

Three in One and One in Three

By Heather Ford Lark



When I first hear the phrase ‘three in one’, I must confess to thinking back to my youth and the oil I used to lubricate my bicycle chain. Claiming to have three functions in the one oil, it was a popular choice for me and my family in the care of our bicycles.

But the Three in One in my title here, is a very different Three in One altogether.

This coming Sunday is Trinity Sunday. Over the centuries, theologians have tried to understand and explain the nature of the Trinity. In fact, St Augustine spent almost 30 years of his life writing a fifteen-volume work called “About the Trinity”.

But one thing we shall never be able to do as humans is to grasp the Trinity with full understanding – because we cannot measure and contain God.

As soon as we try to nail God down with mathematics or science, we run into trouble, and the concept of the Trinity reminds us that all our models and images are only rough guides to help us. The reality is always more and different – and better.

When we see a rainbow, we generally recognise within it about seven colours, but actually I read that it is a continuous spectrum of an infinite range of colours blending into each other. Similarly with God, the creator of that rainbow, we simply cannot comprehend everything, because He is so very much more than we can imagine.

And also with the Trinity, the concept will always retain some mystery and wonder for us:

The One true God, who exists eternally as three Persons, yet always one, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Actually, the word Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible, but the Bible does present the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct persons.

There are many mysteries in life that we accept without fully understanding, so why not this too?!

We don't know all there is to know about space – far from it. Some mysteries about comets and stars are now solved, but as bigger telescopes and more sophisticated instruments probe deeper into space, those mysteries have been replaced by new conundrums. Astronauts who very recently travelled around the moon in the Artemis II mission saw things human eye has never seen before, and were full of wonder.

In the 18th Century a German, Gerhard Tersteegen said: 'A God understood, a God comprehended, is no God.'

If we understood everything, if humans could fathom him out, would He would be very great? He would not be God. He would be a God made in our own image – one we could put neatly in a box – but He is beyond our understanding – and yet he gives us glimpses of Himself.

Perhaps the image of a triangle may help us a little.

The triangle is a shape with each two sides firm against each other. It is such a strong shape that it is used widely in building, as a foundational support in roof rafters, in bridges, towers, and pylons. Our amazing God, three in one and one in three, can be likened to this triangular firm foundation. The Son leads us to the Father and the Spirit; the Father leads us to listen to the Son and the Spirit; the Spirit leads us to the Father and the Son.

Each of the three persons of our One God have different attributes yet the Three work together as One – and the promise is that God is with us and we can know Him.

God is involved with us as a loving compassionate Father, and in the Son, Jesus, as God who in an extraordinary way came to live among us, as a human being. In those who follow God, the Holy Spirit is working in and through us. He teaches, guides, comforts – and prays to the Father for us in a way we do not understand.

The Trinity means God is near and involved.

Perhaps this week we can pray ‘the grace’ (as it is sometimes called) with a heightened awareness of the Trinity and the importance of each of the Three. (quoted below).

‘May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.’ 2 Cor 13 v 14.