

**ECC Growth Groups – Term 4, 2014**  
**Behold our God – Study 2: God is Three, God is One (John 13-16)<sup>1</sup>**

**Big Idea:** There is a complex unity to God – he is one God and yet three persons. Far from being an unnecessary or irrelevant truth, God as Trinity is at the very heart of how God has revealed himself to us in the Scriptures.

**Study Aim:** That group members will: (i) grasp more deeply the truth that God is three and God is one; (ii) become less embarrassed and less fearful of this truth; and (iii) grow in their understanding of the implications of this truth for their lives.

### Discussion Starter<sup>2</sup>

When you hear the phrase, ‘God is three and God is one’, or the word ‘Trinity’, what thoughts and feelings do you experience?

### Prayer

Last week we commenced our series of studies by reading Deuteronomy 29:29 ...

*“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law”.*

As we come to this study, it is especially important that we remind ourselves of the truths that we drew out from this verse<sup>3</sup>. In line with this, Jensen and Payne make the following helpful comments about the Trinity:

*“Christians have too often been defensive and negative about the doctrine of the Trinity. We feel the need to apologise for believing something for which we can find no parallels or analogies in life ... We should not be embarrassed. It shouldn’t surprise me that God turns out to be greater and more complex than anything I know of in this world. There are many things in this world that I find difficult to comprehend, so I should not be surprised that I cannot completely fathom the Creator of the universe. This is not to say that the Trinity is an impenetrable mystery that I cannot understand in any fashion at all. We must not confuse knowing everything with knowing something. I can know that God is three persons and one God”<sup>4</sup>.*

In light of the above, as well as your interactions during the ‘Discussion Starter’, spend some time praying for each other as you look at God’s Word together.

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<sup>1</sup> This series of studies is loosely based on the booklet ‘Meeting God’ by J. I. Packer in the *Lifeguide Bible Study* series (1986, IVP).

<sup>2</sup> Remember from the first study in this series that the ‘Discussion Starter’ plays an important role in the overall study. Therefore, resist the temptation to view it merely as an entrée/introduction that just needs to be fulfilled before the main course/main section. It represents an important opportunity for a number of the group members to contribute. The question used for a ‘Discussion Starter’ should therefore be general and open enough for all to feel sufficiently confident to answer. If people share at this early stage in the study they are more likely to share further as the study progresses.

<sup>3</sup> See Study 1 – ‘Series introduction’ – if you or your group need reminding of this.

<sup>4</sup> The Blueprint, Jensen and Payne, p 28.

## Bible Reading

The truth that God is one God and yet three persons can be seen throughout the Scriptures. However, it is in Jesus – God with us – that this truth is made known to us most clearly. Therefore, we will restrict ourselves in this study to some of the richest teaching that Jesus himself provides – his words of farewell to his disciples in the upper room on the night before his death.

Read John 13:31-14:11.

## Activity

Split your group into pairs/triplets and hand out a print-out of Appendix 1 to each small group. Instruct each pair/triplet to work together and fill out on the first table what we discover in this passage regarding the relationship between God the Son (Jesus) and God the Father<sup>5</sup>.

God the Son (Jesus)	↔	God the Father
13:31-32 <i>In the Son of Man (Jesus) being glorified, God is also glorified in him. God will glorify the Son in himself.</i>		
14:1-4 <i>Jesus says, “Trust in God; trust also in me” (!). Jesus is going to his Father’s house to prepare a place for the disciples. His going is his assurance that he will return and take them to his Father’s house.</i>		
14:7-9 <i>Knowing Jesus = Knowing the Father. Anyone who sees Jesus has seen the Father.</i>		
14:10-11 <i>The Son (Jesus) is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. Jesus’ words are not his own – they are his Father, living in him, doing his work.</i>		

Bring the pairs/triplets back together again to share with each other what they have discovered.

What do we find out from those verses in terms of the relationship between God the Son and God the Father?

Was there anything that you found new, interesting or thought-provoking?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In the interests of time, you may like to allocate certain verses to particular groups rather than all of the groups looking at all of the verses.

<sup>6</sup> Framing the question in terms of what people find surprising (i.e. note the use of the words “new”, “interesting” and “thought-provoking”) can be a helpful way to get people to think through the meaning/interpretation of a passage, without actually realising that that is what they are doing. This can be good for group members who are not as skilled at, or who are not particularly confident in, moving from what the text says to what the text means (from comprehension to interpretation). It is a good kind of question to have up your sleeve whenever you are leading a small group Bible discussion.

Jesus' words in John 14:6 (*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*) have rightly become well-known. Spend some time together unpacking each aspect of Jesus' claim<sup>7</sup>.

### Bible Reading

Read John 15:26-16:15.

### Activity

Once again, split your group into pairs/triplets<sup>8</sup>. Using the second table on the same handout as before (Appendix 1), instruct each pair/triplet to work together and fill out what we discover in this passage regarding the relationships between God the Son (Jesus), God the Holy Spirit (the Counsellor) and God the Father<sup>9</sup>.

