

**Life Principles Center**  
**Course: Knowing God**  
**T1\_CC\_L1: The Truth About the Trinity (MD119)**

**Introduction:** I invite you to discover more about almighty God—to whom you've devoted your life. When you and I comprehend the heart of our Father—who He is and how He operates—we will never live our lives the same way again. It is impossible to lead mundane, passionless lives once we grasp the fullness of God's nature. Now, let's explore together the Trinity of God as expressed in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Lesson 1, Section 1**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Identify and briefly explain the three Persons of the Trinity.
- B. Recognize that God's attributes do not change among the three-part Godhead.
- C. Become familiar with the Scriptural basis of the Trinity and memorize John 1:1.

**Scripture**

*Read John 1:1-3*

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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

**Lesson 1**

One of the most difficult concepts for us to understand once we come to know Christ as Lord and Savior is the Trinity. This issue seems to be something of a mystery, not because God desires to hide any part of Himself, but because our human minds simply cannot fathom the all-surpassing greatness of God. However, until we get at least some idea of what the Bible teaches about the Trinity, we will never be able to understand who God is and how He operates.

Part of our confusion may stem from the fact that the word “Trinity” is found nowhere in the Bible. However, although the specific term is not used, the truth of the Trinity appears throughout Scripture.

The first thing we need to notice about the Trinity, as revealed through the Word, is that *God consists of three distinct persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. By “distinct,” I mean that the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. They are each distinct from the other, and yet are characterized by the same attributes.

There are five divine attributes I want to share with you. These are *eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and immutable*. These are attributes that we can only ascribe to God, and each Person of the Trinity has all five.

This leads many people to wrongly conclude, “Well, Christianity must actually serve three gods.” This is not true at all. The Bible clearly teaches that God is one, as we shall reiterate throughout the next few lessons. The difference is that each Person has a different, distinct *function*. This should in no way diminish your view of God, and it should not cause you to see the Trinity as a hierarchy of deities. The three Persons work together to make up the Godhead, a term used to describe the singleness of God through the unity of the Trinity.

**Q1:** *Choose the statement that is NOT true:*

- A. *The Godhead is made up of three different gods.*
- B. *The term Godhead is used to describe three distinct functions of one God.*
- C. *While the Father, Son and Spirit reflect God in different ways, each reflects the same five divine attributes.*
- D. *The truth of the Trinity is revealed in Scripture, even though the term “Trinity” is not used.*

The distinction among the Father, Son, and Spirit is demonstrated explicitly throughout Scripture, perhaps most notably in Creation itself. For example, Genesis 1:1 clearly describes the action of the Father, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Beginning in verse 3, we see God the Father speaking each aspect of Creation into existence. In considering Creation, most Christians only recognize the action of God the Father, but what about the activity of the other two Persons?

The first chapter of John’s Gospel mirrors Genesis 1:1, but reveals something more. John 1:1-3 reads, “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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” What is this “Word”

to which John refers? It was Jesus, God the Son! (John 1:14) In Genesis, we see God the Father planning Creation and speaking it into existence, and here in John, we see that Jesus is the One *through whom* the Father created the world. (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16)

**J1: Memorize John 1:1:**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*How does this verse testify to the unity of the Father and the Son?*

Finding the Holy Spirit in the act of Creation is not difficult. All we need to do is return to the first chapter of Genesis, verse 2, “The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” So, we see that while the Father brought about Creation *through* the Son, the Spirit was over the waters exercising some bit of administration over the act of Creation. What a wonderful picture of the three Persons acting distinctly, yet as One.

Also, the Trinity is evidenced elsewhere throughout the book of Genesis as God testifies to Himself in the plural. In Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and 11:7, God is shown as referring to Himself as “us.” For example, in 1:26, God declares, “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness.” Within the context of God’s complete unity (Deuteronomy 6:4), these plural references only make sense within the framework of the Trinity.

## **Lesson 1, Section 2**

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:**

- A. Distinguish between the three Persons of the Trinity and their functions.
- B. Identify lingering questions about the Trinity.

While not using the word “Trinity,” Scripture clearly teaches the distinct personalities of the three Persons. John 15:26, for example, quotes Jesus, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.” In this passage, we see the Father, Son, and Spirit acting individually, yet with single purpose.

