottom line? We know that God is Triune in our prayers, evangelism, and worship? What do we need to know to speak well of Him? We need to know that the one God is Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son is all that the Father is except Father, and so with the Spirit. God does what He does because He is who He is. Through God's works in time, we know who He is in eternity. We should all three persons acting in everything God does, while always acting like themselves. Are we building a Trinitarian theology and devotion on a solid foundation?

¹ “There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” WSC 6.
² This definition draws from Boethius, Anselm, Richard St. Victor, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure, and it also reflects uses of personhood in post-Reformation authors like Francis Turretin.

³ Vidu is essential reading on this issue, since he connects this principle to every point of Trinitarian doctrine. Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*.

⁴ Latin for, “The external works of the Trinity are undivided” Butner notes the vital importance of Jn. 5:19 among pro-Nicene authors in connection with this doctrine. *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, 184. He adds that “there is a single operation in a threefold form” (189).

⁵ Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics* 193–94. So Swain, *The Trinity*, “Appropriation, more precisely defined, then, is the special association of certain works of the Trinity with certain persons of the Trinity based on the way certain works specifically manifest personal properties of the Trinity (paternity, filiation, and spiration). Thus understood, appropriation not only concerns the work of the triune God. It also concerns the attributes and effects of the triune God” (113).

⁶ Richard appropriates power, wisdom, and goodness to Father, Son, and Spirit, precisely because power is of none and goodness cannot exist without both power and wisdom. St. Victor, *Trinity*, 274. 6.15. While such attributes belong to the divine nature, he appropriated power, wisdom, and goodness to particular persons. 1 Cor. 1-2 similarly associate the Son with divine wisdom particularly. Bonaventure provides extensive examples of appropriations in *Breviloquium*, last section of part 1.

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 98.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. **PLEASE BE AWARE** of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

But i'm glad to be here with you. It's a blessing to be able to speak about the glory. Of the triune god. And before i get to our topic and not just introduce the message tonight, But the actual topic and how we're going to be addressing it together over today tomorrow and even the lord's stay together.

I do want to read scripture for us. And in john chapter 5. Versus 16. And i'll read down through 30. We have one of the most profound. Discussions from our savior's lips. About his relationship to his father. And so, a lot of what we see here is very vital when we ask the question, who is god And when we ask the question, who is god, where the bible is going to lead us is in the direction of the trinity?

And as i read this annually, i feel like there's a sense in which my mind is always twisted and knots, just a little bit. But there's much light here for us as well, and by the grace of god, much joy for us in jesus christ, i'm going to read the rather lengthy sections so that we can pick up the rhythm.

Of this description of the father son relationship in the talk. I'll give tonight, i'm going to stress verse 26. Particularly, but we're going to be in a lot of other Uh texts as well. But let's go ahead and begin with verse 16. For this reason, the jews persecuted, jesus and sought to kill him.

Because he had done these things on the sabbath. But jesus answered them. My father has been working until now. And i have been working. Therefore, the jews sought all the more to kill him because he not only broke the sabbath, but also said that, god was his father Making himself equal.

With god. Then jesus answered and said to them. Most assuredly, i say to you. The son can do nothing of himself. But what he sees the father do For what he does. The son also does in like manner. For the father, loves the son. And shows him all things that he himself does and he will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

For as the father raises the dead and gives life to them. Even so the sun gives life to whom he will. For the father, judges, no one, but as committed all judgment to the sun. That all should honor the sun, just as they honor the father. He who does not honor the sun, does not honor, the father who sent him.

Most assuredly, i say to you. He who hears my word and believes in him, who sent me? Has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment. But as past from death, Into life. Most assuredly, i say to you the hour is coming and now is When the dead will hear the voice of the son of god, and those who hear will live.

For as the father has life in himself. So, he has granted the son. To have life in himself. And has given him authority to execute judgment. Also, Because he is the son of man. Do not marvel at this for the hour is coming in, which all who are in their graves, shall hear his voice and come forth.

Those who have done good to the resurrection of life. Those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Hiking up myself, do nothing? As i hear. I judge. Am i judgment? Is righteous. Because i do not seek my own will. But the will of the father. Who sent me?

Amen. Let's join our hearts in prayer, once again. Blessed. God, you are majestic and glory. We marvel at your beauty. We delight in your word. We ask that you would exalt your son among us this evening and this weekend? And we pray that you would grant us the holy spirit to this end.

Lift up our hearts to heaven. Where our savior is seated at your right hand. And we pray that you would enlighten our minds as we consider the truths of your word. As your church helps us understand what we find there. And also, lord ultimately as we seek to grow in our devotion to you, our god and our father Forgive us our sins for christ's sake.

Amen. Other animal. I'm excited to be able to spend a few days with you talking about the doctrine of the trinity. Really, what i'm aiming at this weekend. Is one thing. And that is to show that the trinity. Is really the lifeblood of biblical christianity. And what i mean by that is the trinity is the foundation.

