

“God is Love”

Flash Theology | Week One | Newbreak Church

May 7th, 2023

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we begin our discussion around *Flash Theology*, a book that seeks to help us discover more about who God is, how he chooses to relate to us, and what he is like. This week we think about the fact that God is Trinity, however, we approach it through an accessible way by seeing how God is relational and how he invites us into a relationship with him for both partnership and mission.

Icebreakers for Life Groups

- In your own words, what is theology?
- Why is theology important for our lives?

Going Deeper Into the Message

What is God?

Read 1 John 4:7–19

Point 1 – God is perfect love (1 John 4:8).

A. W. Tozer once famously said: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is **the most important thing** about us.” If we don’t see God as the very essence of love, we will never trust him. In fact, to search for love is actually to search for God, whether we think of it that way or not, because God is love.

We live in a broken world where love is selfish and lacking. God is not like that. His love is the *real* kind of love that our world needs! Everyone and everything else only can offer a reflection (at best) or a poor imitation (at worst). According to 1 John 4, God’s love was displayed by the giving of his one-of-a-kind Son—Jesus. God sent his eternal Son, Jesus, as a means to cover our sin and mend the fractured relationship we have with him (more on that in point 3).

It is important to note that Jesus is not God's Son in the same way that we are sons and daughters of God. Jesus is the Son of God in an entirely unique way. His sonship had no point of origin. He did not have a heavenly mother who conceived and delivered him. Jesus's relationship to God the Father is one where they equally share in the being of God, yet they relate to each other (analogously) as a father to a son in a way that is beyond our full comprehension.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- When you think of God what is the first thing that comes to mind about Him? How does this impact how you relate to Him?
- What do you think of God's love for you? How often do circumstances in your life show you His love?
- After reflecting that God *is* love, how can you look at situations in your life differently?

Point 2 – God is relational (1 John 4:13).

The question came from a seven-year-old: "*What was God doing before he created everything? Was he bored?*" It was a great question! We don't have any details, but we do know one thing: God was completely satisfied in a loving relationship even before he created anyone or anything else. So, no, God was not bored; he was enthralled by love. But where did this love come from? It came from himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is a triune being, after all! No other world religion has anything like our triune God. No human imagination could have ever conceived it; God had to reveal it to us.

While every world religion claims that their god is loving, only the Christian God of Scripture can adequately match the claim of 1 John 4:8, "God is love." Why? Love is directional; it is relational; it takes more than one person. It requires a lover and a beloved. Being love itself implies God has always had someone to love. Other so-called gods might have theoretically had the potential to love; but for them, love could not become a reality until they created someone to love.

God is and has never been without relationship, because he eternally experiences relationship within his triune being. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the three persons of the one God all express this love dynamically and eternally.

The God of Scripture is unique. No analogy properly fits him, because every other being is unipersonal (one person who is one being), whereas God is tripersonal (one being

who is three persons). Only the triune God can make the claim of being love to his very core, as an eternal and essential attribute. Think about it this way: God is relational to the core because he is triune. There was never a time when God the Father did not have God the Son and Holy Spirit to love and be loved by, and vice versa.

If this is confusing, that's okay! The good news is this: **You experience the Trinity even if you cannot explain the Trinity!**

(For more on the Trinity, see Chapter 2 of *Flash Theology: A Visual Guide to Knowing and Enjoying God More*.)

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How does 1 John 4:8 “God is love” make God the exclusive fountain and source of real, divine love? Why does this matter?
- In your own words, how does the Trinity provide the only meaningful/theological explanation for “God is love”?
- “You experience the Trinity even if you cannot explain the Trinity.” How do you understand this? In what ways do you interact with the persons of the Trinity?

What does this mean for me?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Point 3 – God invites us to extend his love into the world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This relational God saves us to relate to himself (reconciled) and then to be reconcilers. How crazy is it that God limits his activity in the world based on the relational participation of his people? Do you want God to act in the world? WE are his hands and feet.

God also demonstrates his desire for a relationship with us by including us in his mission to reconcile the world back to himself (2 Corinthians 5:11–21). We are God's method to accomplish his mission, and we play a key role, even though God could accomplish all he wants without us.

God prioritizes relationship over efficiency. He moves at the speed of our cooperation. If you have spent any amount of time with kids you'll understand the monumental

difference in efficiency between doing something yourself or doing something that includes the “help” of a child! Yet, this is a great way of thinking about how God chooses to work in our world. There is much God wants to do in the world and sometimes—*sometimes*—he refuses to do it any other way other than through collaboration.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What does it look like to be “an ambassador of Christ” as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20?
- How does “being reconciled” to God provide another helpful picture of the gospel?
- “God prioritizes relationship over efficiency. He moves at the speed of our cooperation.” How does this shape your view of God, personally? How does it challenge the way in which you will treat others?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week’s message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?