**►Jesus – Up Close and Personal**

**“Is Jesus God, or God’s Son?”**

**February 5, 2012**

**►Genesis 1:1, 26-27; John 16:12-15**

**►**A little girl who was visiting her grandmother, who took her to church for the very first time. Afterward, she asked her what she thought of the service. "I don’t understand why the West Coast isn’t included too," she replied. When grandma inquired what she meant, she added, "You know, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the whole East Coast." I guess it’s no surprise that on her first visit to church that little girl had a hard time understanding the Trinity.

When I started planning this series, “Jesus – Up Close and Personal,” I knew that sooner or later I was going to come face to face with the **Trinity**. I was going to have to address the question, “**Was Jesus God, or the Son of God?** Or was he somehow both?” I felt like God was telling me, "Jeff, you really need to get a grip on this. Your church needs to get a grip on this.”

Yet there have been times when I’ve wondered to myself, "How can I believe something that I’m not even sure I understand? How can God be one and God be three at the same time? And even if I did understand it, how in the world do I explain it without making everyone out there confused?” But that’s what I’m going to try to do this morning!

**►**POP QUIZ: How many times is the word “Trinity” found in the Bible?

 **►**Answer: None. Yet this doctrine – this statement about the nature of God – woven through all of scripture.

As we look to the Scriptures, I see 4 things that are true about the Trinity.

1. **►God is One**

“God is one” is the claim of the Bible. In the OT *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one”* (Deut.6:4, NIV).

And yet, even in the first few verses of the Bible, we also begin to see hints of the Trinity:

**►***Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness…"* Genesis 1:26

It doesn’t say, "Let ME make man." It says, "Let us!" All the members of the Trinity are involved in the creation of mankind.

How do I know he’s not referring to the **angels?** Because in Genesis 1:1, you have God creating the heavens and the earth. And in verse 2, you have the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters. And in Colossians 1:16, we’re told

**►** *(Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.* Colossians 1:15-16 (NIV)

Jesus made the heavens and the earth!

One God, in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1. **►There is DIVERSITY in the Trinity**

The members of the Trinity work together, but **they don’t always do the same things**. Look at salvation. God the **Father governs** **the world.** God the **Son redeems** the world (on the cross). And the Holy **Spirit gives us the power** and grace to change the world. Three very different roles. But all for the one purpose of manifesting God’s glory in the world.

*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.* John 14:15-17 (NLT)

*Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.* John 14:23 (NLT)

In **John 16**, we read that the **Spirit will guide us** into truth. He will **glorify Jesus**, w**ho owns everything that is owned by the Father.** They are all there in those few verses. One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In this case we see all three members of the Trinity, One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **working together for one great purpose** – the salvation of humankind. Working together so that you might become a child of God, a brother or sister of Jesus Christ.

1. **►There is INTIMACY in the Trinity**

The third thing I see is the intimacy within the Trinity.

*The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands.* John 3:35

**►***I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father.* John 14:31

This tells me that our **God is personal. He’s intimate**. He’s a God who exists in relationship.

And the beautiful thing is that God **wants to have the same intimacy with you** that he has within himself. God traveled through heaven and time and space to pursue a relationship with you.

We’ve seen the unity of the Trinity. The diversity of the Trinity. The intimacy within the Trinity.

1. **►Each member of the Trinity is fully GOD**

Once again, let’s remember that the Bible is crystal clear that there is **only one God**. One divine being. Deuteronomy 32:39 says that *"There is no God besides me."*

 **►**Isaiah 43:10 says *“But you are my witnesses, O Israel!” says the Lord. “You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God— there never has been, and there never will be.* Isaiah 43:10

**►**James 2:19 says *"You believe that there is one God? Good!"*

**But the same Bible that says that there is only one God also says that the Father is God. The Son is God. And the Holy Spirit is God.** So these persons must be the one true God.

