

Session 1

Who is God? The Gospel and Assurance of Salvation

Who is God?

The opening line of the Bible reads, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). In this first sentence, we learn that God existed before time began, that He is the author of history, and that He created everything by His power.

Followers of Jesus believe in one God, who exists in three persons. This concept is called ‘The Trinity.’ We do not worship three Gods, nor one who shapeshifts into three separate beings. We worship one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. Each is fully God (Jesus is not one-third God, for example). They exist together in perfect unity.



We see an imperfect and incomplete example of this reality in marriage. When a husband and wife get married, they become ‘one flesh.’ Two individual people are united together. The Hebrew word for ‘one,’ *echad*, represents a complex unity. The same word for ‘one flesh’ is also used for ‘one God.’

This analogy falls short of the mystery of the Trinity, yet it can give us a small example of how two can be united as one.

We see the Trinity operating together at the baptism of Jesus. Read Mark 1:9-11. Write down what you see each member of the Trinity doing in this story:

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’” Mark 1:9-11

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

The Bible lists many attributes of God’s character. We are going to spend some time discovering just a few of His characteristics. Read the following passages and write down what you learned about God from these verses:

Exodus 34:6-7

Malachi 3:6

Psalms 8:9

Isaiah 55:9

John 3:16

Isaiah 6:3

Psalms 139:7-8

Psalms 9:8

Luke 11:2

What did you learn about God from the verses above that brought you hope and comfort?

What did you read about God from the verses above that was concerning or confusing? If you have any questions about what you read, make sure that you discuss them with your discipleship mentor.

The Gospel

In Genesis 1-2, we discover that God created a perfect world and made human beings in His image. He gave them a mission: to partner with Him to rule creation. There was only one rule. If they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would be separated from Him and die. Sadly, Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Their sin brought devastation. Their relationship with God, each other, and creation came under the curse of sin (Genesis 3).

Although humans were created for relationship with God, we are separated from God because of our sin. We are born with a sin nature, and are in bondage to sin until salvation. There is nothing we can do to reach God on our own.

Read Romans 3:10-11. What percentage of people are righteous and seek God on their own?

Read Romans 6:23. What are the consequences of our sin?

Read Hebrews 9:27. What will happen after we die?

Read Ecclesiastes 2:11. This passage discusses a pursuit of a meaningful life apart from God. What can we conclude from this verse about life without God?

From these passages, we can conclude that a life apart from God is meaningless, and a death apart from God is hopeless. This is the worst possible news.

Thankfully, God is rich in mercy and has a plan to restore mankind. He sent His son, Jesus, to this earth. Jesus lived a perfect life, died on a cross for our sins, and rose again to bring us new life. This is the Gospel, the Good News. Jesus did this as our perfect sacrifice and our perfect Priest.

As our perfect sacrifice, Jesus took our place and received the punishment for our sin so that we could receive God's grace.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

As our perfect Priest, Jesus created a way for humans to walk in relationship with God. Because of Jesus, we can “approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Through the Gospel, we discover that Jesus brings ultimate meaning to life, and hope to death.

Assurance of Salvation

Every follower of Jesus, at some time in their life, doubts that they are actually saved. Thankfully, Scripture tells us that we can be confident we are saved. In fact, this is the purpose of the book of 1 John. *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13).

There are three reasons we can be confident we are saved:

We can be confident because of God’s promises – God is far more committed to us than we are to Him.

- ▶ God promised eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus (John 3:16).
- ▶ God promised that if we believe in Jesus, our past, present, and future sins are forgiven (Ephesians 1:7-8).
- ▶ God promised He is fully committed to our spiritual growth (Philippians 1:6).

We can be confident because of God’s actions.

- ▶ God wants everyone to be saved, so He is patiently withholding judgement (2 Peter 3:9).
- ▶ In Scripture, God repeatedly forgives the worst sinners. Paul was a murderer; David committed adultery, and Peter denied Jesus three times.
- ▶ In Scripture, God showed extravagant and repeated mercy to His people, the Israelites (Hosea 11:7-8).

The fruit in our lives can be evidence we are saved.

- ▶ When the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts, it is evidence we are God’s children (Romans 8:16).
- ▶ When we believe in the truth about Jesus, we can be confident we are saved (1 John 5:1-2).
- ▶ When we obey Jesus’ commands and our lives are becoming more like Him, we can be confident of our salvation (1 John 2:3-5).
- ▶ When we love one another, it is evidence of God’s work in our lives (1 John 4:7-9).

Why is it important for you to be confident of your salvation?

Which of these verses are the most encouraging to you? Why?

Summary Points:

- ▶ Followers of Jesus worship one God who exists in three persons, the Trinity.
- ▶ God is love, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, holy, good, and just.
- ▶ Without a relationship with God, life is meaningless, and death is hopeless.
- ▶ We can have a relationship with God when we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.
- ▶ Followers of Jesus can have assurance of salvation based on God's promises, God's character, and the spiritual fruit in our lives.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Memorize Romans 8:1. This is a great verse to quote if you doubt your faith.
- ▶ Spend a few minutes each day this week studying the passages of Scripture listed in the 'Assurance of Salvation' section. Incorporate the Scripture into your prayer time, thanking God for His grace and ask Him for help.
- ▶ If you have not yet received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and receive His free gift of salvation. If you are not sure how to do this, talk with your discipleship mentor.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6