Of all other doctrines. And all fundamentals. But the trinity is also the heart. Of christian devotion and worship. Now, as i introduce the topic that way, i'm going to go out on a limb, especially with a group of people that i really don't know. And say that your experience.

May have been much like mine. With the doctrine of the trinity. Often, when we hear about the doctrine of the trinity or even hear the word trinity, We immediately think. Of something that is difficult to define. Even harder to explain. And sometimes. Are we left wondering? Whether it actually has any practical relevance at all.

In other words, we know it's fundamental because people have told us it is And they've tried to show us its biblical, but what i'm really getting at is, what's the use? What's the difference that the doctrine of the trinity actually makes? Now what i'm going to do is go through several texts over the weekend.

Focusing, especially on the book of ephesians. In order to show that the trinity is the heart and soul of christianity, it ought to be our heart and soul as well. So i'm aiming, not just to give you an explanation of the doctrine But to show you the blessedness of knowing the triune god.

So that's the direction that we're trying to go. However, We do need to begin. Giving something of. An explanation of the doctrine or some kind of groundwork. And i want to do that in a couple of different ways. In my outline that i have before me. And i think some of you might even have, i really boil this down to two questions.

What do we already know about the trinity? And what do we need to know? And let me restate that because what i'm really getting at is How do we already know the triune god in our experience? If you're one of those people that when you hear about the trinity and, and you hear me, raise the questions, how is this relevant?

How is the doctrine of the trinity practical? When it's difficult to define, it's difficult to explain. You know, more than you think is what i'm getting at. In our basic christian lives are basic christian experience. The gospel of jesus christ is trinitarian and shapes everything in our lives. So my first question is, what do we already know?

How do we see this? The second question is, what do we need to know? And maybe think of it this way. I'm wearing glasses up here if i take off these glasses, I know your people. And you're all a bit blurry, i can recognize james because he's in the front row but probably not.

Anybody else? But when i put the glasses on suddenly, i see faces. I make eye contact. I know who people are, if i've met you Well, that's what we're doing. We're trying to look at what we already know that, maybe vague that may be in the background and then try to bring things into sharper, focus and ask what should we know?

How can we know our god better? How can we walk with him? How can we speak of him? More effectively more fully. So if the trinity is the heart and soul of biblical christianity, and ought to be the heart and soul. Of us as well of our hearts of our souls.

What do we already know? Well, we already assume. That god. Is one god. In three persons. In many things we do as christians. And i just want to give you three examples. What about when we pray? How do we pray and fair warning? I'm going to run through some of these quickly and pick up on things that maybe we already know in our experience.

But then i might deepen them a little bit and dig into them a little bit more. And what we're actually talking about why these things are the way they are. How do we pray? We all know the Lord's prayer, don't we? How does it begin? Our father, right? Our father.

Who art in heaven? Hallowed be your name. Good, everybody's got the lord's prayer down. But, We also know, don't we? That when we pray, We pray. In jesus name. And even if we don't know why, And even if we don't reflect on those simple words in jesus name, very much We know jesus told us to say that when we pray, And they're significance to this.

That'll circle back around to in just a moment. But what about the holy spirit? Well, we pray. For the holy spirit, don't we? I'm going to mention evangelism in just a moment. Uh but i was actually talking to a woman in a doctor's office recently who was a professing christian, and she didn't have any connection, any kind of reform church or Presbyterian church or anything along those lines.

And started talking about unbelieving, family members. I'm believing children, even and neighbors. And the first thing that she said was, We need to pray. For the holy spirit. To change their hearts. That's an interesting thing to say, isn't it? Because if i asked her, if i said for example, When you come to jesus christ, are you able to do that in your own strength?

Can you just believe in jesus christ? You hear the gospel? You're told to repent and believe and can you just do that? She'd probably say, absolutely. But now in her prayers, she knows something better by instinct on her needs. There's something in that person. There's something in their heart.

There's something in their way of thinking that only a supernatural immediate work of god can fix and can change. So, we pray for the holy spirit. We also pray. In the holy spirit. And i'm going to assume. Perhaps a certain knowledge of scripture here on some level. Because in Romans 8, for example, a favorite chapter probably to many of us all things work together for good.

All these other great verses that we find there, no condemnation in christ. But we also have a description of the holy spirit's work in prayer, don't we? And we're told that we don't know what to pray for, as we ought And the good news is. That the holy spirit helps us.

The spirit who lives in our hearts. Enables us to pray. With groanings that we can't often put into words. So, what do we know about the trinity without explaining defining the doctrine, putting the pieces together? What do we do when we pray? We pray to the father. We pray through, jesus christ.

And we pray by, and for The holy spirit. Now let me deepen that a little bit. I'm gonna i'm blurring lines and i'm admitting this because i'm asking the question, what do we know this is basic so far? But there's a little bit more to it. What do we know?

