

OUR FATHER

*Loving
Faithful
Good*

PSALM 103:13

WHO IS GOD?

LOVE. GRACE. TRUTH. PRESENCE.
ALWAYS.

OUR SAVIOR

*Redeemer
Forgiver
Hope*

JOHN 3:16

OUR HELPER

*Comforter
Guide
Strength*

JOHN 14:26

He created us. He loves us.
He saved us. He walks with us.
He will never leave us.

He is everything.

Who Is God?

A Reflection from My Doctoral Studies and Ministry Calling

This paper was written during my Doctor of Christian Leadership studies at Liberty University. Through my education, God has deepened my understanding of Scripture, spiritual formation, and Christian leadership. The lessons learned through these studies continue to shape both my personal walk with Christ and the ministry He has called me to pursue.

During my doctoral studies, I was asked to examine one foundational question: Who is God? As I worked through this assignment, I realized that every area of healing, spiritual growth, leadership, discipleship, and transformation begins with how we answer that question. Before we can understand who, we are, why we suffer, how we heal, or what God is calling us to do, we must first know the One who created us and calls us into relationship with Himself.

Throughout my own journey of brokenness, loss, rejection, grief, and restoration, I have discovered that knowing God personally changes everything. His presence has sustained me through life's deepest valleys, His truth has replaced the lies I once believed, and His faithfulness has continually drawn me closer to Him. The more I have come to understand God's character, His love, His holiness, His mercy, and His sovereignty, the more I have learned to trust Him with every area of my life.

This paper reflects both my academic study and the biblical truths that continue to shape my life and ministry. While it was originally written as a doctoral assignment, its message extends far beyond the classroom. It represents a foundational truth that continues to guide my faith: everything begins with knowing God.

Studying the doctrines explored in this paper—the Trinity, God's transformative work, and His attributes and moral perfection—helped bring greater clarity to the ministry calling God has placed on my life. I came to understand that God has not called me simply to share my story, but to point people to Him. My mission is to help broken, hurting, and spiritually weary people discover the hope, healing, truth, and transformation found in Jesus Christ. As I learned more about God's character and His work in the lives of believers, I became increasingly convinced that lasting transformation occurs when people encounter God through His Word, grow in their identity in Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit to shape them into the likeness of Jesus. This conviction continues to guide every aspect of my ministry, writing, discipleship, and spiritual formation efforts.

It is my prayer that as you read this paper, you will not simply gain knowledge about God, but that you will come to know Him more deeply and experience the transforming power of His presence in your own life.

Approaching Leadership Studies: Priority 1: Who is God?

Christie Johnson

Christian Leadership Doctorial Program: Liberty University

CLED 700: Biblical & Theological Foundation of Leadership (B02)

Dr. Joseph Bulter

September 1, 2024

Author Note

Christie Johnson is a Doctrine student at Liberty University, focusing on Christian Leadership in Spiritual Formation. This paper is part of ongoing research into the importance of understanding humanity through scriptural insights, guided by David Powlison's three epistemological priorities. The aim is to elucidate the significance of aligning our understanding of humanity with biblical teachings to fulfill the Great Commission and embody effective Christian leadership.

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Christie Johnson, Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or via email at servantofgodchristie@yahoo.com.

Introduction

In the Christian faith, a covenantal relationship with God established through His self-revelation, where our response—obedient or disobedient—determines the blessings or curses we receive. This profound connection between knowing God and submitting to His Lordship is foundational. As John M. Frame (2008, p. 39) explains, doctrine applies God's Word to every aspect of life, deepening our understanding and fostering obedience. Daniel L. Akin (2014, pp. 106-107) emphasizes that all knowledge of God comes through divine revelation—God bridges the gap between Creator and creation by revealing His nature and will. Only through this self-disclosure can we truly know Him. The Holy Spirit then applies this revelation to our hearts, guiding us in interpreting and understanding Scripture, which is essential for the Christian faith.

The aim is to explore three central theological doctrines: the Trinity, God's Transformative Work, and His Attributes and Moral Perfection. These doctrines not only deepen our understanding of God's nature but also have profound implications for Christian leadership. By comprehending these doctrines, we are equipped to lead in ways that reflect the unity, power, and character of God, thereby guiding others effectively in their spiritual journeys.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

"The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith" (Grudem, 2020, p. 269). It teaches us that all of God's attributes—eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, infinite wisdom, holiness, love, and omniscience—are fully true of each person within the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for each is fully God. Studying the Bible's teachings on the Trinity offers profound insight into the core question of our spiritual journey: What is God like in Himself? Scripture reveals that in His very being, God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—distinct persons yet united as the one true God. Philippians 1:2

(English Standard Version) reveals God as the Father, Titus 2:13(ESV) identifies Jesus as God, and Acts 5:3-4(ESV) affirms the Holy Spirit as God. This distinction is essential, as seen in passages like 1 John 2:1(ESV) and Hebrews 7:25(ESV), which show Christ interceding for us before the Father. This intercession is only possible because Christ is a distinct person from the Father. Similarly, Romans 8:27 (ESV) highlights the Holy Spirit's role in interceding for us, doing so in a manner that is distinct from the Father, to whom the intercession directed.

John 4:24 (ESV) reminds us that God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The Holy Spirit plays an indispensable role in revealing God to us and enabling our relationship with Him. As 1 Corinthians 2:9-12 (ESV) explains, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.”—but these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God, and through this revelation, we gain a true understanding of who God is. Without the Spirit, “there is no real knowledge of God” (Treier & Elwell, 2017, p. 396).