*Q2: Based on previously mentioned passages in Genesis and John 15:26, match each aspect of God's Trinity with the appropriate action:*

- |                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. God         | A. Helper             |
| 2. Jesus       | B. Sender and Savior  |
| 3. Holy Spirit | C. Author and Creator |

Similarly, Mark 1:9-11, which describes Jesus' baptism, presents each of the three Persons distinctly. In this passage, Jesus rises from the waters as the Spirit descends like a dove. At that moment, the voice of the Father sounds from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

It is crucial that we understand that we do not serve three gods. We have only one God, who reveals Himself in three distinct Persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of the three are in perfect agreement, and they each have the five divine attributes (mentioned above) that can only characterize God.

It is true that the Trinity is a difficult concept; however, that difficulty can actually work toward the benefit and validity of the Gospel! Consider this: if someone set out to invent a religion, who would attempt to make up a triune Godhead? It just does not make sense. Therefore, there are many people who may say, "Well, I believe in God, but I just don't believe any of this Jesus and Holy Spirit business." My friend, with the full support of Scripture, let me tell you that this is simply not an option. The Bible clearly points toward the truth of the Trinity. In order to discount the Trinity, you must discount Scripture itself. Conversely, if you believe in the Word of God, you must believe in the existence and work of the Trinity.

Thank you for working so diligently through this section. I know these concepts are not easy, but I assure you that they are vital to understanding who God is. In the next lesson, we will continue this important discussion as we explore the equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*J2: What questions do you have about the Trinity? Record them in your journal, and review them as you complete the next two lessons.*

## **Prayer**

Lord, thank You for the massive weight of Scripture that explains Your triune nature. Help me to see You clearly as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Please enable me to absorb the material I've

just studied, and prepare my heart for the lesson to come. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Homework

Scripture Memory:

*The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.*

*John 5:19*

*Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."*

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Knowing God

#### T1\_CC\_L2: The Truth About the Trinity (MD119)

**Introduction:** Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

#### Lesson 2, Section 1

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- D. Understand the attributes of the Trinity.
- E. Identify how your concept of God has grown.

#### Scripture

*Read Colossians 1:15-17*

And He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

#### Lesson 2

In the previous lesson of this course, we began our look at the Trinity and noted that while the term "Trinity" is not used in Scripture, the concept is certainly evidenced by the Word. We specifically saw that God is One, yet exists in three distinct, separate Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this lesson, we will continue our study of the Trinity by exploring another characteristic of our triune God: each Person's *complete* divinity.

It is vital that we understand that each Person of the Trinity, although distinct from each other, *is fully God*. This means that no one of the three is "less God" than any other. Each contains a *full measure* of the five fundamental divine attributes we saw in the previous lesson: *eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and immutable*.

*J1: Compare Colossians 1:17 with John 1:1. How do these verses support the eternal, omnipresent attributes of God's holy Trinity?*

I remember one time early in my preaching ministry when I delivered a sermon on the Holy Spirit. After the service, someone came up to me quite upset, saying, "I don't understand why you are talking about the Holy Spirit. You ought to be talking about Jesus!" She believed that I was doing a great disservice to Jesus by describing the Holy Spirit as equal to Him. This is simply not the case. Jesus is no more or less God than the Holy Spirit is. Scripture shows that each is *fully* God.

For example, John 6:27 shows that Jesus Himself equated the Father with God. That passage reads, ". . . for on (Jesus) the Father, *even God*, has set His seal." Very plainly, then, we see that Jesus taught that the Father was God.

Moreover, Scripture attests to the full divinity of Jesus as well. In John 1:1, we see that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God." The "Word" here, as revealed in John 1:14, is Jesus Christ Himself. Also, Matthew 28:18 records Jesus instructing, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Who could have all authority in heaven and in earth except God alone? No one! So, we see that Jesus was fully God.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is certainly placed on equal ground as the Father and the Son in Scripture. Consider Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son *and the Holy Spirit*" (emphasis added). If any of these three were not God, why would Jesus have included it in this powerful command? Similarly, 2 Corinthians 13:13-14 and 1 Peter 1:1-2 contain explicit statements that include the Spirit in equal standing with the Father and the Son.

*J2: As you grow in your understanding of God's fullness in three Persons, how has your view of Him expanded?*

## **Lesson 2, Section 2**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

A. Apply your understanding of the Trinity in relation to your prayer life.

Throughout the New Testament, we see that the early Christian Church certainly recognized the Father as God, the Son as God, and the

Holy Spirit as God. There is no hierarchy, only differing functions and purposes among the Godhead.

An interesting question that arises out of the realization that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each *fully* God is *to whom, then, should we pray?* If prayer is our communication with God, how are our prayers affected, heard, or answered by each member of the Trinity?