Why is this something that is so ingrained into christian life and experience? I mean, i've quoted these texts and i think the obvious answer is we've read them in the bible. We know the lord's prayer. We know we need to pray in jesus name. But why, for example? In jesus name.

Well thankfully, our larger catechism in Presbyterian churches. As two questions on why we pray in jesus's name. And if i can blur them together a little bit, they help us. Understand what we're picking up intuitively in our experience. That. No one. Can approach god. Without a mediator. God is great in heaven.

And we are creatures on earth who are we that god should even notice us and pay attention to us. But then, we compound the problem. With the fact that we are sinners. We deserve God's judgment. We deserve god's wrath. And there is none other in heaven or earth appointed or fit for that, glorious work of mediating between god and man, other than jesus christ.

So those words are are pregnant, aren't they? They're full when we say, in jesus's name, there is a confession. I have hope in jesus christ and in none other, And, unless i pray in jesus christ alone, i can't pray at all. And again, why the holy spirit? Well. Because the scripture tells us to ask for the spirit the scripture tells us to pray in the holy spirit, but i think more profoundly more, fundamentally.

Did you realize we actually can't pray. Without the holy spirit. Some people make a big deal of the bible's command. That we should pray, always in the holy spirit and act as though, this is some special kind of prayer. What i'm doing most of the time is mundane, not a big deal.

Ordinary run-of-the-mill, prayer. Nothing seems to happen. Nothing's really exciting. But maybe. I receive a special experience from god, where now my heart is warmed, my affections are raised. Now i'm really praying in the holy spirit. Well, you realize, no spirit, no prayer. No spirit, no ability to lay hold of jesus christ.

And no jesus christ. No father. So i'm expanding this a little bit. We know we need to pray to the father through the son. By the spirit. But do we? I'm asking this question, because The bible teaches us to approach the father, call him our father, come in the name of jesus christ.

Come by the spirit's powerful work in our hearts. And i'm going to explain the reasons why these things fit, why these things must be there's something in god himself. There's an order in who God is as father's son and spirit that actually shapes these kinds of things, determines them, directs them.

But sometimes i've heard people, for example, tell children to pray And say. Here's how you pray. Dear jesus. And it's always been interesting to me because there's nothing wrong with it in and of itself. We're going to see in a moment that the father, the son and the spirit are one.

God, the son is god, equal with the father, prayer is an active worship. We worship any, we worship all three. We worship them all at once. And yet. We pray our father. According to the lord's prayer. Do we have a view of the father? That somehow puts him at a distance.

I don't want to get too much into what i'm going to say tomorrow, so i'm trying to restrain some of this a little bit. But is it that jesus in our minds is approachable to a child but a father is not And the father is distant. I hope to show you when we get there.

Taking the words, our father on our lips is actually one of the highest privileges we could ever have. And when we pray to the father, through the sun, by the spirit, we not only depend on all three persons in the trinity and worship all three as divine. We respect, who god is, we respect the order in the trinity from the father, through the son, by the spirit, by the spirit, through the sun.

We come to the father. So i've told you what, you know, you know, pray our father, you know, pray in jesus name, you know, you need the holy spirit. I've given you a little bit of why as sort of pulling us into what's next? But there's another example. What about our evangelism?

We want to tell people about Jesus. And what is one of the? Primary texts. That we often quote, Or at least Christians quote, all over the place. God, so loved the world. That he gave his only begotten. Son, that whosoever believes in him. Should not perish, but i've everlasting life.

And notice what we're doing. Even if it's just in the bible, quote. Who is God there? It is God, the father. Who so loved the world that he gave God, the son, he gave his only begotten son To live as a man. And whoever believes in Christ who live for us, who died for us, who rose for us, Will not perish.

But come into everlasting life and I already gave the other example with prayer, didn't I? When we're witnessing to people, whether it's Our our family members, I'm sure if I asked around this room, many of us including myself have close family members, who don't know, Jesus Christ and we are begging, the Lord to open their eyes, where begging the Lord to change their hearts, to renew their wills, to help them.

See something of what we see. And what are we doing in our evangelism? We are offering Christ to people just as the father offers Christ to people. And we are praying for the Spirit to drive Jesus Christ into people's hearts. And we know this intuitively by experience. Now again we're seeing a certain order in a certain pattern that's going to start jelling together as we put pieces together and ask what should we know?

Because what we're recognizing is, when we talk about salvation, Salvation comes from the father through the sun, by the Spirit, by the Spirit, through the sun, to the father, I pray. God, the father sent his son and the Spirit brings people to know the sun so that they might in turn come to the father.

You're seeing a pattern. There's something we already know here. But I'm spelling it out in a little bit more detail. Hopefully, so we see it a bit more clearly. But the third thing about answering the question, what do we already know? We already know the Trinity in worship. Now, this may be a harder one and as I raise the issue of worship, maybe some are wondering.

