

# Explaining Complex Concepts Simply

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## I. Philosophical Foundations

### A. Rules of Thumb

1. **PRAY!!!!** Always pray before you teach – over the lesson, over the kids, and over your speech. Ask the Lord to give you the words to say, to be with you, and speak through you, and help you to answer the questions that the kids will ask you. 1 Peter 3:15 – “**Always be prepared.**”
2. Don’t ignore their questions. Acknowledge that you heard them, but then redirect them to the point of the story. Keep the main thing, the main thing.  
“That’s a great question Bobby, but I’m afraid you are missing the point of the lesson, which is...”
3. Moral questions – don’t answer in front of the entire class. Different types of parents have varying levels of what they consider “appropriate” for their child’s age. Even if you think it’s something a child that age should know, it’s not up to you.
4. **FILTER!!!** Calvary Curriculum specifically filters out topics that aren’t age-appropriate. As kids get older, you can address various topics with them, but when they are little, there’s no need to explain every single word in the Bible. Just hit the main points! If you don’t use a curriculum that does this for you, you can do this on your own as well. You can write out the story for them in simpler language and make copies for them, along with a coloring sheet or activity. (No *NIV* - due to missing passages and bad translation - use *ESV* if something simpler than the *NKJV* is needed, or **CAREFULLY** paraphrase it yourself.)
5. Kids are smarter than we give them credit for. Just teach them the simplest, most correct way you can, and encourage them to keep learning until they can understand it. **DO NOT** feel bad or beat yourself up if you can’t explain a complex concept simply enough. As a human, you are not supposed to be able to understand everything fully. (1 Cor. 13:9-12)
6. Read *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis

### B. Apprehension vs. Comprehension

There is a difference between apprehending and understanding. All kids need to be able to do for those really difficult complex topics is to apprehend them.

- **Apprehension:** acquisition or addition of knowledge (Gk. *nooumen*)
- **Comprehension:** the act of understanding something; grasp mentally (Gk. *gnosis*)

### C. The Role of Faith

- It’s ok to not fully understand everything.
- Part of faith is trusting even when we don’t fully understand something.
- **We know enough to accept that which we don’t know.**

(Hebrews 11:1-3) When you have a student who is doubting, or struggles to understand a complex concept, share with them all of the wonderful things we do know and can show them about God. Most times, the mountain of evidence ends up outweighing the doubts.

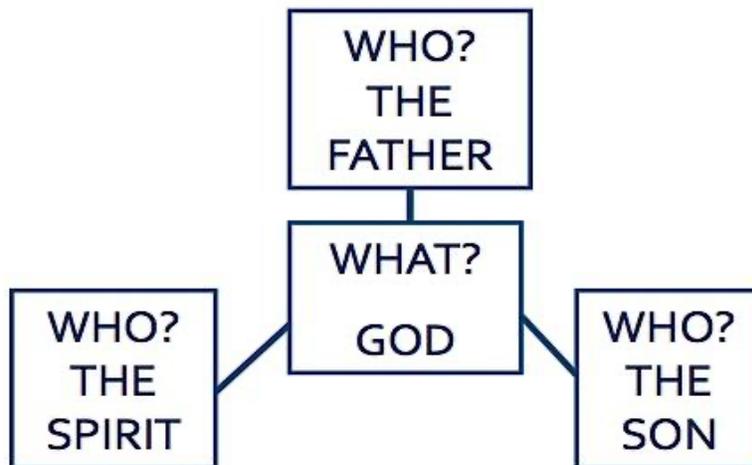
## II. Practical Answers

### **Q: Who made God?**

A: No one did. He was not made. He has always existed. The laws of physics state that only things that have a beginning need a beginner (maker). God had no beginning, so He did not need to be made. The Bible declares God to be eternal 73 times! We don't need to *understand* the eternity of God to accept that the Bible is telling us the truth about Him. (At this point, you can give the case for the trustworthiness of the Bible. If the Bible is true, then what it says is true.)

### **Q: How can God be both three and one?**

A: Avoid analogies! God is three “who’s” in one “what”, or three persons in one nature.



### **Q: Why doesn't God answer my prayers?**

A: God always answers prayers, just not in the way we assume He will. God answers prayers in 4 ways:

1. Directly: Yes
2. Delayed: Wait
3. Differently: Or
4. Denial: No

Here's where the hard part comes in, when a child follows up with **“why would God say no when I pray for bad things to stop happening?”** How do you answer that?

The reason bad things happen is because there is sin in the world. Romans 3:23 says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. God could take away our ability to sin, but that would be taking away our freedom to choose how we act.

So, instead of taking away our ability to sin, He gave us the Holy Spirit to have power over sin! However, it is our choice whether or not we obey Him. We cannot force people to obey God.

