

AsiAfrica Ministries, Inc.

© June 2015, Rev. Dr. Martin M. Davis (Ph.D.),

INTRODUCTION

If you could choose *one* word to describe God, what word would you choose?

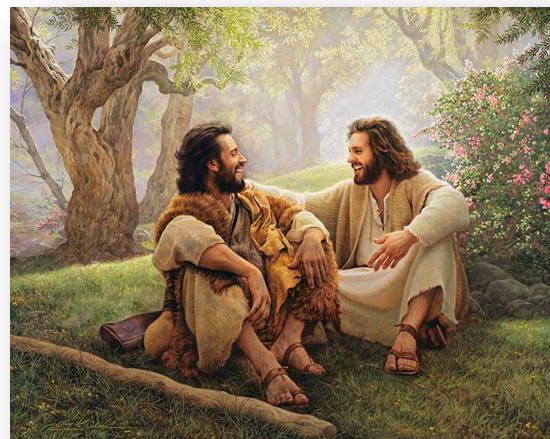
If you find it difficult to decide, then notice the word the Apostle John used to describe God. John said, “God is *love*” (1 John 4:8, 16). For John, the best word to describe God is “love!” Why

does John describe God this way? How did John learn this wonderful truth about God? To find out, let us read his words in the New Testament:



We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have **heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands.** He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. **We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us.** And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.—1 John 1:1-4; New Living Translation

Whom has John heard? Whom has he seen? Whom has he touched? John was one of the twelve disciples who travelled with Jesus. John knew Jesus very well. John wants to tell us the wonderful things he has learned about *Jesus*. John knows “God is love,” *because John knows Jesus!* John teaches us an important lesson about the right way to think about God. If we want to know about God, we look to Jesus, for *only Jesus knows the Father* (Matthew 11:27).



**John knows that “God is love” because
John knows Jesus, the Son of God!**

Jesus has a unique relationship with our heavenly Father. Jesus said, “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30). Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus said that he came down from heaven to do *only the Father’s will* (John 6:30).

The apostle Paul wrote that *Jesus is fully God!* Paul says, “For in Christ lives all the *fullness of God* in a human body” (Colossians 2:9). The writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus, the Son of God, “radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God” (Hebrews 1:3). Finally, the Apostle John writes, “In the beginning the *Word [Jesus] already existed*. The Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son” (John 1:1, 14). John is writing about *Jesus*. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, *who came down from heaven* and lived among us as a human being! Jesus is “Immanuel,” a name that means “God with us” (Matthew 1:21-23).

THE NICENE CREED

How was the early Church to understand the New Testament teaching about Jesus? How could they describe the relationship between Jesus and God the Father as revealed in the New Testament?

Many centuries ago, the leaders of the Church met together in a little village called *Nicaea* (in modern-day Turkey). They wanted to find a way to describe the relationship between Jesus and God the Father, so that everyone would understand that Jesus is the eternal “Son of God.”

In those days, most Christians could not read or write, so the Church needed teachings about Jesus that the people could hear and memorize. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the early Church leaders wrote a “creed” to help Christians better understand what the New Testament teaches about God. A “creed” is simply a summary of what Christians *believe* about God. Today, the “creed” written by the early Church is called the “Nicene Creed.” On any Sunday, the Nicene Creed is heard in Churches all over the world. The “creed” teaches that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For now, let us look at what the “creed” says about Jesus, the Son of God:

Jesus is God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Of one being with the Father. . .

The “creed” sums up the New Testament teaching about Jesus. The “creed” says that Jesus is *fully* God! He is “of one being with the Father.” In other words, Jesus and our Father in heaven share the same “being” or “nature”—that is, both are “God.” The early Church often

The Nicene Creed
sums up the New Testament
teaching about Jesus as
follows:

Jesus is God of God,
Light of Light,
Very God of very God,
Of one being with the Father

described the relationship between the Father and Son like that of the sun and its light. Just as the sun and its light are “one,” Jesus and the Father are “one.” As the sun sends its light to warm the earth, the Father sends his Son to earth to reveal the warmth of the Father’s love for *everyone*.

Jesus and his Father in heaven are both God, because they are “one” and the “same” in “being” or “nature.” Therefore, we can learn much about our Father in heaven by looking at his Son Jesus. As we learned earlier, this is exactly how the Apostle John knows that “God is love,” because John knows Jesus. John learned about the Father’s love from Jesus!



If you want to know about God, look at Jesus!

Jesus is like his Father. He came to earth to do his Father’s work. Jesus said:

I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. **He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.**

For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing.—John 5:19, 20

Jesus does only what he “sees” his Father doing. Jesus always acts according to the Father’s good purpose. Therefore, the loving deeds of Jesus reveal the *Father’s will* at work! This means that all the good things we say and believe about Jesus are also true of the Father! The loving heart of Jesus reveals the loving heart of the Father! This is wonderful news, because now we know that our Father in heaven is a loving, caring God. He *sent his Son to show us his love*. This is how the Apostle John knows that “God is love.” John knows that God is love because *John knows Jesus*, the Son of God.