<b>God the Son (Jesus) → ← God the Holy Spirit (the Counsellor) → ← God the Father</b>
<p>15:26</p> <p><i>Jesus will send the Holy Spirit from the Father.</i></p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit is described as the "Spirit of truth" (cf Jesus in 14:6).</i></p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit "goes out" from the Father.</i></p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus.</i></p>
<p>16:7</p> <p><i>Unless Jesus goes away, the Holy Spirit will not come to the disciples.</i></p> <p><i>If Jesus goes, he will send the Holy Spirit to the disciples.</i></p>
<p>16:12-13</p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit (the "Spirit of truth") will guide the disciples into all truth.</i></p> <p><i>The Spirit does not speak on his own – he speaks only what he hears.</i></p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit will tell the disciples what is to come.</i></p>
<p>16:14-15</p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit will bring glory to Jesus.</i></p> <p><i>The Holy Spirit will do this by taking from what is Jesus' and making that known to the disciples.</i></p> <p><i>All that belongs to the Father is Jesus'.</i></p>

Bring the pairs/triplets back together again to share with each other what they have discovered.

What do we find out from those verses in terms of the relationships between God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the Father?

Was there anything that you found new, interesting or thought-provoking?

<sup>7</sup> That is, spend some time firstly discussing what it means for him to be *"the way"*, then secondly some time discussing what it means for him to be *"the truth"*, and finally some time discussing what it means for him to be *"the life"*. Often people become overly familiar with well-known verses to the extent that they actually haven't spent much time thinking them through in detail.

<sup>8</sup> You can either retain the same pairs/triplets from the first activity or split the group into different ones. Both methods have their benefits.

<sup>9</sup> Again, in the interests of time, you may like to allocate certain verses to particular groups rather than all of the groups looking at all of the verses.

In John 16:8, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgement. How would you explain how he does this, in your own words?<sup>10</sup>

### **Application Questions**

Imagine if Jesus was not God. How would that change your day-to-day life?

Imagine if the Holy Spirit was not God. How would that change your day-to-day life?

Gregory of Nazianzus – a famous Christian from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD – stated, “*When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit*”. Why is it that we rarely think this way? What are some of the problems that result from our wrong thinking in this regard?

### **Close + Prayer**

See Appendix 2 – ‘Theology to Doxology’ and then close the study with a time of prayer.

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<sup>10</sup> Sometimes people can become a bit anxious when they are asked to respond in their own words. Perhaps they are afraid that they will not ‘get it right’. One of the many strengths of small group Bible studies is the fact that members can help each other grow in their understanding and ability to explain God’s word. This means that there will be times when we do not ‘get it right’. These should be seen as opportunities rather than threats. Stretching people by insisting that they explain in their own words helps them to not simply regurgitate what the Bible says word-for-word but to express God’s truth in a way that is a more natural expression of how they would speak to others on any given topic.

## Appendix 1 – God is Three, God is One

**Table 1**

God the Son (Jesus)	↔	God the Father
	13:31-32	
	14:1-4	
	14:7-9	
	14:10-11	

**Table 2**

God the Son (Jesus) ↔ God the Holy Spirit (the Counsellor) ↔	↔ God the Father
	15:26
	16:7
	16:12-13
	16:14-15

## Appendix 2 – Theology to Doxology<sup>11</sup>

For this study, there are two options for our ‘Theology to Doxology’ section. You could use either song, or even both of them, for your group.

Firstly, if you would like to listen to a highly-recommended and fun song that does an excellent job at capturing the truths of this study, try:

Colin Buchanan, *Rev Master-T’s Trinity Mashmix* (‘God Rock’ album).

The lyrics are printed below:

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
Three names  
The Trinity

Every time I think of the Three  
My mind is drawn to  
Drawn to the One

And every time I think of the One  
My mind is drawn to  
Drawn to the Three

And I think Gregory expresses that brilliantly  
Gregory Nazianzus  
Gregory expresses that brilliantly

In terms of the Trinity  
There is a point at which one  
Has to stop speculation

And simply  
Bow down and worship  
Bow down and  
Bow down and  
Bow down and worship

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
God is Three and God is One  
The Trinity

CCLI Song # 5977855  
Colin Buchanan  
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<sup>11</sup> Theology – literally ‘a word of/about God’ is to lead to Doxology – literally ‘a word of praise/glory’. Please see the introductory notes to this section in Study 1 – Appendix 1 if you need to recall the rationale behind its inclusion.

Instead, or as well as, Colin Buchanan's song you could use *'Praise the Father, Praise the Son'* by Chris Tomlin to sing together or listen to.

If you would like to listen to a version online, you can use the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpyIc7aR8BQ>

If you would like to sing together or simply read out the lyrics, they are included below:

### **Verse 1**

O sov'reign God O matchless King  
The saints adore the angels sing  
And fall before the throne of grace  
To You belongs the highest praise

### **Verse 2**

These sufferings this passing tide  
Under Your wings I will abide  
And ev'ry enemy shall flee  
You are my hope and victory

### **Chorus**

(Oh) praise the Father praise the Son  
(And) praise the Spirit Three in One  
Clothed in power and in grace  
The name above all other names

### **Verse 3**

To the valley for my soul  
Thy great descent has made me whole  
Your word my heart has welcomed home  
Now peace like water ever flows

### **Chorus (x 2)**

### **Bridge**

Yours is the kingdom Yours is the power  
Yours is the glory forever  
Yours is the kingdom Yours is the power  
Yours is the glory forever

### **Final Chorus**

Praise the Father praise the Son  
And praise the Spirit Three in One  
Clothed in power and in grace  
The name above all other names  
The name above all other names

CCLI Song # 5203251

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash

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