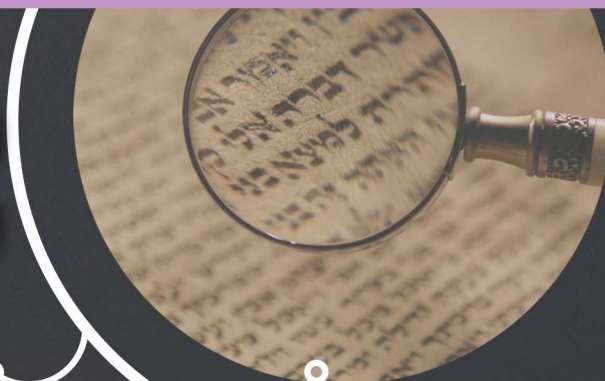


MY JOURNEY TO LIFE THE TRINITY



My Journey to Life, Step 8

Foreword

My Journey to Life provides the keys for living every day with peace of mind, harmony of body and wonderful relationships. As you read through each lesson guide, your daily outlook will be transformed and renewed by the Spirit. We pray you will experience a growing adoration for the greatest Teacher this world has ever known. Let's begin walking, step-by-step, on the pathway towards a new life together with Jesus.

Preface

The eternal oneness of God is a mystery that has no full explanation in human terms. Many have attempted to provide simple analogies to explain the nature of the triune God, such as it being like the layers of an apple or the three different properties of water, but these do not adequately capture the magnitude of the concept. We will study the wonder of the triune God throughout eternity!

Step Eight—The Three-Person Godhead

Who is the Godhead? What does the Bible say about them? “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 23

Bible Discovery: Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *16LtMs, Manuscript 47*, 1901, par. 6

1. Why are there so many conflicting theories about God? Most explanations about God, including His very existence, depend on human wisdom. But human wisdom cannot penetrate the divine. Because of this, most humanity has failed to recognize Jesus' role as both God and Savior (John 1:11; Matthew 7:13, 14) and the Holy Spirit as a separate entity Who is also God.

God longs to show Himself to us through His own personal revelation as recorded in Scripture. This lesson will not depend on nature-based theology or philosophical interpretations of God but on the declarations of His Word.

Bible Discovery: Job 11:7; Jeremiah 8:9; 1 Corinthians 1:20, 21; 2:7, 8; Colossians 2:8

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 427.1

2. If human wisdom is not always helpful in knowing God, how does He reveal Himself? God realized our predicament of failing to understand His heart of love for us. To bridge that gulf, the Godhead chose together to manifest themselves through the incarnation of Jesus. The Scriptures are His self-revelation, telling Christ's story from eternity through humanity's redemption. But the Scriptures do not *prove* God's existence as much as they *assume* it. Since God is not an object to be analyzed or quantified, to find the truth about God in Scripture, we must have an openness to the Holy Spirit and a willingness to do God's will.

Additionally, God discloses Himself through the general revelation of nature. Though sin has marred nature, giving it an imperfect testimony regarding the Creator, God nonetheless uses His creation to reveal Himself to all people, even those who have not had access to Scripture.

Bible Discovery: Psalm 14:1; 19:1-3; John 7:17; 17:3; Romans 1:18-22, 28; 1 Corinthians 1:20, 21; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:20

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 319.1, 4; *Steps to Christ*, p. 10.3

3. The Bible says to "love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). How is it possible to wholeheartedly love the Creator if we don't know Him? Even those who know little to nothing of God can learn of Him through nature and human experience, as well as evidence from Scripture. A general revelation of God to the heart is also given to those who have no access to the Bible (Acts 17:23; Romans 2:14, 15). If any of us want to find and know God, we must seek Him with all our heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

Our primary knowledge of God comes from the Incarnation—Jesus coming from heaven to earth to reveal what God is like to a world largely clueless about His character of love. Only Jesus could reveal the Father, because He is the Father's express image (Luke 10:22; Hebrews 1:3).

Bible Discovery: Jeremiah 31:33, 34; John 5:39; 6:53, 63; Philippians 3:10; 2 Peter 3:18

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 85.1; 87.3

4. Is there only one God or three? John's gospel reveals that the Godhead consists of God the Father (see Bible study #9), God the Son (see Bible study #10), and God the Holy Spirit (see Bible study #11)—a unity of three co-eternal Persons in a mysterious, non-hierarchical relationship.

For all the persons of the Godhead to be truly God, they must be equal in nature. As an example to humanity of total dependence on God, Jesus chose in His incarnation to be subordinate to the Father until the task of redemption entrusted to Him is finally complete at the Second Coming.