**The Father is God**…

**►***Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead--* Galatians 1:1

So we know that the Father is God. But there are also a bunch of verses that teach that **Jesus Christ is God.**

The prophet Isaiah predicted the birth of Jesus in these words we hear every Christmas:

**►***For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* Isaiah 9:6

What did Jesus have to say about this? Well, one of the most dramatic examples is found in John 10 where Jesus is teaching about his relationship with God the Father, and he shocks the crowd by saying

**►** “*The Father and I are one.” Once again the people picked up stones to kill him. Jesus said, “At my Father’s direction I have done many good works. For which one are you going to stone me?” They replied, “We’re stoning you not for any good work, but for blasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God.”* John 10:30-33

And a few verses later, Jesus says, **►** *“I am the son of God.”* John 10:36

And perhaps the most dramatic statement about the divinity of Jesus was spoken by Thomas, shortly after Jesus’ resurrection:

**►** *“My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”* John 20:28-29 (NLT)

He said to him "My Lord and My God!" And Jesus basically said, **"Good answer! You got it right!"**

The way we put this together is this. We say that **Jesus was “fully human, and fully God.”** Not half and half. Not one sometimes then another other times. Both, fully, all the time. One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And there are also a few verses that teach that **the Holy Spirit is God**. In Acts 5 there’s the story about when **Ananias and Sapphira** lied about how much money they gave to the church. Remember what Peter told them? He said,

**►** *“Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit … You weren’t lying to us but to God!”* Acts 5:3-4

**►**So the Bible is very clear that there is one God, eternally existing as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Now how do we explain this to people?** It is very hard for a small human being to totally comprehend something as huge as the Trinity. It’s too big for us.

Having said that, let me give it a shot. It’s **like our federal government**. **How many governments run this country?** Just one. We have one national government. Now **how many branches** are in the government? Three. The Legislative Branch (Congress). The Executive Branch (The President). And the Judicial Branch (the court system). These three branches make up our one government. It’s a little confusing at times. But I accept the fact that we have one government in 3 branches.

Another illustration some people use is **H2O**. Ice is H2O. Water is H2O. Steam is H2O. Solid, liquid, gas. One substance in three forms.

I could go on and on, but the fact is that **every illustration I can come up with will fall short**. So, how can I believe in the Trinity if I can’t really understand it? The real question is, **why in the world would I think that I can fully understand God?** It’s like trying to teach **calculus** to a fifth grader. They understand a lot more math than they did when they were in Kindergarten, but they are still working on simple multiplication and division! Heck, even I don’t understand calculus – I can’t begin to get my mind around it. But, I believe in it, because even though I don’t understand it, I know it’s true.

It’s the same thing with the Trinity. I don’t always understand how it works. But I accept it. Not because I can completely understand it. Because **I can see that it is taught in the word of God.**

**The word of God is true whether we understand it or not**.

I’m ok with that. I’ve got enough on my plate with things that I DO understand! I’m more concerned about doing what God says than I am in figuring out all that he is.

**But, even if you accept the Trinity, that alone is not enough.**

You have to **experience** the Trinity. What good is it to believe in the Trinity if you’ve never felt the power of the Trinity? Or experienced the love of the Trinity?

I read about a 12 year old boy who became a Christian at a revival service. The next week, his friends questioned him about the experience. One friend asked him, "Did you see a vision?" The boy said, "No." Another friend asked, "Did you hear God speak?" The boy said, "No." So they said, "Well, then **how do you know you were saved?"**

The boy searched for an answer. Finally, he said, **"It’s like when you catch a fish**. You can’t see the fish. Or hear the fish. **You just feel him tugging on your line**. I just felt God tugging on the line of my heart. And the message was a message of love just for me."

Maybe the Lord is tugging on your heart. Maybe he’s saying, "I want to have an intimate relationship with you. Like the one I have with the boy. Like the one I have with myself. Like the one I have with millions of people around the world. If you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Triune God will make his home inside of you. Let’s pray.

HANDOUT with scriptures