

The One True God

Module 2.1

In the beginning, God...
Genesis 1:1

These familiar words are the first words of the Bible and are absolutely crucial for the Charis Fellowship's understanding of biblical doctrine. These words reveal to us that something, moreover someone, existed before us... before anything. These words reveal to us who this someone is and by what name He shall be called. These words reveal to us that in and of Himself He is entirely set apart and different. Simply put, it is in these familiar and simple words that the Creator and the creature find their proper place.

As Scripture unfolds the story of humanity within the beginning chapters of Genesis, one detail remains ever clear; God is in charge and all are accountable to Him. From the speaking of all things into existence, to the consequences given for Adam's sin, to Cain's banishment, to wide scale judgment on a growing population known for its wickedness and evil, to the scattering of the disobedient and the creation of languages, to the calling of the pagan worshiper to be the father of an innumerable number of descendants, the Creator God (the God who created) rules and reigns.

This God, the only true God, reveals Himself to us in and throughout His Word. In Deuteronomy 6:4 we read, "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*"

In Isaiah 45:18 Isaiah declares to Israel, "*For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is God!), who formed the earth and made it (He established it; He did not create it empty, He formed it to be inhabited!): 'I am the LORD, and there is no other.'*"

In the New Testament, these same truths are reaffirmed by not only the life, actions, and teachings of Jesus but also by the explicit statements made about God. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5-6, "*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*" What is more, the Bible is filled with hundreds of verses, in both the Old and New Testaments, that declare that God is the sovereign Creator over all. Human beings may disagree with the Bible about who God is, but the Bible does not disagree with itself about who God is.

And yet, this God "*who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light*" (1 Tim. 6:16) has revealed Himself as "*merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*" (Ex. 34:6). A God who not only created humanity in His image with the capacity and need for relationship, but ultimately and completely fulfills that need in Himself (Ps. 16:11). Thus, He is not just the sovereign Creator, and unceasing sustainer; nor is He merely a distant and disinterested benefactor. Rather, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who does

the impossible. The God who makes provision. The God who gifts righteousness to those who trust His word. The God who makes and keeps promises.

This is our God. The One True God. The Creator and Lord of all. The God who has revealed Himself to humanity through His Word...the Bible.

And while He may be knowable He is wholly incomprehensible. While we may know and understand some things about God, we are unable to understand all things about God; for the Creator is infinite and we, His creatures, are finite.

One particular aspect of God that hangs in this point of tension is His oneness that eternally exists in a plurality. He is the three-in-one, eternally existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...never less, and never more. Despite our best efforts to know and understand these truths, there is an immeasurable chasm between the reality of the Trinity and our ability to understand the Trinity.

With some measure of accuracy, we are able to understand from the Scriptures some of the “why” of the Trinity. Within the Godhead, we see self-giving and mutually honoring relationships that are exemplified as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together in perfect harmony. In this way, God Himself provides for us a model of healthy relationships and teamwork.

It is also not difficult to understand the “what” of the Trinity from the Scriptures. While it is true that the word Trinity is never used in the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity finds its definition completely from the Scriptures. Matthew 28:19-20 provides us a clear articulation that God is triune for we are to “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Passages recounting Jesus’ baptism such as Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 3:22 show us that while the Son was in the water, the Spirit was descending, and a voice was speaking from heaven, whom we understand to be the Father.

What is most difficult regarding the doctrine of the Trinity is not the “why,” - though we know less than we think about the “why,” - nor is it the “what.” What is most challenging regarding the Trinity is the “how.” Here we can only speculate and often find ourselves erring in some fashion when we do.

Our inability to fully explain the Trinity should not surprise us, though it certainly does unsettle us. However, we are similarly unable to fully explain how God simply spoke and created the universe, “*so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible*” (Heb. 11:3). Here again, in regards to God as Creator, and triune, we must be reminded that we are finite and He is infinite.

As we begin to unpack further details of the Charis Commitment to Common Identity (CCCI) statement, and in particular the *Evangelical Core*, we need to remind ourselves of how this document is intended to function for us. *The Evangelical Core* is intended to both clarify for our fellowship a basic standard of theology and doctrine and clarify what beliefs we believe “genuine” Believers in Jesus Christ share in together. To this end, we are humbly stating that these truths, as understood from Scripture, are the fundamental truths that we *must* agree on and they are only negotiable if it can be shown from Scripture that we are in error.