

What Is God Like?

If you ask Americans if they believe in God, 87% say, “Yes.” But if you ask them, “What is God like?”, you start to get some very different answers. For example, Neale Donald Walsch claims to have had dozens of conversations with God. He’s the author of the best-selling book series, *“Conversations with God.”* In his first book, he claims to have had this conversation:

God: I cannot tell you My Truth until you stop telling me yours.

Walsch: But my truth about God comes from you.

God: Who said so?

Walsch: Leaders, ministers, rabbis, priests, books. The Bible, for heaven’s sake!

God: Those are not authoritative sources.

Walsch: They aren’t?

God: No.

Walsch: Then what is?

God: Listen to your feelings. Listen to your Highest Thoughts. Listen to your experience. Whenever any one of these differ from what you’ve been told by your teachers or read in your books, forget the words. ¹

This is exactly how most cults and false religions have been started. Someone claimed to have had a direct revelation from God, which instructed them to ‘disregard the Bible’ as having ultimate authority. That’s why our church’s first Statement of Faith claims only God’s Word as our highest authority.

So, I don’t care how many millions of books Mr. Walsch has sold, his conversations were not with God. And we are warned by Jesus of this sort of thing happening just before He returns:

“... many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matt. 24:11-13)

So, if these false teachers are wrong about God, then who’s right? Well, the Bible alone is right because the Bible was written by God Himself through His faithful people. Our second affirmation describes God as the Trinity. It states:

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection; and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

Our next three affirmations describe God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It can be hard for us to understand how God can be one God existing in three persons because we don’t know any person who can do that. But in God’s creation there are some realities that can help us. For example, water. Water can exist in three different realities. It can be ice or vapor or liquid. In whatever form, it’s all still water. But God is so unique, He can be three persons all at the same time.

But I want to spend our time today examining another question about the Trinity that is more practical. It’s this: “What’s the impact of the Trinity on my life?” First, we see that...

I. Our Soul’s Future Depends on What We Believe About the Trinity.

The essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all equally God. It's God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Many today say, "Yes, I believe in God." But if you ask them if they believe that Jesus is God, they'll say, "Oh, Jesus? Well, no, I don't think He was God. He was a really, really good person. But, no, he wasn't God."

By believing that, they've put their soul in extreme jeopardy. Why do I say that? Well, first of all, John 1 and Hebrews 1 declare that Jesus is God. John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The "Word" being spoken of here, the Word that participated in creation because it "*was God,*" is Jesus. How do I know that? Because the Bible tells me so. Hebrews 1:1, 2...

Long ago ... God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... through whom also he created the world.

Bingo! But you might say, "All right. I agree that the Bible says that Jesus is God. But why should that matter to me?" Here's why: your sins will not be forgiven unless Jesus is Divine, and if your sins are not forgiven, your soul has a desperately dark future. And you're saying, "What are you talking about?"

Okay, let me line it out for you. Every human being is created by God, not evolved by chance. God, through Jesus, placed an eternal soul within each of us. So, your soul will exist forever. The only question is, "Where will it exist?" There are just two possibilities – live forever with God or live forever without God. Living with God will be awesome because you will be separated from all evil, ALL evil. So, that will be the ultimate of good living.

But living without God will be the opposite. It will be all evil, absent from even an atom of anything good. How do I know this? Because the Bible tells me so.

So, everyone with half a brain wants to go to live with God. But how can we do that? By wanting it enough? No. By doing enough good deeds to outweigh our bad deeds? No, it doesn't work that way. The Bible says that God is perfect, so He's not letting anything or anyone into His presence in heaven that hasn't had all traces of evil removed. Jesus said it Himself: "**You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" (Matt. 5:48) And how could that ever happen?

If you know the Bible at all, you know that it says, **... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory (the perfection) of God ...** (Rom. 3:23) "All" means all. Some are better than others, but no one's perfect. We all know that's true even if we DON'T know the Bible. But here's what the Bible says that some people don't know. It says that Jesus can make us perfect. How? Hebrews 9 explains it:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance ... (Heb. 9:11-12, 15)

Now listen carefully to verse 24. Where did Christ go with His own blood?

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands ... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. (Heb. 9:24)

Why is it necessary for Jesus to be divine? Because only God is perfect and only a perfect sacrifice on the cross could pay for your sins and make you perfectly innocent when you meet God. And besides that, only a perfect Jesus could bring that sacrifice into God's presence, which is the only place your sins could be forgiven. So, your soul's future depends completely on the Trinity being one God in three persons. But there's a second practical truth about the Trinity...

II. Our Living the Good Life Now Also Depends on the Trinity.

How would you define "the Good Life" for yourself and your family right now? Wouldn't that mean that your life in all its parts is satisfying, healthy, and fulfilling?

