

## Living With Hope

### Presentation 2: The Trinity

#### *Are You my Mother?*

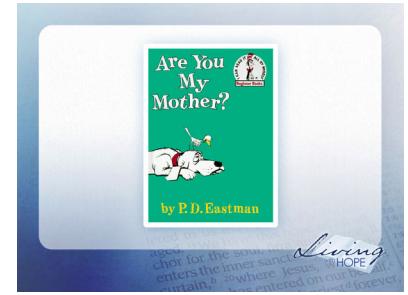
#### Metaphor: Parentage

Last Revision: 6/12/2009



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► “Are you my mother?” A baby bird, separated from its mother, embarks on a search for his mother in this classic 1960’s pre-school book. In his search for identity, for family, and for love, he asks a kitten, a hen, a dog, a cow, a boat, a plane, and at last convinced he has found his mother he climbs onto the teeth of a giant power shovel. But he is betrayed by the behemoth as it shudders and grinds into motion.



Did any of you read that book to your children? Did your mother read it to you when you were little? It’s a classic book because it deals with the major themes of life: Who am I? What am I doing here? Where am I going, and am I loved?

While you may not think of them all the time, these are the questions that haunt you when you are a teenager discovering your personhood, when your parents are pressing you to get out of the house and make a career choice, when you hold a newborn baby in your arms, or listen to the doctor tell you that you have a terminal disease, or when you look in a mirror and realize that you’re not getting any younger and that your life is finite. Who am I? What am I doing here? Where am I going, and am I loved?

These are bigger questions than simply ‘who are my parents,’ ‘what career should I be doing’, and ‘will I ever have my own family and children’, as important as those questions are. They reach deeper. What is my place in the universe? Of what significance is my life? What is my reason for existence?

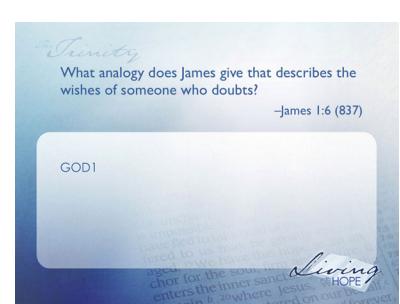
There really are only two perspectives with which to answer these questions. One is leaving God out of the frame of reference and the other is including divinity in the picture.

Up until a few hundred years ago most everyone on the planet earth included some kind of a picture of God in the picture frame. During the enlightenment mankind began trying to find answers without God. Galileo pioneered natural science when he asserted that the evidence showed that planet earth is not the center of the universe, and in fact the earth orbits around the sun. Charles Darwin tried to come up with an explanation of the origin of life that left a divine Creator out of the frame. Soon the scientific method was standardized. Mankind tries to explain the mysteries of the universe naturally, without God in the picture frame.

"Are you my mother?" asks the baby bird to a boat, a plane, a power shovel. Science says that you got here because of radiation in a primordial soup of randomly connected elements that turned into primitive amino acids which reacted with each other to form primeval DNA and life itself. Then through more radiation and micro mutations and billions of years the fittest and most advanced life forms survived and became more complex until we have mankind today.

What is my identity? Science says you are here because of sheer random chance. You are nothing more than a walking chemistry set that randomly assembled itself on this pile of rock floating around in space. How does that make you feel? Hopeful? Fulfilled? Purposeful? Valuable? Probably not.

► GOD1 What analogy does James give that describes the wishes of someone who doubts? **James 1:6 (837)**