First, let us examine the role of the Father in prayer. You may recall that when Jesus' disciples asked about prayer, the Lord led them through a model that emphasizes the role of the Father. His prayer begins, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9). By this example from Jesus Himself, we see that we are to pray to the Father.

However, this does not leave the Son and the Holy Spirit out of the matter entirely. Notice Jesus' explanation for His own role in prayer in John 15:16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." So, we see that Jesus is also involved in prayer, as we are to pray *in His name*. This means that when we approach the Father, we can do so *as His Son*, because Jesus Christ is within our hearts.

**Q1:** *True or False? Jesus said we are to pray to Him in the Father's name.*

Finally, let's see the Holy Spirit's involvement in our prayers. In the twentieth verse of the single-chapter book of Jude, the author encourages his readers, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." So, we see that when we pray, we pray *in the Holy Spirit*.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit prays *for* us when we cannot. Romans 8:26 reveals, "The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Sometimes our pain is so great that we cannot even pray. At these times, all we can do is sit still and allow the Spirit of God to intercede for us, offering up prayers on our behalf.

**J3:** *Can you think of a time in your life when you hurt so deeply that you could not even articulate a prayer? How did you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit? Did you feel as though you were praying, even if you only sat still?*

Clearly, Scripture teaches that each member of the Trinity is fully God. Each one has the attributes that only God can possess. Each one was present at Creation. Each one works intimately in our lives. And, each one is active in our prayer lives. In the next lesson of this course, we will take a last look at the Trinity as a whole before moving on to examine each Person of the Trinity.

### **Prayer**

Father, through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Your one and only Son Jesus Christ, I come to You now in praise. Lord, I thank You for revealing Your Word to me. Help me to grow in my knowledge of You, so that my entire lifestyle glorifies You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Homework**

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

*John 5:19*

*Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."*

**Life Principles Center**  
**Course: Knowing God**  
**T1\_CC\_L3: The Truth About the Trinity (MD119)**

**Introduction:** What makes a successful student? The Lord answers, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Divided into two sections, this lesson contains assignments that you are encouraged to finish before continuing to the next lesson.

**Lesson 3, Section 1**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- F. Understand God's personal, intimate interaction with your own life.
- G. Grasp the scriptural basis for the existence of only one God.

**Scripture**

*Read Matthew 3:16-17*

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

**Lesson 3**

So far in this course, we have explored some difficult concepts about the nature of God. We have seen that God exists in a Trinity, comprised of three distinct Persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Also, we have seen that while each of these three are individual personalities, they are each *fully God*, having all of the divine attributes previously discussed. Now, in this third and final lesson on the Trinity, we must round out our study with one last point: *there is only one God*.

We reviewed this point briefly in Lesson 1 of this course, but it is certainly important enough to warrant a more thorough examination. It is absolutely vital for all believers to understand that the concept of the Trinity *does not* imply the existence of three separate gods. Scripture clearly teaches—throughout both the Old and New Testaments—that there is only one God. Now, let's explore some of these passages.

First, take a moment to read Exodus 20:1-7. In this passage, God has just led the Israelites out of Egypt, where they had been slaves. The

Israelites had been in Egypt for so long that they had been submerged in the Egyptian culture. One thing with which they would certainly have been familiar is the multitude of gods that the ancient Egyptians worshipped. To counter any ideas of multiple gods or idol worship, God clearly establishes Himself as the one true God. He declares in Exodus 20:3-5a, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.” Obviously, then, God left no room for *any* other deities beside Himself.

God knew the Israelites intimately. That is how He knew that they were worshipping idols. Therefore, He made it clear to them (using terms they would understand because of their familiarity with Egyptian practices) that He alone was God.

Likewise, the one true God knows you personally; He knows what experiences you've been through, what struggles you've had, what passages of Scripture mean the most to you, and what your desires are. Thus, He speaks to you in ways that He knows you will understand.

*J1: Write about an experience when God revealed Himself to you in such a way that you knew He was very intimately aware of your life and your needs?*

Deuteronomy 4:35 leaves little room for question or doubt as to God's uniqueness, “To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him.”

One of the most well-known passages on the topic of God's uniqueness is Deuteronomy 6:4, which became a regularly-spoken confession of faith in early Judaism. This important verse reads, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”

Finally, Isaiah 45:5 depicts God speaking to an unbelieving king, “I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God.” These are just a few of the many, many passages in the Old Testament that depict God's divinity.

This emphasis is also present throughout the New Testament. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:3-5, Paul encourages, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” This is a

great passage that not only testifies to the uniqueness of God, but also to the perfect union between the Father and the Son.

