Seven Simple Facts About the Trinity

The Trinity was mentioned by Theophilus of Antioch (168-181/8 A.D.) Clement of Alexandria (193-202 A.D.), and Tertullian (c.207 A.D). It describes seven Biblical facts. Are there any you have not seen before in the Bible?

1. There is an Undeniable "Threeness" in Scripture

Mt 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:2; Eph 2:18; 3:14-17; 1 Th 1:3-5; Rev 4:8; Rom 15:16; Heb 9:14; Jude 20,21; Isa 48:16; 2 Th 2:13-14; John 15:26.
Is the work of our salvation at the cross a work of man or a work of God?

2. The Three Are Inseparable in Some Ways

Mt 28:19; John 10:27-30; 12:44-46,49-50; 14:9-11; 15:26; 16:13-15; 17:10; Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 2:11-12. The Father & Jesus share at least 25 names and titles (Lord of Lords Rev 17:14; Dt 10:17, Alpha & Omega Rev 1:8,17-18). How often have you said the end of 1 Cor 12:3?

3. The Three Are Distinct in Some Ways

Mt 3:16-17; 17:5; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:1;6:38;14:31;15:26;16:28;17:5; Acts 5:31-32; Heb 5:7-8.
Heaven was not empty when Jesus came down. They communicated when Jesus was baptized.

4. The Father is God,	**the Son is God, and**	**the Spirit is God**
1 Pet 1:2,3; Jn 5:18;8:54	Heb 1:8-9; Rev 1:8; 22:12-16	Rom 8:9-16; 1 Cor 12:6,11
Eph 1:2-3,17;3:14;5:20	John 1:1,18; 20:28;	Luke 1:35; 1 Cor 2:10-11
1Th 1:1,3;3:11; Phm 3	Hosea 1:7, Isa 7:14	1 John 4:12,13,15-16; Jn 14:16,26
2 Th 1:1; 2:16; Ga1:1,3	1 John 5:11,12, + 21	1 Cor 3:16 vs. 1 Cor 6:19
Titus 1:4; 1 Cor 1:3;8:6	Col 2:9 & Mt 1:23	Acts 5:3-4; Job 33:4; Ps 139:7-10
Eph 3:11;Jn17:5 (eternal)	Heb 7:3; 13:8 (eternal)	Heb 9:14 (eternal)

In some verses idols are referred to as gods, (Gen 31:30,3; 1 Cor 8:5) and in two places men are referred to as "gods" (Ps 82:6-7; Jn 10:34-36). "God" here though is defined as:

1) One whom we and all the world are created through.
2) Rightfully worshipped by angels and men.
3) Rightfully given praise and devotion by men.
4) Rightfully called our Lord and our God.

By the above definitions, Christ is God according to the following scripture.

1) Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17 (*other* in Jehovah's Witness New World Trans. is their own addition)
2) Hebrews 1:6,9 (*proskuneo* in Greek), Revelation 5:8-9, John 9:38
3) 2 Corinthians 11:3
4) John 20:28-29; Hebrews 1:8-9; Revelation 22:20; Philippians 2:11 (Lord).

If you refuse to recognize Jesus in these four ways, there is no need to continue until you decide to repent and obey the Bible.
God's people in the Bible boast of and give glory to Jesus Christ. Do You?
Gal 6:14, 1 Corinthians 1:23,30,31, 1 Cor 2:2, John 1:14, Philippians 2:10-11, 2 Peter 3:18.
How many times have you boasted of what Paul boasted of in Gal 6:14?

5. There is only One God, Not Three Separate Ones

Dt 4:35-9; 6:4;Mk 12:29-33; Isa 43:10-12; 44:6,8; 45:5-6,14,21;46:9; Joel 2:27; 1Tim1:17;2:5;6:15-6