► *But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

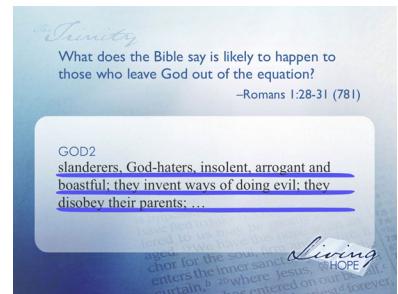
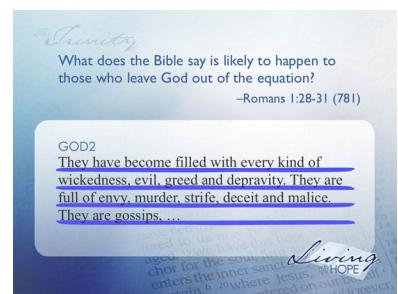
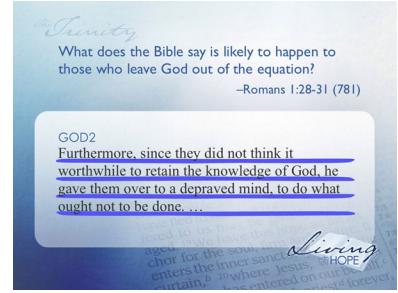
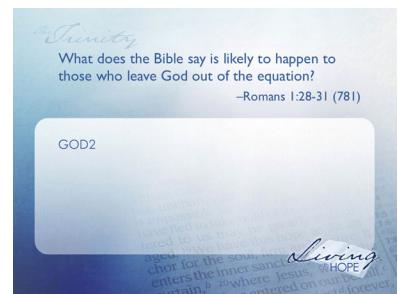
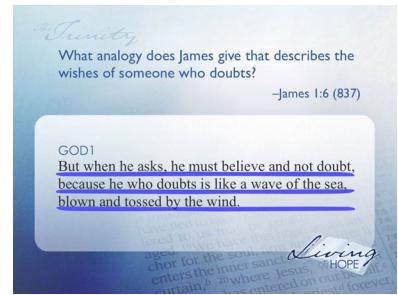
Without meaning or purpose to life it is difficult to find hope. Like a boat left to drift on the ocean without a sail rudder or anchor we are tossed to and fro by the pressures of society; whether it is to pursue wealth, beauty, power, or fame. The beaches of the world are strewn with shipwrecked lives of those who couldn't find hope and fulfillment in these trivial pursuits.

► **GOD2** What does the Bible say is likely to happen to those who leave God out of the equation? **Romans 1:28-31 (781)**

► *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.*

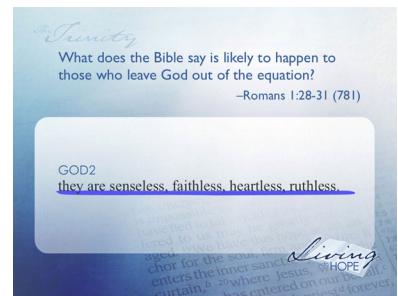
► *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,*

► *slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;*



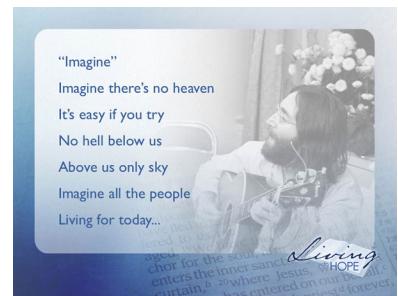
► *they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

That is not to say that everyone who is irreligious is an Adolph Hitler clone. There are many decent people who live model lives; leaving this world a better place than they found it. And that is also not to say that all religious people are good and descent people. In fact, most of the terrorism, genocides and crimes against humanity claim religion as a pretext for their atrocities.

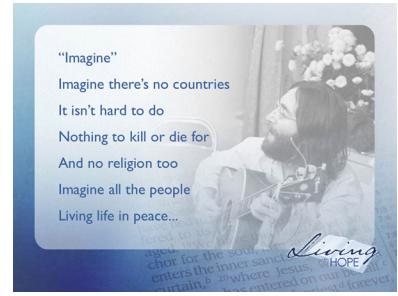


Perhaps that's why songwriter John Lennon dreamed of a religion free world when he penned the song "Imagine."

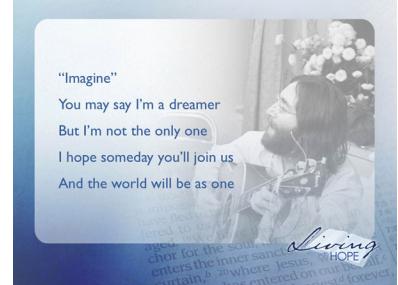
► Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today...



► Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace...



► You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one



Not too many joined John in his dream world of atheism. The reality is that the world of totally secular people is quite small. Only 2.3% of the human population considers themselves atheist.<sup>1</sup> Within the other 98% of the population that make room for some kind of supernatural power in their belief set there is an infinite smorgasbord of spiritual offerings. And within that mix many people pick and choose as they go through the spiritual buffet.

