

## Papanikolaou- Lesson 8

**Big Questions: Why did God give us the ability to think about the Trinity? How does the person of Jesus Christ inform our thinking about God?**

### Key points

*Teachers should understand these few, key points before the lesson, and students should take these points away from the class.*

- A. Our faith is reasonable, even if it is not scientific.
- B. (Anything that is *scientific* is measurable or observable, and God is definitely not measurable and often not observable in a concrete way, or rather not observable in the same way as the objects of scientific study.)
- C. When we reason about God as Trinity, we base our thinking upon the person of Jesus Christ, because he is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Since we cannot see God the Father or God the Holy Spirit, but we are able to see Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, he gives us the ability to think about and know God more concretely. He is God’s revelation to us primarily.
- D. Christianity is not a religion of the book; Christianity is a religion of the person, Jesus Christ.
- E. The book, our Bible, gives witness to the person, Jesus.

### Review

Ask students:

1. What did we learn last class? Review your notes and rewrite a key point or takeaway that you found significant. If you were absent, your job is to review the student guide from last class and then ask your fellow students questions about the points they’re about to share.

Give them 3 or so minutes to review and write, then ask them:

- Share what you’ve written (go around the room systematically to get feedback)
- Then ask students who were absent last class: do you have any questions they have about their points? Students may not be able to answer their questions, and that’s okay. You can affirm the question, and if it’s easy to answer yourself, do so. And if not, say “We’ll hold on to that question to see if it’s answered in any of the future classes.”

Finally, review any key points from last class that were missed, especially if they are really important for this upcoming lesson.

### Opening Reflection

Say something like:

- Last lesson, we delved into the theology of Christ’s full humanity and divinity.
- We learned about how St. Athanasius’ ability to think correctly about God helped to settle a major controversy in the church.
- Today, we’re going to take a step back from the historical events and detailed theology and just contemplate the questions:

- Why did God give us the ability to think about the Trinity?
  - Upon what foundation do Orthodox Christians base their thinking about God?
2. Read these two verses of scripture. What do they have in common? What do they reveal about the power of face-to-face interaction?

"Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete" (2 John 12; c.f., 3 John 13).

"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." (John 21:25)

3. Do they find it important to have some conversations face-to-face, rather than merely through writing in an e-mail or text conversation.
4. What is the advantage of having a face-to-face conversation? Are there any things that make a face-to-face interaction more difficult?

### Video Clip

Dr. Papanikolaou is going to expand this idea of face-to-face interaction by lecturing on about the importance of Christ in our thinking about God.

5. Now fill in the points Dr. Papanikolaou makes in this video clip.
- a. Our faith is \_\_\_\_\_, even if it's not \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. When something is scientific, it is both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Christianity is not a religion of \_\_\_\_\_. It is a religion of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Reflection on Video

6. What do you think Dr. Papanikolaou means when he says that Christianity is not a religion of the book, but a religion of the person, Jesus Christ?
7. Jesus did not write the scriptures himself. All of the scriptures are written by human beings who received revelation from God. Why do you think God chose to communicate to us in this manner?
8. If our faith is based upon a person, rather than a book, what challenges and opportunities does this fact present to us as we try to live as faithful Orthodox Christians?
9. Any final thoughts?

*Close with any of the key points that they might not have addressed in their own sharing/discussion.*

At this point, you may choose to hand out the "Key Points" summary page for this lesson.