6. They are Co-equal in a Similar Way as a Father and Son Are Co-equal

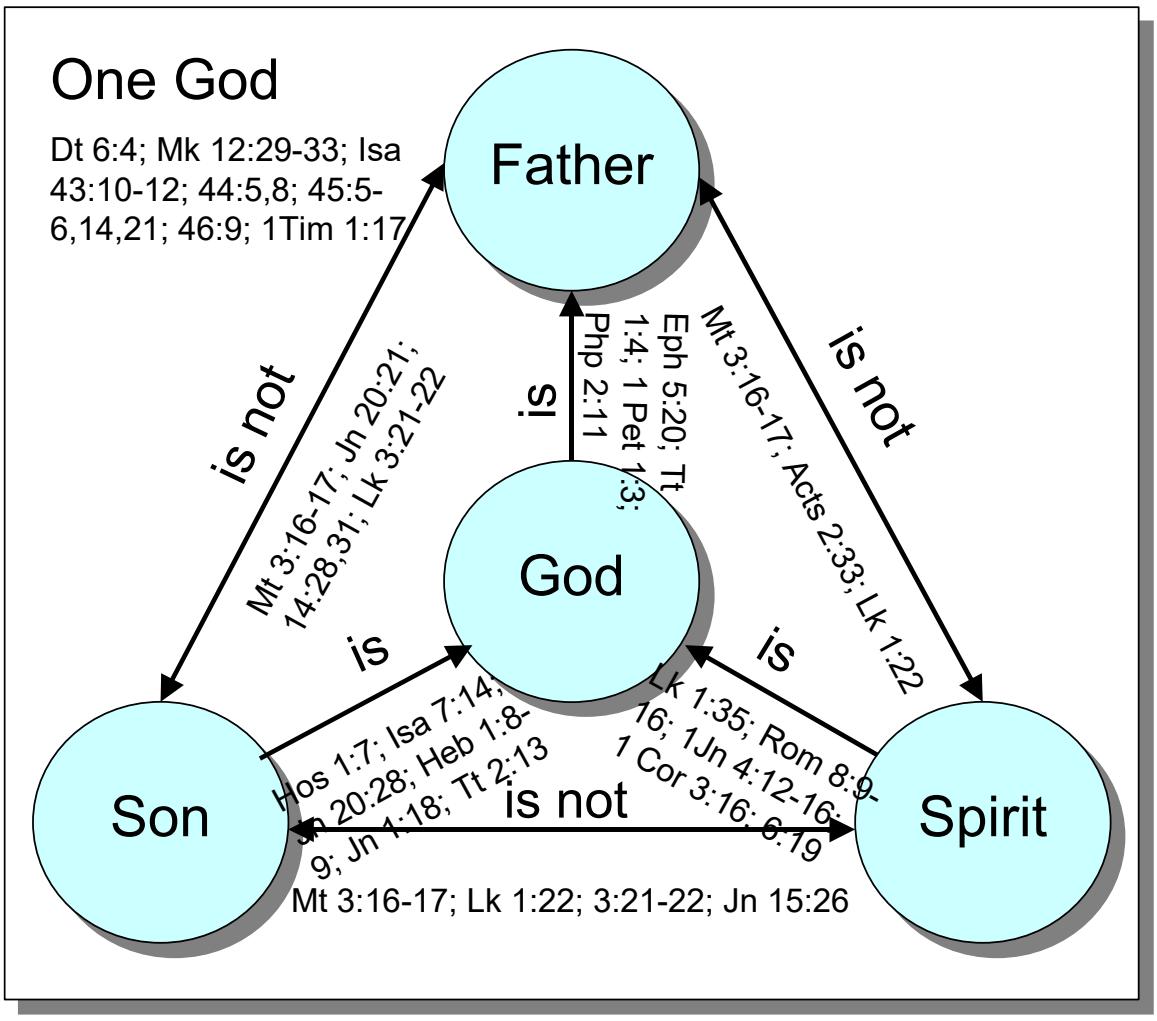
John 5:18; 5:23; Col 2:9-10; (Is 44:6; Rev 1:8 vs. Rev 1:17-18; 22:13)
As John 5:18 shows, a father is equal in nature to the son he begets. Otherwise, your father must be greater than you, your grandfather greater than him, and your 100th ancestor must have been one super guy. People make things but "beget" only people. God made created things but "begets" only God. Shouldn't church worship be modeled after heavenly worship? If you have never sung or given glory to God and the Lamb, prayerfully read Rev 5:9,12-14.

7. They Differ in Role and Rank in a Similar Way as a Father and Son Differ

1 Cor 11:3; 15:25-28; Mt 12:18; Eph 1:17; John 1:33; 14:16,26,28; 20:17; Rom 8:26-27; 1 Peter 1:3-4. A Father is the head of a son, and God is the head of Christ. (1 Cor 11:3)

This tract has been endorsed by these University of Texas at Austin groups: Chinese Bible Study (CBS), Longhorn Life Campus Mission, the Navigators - UT, International Student Friendship Ministries, Baptist Student Union, and A.C.C.C.F. (1994)

A Trinity Entity Relationship Diagram



Good and Bad Analogies of the Trinity

While no analogy of the Trinity of God with things on earth can be expected to be perfect, here are some good and bad analogies of the Trinity. Pick which are good and which are not.