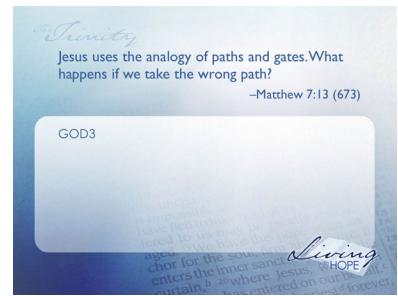
There's animism, paganism, polytheism, Mormonism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Adventism, Judaism, Satanism, mysticism, esotericism, Catholicism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, postmodernism, Pentecostalism, Deism, Rastafarianism, and Nuwaubianism just to name a few.

"To many, God is *Aladdin's Genie*, as malleable as Robin Williams's character performing "You Ain't Never Had a Friend Like Me." Rub the magic prayer lamp and—*poof!*—He's Ed Sullivan, William Buckley, or Abu the elephant. God converts to whatever we wish for, with the applause sign always blinking. Some people view God as an old man, while others see Her differently."<sup>2</sup>

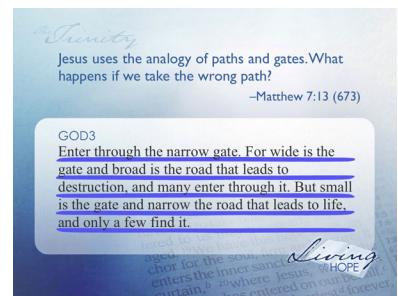
Does it really matter? Did it really matter to the baby bird who his mother was? He could imprint on a cat, a dog, or a steam shovel. It doesn't really matter which object he imprints on as long as he imprints. Or does it matter?

A common saying is that 'all paths lead to the top of the mountain.' The implication is that it really doesn't matter which path you choose. Simply get on one and go, and 'I'll meet you at the top.' While it is a pleasant idea, history tells us quite a different story. All paths may lead to the top of the mountain, but it probably isn't the same mountain. Think of some of the religious paths and their mountainous destinations: 9/11; crusades, pogroms, ethnic cleansings, and the Counter Reformation. Think of some recent religious leaders and the paths they took their followers on—leaders such as Jim Jones, David Koresh and Marshall Applewhite.<sup>3</sup>

► GOD3 Jesus uses the analogy of paths and gates. What happens if we take the wrong path? **Matthew 7:13,14 (673)**



► *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*



A hiker would be crazy to conclude that all paths lead to the same place. They don't. And the same is true in the religious community. Not all paths lead to the same place. Although there is some truth in most religions the Bible teaches that if you go down the wrong path you may take a fall. Some paths lead to destruction.

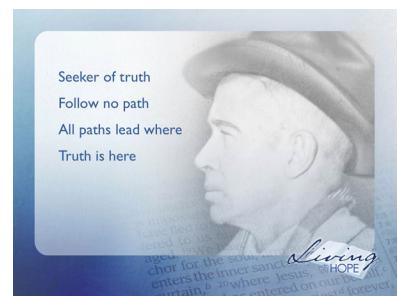
Perhaps there is truth to the poem by e.e. cummings:

► “Seeker of truth

Follow no path

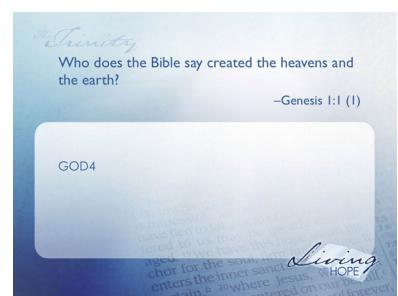
All paths lead where

Truth is here”

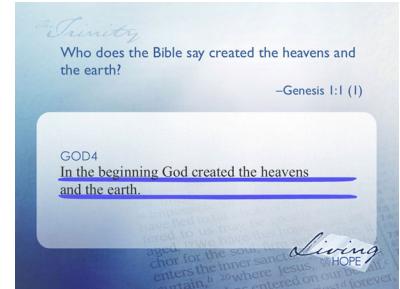


Perhaps it would be wiser to look not to religion for truth, but to seek after God. Perhaps we should consider that instead of following the follower, we should follow the Leader. In doing so, we can find out why we're here. And who really is our mother. The scriptures give a viewpoint of origins filled with purpose.