Unlike pagan notions of a multiplicity of gods and deities, Scripture teaches that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 4:35; John 17:3). While the Godhead exists in three separate and distinct Persons, God is one in purpose, mind, and character. Since God is love and love must be expressed, it would be impossible for God to exist in a singular Personage.

Bible Discovery: Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6, 8; 45:5; Mark 12:29-32; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Hebrews 9:14; Titus 2:13

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, p. 148.4; *Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895, par. 3

5. Are there Scriptural examples of plurality within the Godhead? Yes! Let's first examine plural pronouns for God:

- "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image." (Genesis 1:26)
- "Behold the man has become like one of **Us**." (Genesis 3:22)
- "Come, let **Us** go down." (Genesis 11:7)

Additionally, the word for "God" in Genesis 1:1 is "Elohim" – a plural word for God most frequently used throughout the Old Testament, and always with a singular verb. Using "Elohim" to name God helps us understand that the main character of the Bible is one God whose inner being is a plurality.

Other texts that include all three members of the Godhead include: "And now the Lord God [the Father] and His Spirit [the Holy Spirit] have sent Me [the Son of God]" (Isaiah 48:16); "I [the Father] have put My Spirit upon Him [the Messiah]; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1); "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Various references distinguish the Spirit of God from God the Father or God the Son. In the Creation story, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Christ clearly announced the coming of the person of the Holy Spirit only a few hours before His crucifixion: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth," (John 14:16, 17; cf. 16:4-7, 13).

Bible Discovery: Matthew 3:17; Luke 1:35; 3:21, 22; Romans 1:4; 15:30; 1 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 1 John 5:7

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 615.1

6. Are all three members of the Godhead doing the same thing? Though Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all work together to redeem humanity, they each perform different tasks in saving us. Two examples of these differences include that (1) The Father gave His Son, Christ gave Himself, and the Spirit gave Jesus birth; (2) At Jesus' baptism, the Father gave encouragement, Christ gave Himself to be baptized as our example, and Spirit gave Himself to Jesus to empower Him.

The great work of the Trinity is to reveal God and a knowledge of Christ to everyone (John 17:3) and make Jesus present and real (Matthew 28:20; cf. Hebrews 13:5). Though all three members of the Trinity work together to save, only Jesus lived as a man, died as a man, and became our Savior (John 6:47; Matthew 1:21). But because "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19), God could in that sense also be designated as our Savior (cf. Titus 3:4), for He saved us through Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Philippians 3:20). The Holy Spirit represents Christ; yet is a distinct personality (John 14:26).

Bible Discovery: Matthew 1:18, 20; 3:13-15; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 222.2

7. What member of the Godhead is the focus of Scripture? Because it was through Jesus that God's love and purpose were revealed, the Bible focuses on Him. All the Old Testament sacrifices and festivals pointed forward with hope to the coming Messiah. Jesus is the focal point of the four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He is the Good News proclaimed by the disciples in sermons and writings—the Blessed Hope. The Old Testament writers look forward to the first coming of Jesus, while the New Testament reports His advent and helps us look forward to His return.

Even though the early church baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19, 20), it was through Jesus that God's love and purpose were revealed. Thus, the focus of the Bible is on Jesus Christ, and the Christian's hope of redemption and eternal life through the cross.

Bible Discovery: Acts 4:12; Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; 2:2; 15:3; Colossians 1:15-17

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1895, par. 7

8. Where did the doctrine of the Trinity originate? Although the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, the concept that God is one essence and nature in three persons is a mystery woven throughout Scripture.

Early Christians identified the Son as Creator (John 1:1-3) as well as YHWH or the "I AM" of the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58). They accepted Jesus as equal to the Father and Judge

of all the earth, who should be worshipped as God. These early Christians also knew the Holy Spirit was a separate Person who could be grieved or blasphemed (Matthew 12:32).

The New Testament writers showed their acceptance of the one God in three persons concept, mentioning the members of the Godhead together several times (See **Bible Discovery** verses for **Question 1** above.)

In the 4th century, Arius, an Alexandrian priest, taught that God created Jesus as His literal son who was not equal with the Father, a being neither fully human nor fully divine. This teaching, called Arianism, is not in harmony with the teachings of the Scripture in which Jesus is revealed as the Eternal Creator. Other heresies regarding the nature of the Godhead have surfaced through the centuries, but the Bible alone speaks unchanging truth regarding the equality of the triune God, who have existed harmoniously from eternity.

