

Understanding the Trinity

1. When you read the Bible, remember that the more you observe, the less you need to interpret. Let your observations drive your understanding of the biblical passage. Take for example the Creation of Man – what do you observe about God that is a bit confusing?

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (Gen 1:26, NIV)

2. As you read the Bible more, you will discover more information that will take some time to reconcile those confusing bits you have encountered. What do you observe in these passages? What conclusions are you beginning to draw?

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Gen 2:7, NIV)

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Col 1:15-16, NIV)

The Spirit of God has made me;
the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33:4, NIV)

3. Take the time to understand tough concepts. Another method is to study the underlying Hebrew or Greek words. Note carefully what God says in this passage:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our **God**, the Lord is **one**. (Deut 6:4, NIV)

What are the Hebrew terms for the English words in bold print?

a) Take your phone out and search “Blueletterbible.org.” Type into the search box “Deut 6.” Scroll down until you find “Deuteronomy 6:4.” Find the word “God” within that verse. Click “tools” and scroll down past “INTERLINEAR” until you come to a table with “English” and “Strong’s.” This is called a lexicon.

A lexicon is a language dictionary. In our case, this dictionary shows you what Hebrew word was translated into the English for “God.” Notice that Hebrew looks very different from English.

b) Scroll down the verse until you find “God.” Next to it you see the Hebrew word **‘ēlōhîm** and if you click the Strong’s Number “H430,” the lexicon / dictionary will show you lots of things like how the Hebrew word is spelled in English and how its pronounced (click “LISTEN”).

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible was made by a group supervised by Dr. James Strong. Taking 35 years to complete, it was published in 1890! It is an index for every Hebrew and Greek word used in the Bible to help a person find a specific verse that the word is used in.

c) If you scroll down a little and click “Show Strong’s Info,” you’ll see the definition of the Hebrew word.

d) Repeat the same process for the word “one.”

4. How would you define the Trinity?

Understanding the Trinity Teacher Notes

1. When you read the Bible, remember that the more you observe, the less you need to interpret. Let your observations drive your understanding of the biblical passage. Take for example the Creation of Man – what do you observe about God that is a bit confusing?

Then God said, “Let **us** make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (Gen 1:26, NIV)

Help the student with his skill of observation. Use questions to focus his attention on details like pronouns.

From the very beginning, the Bible introduces the concept that God is more than one with this statement, “Let **us** make mankind in our image.”

This notion should naturally cause questions, because this is a very unusual concept.

2. As you read the Bible more, you will discover more information that will take some time to reconcile those confusing bits you have encountered. What do you observe in these passages? What conclusions are you beginning to draw?

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Gen 2:7, NIV)

Encourage the student to tell you what they think this statement is saying. It’s OK to make a mistake and help them see their error and improve upon their reading skills and observation.

Here God the Father created man.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Col 1:15-16, NIV)

This statement indicates Jesus, the Son of God, created man.

The Spirit of God has made me;
the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33:4, NIV)

This statement indicates the Spirit of God created man.

Each of the biblical passages above show that each person of the Trinity was involved in the creation of man.

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"El" is the root word for God and refers to a god. It was a term used by many ancient Semitic cultures to refer to either the one true God or false pagan gods. "Elohim" is the plural form of *El* and is the Hebrew word used here in Deuteronomy 6:4. It refers to "three or more."

When you examine the concordance here, you'll see that this concept of God is found in the very beginning in Genesis: In the beginning God (**‘ēlōhîm**) created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1, NIV).

The Hebrew term “**‘eḥād**” is the basis for the English translation “one” in Deuteronomy 6:4. It can be understood as “a single unit.” The concordance can help you understand this concept with examples of how this word is used elsewhere:

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one (**‘eḥād**) flesh. (Gen 2:24, NIV)

When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single (**‘eḥād**) cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. (Num 13:23, NIV)

4. How would you define the Trinity?

God is one Divine Being who has three distinguishable personal distinctions; each serves the other in selfless love and working dependently and cooperatively together.

God is not three distinct individuals working independently.

God does not have three phases as solid, liquid, and gas.

God does not act in three different ways.