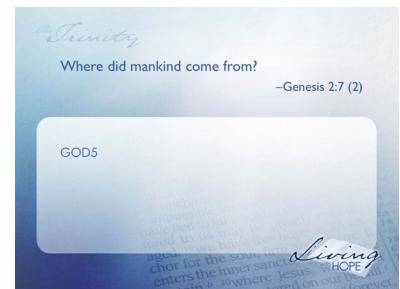
► GOD4 Who does the Bible say created the heavens and the earth? **Genesis 1:1 (1)**



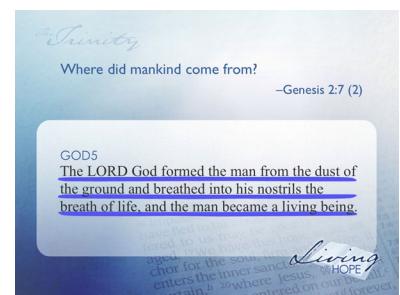
► *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*



► GOD5 Where did mankind come from? **Genesis 2:7 (2)**



► *the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*



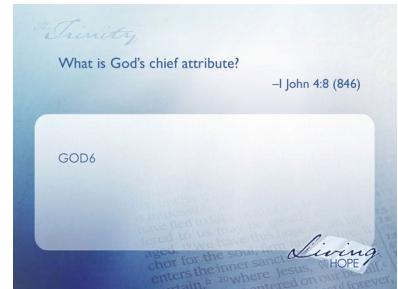
The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dream and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by His purpose and for his purpose, and that brings hope.<sup>4</sup>

As the baby bird looked at possible mothers he found a lot of interesting characteristics. A dog that barked. A cat that meowed. A plane that flew, and a steam shovel that grunted noisily. But those weren't the features of his mother. Only when he found his mother did he discover her true characteristics, a bird who loved him and brought him worms. As we have searched for God through the ages we may have imprinted on some things that we thought were God but were not. It is only after we have discovered God in the Bible that His true attributes are revealed.

## Characteristics of God

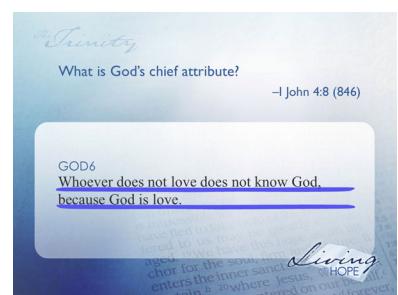
Let's take a few minutes to look at some broad strokes given in scripture that tell us more about this God who created us.

### ► GOD6 What is God's chief attribute: **I John 4:8 (846)**



### ► *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

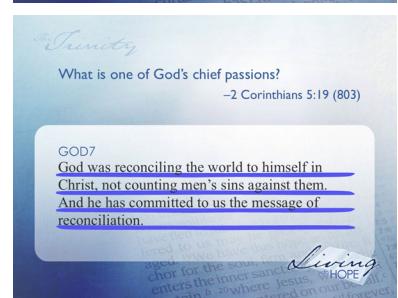
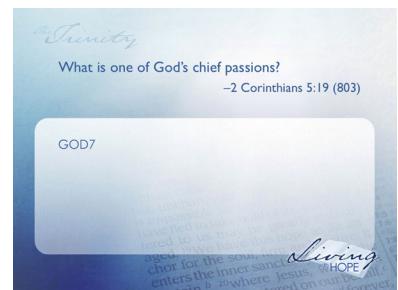
It is ironic that most of the religious atrocities in history are perpetrated by people who did not know God; for how can one hate his fellow man and be following a God of love?



### ► GOD7 What is one of God's chief passions? **2 Corinthians 5:19 (803)**

### ► *that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

It is ironic that most of the religious bigotry of the ages has served to separate people when God's chief desire is to bring together.



► GOD8 What is one of God's greatest hopes for mankind?