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

As we have learned, Jesus and the Father are “one” in “being” or “nature.” In others words, the Father is God, and his Son Jesus is God. After Jesus rose from the dead and returned to his Father in heaven, Jesus sent a “Helper” to guide his followers into truth and help them to remember everything Jesus taught them (see John 15:26; 16:13). The “Helper” that Jesus sent is the Holy Spirit. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is God.ⁱ

The early Christians worshipped, prayed, and baptised in “the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” After Jesus rose from the grave, he gave important instructions to his disciples:

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”—Matthew 28:19, 20

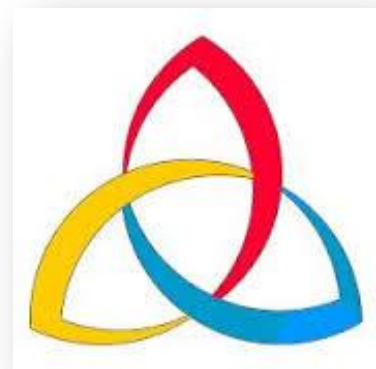
The Apostle Paul ended one of his “epistles” with the following blessing:

May the grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, the love of **God**, and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.—2 Corinthians 13:14

The first Christians believed that God the Father sent his Son Jesus to save the world from sin. They believed that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort the Church. They believed these things because *this is how God revealed himself in the Holy Bible*. In addition, the early Christians *experienced* Jesus in their lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. For them, the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was very *real!*

Soon, however, unbelievers began to accuse Christians of worshipping “three gods.” Unbelievers claimed that Christians were no different from pagans who worshipped many “gods.” They wanted to know why Christians claimed to worship “one God,” when the early Church prayed and worshipped in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.ⁱⁱ The Church had to answer these questions if the New Testament teaching about God was to be taken seriously in the ancient world. From careful, prayerful study of the New Testament, the leaders of the early Churchⁱⁱⁱ developed the “Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.”

The “Doctrine of the Holy Trinity” teaches that Christians worship “One God in Three Persons.” The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each “God,” because they share the same “being” or “nature.” Each Person is fully and equally “God.” On the other hand, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not the same person. The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Father, and the Father and Son are not the Holy Spirit. Each divine person is “distinct” from the others. Because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united in “being,” Christians believe “God is One.” Because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct “persons,” Christians believe “God is Three.” Therefore, Christians believe that God is both “One” and “Three.”^{iv}



**Christians believe in
"One God in Three Persons."**

CREATED FOR LOVE



As we have already learned, “God is love.” The Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoy an intimate, personal fellowship of love, joy and beauty. Because God is love, God is not selfish. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not keep their love to themselves. Their love flows out from heaven above to earth below. Like a

fountain of love, God’s love overflows into the world. God created human beings to share in the love, joy and beauty of the Holy Trinity. This is the “secret” of our lives. God created us to enjoy *fellowship* with him forever! Despite our problems, pain and difficulties, we may be filled with hope, as we look forward to the joyous future ahead, when we will enjoy the love, joy and beauty of God forever!

Since God created us to share in the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God commands us to love one another. Love begins in the heart of God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit share their love among themselves. Their love flows out to the world, like life-giving water from a beautiful fountain. Jesus came to reveal the Father’s love; Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with love. The Holy Spirit strengthens us to share our love with family, friends, neighbours—and even strangers! When the day finally comes that God’s love covers the earth, all creation will shout with joy in praise of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoy a fellowship of love, joy and beauty.

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, **since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.** —1 John 4:9-11, NLT

If you have questions about this article, or any article on our website, please contact us at: office@AsiAfricaMinistries.org .

END NOTES

ⁱ The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is God. The names of God (Acts 1:8; John 4:24; 14:21; 15:26; Rom 8:14), the characteristics of God (Hebrews 9:14; 1Cor 2:10-12; Luke 11:20; Romans 15:18-19) and the works of God (1Corinthians 2:10; Acts 5:30-32; 28:25; Titus 3:5; 1Cor 6:19) are applied to the Holy Spirit. To learn more about the Holy Spirit, visit our website www.AsiAfricaMinistries.org/Education/ .

ⁱⁱ Even today, Muslims wrongly say that Christians worship “three gods.”

ⁱⁱⁱ You may like to know the names of some of the great leaders of the early Church. They are Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus, and Augustine of Hippo. These great leaders lived in the first few centuries of the early Church.

^{iv} The word “Trinity” basically means “Three-in-One.”