

Q: What is the best way to explain the trinity to a new believer?

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 6: **4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**

-The bible tells us God is one. We do not have three separate Gods, we have one God. The first thing you do when explaining the trinity is to explain that there is only one God. This starting place is absolutely critical. A few improper understandings of God are...

False view 1: Polytheistic view:

Some people think that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate gods. That is called polytheism. Poly for many and theism for god. The Bible clearly teaches that God is one.

False view 2: Modalism

Another false thought is that God is one person who has revealed himself in three different modes or forms throughout history. First in the Old Testament as Father, later on as Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit. Modalists, would say that the Father became the Son, who became the Holy Spirit. They might describe it like the man that goes to work, he puts on the hardhat and becomes a construction man. Later he leaves work and puts on the uniform and coaches a soccer team, he is coach. And finally he goes home and puts on sweats and he is a husband. The same man with three different modes. But that isn't a correct doctrine, the Father didn't become the Son, and the Son didn't become the Holy Spirit. They are distinct and yet one. So when the popular book *The Shack* speaks of the Father with nail scars in his hands. This is incorrect. Jesus died on the cross, not the Father. When Jesus said he was going to be with the Father, why would he say that if he was the Father? When Jesus was praying to the Father, then who was he praying to if that was true?

Scriptures refutes modalism with passages such as, **16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."** (Matthew 3)

All three persons of the trinity distinctly mentioned at the same time. While Jesus is not the Father, Jesus did say if you have seen me you have seen the Father. He did say that he and the Father were one.

God is one. We have to see how clear that is in Scripture. He is not three separate gods, but one God. Interestingly in the Old Testament we read things like, "Let us make man in our image." (Genesis 1:26) Even as the Old Testament clearly points out that God is one,

we also clearly see the plurality of the Godhead. The idea of the Trinity isn't just a New Testament concept, though it is more clearly laid out there.

-God is further revealed in three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is what is hard for us to get our minds around. How can God be one and yet three distinct persons? Doesn't one, plus one, plus one equal three? Yes, but one, times one, times one equals one. We have to understand that God is so beyond us. Do you get this? We somehow with our finite minds think that we can easily understand the eternal God perfectly and we can't.

Deuteronomy 29:29 is an important verse for each one of us to know. It says, **29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever.**

There are some things we can get, but if we could totally understand God right now with our limitations, we sure would have a small God. Yes, we have to study and know what he has revealed about himself. We can know him and know about him, but we also have to realize that he is beyond description.

Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Think of your best thought on your best day, and realize that that doesn't even compare to God's thoughts. There are things that God has revealed about himself, that we can understand, but there are some things that we won't fully comprehend with our limited minds here and now. We all have our strengths and weaknesses in various subjects. Some of us are strong in one subject and are weak in another. Some of you love math, others of you go into cold sweats when you see a calculator. If we are limited in human understanding and ability, what makes us think we can fully understand God? God is incredible! He is beyond anything you can imagine. His creation just gives us a small glimpse of how incredible he is!

The Assemblies of God says it like this...

2. The one True God

The one true God has revealed himself as the eternally self-existent “I AM,” the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10,11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22).¹

It has been said like this, “As the Trinitarian doctrine maintains, each of the persons of the Godhead is distinct, yet they are all each, by nature, God.

¹ (AG.org The 16 fundamental truths of the Assemblies of God)

- With time, for example, the past is distinct from the present, which is distinct from the future. Each is simultaneous. Yet, they are not three 'times,' but one. That is, they all share the same nature: time
- With space, height is distinct from width, which is distinct from depth, which is distinct from height. Yet, they are not three 'spaces,' but one. That is, they all share the same nature: space.
- With matter, solid is not the same as liquid, which is not the same as gas, which is not the same as solid. Yet, they are not three 'matters,' but one. That is, they all share the same nature: matter.

Note that there are three sets of threes. In other words, there is a trinity of trinities. If we were to look at the universe and notice these qualities within it, is it fair to say that these are the fingerprints of God upon His creation? I think so. Not only is this simply an observation, but it is also a good source for an analogy of the Trinity.”²

To sum it up, if I were sharing the trinity with a new believer, I would take them to Deuteronomy 6, Matthew 3, and Genesis 1. Deuteronomy 6 points out very clearly that God is one. Matthew 3 shows that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct and Genesis 1 shows us that even in the Old Testament the plurality of the Godhead is eluded to. Finally I would end with Deuteronomy 29:29 which helps us to realize that we cannot fully comprehend God. I might end with sharing a few analogies from nature.

It has been said, “Try to explain the trinity and lose your mind, try to explain away the trinity and lose your soul.” The doctrine is critical, even if not easily comprehended.

² <http://www.carm.org/doctrine/trinitylook.htm>