**John 6:40 (741)**

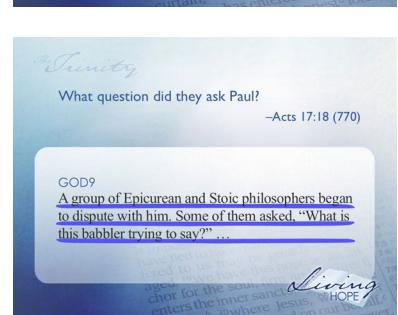
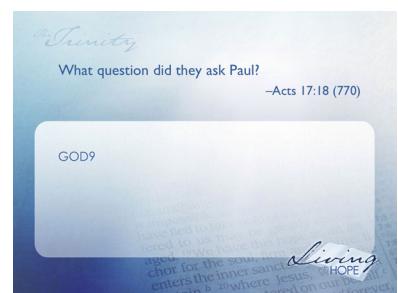
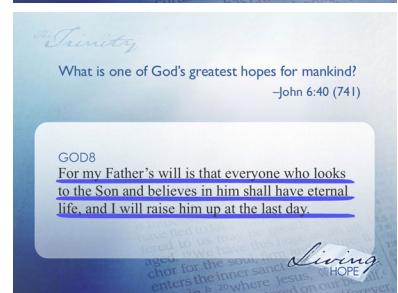
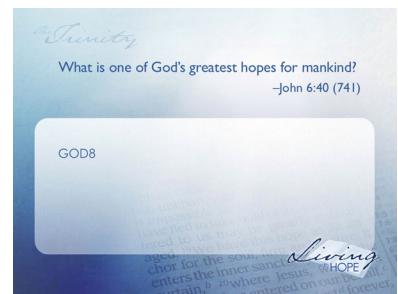
► *For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*"

It is ironic that religious bigotry and crusades have resulted in countless millions of deaths where God's desire is for life. This passage comes from the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. God raised Lazarus from the dead in this lifetime and promises eternal life for those who believe in Jesus for the world to come.

Perhaps religious people have mistakenly imprinted on something else other than God. Who is this God that the Bible speaks of? How is He different than any of the other gods advocated by the smorgasbord of world religions? That's the question asked by 1<sup>st</sup> century Greek philosophers.

► GOD9 What question did they ask Paul? **Acts 17:18 (770)**

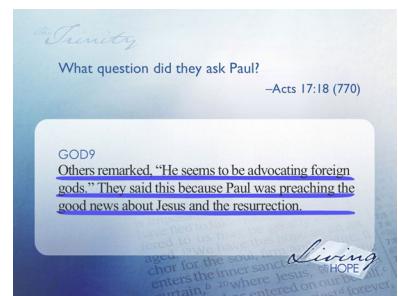
► *A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?"*



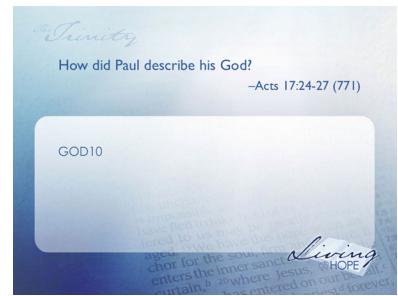
► Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

Greeks temples were filled with statues of dozens of gods. The worshippers did their due diligence to make sure that they were paying homage to all, but just in case they missed one, they had an altar with the inscription "To an unknown god." Paul took this opportunity to tell about the god that they seemed to have overlooked.

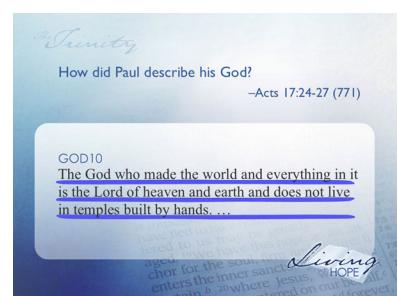
► GOD10 How did Paul describe his God? **Acts 17:24-27 (771)**



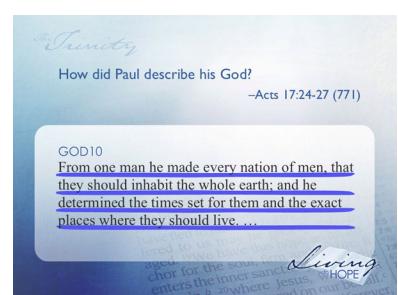
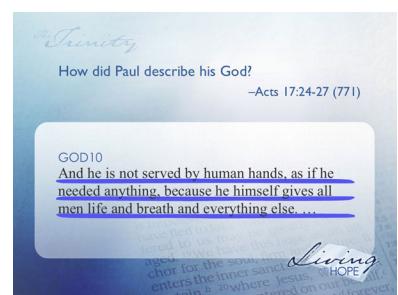
► "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.



► And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.



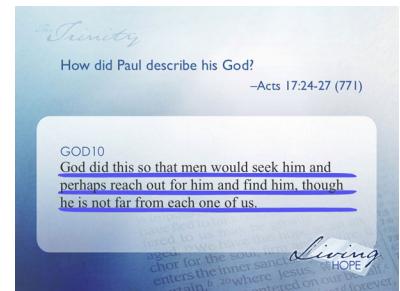
► From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.



