



We Believe in the Holy Spirit

"...who proceeds from the Father and the Son..."

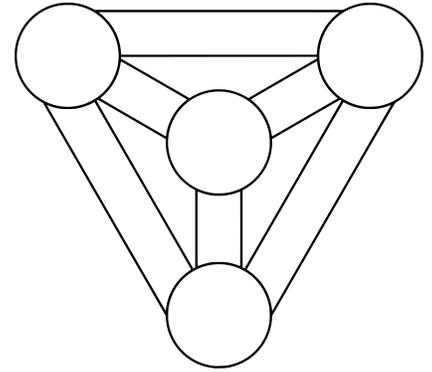
Lesson 2

Introduction

Review. What controversies led to the formation of the Nicene Creed?

Many attempts have been made to describe the Trinity in simple terms. Evaluate the following comparisons that have been made and identify how such illustrations fall short:

- "It's like water. It's H₂O but it can be a liquid, solid (ice), or gas (steam)."
- "It's like the sun in the sky. You have the sun which gives off heat and light."
- "It's like an apple with the skin, the flesh of the fruit, and the seeds; together they make one apple, not three."
- "It's like a three-leaf clover..."



Why have Christians, for centuries, endeavored to clearly teach and confess the Triune God?

Today's lesson allows us to dive deeper into the mystery of the Trinity and the intimate relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

"Proceeding from the Father and the Son."

The concept of God sending or placing his Holy Spirit upon his people is not just a New Testament concept. Consider these Old Testament references:

Numbers 11:25 – "Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the *Spirit* that was on him and put the *Spirit* on the seventy elders. When the *Spirit* rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again."

Psalms 104:30 – "When you send your *Spirit*, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth."

Isaiah 44:3 – "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my *Spirit* on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."

Ezekiel 36:27 – "And I will put my *Spirit* in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

Joel 2:28,29 – "And afterward, I will pour out my *Spirit* on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my *Spirit* in those days."

The passages above speak of the Spirit being sent upon God's people. However, the phrase, "Proceeding from the Father and the Son," points to the inner relationship and activity among the persons of the Trinity. For example, Jesus is not created but _____ of the Father from eternity. The Spirit is neither created nor begotten, but rather he _____ from the Father and the Son.

John 15:26 – "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out [ekpareuomai] from the Father, he will testify about me."

Matthew 10:20 – "It will not be you speaking, but the *Spirit of your Father* speaking through you."

Historical Background of this phrase in the Nicene Creed:

Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.). The Creed originally included only the phrase, “who proceeds from the Father.”

Council of Toledo (589 A.D.). The phrase “and of the Son” was added to the creed to further combat the Arian heresy, which stated that the Son is less than the Father. Only the Western church was present. Following the council, the phrase “Who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*,” became prominent in the West.”

Filioque Controversy. *Filioque* is the Latin word for *Son*. This became a major point of contention between the Eastern and Western churches. Finally, in 1054, the Great Schism occurred and to this day the Eastern Church confesses, “Who proceeds from the Father,” and the phrase, “and the Son,” remains absent to this day.

How do the following passages provide a Scriptural basis for confessing that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son?

John 20:22 – “And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.””

Romans 8:9 – “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

Galatians 4:6 – “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*, Father.”

Discuss.

- The Creed we now know as the Nicene Creed had developed over decades and centuries. And yet God’s Word does not change. How then do you explain the development of the Creed and the addition of the phrase “and the Son?”
- The Church throughout the centuries has strived to give the clearest possible confession concerning the truths of Scripture especially when controversy arises. Concerning which doctrines do you feel the church needs to give the clearest confession in today’s world?
- What exactly does it mean that the Holy Spirit goes out from the Father or that Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit?” To what can we compare the activity of the Trinity in sending out the Spirit or the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son?

The relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

By confessing our faith in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, the Christian Church stresses the unity of the of the Triune God. In the following phrase of the creed we confess, “...who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.”

Consider again Jesus’ words in **John 15:26**. “When the Counselor 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.” What insight does this short verse give into the mystery of the Trinity?

John 14-17 records a deep conversation between Jesus and his disciples concerning the relationship of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Read John 14:5-27.**

- How does Jesus describe his relationship with the Father? (Verses 9,10)
- How does Jesus describe the relationship among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? (Verses 16,25,26)
- How does Jesus describe the work of the Holy Spirit? (Verses 16, 26)
- How does Jesus describe the activity of the Triune God in relation to you, a believer? (Verses 16-20)

Read John 16:5-16. How does Jesus describe the inner working of the Trinity in this section?

Discuss.

- For a Bible study on the Holy Spirit we sure are talking a lot about the Father and the Son. Why is that?
- The intimate relation among the persons of the Trinity is so deep that we cannot fully understand it. However, what comfort does this profound teaching give you as you ponder Jesus' words in John's gospel?
- Ponder the intimate unity of the Triune God. Now ponder this, you were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What does this mean?