1. Does a three-leaf clover really have three leaves or one? If someone says three, you can point to the one leaf, because they are all connected in the middle. If someone says one, you can point to the three distinct lobes. In a similar manner, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct and yet inseparable.

2. The Trinity has three parts, similar to an egg having a yolk, egg white, and shell.

3. The Trinity is like water: existing as ice, liquid, and steam.

4. Has anybody seen the sun? No not really, we have only seen the light from the sun. Has anybody felt the sun? Not really, we only feel the warmth of the sun. Likewise, no one has seen the Father, the source, but we mankind has seen Jesus. We feel the Holy Spirit, dwelling in our hearts.

5. The Trinity is like a man, who is simultaneously a worker, a husband, and a father.

6. The Trinity is like an apple. There are three distinct parts: skin, pulp, and core, but only one apple.

7. A human being is like a trinity in microcosm, with a body, soul, and spirit.

8. Draw a mountain range with three peaks and one mountain base. Is that one mountain or three?

Good and Bad Analogies of the Trinity - Answers

1. The three-leaf clover analogy is OK. This was first used by Patrick of Ireland (yes there really was a Patrick of Ireland and he was a great guy), around 400 A.D.

2. The egg analogy is very simple but it is OK to show something as simple as an egg can be one and yet three.

3. The water analogy is bad, because ice, water, and steam can turn into each other, and the Father, Son, and Spirit do not turn into each other. Hebrews 13:8 says Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

4. The sun analogy is good to show not just distinctness and inseparability, but something of the role of each. This analogy was given by Tertullian around 200 A.D.

5. The man analogy is bad, because this is modalism, not the Trinity. The Father did NOT have the role of the son and die on the cross for our sins.

6. The apple analogy, like the egg analogy, is OK to show inseparably and distinctness. This was in a children's book on the Trinity.

7. The body, soul, and spirit analogy is bad, because it is an example of modalism. On earth Jesus submitted to the Father, prayed to the Father and the Holy Spirit alighted on Him as a dove. Jesus did not pray to himself or do a magician's act.

8. The mountain peaks analogy is OK, showing separateness and distinctness.

How to Answer Most Questions on the Trinity

Rather than have a handout on this, I usually put this on the whiteboard. I do this section not as a lecture, but rather as an interactive discussion.

I ask them for various questions they have on the Trinity or objections they have heard. Rather than answer the objections I put them on the board under the appropriate category. I put the verse or topic they mention in one of five columns. I put the letter on the top of the column after they have something in it. When they are done, I fill in the rest of the letters. I leave them guessing as to what each letter stands for until the end.

G	O	D	I	S
"God" has 4 definitions	On earth	Differ in role and rank	Inseparable yet distinct	Same in "LENGTH": Love, Essence, Name, Glory, Titles, Honor

Initially I only put up the letters, a space (to write the meaning later), and then the verse with each question.

I tell them my objective is NOT just to answer their questions on the Trinity. Rather we are more ambitious than that. Our objective is that they would learn this framework so that by the end of this class they themselves would be able to answer at least 90% of all objections on the Trinity. Here is a sample discussion of each part.

G - God has different definitions

Question: Since many verses, such as 2 Corinthians 13:13, say things like "God and Jesus", how can Jesus be God? Since many verses call Jesus the Son of God, and no one can be the son of themselves, then how can Jesus be God? If the Father is "Lord", how can Jesus also be Lord?

Answer: First you have to recognize that the term (God/god) (Hebrew *elohim* / Greek *deos*) has at least four different meanings in the Bible. In fact, Hebrews 1:9 deliberately uses the term God in two different senses (Father and Jesus) in the same verse. Ditto for John 1:1. Jesus acknowledged there was more than one meaning in John 10:34-39, where He quotes Psalm 82:6. Here are the meanings in the Bible:
Those who are **called gods**, even idols. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6; Genesis 31:30,33
The Father. Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:2-3,17, Hebrews 1:9 (2nd occurrence) etc.
Jesus. Hebrews 1:9 (1st occurrence); John 1:1,19: Hosea 1:7; Isaiah 7:14; 1 John 5:11,12 vs. 21; Colossians 2:9 and Matthew 1:23
The Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9-16; Luke 1:35; 1 John 4:12,13,15-16; 1 Corinthians 3:16 vs. 1 Corinthians 6:19; Acts 5:4.