*Q1: Choose the best word to complete this sentence: The unity of the Father and Son reveals God's distinctiveness and His \_\_\_\_\_.*

- A. Distance
- B. Jealousy
- E. Oneness
- D. abstractness

### **Lesson 3, Section 2**

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:**

- A. Understand Matthew 3:17 in terms of God's amazing love.
- B. See God as close, involved, and personal, rather than existing in some far off place called "heaven."

The early church may not have understood the awesome concept of the Trinity much better than we do today, but history and Scripture reveal that they did, in fact, believe it. Not only did they believe it in their personal lives, but they taught it to others and saw the necessity of understanding the Trinity as part of a healthy, developing walk of faith.

What difference does it make in our lives, here and now? It makes a world of difference. You see, most people see God as being quite distant from this world, far removed from the problems and challenges that you and I face everyday. One of the biggest of these problems for people is the question, "How do I call God out of that place called heaven and get Him down here, involved in my problem, my heartache, my burden, my sorrow, my loss?"

You should understand that when I say this, I am not only talking about unbelievers. I am also thinking about Christians who have not grown to understand God very well at all. They may say, "Well, I go to church sometimes, I read the Bible occasionally, I pray every now and then, but nothing seems to be happening." My friend, if this describes you, then your concept of God is far too small!

God is bigger than you or I could ever imagine. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, and eternal. There is nothing too big or too small for His attention. And, He exists in three Persons. He is our divine Father, our saving Christ, and our indwelling Holy Spirit. We see through the sacrifice of His Son that He loves us completely, and we see

through the giving of the Holy Spirit that He knows us intimately and personally.

*J2: Consider Matthew 3:17:*

*“. . . and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’”*

*As you examine this verse, how is your perspective of God's unconditional love broadened?*

Although we can never fully understand each aspect of the Trinity, I hope it is clear to you that some understanding of our triune Godhead is vital to our relationship with God. With this now established, we will spend some time in the next several lessons examining each Person of the Trinity in greater detail. We will begin in the next lesson with the study entitled, *Our Heavenly Father*.

## **Prayer**

Father God, I praise You for the way You have revealed Yourself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thank You for loving me as God the Father, for saving me as God the Son, and for walking with me through each day as God the Holy Spirit. Help me as I grow in my understanding of who You are, so that I may know You better and tell others about You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Homework**

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

*John 5:19*

*Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.”*

**Life Principles Center**  
**Course: Knowing God**  
**T1\_CC\_L4: Our Heavenly Father (MF212)**

**Introduction:** This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

**Lesson 4, Section 1**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- H. Memorize and apply John 5:19 to your life.
- I. Recognize how Scripture portrays God as Father.
- J. Understand the correlation between knowing God as your Father and its effect on how you perceive eternity and how you view yourself.

**Scripture**

*Read John 5:19-20*

Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, so that you will marvel.

**Lesson 4**

The Bible contains many different titles for God, and each one of these carries a different meaning, thereby demonstrating distinct aspects. We often see Him as Creator, the Ancient of Days, the Almighty, the Rock, and the Holy One. In this lesson, however, we will examine the title for God most often used by Jesus: *Father*.

Jesus Christ changed how we relate to God. Through Christ, we have become "sons of God" and "co-heirs" with Christ. (Galatians 4:4-7) This dramatic change is best seen in the use of the title *Father* throughout Scripture. In the entire 39 books of the Old Testament, God is referred to as "Father" only 15 times. However, in the New Testament, which spans the time following the ministry of Jesus, God is called "Father" 245 times, over 100 of which occur in the Gospel of John alone.

Seeing how important this identification was to Jesus Himself, let's examine some passages that reveal Jesus' own relationship with the Father.

**Q1: Multiple Choice: Jesus' understanding of God as Father . . .**

- A. reflected a traditional Old Testament view of God.
- B. changed the way that believers related to Him.
- C. is not made clear in the New Testament.

First, John 5:19-37 reveals the deep intimacy of the Son's relationship with the Father. In verse 19, Jesus declares, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing." Just as a child watches every move of his earthly father, so did Jesus carefully watch the activity of His heavenly Father.

Second, Jesus did not simply identify God as *a father*, but as His own Father. In John 14:2, He declares, "In *My Father's* house are many dwelling places" (emphasis added). Likewise, in John 15:1, He says, "I am the true vine, and *My Father* is the vinedresser" (emphasis added). In both of these examples, we see Jesus making a personal, intimate connection with almighty God.

Third, we see Jesus' complete devotion to His Father. Luke 23:46 records Jesus' final words from the cross, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said that, Jesus "breathed His last."