► God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

The God that Paul describes is all sufficient. He does not need man for His survival. No statue or icon can contain His identity. He is bigger than we can comprehend. Yet despite of the fact that He does not need us, He still invites us to follow after Him.

Baby bird was finally satisfied when he discovered that his mother was not a cat, a dog, a plane, a boat or a power shovel. His mother was a bird. Who is our Mother? What is He/She like?

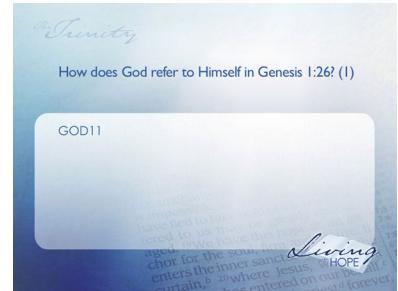


### The Trinity

God is so robust that human language does Him an injustice. The words 'He', 'Him', and 'Her' are too small. Humans have attempted to define God through the generations in human terms. Animists see God in the infinite creatures of the animal kingdom. They worship animals believing that they contain the essence of divinity. Ancient Greeks described the divine as a pantheon of gods, diverse, interacting, gifted with supernatural powers. Monotheists such as Jews, Christians and Muslims see only one God.

Most Christians see God as the Trinity, composed of three distinct, yet united members of the Godhead family: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, three in one.

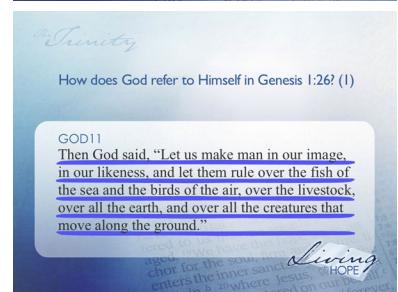
One of the problems baby bird had took place when mother bird had to abandon him to go find food. Fortunately for us, our God is not a solo performer. He never abandons us. God is a family. The Bible teaches of a heavenly family, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, working together, on our behalf, to bridge the gap between a rebellious world and a loving God. Although the word "Trinity" never occurs in the Bible, the concept of the trinity is alluded to in several passages.

► GOD11 How does God refer to Himself in **Genesis 1:26?** (1)

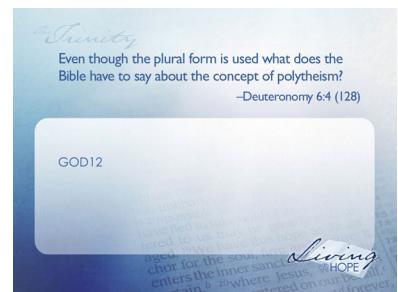
► Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Notice that God refers to Himself in the plural by using the words 'us', 'our'.

► GOD12 Even though the plural form is used what does the Bible have to say about the concept of polytheism (many gods)?  
**Deuteronomy 6:4 (128)**

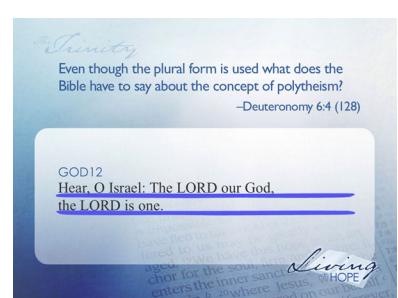


► Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.



God is an enigma. Is He One? Is He more than one?

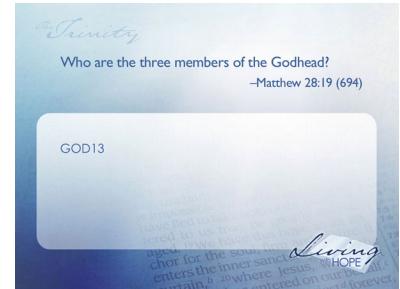
The Trinity God can be compared to three states of matter, as with water: liquid, frozen, or vaporous. All three states are water yet each state is in a bit different form. Another comparison is that the Trinity is like one light bending through a prism to create three



primary colors and infinite expressions. Yet all analogies fall short leaving room for the greater mystery of God.

► GOD13 Who are the three members of the Godhead?

