

God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Word

God desires to communicate with and effect change in ordinary people. So, God has described Himself in a number of ways. We need to stick to the descriptions God gave rather than try to figure out answers to questions God did not address. So, here is a simple list.

1. God is Spirit (John 4:24). Because God is not made of physical stuff, we often have a hard time getting a good picture. As a Spirit, we know that God does not have GPS coordinates. God consists of His character (goodness, patience, kindness, wisdom, justice, mercy, and such like).
2. Nineteen times in the New Testament, human beings are identified as having spirits.¹ This is the part that lives forever in heaven or hell. For people on earth, their spirits are described as “in” themselves, although spirits are not made of stuff that can be tracked.
3. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is said to live “in” faithful people. The primary function of the Spirit who lives in the faithful is character development plus understanding and prayer editing. This same Spirit is also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, Christ, and God, all interchangeably.
4. In addition, the Word is God (John 1:1) and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). So, there are four interchangeable descriptors for God, and they have a close connection to the spirits of faithful people. As Jesus put it in John 17:21, speaking of future believers after the time of the apostles, “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they may be one in Us...” Jesus described a merging of spirits, not distinctly separated ones.
5. The God descriptor represents the idea of character. The Father image conveys a compassionate, gracious, fatherly nature. Jesus represents the older brother who walked the earth as we do, the reality of faith in a physical universe. The Spirit is the intangible who gets things done. The Word is the facts, the body of thought concerning the concept of the existence and nature of the one true God. The Word was around a long time before the Scriptures. The Bible contains topics from the Word, but they are not the same thing. The Bible is a printed book containing information from God; it has no power of its own. The Word is the intellect of God. God uses the representation (Father, Son, Spirit, Word) that works best for getting His ideas across, the non-physical being explained in physical illustrations. Each description is a different facet of the same God, not four parts of God but just another way of looking at the One God.
6. So, all of the names used to identify the divine nature are part of this picture figuratively described as being *in* the faithful. The take-home picture for the faithful is that we are connected to the point of merger with the divine nature, that the faithful are, individually and collectively, fabulously ornate representatives of the divine of whom He is protective and jealous. To think as a spirit, we must see ourselves as a collective of eternal beings.

¹ Romans 1:9, 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:11, 5:4, 7:34, 14:14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 7:13, Galatians 6:18, Ephesians 4:23, Colossians 2:5, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Timothy 4:22, Philemon 25, Hebrews 4:12, 12:23, James 2:26, 1 Peter 3:19, 1 John 4:2.