

*This midweek study will explore the doctrine of the Trinity. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

#### Essential Doctrine: God in Three Persons

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each person is distinct from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

**1** **God is one essence or substance** (Ex. 3:14; Deut. 6:4-5; John 8:58).

- ▶ *How many monotheistic religions can you name? Monotheistic means religions that believe in only one God. (Hint: there are only about four major ones: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.)*
- ▶ *Would the Jewish/Christian belief in one God be normal in its time?*

#### Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

- ▶ *Why do you think Moses wanted to strongly emphasize that God is one?*
- ▶ *Notice how the greatest commandment follows immediately after the declaration that God is one. What's the connection between the declaration and the command?*
- ▶ *If there were many gods, could they command us to love each one with all our heart, mind, and strength? How does this command differ when there is only one God?*

#### Read Exodus 3:14.

- ▶ *How did God reveal Himself to Moses? Was His name singular or plural? Why is that important?*

#### Read John 8:58.

- ▶ *Because of this statement, the Jews wanted to stone Jesus for blasphemy. Reread Exodus 3:14. What was Jesus saying?*
- ▶ *How could Jesus say "I am," when God had earlier said, "I AM"? Why didn't Jesus say "We are"?*

**2** **Each person of the Trinity is distinct and divine** (Matt. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 13:13).

- ▶ *So if God is one, how is He also three? What do we mean when we say that God is one essence and three Persons?*

#### Read Matthew 3:16-17.

- ▶ *Jesus' baptism all three Persons of the Godhead were present, each distinct and simultaneous. Where was the Father? Where was the Son? Where was the Spirit?*

- ▶ *How would you distinguish the Persons of the Trinity? How does each One relate to us? What passages might support this?*

#### Read 2 Corinthians 13:13.

- ▶ *Paul ended his letter with a blessing from each person of the Trinity. What did he wish for each One to give to us? How is each blessing particular to each Person?*

**3** **The Trinity is an essential doctrine** (John 5:22-23; Acts 5:3-4).

- ▶ *What would you consider the absolute minimums of Christianity? In other words, what are the things you must believe to belong to the faith? Would you consider the Trinity one of them? Could you consider any person of the Trinity not fully God and still be a Christian?*

#### Read John 5:22-23.

- ▶ *According to this passage, is it essential to consider Jesus fully God? What reason does this passage give for the necessity of acknowledging Jesus as divine?*
- ▶ *What other reasons would it be essential for one to believe Jesus is fully God?*
- ▶ *What about the Holy Spirit? Could you still be a Christian if you considered Him less than divine?*

#### Read Acts 5:3-4.

- ▶ *This passage is frightening if we are honest. According to Peter, what specific sin did Ananias and Sapphira commit?*
- ▶ *What did Peter say their sin is?*
- ▶ *What conclusion can we draw about who the Holy Spirit is? Based on this passage, would you say it's an absolute must that we believe in His divinity?*

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Muslims, with a strong belief in one God, are often confused by the Trinity. How might you try to explain the Trinity to a Muslim friend?*