Bible Discovery: Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 14:33; Luke 4:8; John 5:22; 14:9; 1 Peter 1:1, 2; Revelation 19:10

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 270.1; *Bible Training School*, March 1, 1906, par. 1; *Evangelism*, p. 615.1

9. Are there demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's divine work before His historical personal coming at Pentecost (John 14:17)? The coming of the Holy Spirit to the believers at Pentecost made clear that the Spirit is accessible to everyone who genuinely seeks His presence and power to renew their life after the life of God. The Pentecostal coming of the Spirit has significance for every Christian!

But the Spirit didn't originate at Pentecost. He was an agent in the creation of the world and of human life (Genesis 1:2; 6:3; Job 33:4). Believers before Pentecost experienced the new birth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Numbers 14:24; John 3:8, 10). Old Testament patriarchs and prophets recognized the presence of God's Spirit in their lives (Numbers 27:18; Psalm 139:7-10) and His work as Counselor and Guide (Nehemiah 9:20, 30). Old Testament believers were also recipients of the gifts of the Spirit, as He distributed talents such as craftsmanship and artistic ability (Exodus 31:1-5). The Spirit also gave the gift of holy boldness in denouncing oppression and injustice (Micah 3:8) as well as power to rise above fear and accomplish great feats for God (Judges 14:6). Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams through the indwelling of the Spirit (Genesis 41:38).

Some of the biblical names for the Holy Spirit such as Counselor, Comforter, and Advocate help us identify Him as a distinct Person, not just a cosmic force, essence, or impersonal power. He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30) and He can give specific instruction (Acts 8:29).

Bible Discovery: Luke 1:35; John 14:16, 17; 15:26, 27; 16:7-15; Romans 8:27

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.2

10. How long has God existed in a trinitarian nature? Since God is eternal and unchangeable, His trinitarian nature has never changed. All the various revelations about God presented in the Bible refer to the trinitarian nature of one God.

Bible Discovery: Isaiah 42:8; 43:10; 55:9; Mark 12:29; Galatians 3:20

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.2; *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.1

11. How can the doctrine of the 3 in 1 Godhead make my life better? Everyone at some point has experienced loss, abandonment, loneliness or rejection. Our hearts long for love—unconditional, intimate, self-sacrificing, never-stopping love! At the cross, the Trinity made a full demonstration of the kind of love for which we long. Through Christ the love of the Godhead fills our aching, empty hearts with companionship and caring. We now have purpose—to be fully reconciled to our Creator God and enter every day into deeper relationship with Him.

We are valued by the Trinity as though there were not another person on earth to share their love! Christ, the mediator between God and us, unites us to the Godhead with ties that will endure through eternity.

Bible Discovery: Isaiah 9:6; John 1:14; 14:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 4:7

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 27, 1892, par. 4

12. Does our understanding of the doctrine of the Godhead really matter? Isn't our relationship with Jesus all that is essential? The concept of the Trinity is at the very center of the doctrine of God. Knowledge about the Father and Holy Spirit is essential to understanding Christ's incarnation, cross, resurrection and heavenly ministries.

The essence of the gospel is seen in the love demonstrated for us by the triune God at Calvary. Consider this: God the Father so loved you that He sent God the Son to die for you that you may be born of God the Spirit (see John 3:8, 13, 16, 17). Before earth's creation this triune God considered the risk of creating you and me with the power of choice. They knew the terrible heartbreak Jesus would endure on the Cross as our sins separated Him from God the Father and God the Spirit (Isaiah 59:2; Matthew 27:46). Yet He came! Only recognition of the perfect unity and purpose of the Godhead can enable us to respond in gratitude to the depth of God's amazing love.

Bible Discovery: Isaiah 48:16, 17; Daniel 7:13; Matthew 3:16, 17; Ephesians 4:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 1:4-6; 13:8

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 907.2

Reflection...

The biblical record declares that the Godhead consists of three distinct persons who have existed together from eternity, all equally God and possessing original, underived and unborrowed life. To deny these realities is to deny the authority of God's Word.

Next Step...

In our next study, we will examine the role that God, the Father, plays in this triune entity.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the doctrine of the Trinity help you understand mutual submission in relationships, such as marriage?
2. What is known about the Godhead from Scripture and what remains a mystery?
3. What did you learn in this lesson about the Godhead that you didn't know before?

Further Reading

Official Adventist Website: <https://www.adventist.org/trinity>

Contact Information

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Request a personal Bible study: <https://www.bibleschools.com/en/personal-studies>

Visit your local Seventh-day Adventist Church: <https://www.adventistlocator.org>

Online prayer room: <https://www.wepray.mobi>