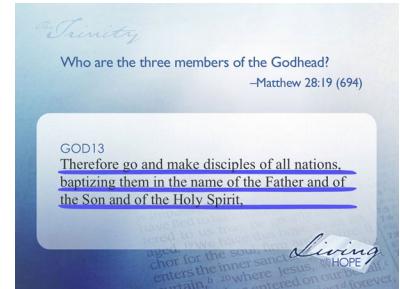
**Matthew 28:19 (694)**



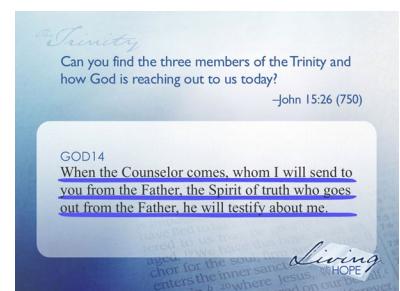
► *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

Jesus clearly articulates the three members of the Godhead as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

► GOD14 Can you find the three members of the Trinity and how God is reaching out to us today? **John 15:26 (750)**



► *"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.*



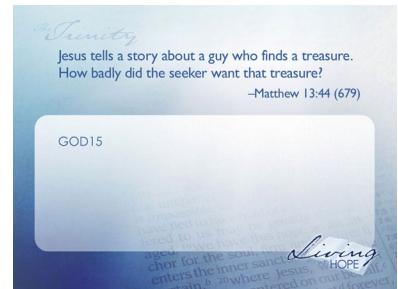
Each member of the Godhead works together like a dream team, offering love, reconciliation and eternal life for those who believe. The Father is the gracious God of heaven who allows His Son Jesus to come to earth to be God in the flesh to reveal

Himself to us. After God the Son returned to God the Father, God the Holy Spirit came to dwell with us until the grand reunion at the second coming.<sup>5</sup>

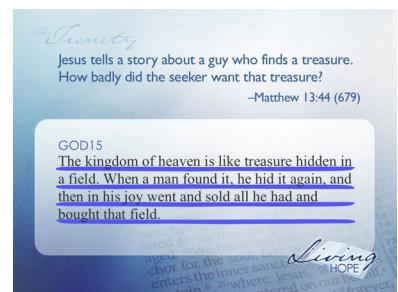
Birds have a built in mechanism of imprinting. They focus on their mother and then follow after her wherever she leads. As humans, imprinting on God doesn't come naturally. It takes a focused passionate pursuit.

### In Pursuit of God

► GOD15 Jesus tells a story about a guy who finds a treasure. How badly did the seeker want that treasure? **Matthew 13:44 (679)**



► "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."



In the ancient times there were no secure banks to put your cash in (kind of like today!). You could hide them in your house but that would be the first place that a marauding army would look. It became quite common for people to hide their treasures in a field. However if that person died not telling anyone where the riches were hidden, they would remain buried until someone accidentally dug them up. Here we have a man who found the treasure, but couldn't ethically take it until he owned the property. So he saved up everything he had to buy the property and then claimed his prize. How happy he was the day that he received his property and his treasure. That's how passionate we should be for our search for God. Are you that passionate?

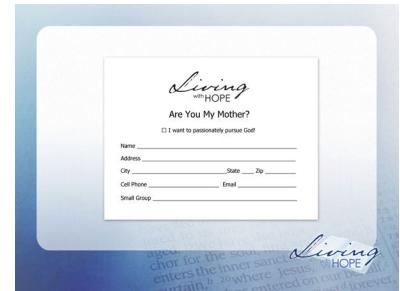
Because God resides both in and outside of the natural world we can't rely on science to find him. God's existence cannot be proved by what we see, hear, taste, or touch with our physical senses. Therefore imprinting on God requires Christian disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and worship.

In the final page of the children's book we see baby bird content and secure in his identity, knowing his family, enjoying his mother's love and knowing that his purpose is to follow after her. The scriptures tell of our identity—children of a heavenly family. They assure us of our heavenly Parents' love. They tell us what our purpose for existence is—to imprint on our heavenly Parents, and follow after our Family.



I want to passionately pursue God!

####



<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents," Section on accuracy of non-Religious Demographic Data, as quoted in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism#Demographics>,

<sup>2</sup> Chris Blake, *Searching for a God to Love*, Chapter Three

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven%27s\\_Gate\\_\(religious\\_group\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven%27s_Gate_(religious_group))

<sup>4</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Here is the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the doctrine of God:

#### Trinity:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

#### Father:

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)

#### Son:

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19;

John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)

**Holy Spirit:**

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

**Creation:**

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was ``very good," declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)