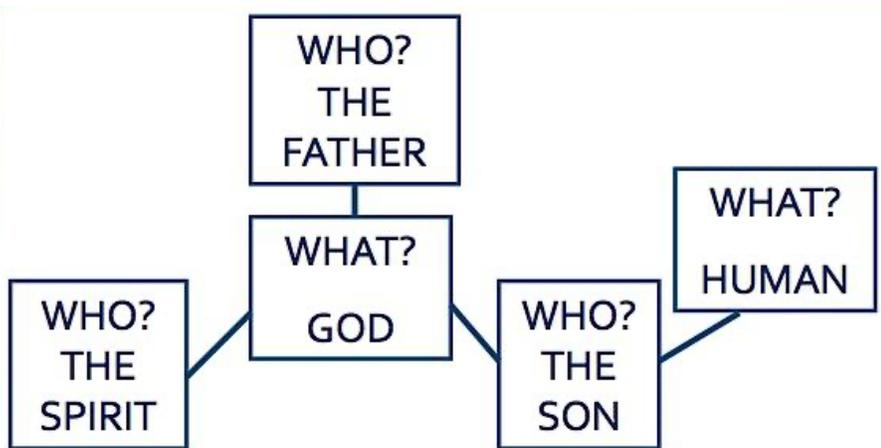
- James 4:7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*
- Romans 6:14 *For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*
- Genesis 4:7 *Sin crouches at the door, but you shall rule over it.*

**Q: Why do bad things happen to good people?**

A: “Why do bad things happen to good people? That only happened once, and He volunteered.” ~ R.C. Sproul  
 (Also check out the book, *If God, Why Evil?* By Dr. Norman Geisler)

**Q: How is Jesus both man and God?**

A: Just as God the Trinity is 3 persons in one nature, Jesus is one person with two natures. It is the joining of the eternally divine nature and the human nature in the one person of Jesus. Jesus the “who” added another “what”.

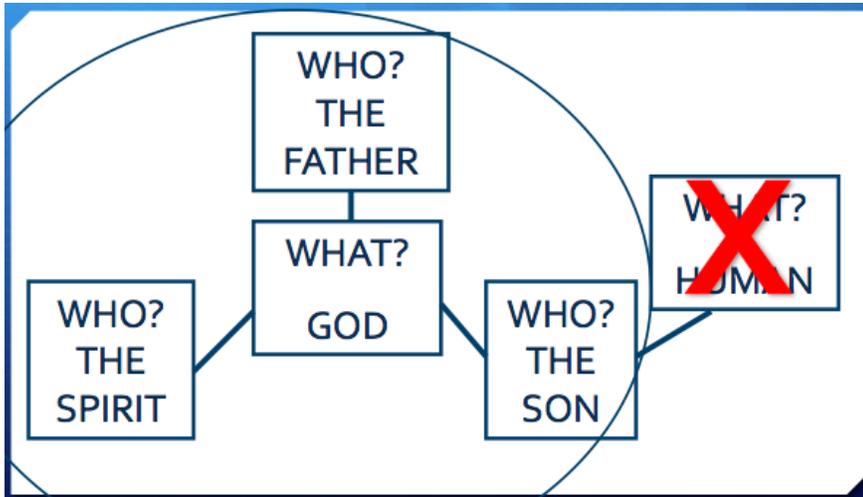


The most important thing to remember when teaching the deity of Jesus is to make sure and emphasize that he is 100% man and 100% God, otherwise you can end up with various heresies here as well.

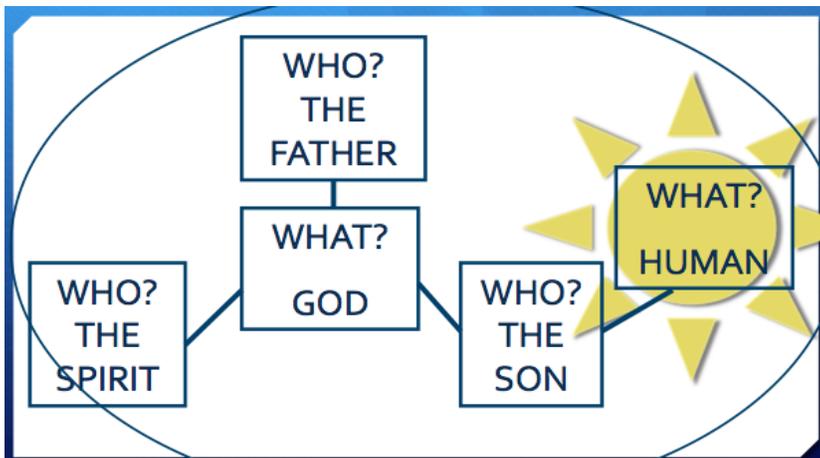
- *Philippians 2:5-8*  
*Jesus is fully HUMAN*
- *John 10:30*  
*Jesus is fully GOD*

**Q: Did God die on the cross when Jesus did?**

A: Jesus’ human nature died temporarily (for three days), but his divine nature did not. The Trinity was still intact and continuously working at that time.



