




A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**
- Read Acts 17:22-31. From this passage, list all of the obstacles we humans encounter in trying to know and worship God **as he truly is**. What could help you overcome each of those obstacles?

"Jesus is the **radiance of God's glory** and the **exact representation of his nature**." (Hebrews 1:3)
Which of those obstacles does knowledge of Jesus resolve? Which does it leave unresolved?

Pastor Doug mentioned the "*hypostatic union*"—a 50¢ word referring to the union of Jesus' divine and human natures in his one person. The **word** is not important, but—as Jesus' interaction with Martha and Mary revealed—this mysterious **truth** is infinitely precious and worshipfully mind-stretching; immeasurably sweet and awe-inspiring. Discuss how this is so for you **personally**.

Reread the quote by Jonathan Edwards in the **Sermon Summary** (it's in **green italics**).
Cite an example for each of those attributes from Jesus' life. (Don't worry if you don't know the exact verse references— something like, "*There was that time when Jesus...*" is enough detail).

- Now, find some of the verse references for the qualities outlined in Edwards' quote.
- Who among your family or friends is particularly afraid of death?
How do you think they would respond to John 11 or to some of the other verses you identified?
Would you be willing to get their opinion of it? What approach should you use?

Sermon Summary (Key Text: John 11:18-44)

We are in a series, "Conversations with Christ", we're eavesdropping on some life-changing—*destiny-changing*—conversations. Today we listen in on Martha and Mary, who were very close friends of Jesus. This fact is emphasized several times in the text. Lazarus was very sick, and by the time Jesus arrived, he had died. Jesus' interaction with them shows us who Jesus is. Let's see what we **learn about his identity**.

I. Who is Jesus? Our story begins with everyone grieving, and Martha and Mary blaming Jesus for his death (v. 21 & 32). Two women, same situation, same kind of grief, same words—but interestingly, Jesus' response to the two is radically different. With Martha, he seems to resist her sorrow and calls her to hope. He exhorted regarding her lack of faith (v. 25). But with Mary, Jesus just enters right into the sorrow (v. 33-35). He's sort of pulled in with her, and all he does is weep. He doesn't say a thing. He just grieves with her. This is profound. With Martha, he's claiming to be God; with Mary, he's showing his humanity. Together, Jesus shows himself to be the great God-man! The power of deity and the vulnerability of humanity. When the Son of God, the eternal second person of the Trinity, took on human nature, he emptied himself of his heavenly glory—but not of his deity (Philippians 2:5-11). Martha needed a bracing, faith-inspiring response; Mary just needed him to enter into her sorrow and grieve with her. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 4:15-16)!

The combination of Jesus' deity and humanity embodies absolute beauty—and this points to a problem: our loves are out of order. All human love will at some time disappoint you, and unless you love God most you won't be able to love others well (because at some time or another you'll refrain from doing what's in their best interest because you fear their disapproval). The way to grow in your love of God is to get to know him for who he really is. The problem, of course, is that God is invisible. But Jesus, the great God-man, reveals him perfectly. **"Jesus is tenderness without weakness, strength without harshness, humility without the slightest lack of confidence, unhesitating authority with a complete lack of self-absorption, unbending convictions without the slightest lack of approachability, power without insensitivity, enthusiasm without fanaticism, holiness without Pharisaism."** (Jonathan Edwards) There is no one else like Jesus. Just as you cannot look directly at the Sun without a filter—it will blind you—you cannot see God clearly without the filter of humanity.

II. What did Jesus come to do? John 11:33 & 38 says that Jesus was "deeply moved" at Lazarus' death. This is a very strong word in the Greek; it means "to be indignant." Jesus advanced to the tomb as a champion preparing for conflict. Jesus won our salvation, not in cold unconcern, but with fiery wrath against our sin, Satan's malicious trickery, and the misery that sin inflicted on us. Our sin indeed deserves death, but how can Jesus destroy sin and death without destroying us? He does so by dying in our place. The raising of Lazarus forms a "hinge" in John's gospel: chapters 1-11 are all about Jesus' life and ministry, but from chapter 12 to the end, it's all about Jesus' death. Unlike the others, this was a very public miracle, and as a result the religious leaders decided to kill him (11:53). The raising of Lazarus sealed Jesus' doom. It was too much. He had gone too far. His enemies said, "Now he has to die." This was the turning point. But of course, Jesus knew what he was doing. When he said, "Lazarus, come forth!" he was signing his own death warrant—and he knew it. Jesus loves us as he loved Lazarus, and he came to die so that we don't have to (11:26)! Jesus' identity leads to **five applications**.

1. Remember that Jesus is a wonderful counselor. As with Mary and Martha, Jesus knows best how to respond to you. Jesus responded to them in completely different ways because He knew what they most needed. Trust Him.

2. Don't be angry at Jesus for your suffering. When Jesus experienced pain at Lazarus' death, He was not mad at himself—He was mad at sin and death. And He did something about it!

3. Realize that to truly love is to suffer. Jesus suffered in order to love Lazarus. This is true at all levels. All real love involves you dying in small ways so that others can truly live.

4. If Jesus really is this powerful and great, if He has done all of this for you, you need to take the limits off of your allegiance to Him. He deserves it first of all because he is your Creator, but he doubly deserves it because he is your Redeemer. So take all the limits off your allegiance, and live for him completely.

5. Don't let the fear of death control you. For the Christian, death is not something to fear, it is something to anticipate. No more struggles with sin. No more jealousy, anger, sadness, betrayal, frustration, or loneliness. For the Christian, that is what lies on the other side of death.

