A Practical Theology of the Trinity
By Mark E. Moore, PhD

I. Preliminary thoughts:
A. Nicean Creed: “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God,] Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth] Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit” (325 A.D.).
B. God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4, “There is no God but one”). “One” is sometimes “unity” not a count (Herbert Wolf, "אֶחַד", ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 30):
1. It is closely identified with יָחַד “to be united”
2. Diversity within unity is also seen from the fact that ‘אָחַד has a plural form, ‘אָחַדִים. It is translated “a few days” in Genesis 27:44; 29:20, and Daniel 11:20.
3. The concept of unity is related to the tabernacle, whose curtains are fastened together to form one unit (Exodus 26:6; 11; 36:13), Adam and Eve are described as “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), which includes more than sexual unity. In Genesis 34:16 the men of Shechem suggest intermarriage with Jacob’s children in order to become “one people.”
4. “The LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be (the only) one, and His name (the only) one” (Zechariah 14:9 NASB).

II. Trinitarian Texts:
A. Multiplicity of God in the OT:
1. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27; cf. 3:22; 11:7)
2. I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8)
3. Psalm 110:1, “The Lord said to my lord” (cf. Matthew 26:64;
4. Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him. (John 12:41).
5. “So, I believe that the name Elohim is compatible with the doctrine of the Trinity and may be hinting in that direction, but the name itself does not demand that we infer that God is triune in His nature.” R. C. Sproul
B. All three in the NT:
1. Matthew 3:16-17, “The Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”
2. John 14:26, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to
you.” Also John 15:26, “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.” (See also 16:13-15)

3. 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."


5. 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

6. 2 Corinthians 1:21–22, “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (See also 2 Corinthians 3:4-6)

7. 2 Corinthians 13:14, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (Cf. Romans 15:30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5).

8. Titus 3:4-6, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

9. Galatians 4:6, “Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’” (See also Ephesians 3:14-17)

10. Ephesians 2:18, “For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”

11. Hebrews 9:14, “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

12. 1 Peter 1:2, “…who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.” (See also 1 John 3:23-24; 4:13-14; Jude 1:20-21)

C. Jesus compared to the Father

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1; see also 1:14, 18; 8:58; 14; 14:9).

2. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

3. “In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9)

4. From them [the Jews] is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! (Romans 9:5; see 2 Thessalonians 1:12)

5. We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13)

6. “He is the image of the invisible God.” (Hebrews 1:3)
7. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5–8)

III. Things you would never know about God without the theology of the Trinity. These will make you more successful as a husband, business man, teammate.

A. **Community.** God is relational and so are you. Two key practices:
   1. **Teamwork.** Let each member of your family, business, or team, play to their strengths. That is essential for effectiveness. Call it delegation, call it specialization, but at the end of the day, we are all most fulfilled when we are doing what we are good at and are then recognized for the contribution we can make to our family, business or team.
   2. **Trust.** Effective delegation requires trust of the other person. Likewise, if you don’t have trust your marriage will fail, your team will lose, your business will be less effective.

B. **Proximity.** Two key practices: God is near. That is one of Jesus’ names in the OT: Immanuel, meaning “God with us.” Who would have ever guessed that God would come to our turf, dress in our skin, and experience our pain. That is precisely what God did in Jesus Christ.
   1. **Availability.** There is no way we could have ever loved God without knowing him and there’s no way to know him if he stayed in the distant heavens. You can’t have love without proximity. Likewise, Dads, our kids need to know you are available. Bosses, your employees need to know you are available. Coaches, if you’re not accessible, your players will have a hard time improving. Availability is essential to success in life.
   2. **Vulnerability.** Why are we not more available? For me, it is because I don’t want to be vulnerable. Your kids will make fun of you; your colleagues may take advantage of you; your team mates may monopolize your time. In short, we don’t want to be available because that requires us to be vulnerable. Ask Jesus how this feels; he might say something about being pinned to a tree.

C. **Humility.** Two key practices:
   1. **Deference.** Each member of the Trinity shows deference to the other. If you listen to Jesus you will constantly hear him say, “Let me introduce you to my Father.” If you ask the Holy Spirit to show himself he will likely say, “Ooh, Ooh, Ooh, Look, there’s Jesus.” If you ask the Father about the mystery of the universe, he will puff out his chest and say, “Have you seen my son?!” Deference is a divine quality that too few of us exercise to our own detriment. How does it make you feel when your husband or father brags about you in public? How does it make you feel when your boss or coach recognizes you at an awards banquet? That’s how the Trinity feels all the time. That’s the model for us to follow if we want to be successful in life.
   2. **Sacrifice.** The Father sacrificed his own son to save the world. The Son laid down his life to honor the Father. The Spirit is constantly, moment by moment,
breathing his own life into the people of this planet. Each person of God has mastered sacrifice. If you want to win at life, that’s the secret sauce.

IV. **The Function of the Trinity** [Draw this diagram: Make a triangle with Father, Son, Spirit inside each angle. Draw three arrows, each starting at the angle and dissecting the triangle. From the angle of the Spirit, label the arrow “Love”. From the angle of the Father, label the arrow “creation.” From the angle of Jesus, label the arrow “Justice”. This diagram shows that the Trinity is not a theological tenant but a model of how each human should live life. There is nothing in our lives that does not fall under one of these three categories. That is why the Trinity matters so much.]

A. **Father & Son demonstrates love**, that is arbitrated by the Spirit (Romans 8:16). Augustine said the Spirit is the love between the Father and the son.

B. The Spirit is the caretaker of the Father’s **creation** which was enacted by the Son (Colossians 1:15-16; John 1:3). This observation comes from Sergei Bulgakov.

C. Jesus brokered **justice** on earth and will hence be judge on that great day due to the law of the Father and the conviction of the Spirit.