Where are you going to go with this? What are you going to say about worship? What do we already know? Well, a couple of things I can cheat by appealing to prayer because we've already talked about it. Prayer is an act of worship. Prayer is inherently, Trinitarian prayer. Actively engages in fellowship, with all three persons in the Godhead to the father, through the sun, by the Holy Spirit.

But what about baptism as an active worship. We are baptized into. The name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. Now, there's a good number of children here. Not many of you are very little Uh, but Many of you I'm going to guess. We're probably baptized. Before you were aware of it.

Maybe you don't even remember it. And what's the significance of being baptized into the name? Of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. We'll notice the name is singular, not plural. The new testament name of God, how we name? Our God is father, son, and Holy Spirit, these are not three Gods.

This is not one God with. Two who are not God, but somehow help him vaguely or cooperate with what he is doing. This is the name of God, the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. And when you were baptized, whether you're a young person or an adult, God, put his name on you.

And what does that mean? It means you need to have God as your father, Jesus as your savior and the Holy Spirit in your heart. This simple as that. There's a Trinitarian gospel standing behind baptism and every time we witness a baptism in the church, which we ought to witness it in the church, we're in this together.

We are active participants, we are watching as it were, the baptism and saying. This God is my God. He has placed his name on me. God is my father Jesus is my savior, the Holy Spirit is in my heart. Always like to tell our congregation back in Greenville, baptism is not a spectator sport.

Even if someone else is being baptized, we are actively worshiping the triune God. We are participants in baptism in prayer, but now let me pull things into sharper. Focus in worship in general. What I mean is I'm thinking of a particular passage and this is one that many of you might actually know.

John chapter 4. When Jesus is talking to the woman at the well, And she asked the burning question, the difficult. Point of controversy, between Jewish people and Samaritans. Where do we worship? Do we worship on this mountain or do we worship in Jerusalem? And Jesus's non-politically correct answer. Initially, actually tells her.

The Jews are right? Samaritans are wrong. In other words, we know what we worship. You have no idea what you're doing. Salvation is of the Jews. But then, if I can paraphrase him a bit, he ends up telling this woman, there's a time in which your question is about to be irrelevant.

The hour is coming and now is In which neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem. Will you worship the father? The father is seeking people to worship him in spirit and in truth, And I think what he's actually getting at is the father is seeking people from every tribe tongue and nation and lo and behold here we are A small portion of the church of the Lord.

Jesus Christ, Tennessee here. Every tribe tongue. People a nation. Worshiping the father in spirit and in truth. Now, in in John's gospel, Spirit overwhelmingly refers to the Holy Spirit. And when he's getting at is, if you're going to worship in spirit, you need to approach God, in worship through the Holy Spirit, just as you depend upon the Spirit and all of your prayers, You must depend upon him in every act of worship and in everything you do.

And that means that you need to come with sincere hearts hearts, that the Spirit is working on as it were and bringing you into God's presence. But what about the truth? Doesn't Jesus. Say I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father, but by me Or the law came through Moses grace and truth through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the true and living way to the father. And so whenever we worship we depend upon the Holy Spirit. We trust in Jesus Christ as our mediator who reveals God to us, by his word by his Spirit. And we call Godfather again. So what do we know?

We know implicitly that we're Trinitarian in our prayers. We're Trinitarian in our evangelism. We're Trinitarian in our worship. Now, I confess I probably said more about this section. Then I want to, but since we're simply going to look at a Ephesians for two sessions tomorrow and try to pick up some patterns to teach us how to think as we approach the rest of the bible.

This gives us a series of patterns more, broadly. What we're really looking at here is, why is it? That as Christians who believe the new testament, this is where we land. Why is it that we end up being Trinitarian implicitly in our prayer? In our evangelism, in our worship?

And the answer is. That the gospel itself is about the triune God. Now, what I want to do is shift to my second question, not just what do we know? What should we know? I gave the example of seeing you without my glasses and putting the glasses on and seeing things in sharper.

Focus. I think we've already been doing that a little bit. And bringing things into clear focus. But there's more, we need to see. There's more, we need to say Perhaps you could also use this illustration or this analogy. We learn the Trinity. Like children, learn how to speak. And learn English grammar.

And that is by using it first. By picking it up, implicitly and isn't that what we've been looking at thus far, we're picking up these things implicitly. We have these patterns in our lives. Well, we need to do now is step back and say why. How do we make this sharper?

How do we make this clearer? What I want to do is borrow some ideas from the history of the church. And, use them as guideposts. To help us find our way through scripture more clearly. So, this is not turning into a history lesson. But what I'm doing is, I'm picking up some key ideas.

Some key terms, the church is given us so that when we go back and read a text, like John chapter 5, which I'll try to illustrate how this works. And just a moment, Uh, we actually see there's something here. There's actually a pattern, there's tools that we can use to describe what we're finding in scripture and ultimately our aim is to know our God, and we want to speak of Him well and as well as we can.