John's Gospel reveals Jesus as the great God-man! Let's explore the "hypostatic union" of Christ's two natures...

Monday—Read Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38.

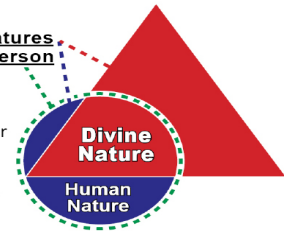
- List everything you see that shows that Jesus is God.
- List everything you see that shows that Jesus is human.
- Try to explain the diagram to the right.
- Does being truly human necessitate that Jesus also be sinful? Support your answer biblically. (Need help? See John 8:29 and 15:10. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15 and 7:26. 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22 and 3:18.)
- Read John 1:1 and 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; and 2 Peter 1:1. What explicit claims do these verses make about Jesus' deity?

"The Christ":

• two distinct **natures** united in **one person**

• the natures neither mixed with each other nor ceased to maintain their own attributes.

• Jesus Christ, the perfect "God-man"!



Tuesday—Read Philippians 2:3-11.

- How do you see Jesus' full divinity in this passage?
- How do you see Jesus' full humanity in this passage?
- If Jesus has a human nature and we do too, then why are we so different? Why would we need to be commanded to be like him?
- Which aspect of Jesus' humiliation do you find most comforting? Most challenging? How can they inspire you?

Wednesday—For nearly a month during A.D. 451, church leaders convened a universal church council in the city of Chalcedon (a suburb of today's Istanbul, Turkey) to clarify the mystery of the person of Christ. The "Chalcedonian Creed" has never been improved upon! It reads: *"We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhood and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; coessential with the Father according to Godhood, and coessential with us according to the Manhood; in all things like us, except without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusing them, changing them, dividing them and without separating them. The distinction of the two natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Substance, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us."*

- What makes sense to you now, which did not before?
- What questions do you still have?
- Does the Chalcedonian Creed seem to you to "cover all the bases"?
- What present-day errors are you aware of which would be resolved if people understood and affirmed the Chalcedonian Creed?

Thursday—Let's resolve some **apparent** contradictions in Jesus' statements and actions (no true contradiction exists). Jesus was **one** Person, with **two** Natures (unfallen human nature + divine nature). During his earthly ministry, he laid aside the expression of his divine prerogatives (Philippians 2:5-8) and operated as a sinless human, in moment-by-moment dependence upon the Father for wisdom and power (which is what Adam failed to do). Referring back to the Chalcedonian Creed, note that:

- One nature does some things that the other nature does not do ("*...the property of each nature being preserved...*"), so for example: Jesus' human nature can have ascended to heaven and is no longer in the world (see John 16:28; 17:11; Acts 1:9-11), but with respect to his divine nature, Jesus can affirm that he is everywhere present (Matthew 18:20; 28:20; John 14:23). Since he has two distinct natures, both of these things can be true about the **person** of Christ—**he** returned to heaven and **he** is also present with us!
- In his human nature, Jesus was weak and tired (Matthew 4:2; 8:24; Mark 15:21; John 4:6), but in his divine nature he was omnipotent (Matthew 8:26-27; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). The one **person** Jesus could at the same time be weary and omnipotent!
- Jesus' human nature **died** (Luke 23:46; 1 Corinthians 15:3), but his divine nature **cannot die**, and in fact, was **able to raise himself from the dead** (John 2:19; 10:17-18; Hebrews 7:16)! Yet the one **person** of Christ experienced death for us.
- In his humanity, he was tempted in every way as we are, and yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). His divinity could not be tempted to sin (James 1:13). Yet anything that **either of his natures** did, the **one person** of Christ does. Thus, "**Christ** died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Whatever can be said of **one** nature **or the other** can be said of the **person** of Christ. Is your head hurting yet?

Friday—Christ is now seated at God's right hand. This is the position of total honor.

- The Old Testament predicted it. Read Psalm 110:1 and the New Testamental fulfillment in Christ found in Hebrews 1:3.
- Read Ephesians 1:20-21; 1 Peter 3:22; and 1 Corinthians 15:25.
- Have you ever heard anyone joke about Jesus, or use his name in vain? Reflect on that in light of what you've learned this week.
- Read Ephesians 2:4-7. **Who else currently is** "seated at the right hand of God"? How can that be?!
- See if these ten blessings are sufficient for your every need:
 1. In Christ Jesus you were chosen by God and given grace before the world was created. (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9)
 2. In Christ Jesus you have eternal life. (Romans 6:23)
 3. In Christ Jesus you are loved by God with an inseparable love. (Romans 8:38-39)
 4. In Christ Jesus you were redeemed and forgiven for all your sins. (Ephesians 1:7)
 5. In Christ Jesus you are justified before God and the righteousness of God in Christ is imputed to you. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
 6. In Christ Jesus you have become a new creation and a son of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26)
 7. In Christ Jesus you are being sanctified and made holy. (1 Corinthians 1:2)
 8. In Christ Jesus everything you really need will be supplied. (Philippians 4:19)
 9. In Christ Jesus the peace of God will guard your heart and mind. (Philippians 4:7)
 10. In Christ Jesus you will be raised from the dead at the coming of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Saturday—Read Colossians.

- List everything you learn about the incomparable Christ from Colossians 1:13—2:19.
- List everything you learn from Colossians 2:20—4:6 about **your appropriate response** to the incomparable Christ.
- After this week's study, can you ever think of Christ in the same way? How will you now respond to him?