O - On Earth

Question: God cannot be hurt, and knows everything, and cannot die. Since Jesus suffered, Jesus did not know the day of His return (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32), and died on the cross, how is Jesus God? Since Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 4:15, etc.), and God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13), how can Jesus be God? Since Jesus was submissive and learned obedience (Hebrews 5:7-8), how is Jesus equal to the Father?

Answer: This is effectively answered with two words: "on earth". Jesus voluntarily emptied Himself of many of His divine powers as Philippians 2:6-8 shows. He gave up much of His glory when He came to earth, as John 17: 5 shows. Jesus was God's son by the virgin birth as well as before time began, and his human body died, but Jesus did not cease to exist. Jesus had 100% human nature, and He was really tempted. But, Jesus was till 100% God, and He successfully resisted all temptation.

Likewise, though Numbers 23:19 and 1 Samuel 15:29 say God is not a man, these were written prior to Jesus coming to earth, and Jesus was God before becoming incarnated as a man.

Romans 1:25 says we are to worship the Creator, not creatures. The human body of Jesus was created, but Jesus is not a creature as He eternally existed prior to His human body. Jesus being God's Son, begotten of the Father, does not mean the Father created Jesus, as people can make things, but people beget people. Jesus is the firstborn of God in three ways: He is the firstborn of the dead resurrected in glory. He is the firstborn in the sense of being the only man after Adam with no human father, and He is firstborn as the only-begotten of the Father before time began.

D - Different in role and rank

Questions: OK, well maybe Christ emptied Himself while on earth, but even now in heaven how about verses such as 1 Corinthians 11:3 say that God is the head of Christ. See also 1 Corinthians 15:25-28; Matthew 12:18; Ephesians 1:17; John 1:33; 14:16,26,28; 20:17; Romans 8:26-27.

Answer: I once had a JW honestly tell me they do not honor the son just as the honor the Father, just AFTER I had them read John 5:18,23. The Father and Son are equal in nature according to Philippians 2:6. As for the importance of the Son's role, see Colossians 2:9-10. If someone asks you if God has a physical body in space and time, the answer is certainly "yes", and it is Jesus. See also Isaiah 44:8; Revelation 1:8 vs. Revelation 1:17-18; 22:13). Jesus saying, "The Father is greater than I" in John 14:28 can refer to either Jesus being emptied on earth of a difference in rank, called "functional subordination" now in Heaven. "Son" does not prove lesser nature or worth. Otherwise, your father must have been greater than you, and your 100th ancestor must have been like superman. We should worship Jesus as the angels do in Hebrews 1:6, praise and sing to worship Jesus as in Revelation 5:9,12-14, pray to Jesus as Stephen did in Acts 7:59, and call Jesus "my Lord and my God" as Thomas the apostle did in John 20:28.

After Jesus rose, the Father gave all authority on heaven and earth to Jesus in Matthew 28:18.
In our salvation, it is wrong to say the Father died on the cross; that was Jesus' role. It was the Father who sent the Son, and it is the Father who grants people to come to Jesus in John 6:65. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit. All three had a role in raising Jesus from the dead. They are co-equal as a Father and Son are, yet differ in role and rank as a Father and Son.

I - Inseparable yet distinct

Distinct will, yet always agreeing. On earth Jesus prayed, "not my will but yours be done."
Patrick of Ireland (~450 A.D.) when asked about this gave the example of a three-leaf clover. (etc.) In Dt 6:4, God is "one". There are different Hebrew words for "one", and the word used here, *'echad*, includes the meaning of united, alike, or alone.

S - Same in "LENGTH": Love, Essence, Name, Glory, Titles, Honor

We are baptized in the name, not names, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father and on share at least 25 names and titles, including Lord, Alpha and Omega, Savior, etc.
As to the Everlasting Father in Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is both the father of our salvation, and one in name with the Father. (The Father dwells in Jesus too).
"All that the Father has is mine" (John 16:15)
"All should honor the son just as they honor the Father" (John 5:23)