So how do we know God is triune? How do we worship Him as triune? Is that what we're ultimately getting at? So what should we know? Well, I want to break things down into a few parts. Maybe, before I do that. I should just begin in the obvious place that many of you may have encountered, or likely having encountered. And that is a definition of the Trinity.

Particularly, I'm thinking of let's say a definition like the Westminster Shorter Catechism. How many persons are there in the Godhead? There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. These three are one. God. The same in substance. Equal in power and glory. Larger catechism, simply adds.

Though, distinguished by their personal properties. That little end phrase though, distinguished by their personal properties, is actually where I'm going to camp out for a while. And try to, to think through the Trinity. But what happens when you get a definition like that? Well. A lot of questions raised come up, don't they?

We raise a lot of questions. What is a substance? And what does it mean that God is one in essence or one in substance? For that matter. What is a person? And this is where we start asking the question, perhaps, how can the Trinity be practical at all? Because if I'm using person here and I'm saying there's one being there's one God there's not three. And there's not one major God and two junior Gods.

But there's one God and all three persons are equal in power and glory, clearly. The term person. Doesn't mean the same thing. I usually mean. When I use the term person. Now, to be fair. Sit around for a moment. I won't bog you down with this. Now. But ask yourself the question.

How do I define a human person? And it's actually not that easy. And by the way less, you get any ideas, I don't mean people choosing their own gender and you know, that that type of thing. What I actually mean is, you're born as an infant. You live your life, you go through tons of change.

Uh maybe some of you are converted out of non-Christian backgrounds and brought to Jesus Christ and brought into the Christian church. You're radically different than what you were but you're still the same person. And you continue to develop and you continue to grow and eventually you die and then one day, you'll be raised from the dead.

What makes you a person? How do you define your personal identity? The being the same person from the time you're an infant all the way, the grave, let alone of the resurrection. Am I my only point is less you uh, point the finger at the doctrine of the Trinity and say well, something is out of whack here or something is askew.

And the term person doesn't really mean the same thing that we mean maybe we really don't understand what we mean very well. Most of the time anyway. In terms of personhood, What I actually want to show you is it's easier to define person with a Trinity than it is with us in some ways.

But what terms do we actually need to know the catechism may raise some questions and generally just to run through it if you look at a definition like that where you're going to go? Well, I need to establish from the Bible that there is one God. And I can look at lots of passages for that this morning, I was reading Deuteronomy, for example, and three times.

I think in Deuteronomy chapter 4, the Lord actually says, I am God. There is no one else besides me. There is no other and he stresses the point over and over and over again. I am not like the gods of the nations. They are dumb worthless idols, they can't hear.

They can't speak. They can't answer. I am the God who made the heavens and the earth. And there's no. Equal to me. I have no peers is what God is saying. There's only one that occupies the category of God. And then we go into the idea that there are three persons.

In the New Testament that are called God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. And then we go to one text after another. To show that this is true. But then we recognize that they are not simply three persons that are called God in scripture. But they are distinct persons.

The Son praised to the Father. The Son becomes man and the Father and the Spirit do not. The Spirit changes, the heart. And unites us to Christ. And you get the idea, the Spirit can be blasphemed, the Spirit is named with the Father and the Son in our baptism, etc, etc, etc.

And then, there's order among the persons. Well, I want to give you a slightly different path. And I, I admit. What I have to say to you tonight. Is much more dense. And harder to wade through. Then what we're going to do tomorrow, what we're going to do tomorrow is here as it were, we're stepping aside from a moment, we're getting some ideas into our minds.

We're getting a feel for our Christian experience, our prayers, our evangelism, our worship, and we are getting concepts straight. So then, when we as it were dive back into the text tomorrow, the whole thing comes to life everything just comes out of the text and we start seeing we're not making this stuff up.

This is how we're meant to know God. This is how God revealed himself, but I want to give you four sets of terms. And I'm going to explain some things underneath, each of them and try to illustrate them. What do we need to know when we think about God as triune?

We need to know. That. God is one. We need to know. That God has plurality. We need to know. That certain persons of the Godhead. Admissions. And we need to know how and why the Bible appropriates or assigns. Certain things to the certain divine persons. Now, I'll try to explain those.

Let me restate them. And this is going to sound worse. We need to know. The persons are co-essential. Or understand co-equality. I'm putting that in place of oneness. We need to understand processions. I'm putting that in place of plurality. We need to understand manifestations, which I'm putting in place of missions.

And then the last one, I'll keep roughly the same. We need to understand appropriations. Now what in the world am I talking about? How is this possibly related to Christian life and devotion? Well, let me explain. When we talk about God's oneness, what we mean is God is a unique being. There's two ways we can speak of God being one.

One is his numerical oneness. That's the verses of already quoted. There's none like him. There's none besides him. Numerically. He is one when we think about God just to make it clear. Um, God is not Thor. God is not Zeus. God is not. In other words, a bigger better, stronger version of you.