Understanding the doctrine of the Trinity is crucial for grasping the full nature of God and His work in our lives. It helps us appreciate the importance of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit working in unity to achieve our salvation and spiritual growth. This understanding is essential not only for our personal spiritual development but also for Christian leadership. The unity and distinctness of the Trinity serve as a model for leadership within the church or ministry, where different individuals with distinct gifts and roles work together in harmony, reflecting the relational nature of God. As 2 Peter 1:3(ESV) confirms, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own

glory and excellence.” This profound truth transitions us naturally to the next essential doctrine: The Doctrine of God’s Transformative Work.

The Doctrine of God’s Transformative Work

The Doctrine of God’s Transformative Work is foundational to understanding salvation and sanctification. This doctrine emphasizes that God's mercy and the truth of Scripture underpin every aspect of your spiritual journey. As Titus 3:5(ESV) confirms, "he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." This divine mercy is not only your entry point into faith but remains central throughout your spiritual growth. Kelly Kapic (2014, p. 37) rightly states, "There is no stage in the life of the sanctified believer that the forgiveness of sins is not absolutely central to their relationship with God.” Your ongoing need for God’s mercy draws you continually to His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16, ESV), where you transform into a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1, ESV).

This transformation driven not by personal effort but by the work of Christ and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Paul David Tripp (2021, p. 22) underscores this truth, emphasizing that the goal of Scripture is "radical personal transformation.” This ongoing transformation sustained by God's faithfulness, which A.W. Tozer (2022, p. 71) describes as "nourishing food for the soul.” John Frame (2008, p. 163) affirms the necessity of Scripture, noting that without it, "we have nothing: no Lord or Savior; no faith, hope, or love.”

Through Scripture, the Holy Spirit deepens our trust, reshapes our identity in Christ, and empowers us to fulfill God’s divine purposes. This transformative work is crucial for understanding God’s Attributes and Moral Perfection. The interconnectedness of these doctrines—God’s Transformative Work and His Attributes—provides a comprehensive

understanding of God's nature and His work in believers' lives. This understanding is vital for Christian leadership, emphasizing the need for spiritual renewal and embodying the attributes we seek to cultivate in others.

The Doctrine of God's Attributes and Moral Perfection

Finally, the Doctrine of God's Attributes and Moral Perfection provides a comprehensive understanding of His nature. God's attributes—often referred to as His perfections—reveal the essence of His being and character. These attributes can be categorized into several types: His spiritual attributes, such as spirituality and invisibility (John 4:24, ESV); His mental attributes, including omniscience, wisdom, and faithfulness (1 Corinthians 2:10-11, ESV); His moral attributes, like goodness, love, mercy, and justice (Exodus 34:6-7, ESV); and His attributes of purpose, such as will, freedom, and sovereignty (Acts 16:6-7, ESV). Each of these attributes is integral to understanding who God is and how He works in your life. As Paul David Tripp (2021, p. 65) insightfully observes, "God is the source of all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness."

Understanding these attributes enriches your relationship with God and deepens your grasp of His divine nature. Psalm 145:3, (ESV) declares, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise," reflecting His divine qualities that shape your life. An attribute is not just a part of God; it describes His very essence, although exactly what He is cannot be fully expressed (Tozer, 2022, p. 13). This understanding is crucial for you to know who God is and how you can grow into the character of His Son as a leader for Him. The attributes of God reveal His essence and character in profound ways, shaping how you relate to Him and guiding your journey of becoming more like Christ.

By integrating the doctrines of the Trinity, God's Transformative Work, and His Attributes and Moral Perfection, we gain a comprehensive understanding of God's nature and

His work in our lives. This understanding is not merely academic but transformative, shaping our faith, worship, and daily walk with God. For Christian leaders, embodying these attributes is essential, guiding our leadership and ensuring that it reflects the character and will of God.

Conclusion

Grounding ourselves in the doctrines of the Trinity, God's Transformative Work, and His Attributes and Moral Perfection is essential for both deepening our relationship with God and shaping effective Christian leadership. These doctrines reveal God's nature and guide us in aligning our lives with His will, providing a foundation for leading with wisdom, integrity, and a Christ-centered focus.

The unity and distinctness of the Trinity offer a model for relational harmony in leadership, while God's Transformative Work emphasizes the need for personal renewal as the basis for guiding others. Understanding God's Attributes challenges us to embody His character—love, justice, holiness—in every aspect of our leadership.

As leaders, we must continually align our actions with the profound truths of Scripture, allowing God's nature and will to guide our decisions. This commitment to growth in Christlikeness is crucial for leading others effectively and advancing God's kingdom. How can we ensure that our leadership consistently reflects the truth of God's Word? This question challenges us to remain vigilant in our spiritual growth and to lead with a heart fully surrendered to God, honoring His revelation in every aspect of our lives.

References

- Akin, D. (2014). *A Theology for the Church*. B & H Publishing Groups.
- Frame, J.M. (2008). *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. P & R Publishing.
- Gruden, W. (2020). *Systematic Theology: Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Zondervan Academic.
- Kapic, K.M. (2014). *Sanctification: Exploration in Theology and Practice*. InterVarsity Press.
- Tozer, A.W. (2022). *Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life*. Lutterworth Press.
- Treier, D.J. & Elwell, W.A. (2017). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Baker Academic.
- Tripp, P. (2022). *Do You Believe? 12 Historical Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life*. Crossway.