**J1: Read the following Scripture passages. Then, in your journal, note how God the Father is portrayed in each.**

**F. John 17:25-26; Matthew 11:25; Matthew 6:25-34; Matthew 6:4-8**

All through these passages, Jesus is trying to make a solid, consistent point about God's nature. From Jesus, we learn that God is not at all distant, and He is not *only* righteous, just, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He certainly *is* all of these things, but He is also loving, intimate, and personal. Jesus reveals that God the Father desires a personal relationship with you and me.

Another important issue to examine is the question of *who can rightly call God "Father"?* Most people naturally assume that *everyone* should call God "Father" because He is the Creator. However, this is not the case. The only ones who can rightly call almighty God "Father" are those who have accepted His Son, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

You may object to this point, saying, “Now wait a minute. Why do you have to accept Jesus in order to say ‘Our Father’?” The reason is that the Bible proclaims that until we accept Jesus as Savior, we are all dead in our sins. In order to become part of God’s family, of which He is the Father, our dead spirits must be revived and brought into a new life in Jesus Christ.

Think about it as you would an earthly family. There are two ways in which a child is brought into a family. The first way is obvious, and that is to be born into it. Well, what did Jesus say must happen in order for a person to enter into the kingdom of God? He said that we must be “born again.” (John 3:3) We are born again at the moment we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts and lives. Then, we immediately become children of God. Through Christ, we are actually born into the kingdom of God and have the right and privilege to call Him “Father.”

The second way to become part of a family is adoption. Parents adopt children not because of the infant's accomplishments, but because they simply *desire* a child so badly that they will go to great lengths to bring a new baby into their home. This is also true of God. Despite our inability to *earn* His love and favor, He loves us nonetheless.

Galatians 4:4-7 reveals that through Christ, we have been redeemed and have therefore received “adoption as sons.” And, because we are sons and daughters of God, we are co-heirs with Christ to the kingdom! An amazing point here is that our adoption did not begin at the moment we received Christ; rather, God knew “before the foundation of the world” that we would be His children. (Ephesians 1:4-5) Our acceptance of Christ into our hearts was the culmination—not the beginning—of our adoption as sons and daughters.

*J2: Read 1 John 3:1-2. How does knowing that you're one of God's children impact your view of yourself, of God, and of eternity?*

## **Lesson 4, Section 2**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- B. Recognize the correlation between how you view your earthly father and how you view your heavenly Father.
- C. Recognize the characteristics of your heavenly Father and how understanding His nature applies to every area of your life.

Unfortunately, many of us have a difficult time understanding God as our “Father” because we’ve either had a poor relationship with our earthly father or because we never knew our earthly father. Therefore, it is hard for many of us to see how the term *Father* has any positive value at all. At the beginning of this lesson, in fact, you heard me describe how my own understanding of God the Father was affected by the loss of my earthly father. If you, like me, have had trouble understanding God’s role as Father, please pay special attention to the following characteristics of our Father in heaven.

First and foremost, God the Father loves each of us completely and unconditionally. Because God loves us without condition, that love does not depend on our performance, behavior, or promises.

Second, we have a Father who listens to us. He is deeply concerned about every detail of our lives, and He wants to be asked into every part. He has promised to be attentive to every prayer we lift up, and He always has an answer to our needs. (2 Chronicles 7:14-15)

Third, God is a providing Father. Scripture assures us, “My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). He even knows our deepest needs when we are not aware of them. (Matthew 6:25-34)

Fourth, our Father gives guidance at every turn. The Psalms and Proverbs especially assert His divine instruction. (Psalm 32:8; Proverbs 3:5-6)

Fifth, God is our Protector. He guards us not only from physical harm, but especially from spiritual attack. And, He is a protector that will never leave our side. (Hebrews 13:5)

Sixth, and perhaps the most difficult to understand, our Father disciplines us. Any good parent knows that discipline is necessary for the welfare of the child. This is especially true within the context of our relationship with God, our Father. (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Finally, we have a Father who desires a personal relationship with us. He will always be right there with us; this is what He meant when he said, “I will never leave or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

*Q2: Match the following characteristics of God as Father with the corresponding Scripture.*

*C. Attentive to our needs*

*B. Protects His children with His unwavering presence*

*C. Leads us with instruction in decision-making*

*D. Provides all our needs, whether we realize them or not*

*E. Corrects us when we rebel against His loving commands*

1. *Psalm 32:8*
2. *Matthew 6:25-34*
3. *2 Chronicles 7:14-15*
4. *Hebrews 12:5-11*
5. *Hebrews 13:5*

To reject this kind of Father is to reject life at its best. This week, I invite you to spend some special time in prayer and Bible study as you seek to understand your intimate relationship with your heavenly Father. He desperately wants to be actively involved in your life. Will you grant Him this privilege?