Then his physical body was resurrected and glorified, and he remains in that state to this day as a part of the eternal Godhead.



#### Quotes:

“If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with Fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about.” – *Mere Christianity*, p. 145

“Real things are not simple. They look simple, but they are not. The table I am sitting at looks simple: but ask a scientist to tell you what it is really made of — all about the atoms and how the light waves rebound from them and hit my eye and what they do to the optic nerve and what it does to my brain — and, of course, you find that what we call "seeing a table" lands you in mysteries and complications which you can hardly get to the end of... Besides being complicated, reality, in my experience, is usually odd. It is not neat, not obvious, not what you expect... Reality, in fact, is usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed. If it offered us just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up. But, in fact, it is not the sort of thing anyone would have made up. It has just that [odd] twist about it that real things have. So let us leave behind all these boys' philosophies — these oversimple answers. The problem is not simple and the answer is not going to be simpler either.” – *Mere Christianity*, p. 46-47

Often, if something is too simple (i.e. humans can fully understand it), it is because it was created by a simple mind (human mind). This is why sometimes talking with proponents of LDS and Jehovah's Witness is so difficult. It seems like they have an answer for everything. And they can, because a human mind made it up!

In *How to Answer Objections to Revealed Religion*, apologist Elizabeth Jane Whately stated in 1875 that, "the way in which the Gospels are compiled offers further proof of their being records of a real history. It is the false stories, the forgeries, like the *Book of Mormon*, which come out full grown at once; real histories are of slow and gradual growth. A jeweler may make a paste imitation diamond quickly; the real gem is formed slowly and silently in the earth." (p. 69)

"Faith is not a blind leap into the dark, but a commitment based on evidence." ~ John Lennox

Nabeel explains the Trinity: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fL2q\\_Mg-D58](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fL2q_Mg-D58)

### Common "Unintended" Heresies

#### The Trinity

**Partialism** — the teaching that each person within the Trinity (i.e. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) is merely a part of God, resulting in each person not being fully God in and of their self.

**Modalism** — the teaching that God is one person that manifests Himself in different modes, as either the Father, the Son, or the Spirit (1 god, 1 person with 3 different manifestations instead of 1 God, 3 persons). This belief is also referred to as **Unitarian** as opposed to Trinitarian - The Father IS the Son and IS the Holy Spirit, etc.

**Pantheism** – any belief that reduces the Holy Spirit to a feeling, force, or emotion, but not an actual person.

#### Nature of Jesus (J. Warner Wallace, coldcasechristianity.com)

**Adoptionism** - denies the pre-existence of Christ and therefore denies His Deity. It taught Jesus was simply a man who was tested by God and after passing the test was given supernatural powers and adopted as a son (this occurred at His baptism). Jesus was then rewarded for all He did (and for His perfect character) with His own resurrection and adoption into the Godhead.

**Docetism** - from the Greek word, *dokesis* which means "to seem". It taught Jesus only appeared to have a body and was not truly incarnate. Docetists viewed matter as inherently evil, and therefore rejected the idea God could actually appear in bodily form. By denying Jesus truly had a body, they also denied He suffered on the cross and rose from the dead.

**Apollinarianism** - denied the true and complete humanity of Jesus, because it taught He did not have a human mind, but instead had a mind that was completely Divine. The heresy lessened the human nature of Jesus in order to reconcile the manner in which Jesus could be both God and man at the same time.

**Arianism** - taught Jesus was a “creature” who was “begotten” of the Father. Only God the Father is “un-begotten”. In this view, only the Father is truly God; He was too pure and perfect to appear here on earth, so He created the Son as His first creation. The Son then created the universe. God then adopted Jesus as a son (because, after all Jesus and God are not supposed to have the same nature in this view). Jesus was worshipped only because of His preeminence as the first creation.

**Nestorianism** - Jesus was really two separate persons, and only the human Jesus was in Mary’s womb. If that was true, then Jesus was not God incarnate while in the womb.

**Eutychianism [Monophysitism]** - Jesus’ humanity was absorbed by His divinity. The heresy is *Monophysite* in nature, derived from the Greek words *mono* (“one”) and *physis* (“nature”). In essence, the heresy claimed Jesus had only *one* nature (something new and different than the Divine or human nature that God and humans have, respectively). Instead, this heresy taught a *third* unique nature was possessed by Jesus; a blend or mixture of the human and the Divine.

**Monothelism** - derived from a Greek root that means “one will”. Monothelism taught Jesus had two natures but only one will. Instead of having two cooperative wills (one Divine and one human), Jesus had one Divine-human *energia*.

\*\*\*Contact Info: [sarah@historicalapologetics.org](mailto:sarah@historicalapologetics.org)\*\*\*