

The Trinity in John's Gospel

I have put together some suggested questions and discussion points but I am aware that there is probably quite a wide spectrum of understanding about the Trinity within most groups and you might need to start by exploring a bit what people understand and addressing some basic issues first. Try not to get bogged down with questions about the mechanics of how the Trinity works - try to highlight instead the ways in which the fact of the Trinity is good news.

As always, these notes are not intended to be prescriptive - do what you feel is most helpful

Read John chapter 14 verses 15 – 26.

These are some of Jesus' last words to his disciples before he was crucified - what do you think are some the main themes that he is trying to communicate?

Jesus talks about three members of the Godhead - Himself, the Father and the Spirit - three divine beings - but one God - a hard concept to grasp - have you ever heard an illustration that you found helpful - can you see its limitations?

Adriaan made the claim that understanding God as a Trinitarian God is profoundly important and impacts every aspect of our Christian lives - do you agree? - have you changed your mind? - can you think of some of the specific ways in which Adriaan suggested it mattered?

He looked at four different points on the timeline of history:

- in eternity before creation
- at creation
- at the fall
- in redemption at the cross

In each case he contrasted the solitary god that is the god that most people think of when they think of god - with the Trinitarian God of the Bible - can you remember any of the points of contrast? In particular can you remember why the Trinitarian God is good news? (for example - the solitary god for all eternity had only himself to relate to so must be selfish - the Trinitarian God was in relationship for all eternity and was therefore intrinsically loving and giving).

We become like that which we worship - what are some of the characteristics of a Trinitarian God that we would like to see manifested in our lives? (for example - loving, giving, sharing, community, togetherness, dependence, selflessness)

The Holy Spirit has been sent to be in us and to help us - why not pray that he helps you to change to exhibit these things in greater measure?

How does a greater understanding of the Trinitarian God alter the way that we view sin and punishment?

Adriaan claimed that the god most people think of is the solitary god as opposed to the Trinitarian God of the Bible - can you see why this is bad news? Do we need to be more careful in our use of language when talking about God to non Christians given that their conception of God is likely to be so distorted? What words might be better to use? How else might we address this problem?

Some people think that if God is good he should just be able to forgive sin without the need for punishment - can you see why this is wrong?

Discuss the importance of a correct understanding of the Trinity in the work of salvation.

Read verse 23 of John 14 - what is the amazing promise that we find here?