*J3: Examine your life; are there areas of it—struggles, habits, or ways of thinking—that are molded by you, your environment, or your upbringing instead of being molded by your heavenly Father? Ask Him to reveal the areas into which He has not been invited.*

**Prayer**

And Father, we praise You and worship You and adore You, and love you, to say to You today how grateful we are that You're not distant, You're not estranged, and You're not a stranger. And You're not just just and righteous and holy, You're not just a judge, nor Lord, nor Savior. While You're all of those things, You said You are our heavenly Father. And we just want to tell You we love You, and we praise You. And I want to say to You, dear Father, would You encourage the heart of every mother today who's trying to raise her sons or her daughters without a father? Would You remind her of what You said, that You are a Father to the fatherless, so that all of us, [including] small children, have You as their Father? And everyone who's willing to receive the Son can have You as Father. We just want to tell You today: thanks for being a wonderful, wonderful Father. And we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

**Homework**

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

*John 5:19*

*Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."*

## **Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip**

### **Our Father's Love**

Children get their deepest, strongest, most meaningful impressions about what God is like from their earthly fathers. So, if their earthly dads are cruel, harsh, difficult, and distant, then the children will grow up thinking that God is just like that. But, if a father is kind, gentle, loving, patient, and actively involved, then the child will grow up with a great sense of security about the idea of God as his heavenly Father.

Now, I had read this and heard it from many people, however, I know it today from my own personal experience. Because, you see, my father died when I was nine months of age. When people asked me about my father, I simply said that my father died when I was nine months of age. End of story, end of thought, end of idea. I had nothing else to say; I had no emotion whatsoever about my father. This was because I just felt like I didn't know him, had never known him, and would never know him until I got to heaven.

Well, I never thought that had any real affect upon my life until . . . well, I do remember that at times, when I would be playing with my friends, and my friends fathers would come call them and they walked away, I'd suddenly feel this deep loneliness inside. I didn't exactly know why, I just knew that I felt that something was missing. No father ever called me. No father ever put his arms around me. No father was ever gentle and kind and loving to me. I had a stepfather for a number of years, but that was a big mistake, and that was a very difficult time for my life. So I never knew a real, genuine father.

So you say, "Well, what does that have to do about God and your impression of God?" It has a great deal to do with it, but I didn't realize it until I was about fifty years of age. I began to realize that even though I was in the ministry and preaching the gospel, and that the Lord was blessing everything that was going on in my life, something was missing. I knew I was saved, I knew I was right with God, but I would confess, I would repent, I fasted, I prayed . . . I felt like there was some gap between God and me and I just couldn't close the gap, no matter what I did.

So finally, out of desperation, I called four of my friends and I said, "Look, I've always been able to find the will of God and what He was saying to me, but somehow, at this point in my life I don't seem to be able to do it." I asked them to meet me if they would and let's just talk. They all decided to do that and so amazingly, within four days, we were all together in another state and I asked them to let me tell them everything I could possibly remember about my life. And then, whatever they told me to do, I would do it.

So we talked from about two o'clock until about ten that evening, including a little dinner break. And then I would wake up off and on all during the night. By the next morning, I had written seventeen pages

longhand, legal-sized sheets, of things I wanted to be sure to tell them about myself.

So the next morning came and we began talking again. And it was about ten-fifteen or somewhere thereabouts, and I had reminded them of a few things two or three times. And so one of them said, "Now, your father died when you were nine months of age?"

"Yes."

And so, one of the fellows, probably the man whom I knew the least of the four, though they were all friends, said, "Charles, put your head on the table and close your eyes." So I did. He said, "Now, your father . . . just picked you up in his arms and held you. What do you feel?"

I just burst out crying, and I cried and cried and cried. I didn't even know why I was crying. He said, "What did you feel?"

And, for the first time, I said I felt secure, warm, loved, and all of a sudden I began to weep again. And I wept and wept. And finally when I had wept my way through all that, I realized that big gap between God and me was [that] I couldn't feel His love. I knew it in my mind, I knew it in my soul and in my spirit, but I couldn't feel it. Emotionally, it wasn't there, because what the little boy in me had said it, "The father's not here. He's gone."