If you can think of human beings with all their faults, and all their flaws and and just magnify it big time. You've got your marvel superheroes, you've got all these other concepts, people have had of the Greek and the Roman gods over the centuries. And i could even say all of the religions.

Well, we're dealing with. When we say, god is numerically one. What we mean is he's in a category by himself. He's up here. Metaphorically. We're down here. There's only two categories, god. Creation and that's it. There's no ladder going between the two. There's no way to walk your way up.

And if i just got bigger and better and stronger like a superhero, then i'm almost there. No matter how much bigger better stronger smarter, you get you're never any closer than when you start it. When we say god is one, he's in a category of his own. He's numerically one.

Is unique. How is unique? Well, there's another sense in which god is one in this relates to the trinity. God is what the church is called. A simple being. And let me restate that in a better way. A simpler way that no pun intended there. That you'll probably get right away.

God is his attributes. God is what he is. God has no parts that. If you add to them, he gets better. And if you take away from them, he gets worse. God is unchangeable, god is a simple being That means when we look at all the descriptions of god in the bible, he's not five percent love of a here or that's a bigger one.

Maybe it's 25 percent and maybe five percent justice over here and 10 percent presence of it here. And if you put all the pieces together and you reach out through the bible and you find everything that you need, it's like a jigsaw puzzle and i finally put in the last piece, there's God.

That's not what we're doing. What we're saying is god is one, he's in a category of his own. He's numerically one, but he's also a simple being He has no parts. So how is this related to the trinity and the language i used of being co-essential? The trinity. Is not three slices of a pie.

Making a hole. The trinity. Is not. One plus one plus one equals 1. Which is exactly why a lot of people say, this is contradictory. The trinity, the person's in the godhead are the one God. If we say what is god, like we would say he's infinite, he's eternal, he's unchangeable and his being wisdom, power holiness, justice goodness, truth and a whole bunch of other things.

If we say, who is god, Then we respond by saying, father son, holy spirit. God is a simple being father son and holy spirit are not pieces of god. Or parts of god. But there is one god. Who is three persons? So that's the first part of this. What about plurality?

The father, the son and the spirit are The one god. Well, let me throw out a couple of terms here. When we talk about the father, the son, and the holy spirit, historically in the church, the key term is processions. And i'm going to try not to lose everyone with this.

Bear with me because i'm going to give an explanation. Then i'm going to go back to the text and then hopefully you're going to start saying There's something here. There's a reason why god works the way he does. There's a reason why i need to know him in the way that i do.

And it goes back to this concept of procession. Let me state it first, let me state in a simple way and then explain what i'm getting at. We talk about procession. We talk about the sun and the spirit. Proceeding. Within god. That sounds worse. Let me state it differently.

The father is god. Of none. The sun is god. Of the father. And by the way, you probably confess that regularly, very god of light, of light, light of light, very god, a very god Begotten, not made. Being of one substance with the father, you're actually saying the sun is god of the father.

That's exactly what that means. And then the spirit is god of the father and the son. The father is of none and proceeds from none. The sun proceeds eternally from the father, would no beginning. Would no end would. No change would no lessening of divine, glory or greatness. Certainly no subjection, or submission or anything along those lines.

He is truly equal in power and glory with his father. But he's god of his father. The spirit, all those things we need to save him as well. But he is god of the father and the son. These are processions. Now just let me give you a couple of thoughts here.

What i'm saying is i just want to make this as unambiguous as possible. This means that the sun and the spirit are not created. Their co-essential and coeternal with the father. It also means that they are both god of the father. In their own way. Not by creation. But by an eternal, communication of godhead.

I know that's hard. But remember what i just said, God's in a category of one, god's, a simple being god is a unique being, no matter how high you go, you'll never reach him. God's. Qualities characteristics. Attributes are in, communicable to you. You cannot become them. You cannot be deified.

But what is in communicable to you is communicable from father to son? Because he has god equal the father. And communicable from father and son to the spirit. Now, let me just Bring this back to the text so that you start realizing We're getting at something in scripture here.

Because the end game here is god does what he does because he is, who he is. God saves you, from the father, through the son, by the spirit, because he is god as father, son and spirit in that order. And that's where this term procession comes in. But think about what we read at the beginning, in john chapter 5, I mean, in some ways this is kind of a mind-bending passage, isn't it?

Because jesus says, much about his eternal relationship to his father. I'm not going to go through all the details but the setting is he's healed. A man on the sabbath, he's not broken god's law but he has broken the jewish traditions And they want to kill him because of it.

And as they Come to him seeking to literally assassinate him or kill him or murder him. He actually makes the problem worse. With the answer that he gives. What are you doing? Why are you breaking our sabbath laws? Well, my father has been working until now and i have been working What's he saying?

