

General Topics :: Teaching the Trinity to Children?

Teaching the Trinity to Children? - posted by pdizzle (), on: 2012/1/10 23:48

I've always read the bible to my kids and I don't want to sound like I'm bragging but they're pretty smart cookies. We've recently been getting into core doctrine because they need to know them as as Det. 6 tells us. As such they've been able to grasp alot but my middle child who is 6 hit me with a question regarding the trinity. I was raised I a home where the is sue was described as an egg or water, but theologically speaking this definition smacks of modlisim. So. My question is to the parents out there, how have you gone about teaching school ag children about the Trinity is way that they can at l est sort of understand.

I know this is a heavy topic, but I rejoice in that my kids want to understand this concept. I truly feel like Augustine in this regard. Try to explain (or is it understand) the trinity and you lose your mind, deny it and you lose your soul.

I understand that this is a sensitive subjet, so let's keep it civil. I look forward to any help that my brothers and sisters can lend me in this precarious subject!

Re: Teaching the Trinity to Children? - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2012/1/11 1:15

The best explanation I ever heard on the trinity was from Francis Schaeffer. Rather than trying to put together a technical explanation, he just said that to be complete God had to be a trinity. It is the way He knows Himself, and is able to be a God of love, wisdom, and creativity. Simply, if God were not in an eternal relationship, He would not know His own Character. He wouldn't know love- because there would be no one to love.

You see it in the way Jesus enjoyed an endless giving and receiving stream with the Father. It was the pleasure of the Father to give all things to the Son, and the pleasure of Jesus to return all things to the Father. And somehow, we connect into the flow by the Holy Spirit, Who is given by the Father to glorify the Son, to reveal the reality of God to us. Without the Holy Spirit, we are at best just outside observers.

Thus we remain as confused as ever by the doctrine of the trinity, but completely comforted by the relationship!

In my old age I am moved away from learning the details of doctrinal orthodoxy to the joy of participating in the relationship.

Contrast Allah. He- or it? is "one." No trinity, and no moral character. Nobody tells him what he can or cannot do, no one is sure if his favor today will not turn to a curse tomorrow. He doesn't care if you live or die, and when you die, he doesn't want to see you. He is without feeling, purpose, or trust. He demands obedience, but won't tell you what that is.

A god who is not a trinity is a disaster. Fortunately, we have a God who treasures us, calls and keeps us by His own Spirit, gave Himself in a painful and humiliating death to be able to welcome us unto His loving home upon our death for all eternity. As a trinity, He knew all about relationship before he ever made the earth and put man upon it.

He even planned for redemption if the man thing were to go south. Which it did...

Re: Teaching the Trinity to Children? - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/1/11 6:20

Personally, I find the egg theory confusing and untenable.

The Godhead consists of three separate persons: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Simple. What is so hard about that?

The godhead works in unity, have different responsibilities. This is the sense they are one. It is this sense of 'oneness' that creates confusion, as I understand it.

My understanding...

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2012/1/11 7:11

Quote:

Thus we remain as confused as ever by the doctrine of the trinity, but completely comforted by the relationship!

I think this is a great insight here. It is better to teach your child to relate to each member of the Trinity than to try and talk about the abstract theological concepts such as "person" and "essence." From a proper relationship will eventually flow the right "head knowledge" and theological understanding of the Trinity. Of course, from time to time teach on the matter. While encouraging relationship and then teaching on the matter, as the child grows into an adulthood, hopefully he'll be drawn into a true understanding by seeing the "mystery" behind the doctrine.

And I agree with ginny, avoid illustrations that involve eggs, ice cubes, circles, triangles, three leaf clovers, and the million other illustrations that are often used. Not only are they not very helpful, most common "Sunday school" illustrations of the Trinity actually end up teaching modalism.

When I've taught the doctrine to high school students once, I drilled the following two phrases into them to help them better grasp the doctrine of the Trinity:

- 1) God is a community
- 2) The Trinity is a dance

These two phrases, which I borrowed from some advanced theological readings, will definitely get your kids thinking. It may overwhelm them even. But, that is a good thing. I can still remember the time I taught on this subject in a High-School Sunday school class. One kid at the end of class looked like he just downed a few energy drinks. He was that "wired" looking from it all. His eyes were open huge, and he told me, "I feel like smoke is coming out of my head." Which in my opinion, was a good thing. In this teaching, he had begun to wrap his mind around something he realized was bigger than him. Mystery was formed. An invitation to go deeper in his walk and understanding of God was extended.

Re: - posted by jochbaptist (), on: 2012/1/11 10:09

QUESTIONS:

How did Jesus' coming to earth, and taking on human form affect the trinity? How was this "separation" possible?

Joch

Re: Separation - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2012/1/13 17:20

Good question, probably no really good answer. Jesus was wholly God and wholly man at the same time, how can we comprehend that? Somehow the separation phenomenon doesn't seem to be an issue because Father Son and Holy Spirit are in constant harmony. Jesus told the disciples to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them, yet we generally conclude that the Holy Spirit was already present with them.

Also, when Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness he kept saying "If you are the Son of God..." Jesus response was "Man" (shall not live on bread alone.) In other words He was saying to Satan, "I'm coming to defeat you not as God, but as Man!"

Could it be that at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan that He made the separation right there, just before He went into the wilderness? And that He walked as a man all the way to the Mount of Transfiguration where He received from the Father man's glory, the fullness of human salvation?

He of course took that glory off and proceeded to the cross to buy it for all of us, again as a man.

The glory was His, He owed no sin debt, but He would not take it up until He had paid the sin price- as a man.

Mysteries, mysteries! The details may be out of our reach, but not the wisdom. God sent His Son to become a man and redeem all men. The ultimate expression of love, totally reasonable, honorable, efficient, and wise.

Because only a Triune God can know these things.