Now I looked back and realized that a couple of things had happened that had set me up for this. One of my secretaries had a little girl and she had to leave for that time. And every once in a while she would come back and just let me say hi to her daughter. And I would say hello to her and laugh and talk to her for a few moments and one Sunday she walked in . . . her name is Jennifer . . . and when she walked in, she reached out to me and hugged my neck and I hugged her and talked to her a few moments and then I gave her back to her mother. And so they said goodbye and walked out.

I still remember what I felt. Because that little girl was nine months of age, and she knew me. And I thought to myself, I knew my father. But I never thought of it, I never even thought the idea was possible.

And then I was in the prayer room, just praying one day, one Saturday afternoon. And, just as a slight vision, just as if something would just pass just like that, I saw my grandfather and my father sitting on this big log out in the woods, and they were just laughing about something. It was just a moment of seconds, and then it was all gone. And I wanted to get in on that conversation so badly that I began to weep. And I got real angry. I got angry at God because I hadn't had a father. And I wanted to get in on that conversation to see what they were so happy and excited about.

Well, all that set me up for this conversation with my friends and that day I realized emotionally . . . the little boy in me said, "Your father's not there, he's never been there." And I just unconsciously transferred

something about God: He's not there. I knew in my mind that He was, but emotionally, I couldn't feel it.

That day, when I recognized that God really and truly loved me, and that He loved me as much as He could possibly love me, I realized that I had never felt it, never emotionalized it. I walked away from that day a brand new man.

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Knowing God

#### T1\_CC\_L5: The Holy Spirit: An Absolute Essential (MF297)

**Introduction:** Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

### Lesson 5, Section 1

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- K. Understand Luke 24:49 and apply it to your life.
- L. Identify three areas of who the Holy Spirit is.

### Scripture

*Read Luke 24:36-49:*

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

## Lesson 5

Have you ever wondered why you don't make better progress in your Christian life? Maybe you have looked at your life and asked, "Am I stagnant? Why don't I read the Bible as much as I should? Why don't I feel the power of God as clearly as I did when I first surrendered my life to Christ?" Perhaps you are hesitant to share your faith, serve in your church, tithe, or surrender old, sinful habits. Even if you pray, study Scripture, and attend worship regularly, you may perceive that something is missing in your walk with the Lord. If this describes you at all, then I want you to pay close attention to this lesson, because we are going to discuss something that can change your life: the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 24:36-49, Jesus speaks with His disciples following His resurrection. Surely they are excited by His return and energized to get to the business of spreading His saving Gospel. But what does He say to them? In verse 49, He tells them to sit still and to stay in Jerusalem until they are "clothed with power from on high." He essentially tells them, "I know you *think* you're ready, but there is something that you're missing. You don't know you're missing it, but you are. And, if you just wait here, I will send it to you and then you can go out and serve Me with the full power of God."

*Q1: Read Luke 24:49 and choose the best answer to the following questions:*

- D. What was Jesus sending?*
- C. the promise of the Father*
- D. a proclamation from heaven*
- E. the provision of manna*

*E. What would Jesus' gift to the disciples clothe them with?*

- A. righteousness*
- B. power*
- C. holiness*

What Jesus soon sent them, as revealed in Acts 2:1-47, was the Holy Spirit. The disciples did not know—just like many of us do not know—how absolutely essential the Holy Spirit would be in going about the Lord's work. As we seek to understand the Holy Spirit, let's examine two questions: *Who is the Holy Spirit?* and *Why did He come?*

In understanding *who* the Holy Spirit is, the first thing we need to see is that He is a Person. We have already discussed this a bit in recent lessons. The fact that He is a Person means that we should never call Him an “it.” Instead, *He* (the Holy Spirit) is a Person of the Trinity, of equal standing and substance as the Father and the Son. (Genesis 1:2, John 15:26)

Second, we need to understand that the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father. In Luke 24:49, how does Jesus describe the Spirit? He says, “I am sending forth *the promise* of My Father upon you.” When the Holy Spirit enters our hearts—which happens the *instant* we accept Christ as Lord and Savior—we receive the fulfillment of a promise that God made to each one of us, that He would send a Helper to encourage and empower believers. (John 15:26) Jesus also states this promise in John 14:16-17, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”

Third, the Holy Spirit is the gift to every believer. In Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, he proclaims, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). This endowment of the Holy Spirit occurs as soon as we accept Jesus Christ, and the Spirit dwells within each believer for the rest of his or her life.

**Q2:** *Which one of these statements does not describe the Holy Spirit?*

- A. *He is a gift from a Father to His children.*
- B. *He is a Person of the Trinity, part of the triune God.*
- C. *He is a powerful “force” for which believers must pray to receive.*
- D. *He is the evidence that God is faithful to keep His promises.*

## **Lesson 5, Section 2**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Understand why the Holy Spirit came.
- B. Understand the danger of relying on your skills and talents.
- C. Recognize God's purpose in allowing failure.

Now, we need to examine the reasons *why* the Holy Spirit came into the world. First, as we see in today’s focal passage, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives to enable us to do the work God has called us to do. Remember, the disciples thought that they were ready, but Jesus knew otherwise. The Lord knew that they could not do the job themselves, so

He instructed them to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Only then would they be able to go about their globe-spanning mission.

The Holy Spirit gives gifts for ministry to every Christian. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) Regardless of which gift or gifts a particular believer may receive, their purpose is to glorify God and strengthen His Church. First Corinthians 12:7 clearly asserts, “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” The key is to discover exactly where and how you can best use your special gifts from God. You will never see someone as effective for Christ than when he is using his gifts for ministry in exactly the way and place God has set for him. We will explore the issue of spiritual gifts in much greater detail in future lessons.

The second reason for the Spirit’s arrival is to enable every believer to live the life that God has called him to live. One of the reasons people fail to succeed in the Christian life is that they continually strive to achieve success under their own strength and abilities. Honestly, every one of us faces this struggle from time to time. Our natural inclination is to solve a problem, face an obstacle, or overcome a difficulty *on our own*. We are simply not used to operating within the Holy Spirit.

*J1: Make a list in your journal of all your talents and skills. Then, read the list and ask God to reveal if you are relying on your own abilities more than on His Spirit. Record what you sense God saying and respond in prayer.*

Do you know what God is waiting for? He is waiting for us to fail so miserably and to fall so flat on our faces that we have no other option but to look up and cry, “God, I can’t do it! If you don’t step in and do this, I’ll never make it!” What a wonderfully freeing moment this is!

*J2: Think back over your life since you've known Christ. What points would you consider to be times of failure? Record them in your journal. Now, ask God to help you see them from His perspective. Do you notice any spiritual growth or discernment that God brought about through your "failures"?*

Listen, God never intended any of us to “live the Christian life.” Instead, He wants us to submit wholly to Him, accept the power and authority of His Spirit, and allow that Spirit to dwell within us and live the Christian life for us. Remember what we’ve studied in past lessons—God doesn’t want to *improve* us; He wants to *re-make* us.

**Q3: True or False? The Holy Spirit was given to all believers so that they would have the ability to live the Christian life for themselves.**

This brings us to the end of Course 3. You are doing a wonderful job! I hope that your understanding of God has grown over the past two weeks. These are certainly difficult subjects to grasp, but our understanding of the Trinity is essential to a healthy, growing faith in Christ. I'll join you again soon when we start the next course, *Christ and the Cross*.

### **Prayer**

Father, we love You and praise You. We bless You. And how blessed we are that You're a patient God. You said that You're longsuffering. We understand You being longsuffering with sinners who don't know You, but to know in our heart that You're longsuffering with those of us who do know You. Patiently, You wait. Patiently, You love us. Patiently, You woo us. Patiently, You convict us. You never give up on one of Your children. We want to tell You how grateful we are that Your grace is greater than all our sin. We could never explain adequately how much You love Your children. How would we pray today that somebody who is unsaved would recognize that it's just not worth it going alone when they could have all of heaven's blessing. I pray, Father, for every believer who is right here, that today each one of us would make a decision today:

*Lord Jesus, I yield to the prevailing control of the Holy Spirit. I want a taste of Your best. I surrender my life to You. Bless me, God, with the best in proportion to my total and full and absolute surrender. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

### **Homework**

## Scripture Memory Review

Fill in the blanks to complete this course's memory verse.

*Therefore \_\_\_\_\_ and was \_\_\_\_\_ to them,  
"Truly, truly, I \_\_\_\_\_ unto \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ can do  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, unless it is something He \_\_\_\_\_ the  
\_\_\_\_\_ doing; for \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ does, these things  
the \_\_\_\_\_ also does in \_\_\_\_\_."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5: \_\_\_\_\_*

## Conclusion

As we've seen, God wants to have a close, personal relationship with you. But, until we grow to see Him as He really is—expressed through the members of the trinity—our Christian growth will be stifled. At this point, you should have a deeper understanding of how God relates to us as our heavenly Father, how He expresses that relationship through His Son, and how His Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out His plans for our lives. I pray that this complete, holistic view of God revolutionizes your understanding of who God is and energizes your Bible studies more than you ever imagined.