



# Introducing the Holy Spirit

Read John 16:5-15. In this discourse Jesus gives a formal introduction to the third person of the Trinity. Write what you learn from the passage about the Holy Spirit and why he was sent. The person of the Spirit. Personhood is not a matter of having feet or eyebrows but rather of having attributes of being such as intellect, agency (the ability to act), will, emotion, and identity. Below are some of the major biblical passages that affirm the unique personhood of the Spirit.

Look up each and record what aspect of personhood is described:

- Acts 5:3
- Romans 15:30
- 1 Corinthians 2:10; 12:11
- Ephesians 4:30

## The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

While the identity of the Holy Spirit is not fully revealed until the New Testament, most scholars see inferences about him in Old Testament passages such as Genesis 1:26-27.

### What Holy Spirit inferences do you see in these opening verses of Scripture?

*God said, "let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27*

- Is there something to be learned about the nature of God in the nature and creation of man?
- Why do you think that God did not fully disclose his triune nature (Trinity) until the coming of Jesus?

## The Trinity.

How would you clarify the Trinity to someone who thinks you believe in three gods?

While the term "Trinity" is never used in Scripture, the personhood and deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are clearly taught. If we were to summarize the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity, it would be as follows: God is three distinct persons; each person is fully God; there is one God. The greatest minds of the last two thousand years have generally conceded that while we can state these three truths with clarity, like the mathematical concept of a fourth spatial dimension or the mystery of human consciousness, the Trinity is beyond our human capacity to perceive or envision.

## **Flatland.**

In 1884, Edwin Abbot wrote "Flatland," an imaginative story of life in a two-dimensional world. The protagonist is A. Square, and as the name suggests, he's simply a flat shape—lines on a page. The story illuminates the difficulty of picturing 3-D life for a two-dimensional being. A. Square, for example, can only experience a sphere as a flat circle, for in Flatland the concept of depth is unfathomable. Flatland is still used in math today as a helpful analogy to explain the difficulty of envisioning a fourth spatial dimension.

Incomprehensible as it may be, there has been no shortage of illustrations offered over the years that attempt to explain the Trinity. To a degree, they are all helpful. But, to a degree, they are all deficient. Below are some of the better known of the illustrations.

Look at each, and if you can, write down what it tries to communicate and where the analogy fails.

- Water illustrates the Trinity in that it can manifest itself in three forms: liquid, vapor, and ice.
- An egg illustrates the Trinity in that it is made up of three constituent parts: shell, egg white, and yolk.
- Sex illustrates the Trinity because, in the consummation of marriage, two people, to the extent possible, become one.
- A plant illustrates the Trinity, with the Father as the root, the Son as the shoot that breaks forth into the world, and the Spirit as that which spreads beauty and fragrance.
- A person illustrates the Trinity in the union and interdependence of intellect, emotion, and will.

As these illustrations are not all equal in their descriptive insight, which do you find most helpful? The Trinity is one of many mysteries surrounding God that can freeze the brain when pondered too long. What other mysteries about God do you wrestle with?

How all three persons comprise one God may not be as clear as we'd like. What is clear is that the doctrine of the Trinity is true and that each member of the Trinity plays a distinct role in our salvation, for we "have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood" (1 Peter 1:2). It is also clear that the mission and ministry of the Spirit are to bring glory to the Son. The Spirit labors in us to focus our mind, affections, worship, and service toward "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

## **What I know now.**

Since we've touched on some abstract ideas, try to process the content through answering these two questions:

How I viewed the Holy Spirit in the past:

How I view him now: