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The Simplicity of the Trinity

As a statement of mathematics the doctrine of the Trinity seems needlessly complicated. How can three be one or one be three? But who said the Trinity is about math?

Everyone can understand how a Father and Son love each other. Anyone can identify with the spirit of love that binds two people so closely together that the two of them, and their love, are united as one. Even if we've never experienced such intimate, loving relationship, we all long for it and can imagine how it might be. In fact, the less we've experienced such love and unity, the more we long to find it and be a part of it.

Math can be hard to understand, but relationship is something we all participate in and long for. That's why it's important to understand that the Trinity is about relationship, not math.

When we think that explaining the Trinity to others means trying to overcome their objections to the mathematical issue of counting to three, then we become reluctant to talk about the Trinity. After all, that math stuff makes it complicated and hard to believe.

On the other hand, when we know that explaining the Trinity is about telling others of the loving Holy Spirit through whom the Father and Son love each other, then we see the simplicity of the Trinity. God is the Father loving the Son in the love of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Son embracing all of humanity and including us in that loving relationship. That's simple. We're the ones who turn it into something complicated. The Trinity gets complicated when we try to impose our math, or our religion, or our faulty Biblical exegesis on the simplicity of the Triune Life.

A few years ago I finally had to address this question in my life and ministry: Am I talking to myself and others about the Father and Son who love each other in the loving communion of the Holy Spirit or am I talking about the omni-God? (What is the omni-God? The God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent but somehow never first and foremost Father, Son, and Spirit). When I answered this question I knew what I had to do. I had to stop letting myself complicate the Trinity and embrace its simplicity. What I've found since I've done that is quite startling. Even children can understand the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and their place in that life.

The Trinity really is that simple.

~ Jonathan Stepp