

# Understanding the Unity of Love

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# 1 John 4

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

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# 1 John 4

<sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

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# 1 John 4

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

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# 1 John 4

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. <sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

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# 1 John 4

<sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup> By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is so also are we in this world.

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# 1 John 4

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> If anyone says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

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# God is LOVE

- In verse 1 and 2, John talks about God, The Spirit and the Son
- In verse 7-8 we learn that God is love and we cannot know love without God. If we cannot love, we don't know God
- Knowing Him transforms us!

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# God is LOVE

- Our perception of God is filtered by Fake News!
- Yet a God who loves provokes us to love Him
- God operates in Love
- The Trinity is a Relationship of Love
- Three distinct persons who cannot exist without the others; three-in-one

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# Definitions of the Trinity

**1. The Trinity is like an egg.** This is probably the most common.

- Tritheism (the belief in three gods). Yes, the egg is one egg and has three parts, but each of the substances that makes up the parts (shell, the white, and yoke), are distinct.
- Three parts are not sharing in the *exact same* nature.
- They are different and cannot express love to each other

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# Definitions of the Trinity

## 2. The Trinity is like water.

- This is popular too, but it only illustrates the heresy of modalism.
- So, the same molecule of water can exist in three forms: ice, steam, and liquid. However, while the molecule of water is one in essence (relative to H<sup>2</sup>O), the forms are not existing in these forms at the same time.
- *Sometimes* it is liquid, *sometimes* it is ice, and *sometimes* it is steam.
- God is not sometimes Son, sometimes Father, and sometimes Holy Spirit. He is eternally each, always at the same time.

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# Definitions of the Trinity

## 3. The Trinity is like a three leaf clover.

- This is a form of tritheism also. While there may be three parts of the leaf that make the clover, each part of the clover is a separate part of the leaf.
- Each do not share in the *exact same* nature (*homoousia*) as the others. They only share a similar nature (*homoiousia*).
- It's not like the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are all of the same species called god. They are all God, sharing in the *exact same*, singular, one, simple nature that is not composed of any spacial, temporal, or physical parts.

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# Definitions of the Trinity

## 4. The Trinity is like one man who is simultaneously a father, brother, and husband.

- This is also modalism. Father, brother, and husband only describe various functions of one person.
- Each function cannot exist in a simultaneous relationship with each other, can't talk to each other, and cannot exist in an eternal fellowship with each other.
- In other words, these are modes of existence, not distinct persons.

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# Problems with these analogies

- It is difficult to use these illustrations in evangelism
- None of them are able to be all things at once
- None of them interact with each other in love
- The Trinity is a mystery
- It is a secret we are told about
- God is a revealed mystery

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# Athanasian Creed (500AD)

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. .... And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

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# Our God is different to other gods

- Islam – Allah has no son and he is alone
- JW – deny the trinity – Jesus is Archangel Michael
- Mormons – Jesus is the son but so is Lucifer. No spirit
- Hindu – millions of gods
- Atheists – if there was a god, he'd be nasty (Hitchens)

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# True Christian Doctrine

- God is a different being – not a dictator in the sky
- He's not a solitary, bearded old man on a throne
- Solitary beings are socially awkward and mean
- God created the Universe out of an overflow of the love He has for His Son
- God Loved Jesus before the foundation of the world

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# John 17:24

- <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

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# What is God?

- God is a Father – loving His Son
- We can't call Him Father if he wasn't one
- God is Love (1 John 4:8)
- The be Father is to love – to give out life – to beget a Son
- He was a life-giving loving Father before He ruled anything

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# What is God?

- He was a Father eternally loving and giving life to His Son
- If the Trinity was like an egg, He couldn't love, He couldn't express love
- Our God is a personal community of love

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# Personal Community of Love

- We have One God in Three persons that mutually co-exist in love for each other
- If our analogy is wrong, we cannot grasp their unity
- The Father, Son and Spirit are distinct persons operating as One in the unity of love. That is God
- The Gospel falls apart if we try to make the Trinity into three bits of God or masks that God wears for us.

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# Personal Community of Love

- God does not change in nature
- If He were solitary in three roles, He would be schizophrenic
- Jesus would sending Himself, begetting Himself, talking to Himself, praying to Himself, seating Himself at the right hand of Himself
- These are distinct persons loving each other

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# Personal Community of Love

- This is not three gods who like each other
- Father was always a Father – eternally Father
- To be Father he must be a Father of... *LOVING GOD*  
*LOVING PEOPLE*
- The Father cannot be on His own
- The Son is eternally the Son – of the Father – has His being in relationship

# Personal Community of Love

- The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son
- Three distinct persons with real love for each other
- They are who they are only in relation to each other

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The Lord our God is ONE!

**Deut 6:4** “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is *one*.

**Gen 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become *one* flesh

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The Lord our God is ONE!

Our God exists and is defined by loving relationships

He wants us to experience that same love and unity with Him, and also with each other

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# How does this work for us?

- God made us in His image as male and female
- There is something in our relationship and differences and husband and wife, man and woman, that image the being of God
- We are the Bride of Christ and to effectively reflect God, we have to operate in love, in community, especially in our marriages and church.

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# How does this work for us?

- God made us in His image as male and female
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- We are the Body of Christ and to effectively reflect God, we have to operate in love, in community, especially in our marriages

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# Conclusion

- God wants to relate to us in LOVE
- The God of loving, permanent relationships is a fountain of overflowing love for us
- Father is a profound name- life-giving and loving because He has a son and we are his adopted sons
- Romans 8:15 ... but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “**Abba!** Father!”

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# Conclusion

**1 John 4:7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

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Simply knowing Him changes our nature to become lovely and loving