I am the god of creation and providence. My father has been governing and sustaining the world up until now. And by the way, i do this simultaneously equally with my father. It's an interesting thought in itself, isn't it? You have an accusation against jesus for sabbath breaking and he goes into the deepest trinitarian theology.

He can And they pick it up. They don't say well, the father is, god of a here but the, the son is not God. In the same sense as the father, he some sort of lesser being over here, they pick it up immediately. It's interesting that that heretics seem to understand the bible far less well than the people who wanted to murder.

Jesus. They understood immediately. He made himself equal to god. So there is a simultaneous action of father and son in sustaining the world, hold your mind there. Because that needs that idea needs to come into what we're talking about as well. But then he goes on to explain, basically how The sun will judge the world.

Why does he judge the world? Because the father has committed all judgment into the hand of the sun. The father judges nothing but he's committed. Everything to the son. But then how does the sun judge only what he sees with the father you see? Again, simultaneous action. Both are working at the same time in the same action.

Because there's one god that's working. But they're working in a distinct order, aren't they? You have a god one god of creation, one god of providence, who at least in this text is the father and the son. And you have this same god judging the nations. And Jesus Christ, actually tells us, in the middle of this text, That that there's there's a time coming in which all who are in their graves are going to hear his voice.

And that's not just an intellectual exercise. By the way, there's not just us defining, a trinity and figuring out what procession means. This is real life, isn't it? I mean, everyone in this room will hear that voice. And will be raised. That's why he says before that the hour has now come When the dead hear his voice and those who hear will live, there's two resurrections here, And you need to have the first one before you face the second one.

You need to have it. Now you need to hear the voice of the son of god and live but you see the reasoning? He is the word of the father. He's the one sent forth from the father to preach the gospel to save people, to call people like us to believe in him.

But why? On the one hand, he and the father are equal as the god of providence, the single god of providence. On the other hand all judgment comes from the father through the sun. Why from the father through the sun because of verse 26? For as the father as life in himself so he's granted the son to have life in himself.

And you can explain that away in all kinds of ways that you want to. But he's giving a reason, isn't he? As the father is self-existent. Yahweh. The god. Who says, I am that. I am. Which in Hebrew is also. I was that I was I will be but I will be I am that.

I am The god, who depends on no one in that category of one by himself? The father has life in himself so far, so good. He's granted the son to have life in himself. So here what I said earlier, The sun proceeds from the father, the son is god of the father.

There is an eternal communication of the whole godhead from the father to the son. And Jesus is actually giving that as the reason why he's the judge. You see why? I say this, this text is mind-bending in some ways. And yet it's very logical. It's very reasonable, isn't it?

We want to believe in the father. We don't like you. You're a sabbath breaker. You're a blasphemer. And Jesus actually says your eternal destiny hinges on the fact that the sun who has life in himself from the father, is the only source of your life. And you must stand before his judgment seat.

And you can never think that you can go to the father without going to the one who proceeds from the father, There's an order here and what god is doing. I think I can stop there, but procession One person going forth as it were from another. What about the holy spirit?

Well in John chapter 16 let me just walk you through it quickly and verbally because I know I'm giving you a lot of material Jesus says that the bottom line of the spirit's mission to the church is to glorify Christ. And he tells us that he will glorify Christ.

He tells us how by testifying through the word and bringing to remembrance what I teach you. But he also tells us why Because just as the sun has all that he has of the father, he says around verses 14 and 15. So the spirit takes of what is mine and declares it to you all that I have is from the father as the father is life in himself, he's granted me to have life in himself so the spirit This spirit proceeds from me.

The spirit takes of what is mine and declares it to you. This is where we start seeing the payoff, the son, proceeds from the father. He is begotten of the father from all eternity. God of the father, the spirit is god of the father and the son. And where that pays off, is this.

The spirit always. Direct you to Jesus. The spirit never bypasses. Jesus Christ. This is why we pray for the spirit to change people's hearts. This is why we need this spirit to pray ourselves. This is why we worship in spirit and in truth, This is why. Without the holy spirit, there is no Christ for us.

No savior to us and with no savior. There is no god. When we pray for the spirit to bless the preaching of the gospel, every single Lord stay. We are not praying for him. To give good exegesis of a text. We are praying for that. But that's not the highest goal.

We are praying for him to glorify Jesus Christ because that's who he is. That is his eternal relation to the side. So oneness. Procession. Person. Let me just wrap this off because procession is person. Person describes distinction, whatever you want to say, about what it means for you, to be a person.

And me a person, we know, we're at least distinct from each other. The problem is, we're separate individuals. But what do you do with a being where there are no separate individuals? There's only one who can occupy the category of god. He's a simple being And there is one person who's god of none, and there's one who's god of the father and there's one who proceeds from the father and the son together.

We have to say that those are within God, those those distinctions. Are not outside of god. You're outside of me. But these persons are not outside of each other. They're within the one god because that's what it means to be one. God So let's just say, person means distinction.

