How the Trinity Shapes Christian Living

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It is a profound truth that the doctrine of the Trinity shapes our lives. As we look at who God is, we are able to see how we are called to live.

What is the Trinitarian Doctrine?

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the one God is three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – making up the one divine essence.

Throughout all eternity, the divine life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is best characterised in human language by our word 'love'. This love, as seen and defined within the Trinity, is the mutual selfless giving of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one to another.

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The Love Within the Trinity

As we know, love is a relational term (love is an action), requiring both subject and object (someone loves someone else). This loving relational dynamic is personified in the Trinity. Turning to the Scriptures, we see within the Trinity humility and submission towards each other, which is born of perfect love.

- The love of the Father towards the Son: 'And when Jesus was baptised… a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17)
- The loving submission of the Son towards the Father: '…Christ Jesus… did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself…' (Philippians 2:5-8)

It is into this perfect love that God invites us, not because He is lacking and in need of our love in any way, but purely because Trinitarian love is generous, creative and relational.

God, in His generosity, created us for relationship, as an extension and display of His Trinitarian nature. This should have a profound impact on why and how the church, His body, lives and loves.

3 Ways the Trinity Should Shape the Church

I want to point out three ways in which the doctrine of the Trinity should shape the life of the Christian church.

1. Community: Isolation to Intimacy

Because God is a social Trinity, He demonstrates that we are called to live in community. We are those made in His image (Genesis 1:26), and are therefore not to live in isolation. God intends that we reflect His relational Trinitarian nature in our lives.

This is only possible as we move out of isolation and into relationships with others. The Christian life, therefore, is life-in-relationship, or life-in-community. This is at the heart of New Testament Christianity and all of Scripture.

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2. Community: Unity and Diversity

The doctrine of the Trinity means that our God is uniquely multi-faceted and can be understood as a God of diversity within His unity. And so within the Church, as a witness to God's perfect Trinitarian love, we share a unity and diversity that overcomes all social, racial and economic barriers. We are each so different, yet we are one in Him.

'I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (John 17:20-21)

The promise of the Scriptures is that our unity and diversity, when lived out in authentic community, will shout to the spiritual powers and principalities, and to people from all nations of the earth, that God is real.

> Trinitarian-informed prayer moves from the Spirit, through the Son and to the Father.

3. Prayer

Our affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity should bring meaning to the way we pray.

Because God is triune, our prayers ought to be addressed to the three Trinitarian persons in line with both the purpose of the specific prayer and the function of each Trinitarian person.

Trinitarian-informed prayer moves from the Spirit, through the Son and to the Father. This is because in Scripture, with regard to the Trinity, we see that it is the Father who initiates, the Son who authorises, and the Spirit who activates.

Prayer plays a key role in our ability to 'become partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1: 4), enabling us to co-labour with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, for the purpose of the Kingdom of God being extended upon the face of the earth, through the church.

So we ask the Father, in the Son's name, through the Spirit.

In conclusion, let us be filled with fresh wonder at the depth and richness of the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with whom we as believers have been invited to share communion. Let it shape our living and praying, so that we may daily share more of God's perfect love with an imperfect world.