The Bible speaks of people being made up of different parts such as the body, the mind or emotions, and the spirit or soul. Some think the Bible speaks of us having three parts, others say we have four. We'll talk more about this next week when we examine our nature. But for the sake of discussion, let's just speak of us as the apostle Paul does in 1 Thess. 5:23 where he says:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, consider this; what does Gen. 1:26 say? God is speaking and He says:

... "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ..."

The Hebrew word translated "man" here is *adam*. Besides being the name of the first human being, it's also generic like our word "mankind." Now, watch this. In the Trinity, how are the persons of the Godhead different? The Bible makes it clear that God the Father does not have a physical body. Jesus said, "*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*" (John 4:24) But the Bible also speaks of God the Father having thoughts and emotions.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts ...

*so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Is. 55:8, 9)

"... the anger of the LORD was kindled ..." (Is. 5:25)

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17)

Of the three members of the Godhead, only Jesus took on a physical body, but because He did, it means that we have "*... one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*" (Heb. 4:15)

And finally, our spiritual nature is able to be in sync with the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. "*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*" (Rom. 8:16)

Do you see what is evident from the Bible? The different parts of us – body, mind, spirit – correspond to the three members of the Trinity! This is what it means to be "made in the image of God." So, you think and feel like the Father, you have a body like Jesus, and you are capable of communicating with all three because you have a spirit nature as well. And who knows better how to keep your mind, body, and spirit healthy than the One after whom you are designed? And He continues to be actively involved in all three realms. It simply is not possible, then, for us to be healthy and whole mentally, physically or spiritually without a relationship with the Trinity!

So, denying the existence of any one of them has consequences which are not healthy. According to the American Psychiatric Association, doctors, for example, have a higher rate of suicide and depression than any other profession. How can that be? Well, in all of their vast medical school training, there's not one course on the spiritual nature of people.

Dr. Diane Komp was a pediatric oncologist who also taught at Yale University School of Medicine. She said that, throughout her medical school training, she was taught to set aside her personal feelings towards her young patients. “Just treat the symptoms” was the rule. But once she entered her practice, she soon learned that aloofness with children simply did not work. This put Dr. Komp in a quandary, “Was it possible that the faith she had been taught as a child had any part in her sterile, medical world?” “If it did,” she decided, “it would require the testimony of reliable witnesses ...” And Dr. Komp said those witnesses soon appeared in the lives of the children she treated and their parents.

In her book, *A Window to Heaven*, Dr. Komp tells story after story of children who, before they died, told of singing angels in their room or of dreams of walking with a grandparent in a beautiful garden or even of meeting Jesus Himself. Dr. Komp remembers a young mom named Naomi, whose firstborn son, Henry, was diagnosed with cancer. He was almost one. Naomi and her husband were raised in a mainline Protestant church but hadn’t been back since they were married. Naomi came to Dr. Komp very distressed and asked her if she believed in prayer. Dr. Komp, though still not a believer herself, had seen so many answers to prayer over the years that she suggested that Naomi and her husband should pray, and they should do it together.

A few days later, Naomi’s appearance was transformed. When Dr. Komp asked about the cause, Naomi said they had prayed and that night, she had a dream. In the dream, she and the baby were in the kitchen of the church where Naomi grew up. Little Henry was crawling around on the floor. Every time he got to the middle of the floor, he’d say, “God!” He said it like a child who had just seen a familiar uncle. It was as though Henry could see God.

Then, in the dream, the next time little Henry got to the middle of the floor, he just collapsed and died. Suddenly, God walked into the room, scooped up Henry who came back to life and God and Henry started to leave the kitchen, laughing and smiling at each other. Naomi could see how happy her little Henry was.

Then, God looked at Naomi and saw how sad she was, so He stopped and handed Henry to her and told her she could keep him for a little while longer until He, God, returned from a mission he had to go on. Henry was in Naomi’s arms but his eyes were on God.

As God was leaving, Naomi asked Him, “Will I have other children I can keep?” And here’s what she then said to Dr. Komp, “God stopped and looked at me with so much love, it was overwhelming. He said gently, ‘Everyone’s life has a plan.’ Naomi looked carefully at God to see if that meant yes or no – but she saw neither. She said she just saw love, overwhelming love. For Dr. Komp, these stories became the “reliable witnesses” that eventually led her to put her full trust in the Triune God.²

Many people today say they’re are on a journey to “find themselves.” C. S. Lewis says: Look for yourself and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin and decay. But look for Christ and you will find him, and with him everything else thrown in. John 16:13-15 says ...

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13-15)

Do you see who's in this passage? You are standing face to face with the Trinity. When you find the Trinity, you will then be able to say, "Now, I know who I am. I am a much-loved child of God." Let's pray...

¹ Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God* (Putnam, 1996)

² Diane Komp, *A Window to Heaven* (Grand Rapids: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1992), pp.74-77