

One of the Most Misunderstood Words in the Entire Bible

“God is love” (1 John 4:8b).

Love is one of the most important words in the Bible and appears roughly 800 times in the Old and New Testaments. In our culture, though, it is one of the most misunderstood words and is used for everything from sexual sin to sloppy sentimentality. In 1 John 4:8, the Bible plainly states that “God is love.” Subsequently, to understand love as the Scripture speaks of it, we must begin with the Trinitarian God who is the source and ultimate example of love.

Based upon the teaching of the Bible, Christians believe that in the unity of God’s essence there are three persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who are fully equal in essence, attributes and eternality, yet eternally relating in fully personal ways. While the word “Trinity” does not appear in Scripture, the concept very clearly does. The church father Tertullian (A.D. 155–220) was the first to use this word. To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean there are three Gods, or that one God merely manifests himself as solely Father, Son or Holy Spirit on various occasions. Rather, the Lord is one (Deut. 6:4), but His oneness, like the oneness of a marriage (Gen. 2:24), contains more than a single person (Matt. 28:19-20).

Each person of the Trinity thinks, feels, acts and speaks in self-consciousness and continuity of identity. Each is able to understand self and creation, to initiate loving relationship with each other and humanity. Father, Son and Spirit exist and relate in perfect loving harmony in the one divine essence. Christians of all ages and branches affirm that there is no God but the Lord, who is Father, Son and Spirit.

Inextricably connected to the doctrine of the Trinity is love. In the very nature of God, there is a continuous outpouring of love, communication and oneness. In perfect love, the three persons are characterized by reciprocal self-dedication to the good of the whole Trinity. Because God is a relational community of love, God is the source and model of all that is love.

During his earthly life, Jesus frequently spoke about the deep love between God the Father and Himself. In John 3:35 we read, "The Father loves the Son, and has placed all things into his hand." In John 5:20a we read, "The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does." Also, in John 14:31 we read, "I [Jesus] do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father."

Spend some time today in prayer thanking God for specific ways He has loved you! {eoa}

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