Person means these processions that I've been talking about here. These things that can't be transferred. The sun is all that. The father is except father The spirit is all of the father and son are accept father and son. Well, those are the the main things and I know I've given you A good bit of material, and there's a good bit more.

But let me try to wrap this up. Just briefly what I have in her manifestations missions. Who god is an eternity. Shapes. What God does in time. That's the simple thing that I'm getting at. Two, divine persons are sent out on missions, you know? A missionary is sent, aren't they?

And did you notice in the text in John 5? Jesus is a missionary. He sent. He sent from the father. He sent from the father to do something in time. That reflects who he is and eternity as a father, as life in himself. He's granted the son to have life in himself.

But he sent him. To save people like us. That is his mission. He is sent by the father. The spirit has a mission as well, and I've already stated his mission is to glorify Christ. So, the father plans, redemption, the son accomplishes redemption, the spirit applies redemption, The sun or the father chooses his people in Christ.

The sun purchases, those people and the spirit changes, those people god must be your father. Jesus, your savior, the spirit must dwell in your heart. So, we're talking about oneness. Then we're talking about processions, then we're talking about missions. What's the bottom line? I've said it before. God does what he does because he is who he is.

This makes sense. Of why we pray evangelize and worship the way we do. And then what about appropriation? I'm not going to I'm not going to be using these terms, especially in the Lord's day when I'm preaching the sermons and all of that. But in the evening, I'm going to be focusing on 2nd Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 14.

The Trinitarian blessing. And the only thing that i'm going to stress is appropriations, i'm not going to use the term. But i'm using it now. And what am i getting at? There's a certain stress, or emphasis. On one particular person often. Now, if what i've said before is true The persons are the one god not parts of the one god not three gods, but the one god is three persons, the father of none, the son of the father, the spirit of father and son together.

And in everything god does. Simple as it sounds. God works. Who is god father, son in spirit. So what does that mean? Father, son and spirit work in everything God does. So we talk about the work of the holy spirit, for example, We're not talking about the work of the holy spirit without the father and the son.

That wouldn't be the true god anymore. But we recognize something. Don't we? When we say, what's the work of the holy spirit? We acknowledge the bible says certain things about him. Says, certain things about the father, says, certain things about the sun, And often these things are just a matter of emphasis.

Let me just use, love for example. Who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. It's got to be the father, right? And by the way, why does the generic term god there? Refer to the father and god, most often refers to the father. This is eternal life.

They know you the only true God, and jesus christ whom you've sent because he's the first person in the trinity. Because the other two persons proceed from him. And he represents the majesty of the whole trinity. And so it's common isn't it to see him spoken of in this way throughout the new testament.

But in terms of the appropriations, let's say love does the father love us? Yes. What about the sun? Doesn't the love of christ passed knowledge. Yes. Why is love particularly associated with the father then? Because the gospel originates with the father. Preeminently. Never to the exclusion of the sun.

But the father sends the son to prove and show his love to us. And the spirit sheds. The love of god abroad in our hearts. All three persons love us because god is triune And god acts in everything, he does as triune. But there can be a stress and emphasis.

On one particular person. Well now, We're ready to go back to ephesians in the morning. Ready to go. Back to the biblical text and say what do we see about god? We see that everything that god does is from the father, through the son, by the spirit, by the spirit, through the sun.

We come to the father. Why? Because god, the father is of none, the son proceeds, from the father, by what we call eternal generation, the spirit proceeds from father, and son by eternal procession, And, Everything god does originates with the father is affected through the sun, perfected, by the spirit.

And in any step along the way we can see, why do we love one another in the spirit because he drives the love of god home? Why did we say god? So loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, because love in the gospel, originates with the father.

Why is the love of christ pass all knowledge in that case? Because he's the one who laid down his life for us. He's the one who died for our sins. Well, we're looking at his patterns. And the churches struggled to arrive at these patterns for a long time. Well, where do i want to end?

Well, i've given you A lot of food for thought. A lot of concepts, a lot of ideas. Where i ultimately want us to land is devotion. I want us to see the glory of this god together. This weekend take these ideas sharpen. The way we think about the unity of god about the distinctions within god, about the relationships between the persons and why they have this order about why god does what he actually does.

So that in every aspect of life in ordinary things in life, In our prayers and our family worship and our corporate worship in going to work Monday morning. Participating in homeschooling. The real million dollar question is, how do we know this? God, how do we live before him? How do we walk with him in everything that we do?

And so, as we aim at these things this week together this weekend, Let us pray for the spirit to bless us. And enable us to see the glory of god in his word. Well, let's join our hearts and prayer now. Father in heaven. We do thank you for your goodness.

We thank you for your kindness. Lord, we confess that our speech is faltering. And we confess that we cannot conceive of you as you are in yourself. Help us to adore you and bow before your footstool. Forgive us of our many sins. Show us your glory. Magnify your name.

And help us read and know your word. Well, In christ's name, we pray. Amen.