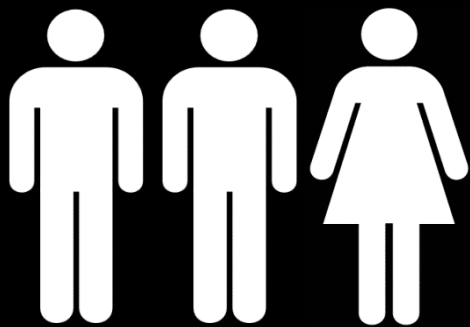


# BEYOND BELIEFS<sup>2</sup>



## THE TRINITY

Millennial young adults' response to Fundamental 2

*Nice guy, or guys,  
but is there one God or three??? :D*

Leanne M. Sigvartsen

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## Millennial young adults' response to Fundamental 2 – The Trinity: Nice guy, or guys, but is there one God or three?

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*ATS 2016 Annual Meetings, San Antonio, TX*

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### **Abstract**

The *Beyond Beliefs* study asked 179 Seventh-day Adventist Millennial young adults to write a 150-200 word comment for every single one of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Adventism including Belief 2 – *The Trinity*. Analysis of the 168 returned responses identified that Millennials were generally favorable to this belief although many find it confusing, difficult to understand, and grabble to explain it. The current wording of *Belief 2 – The Trinity* seems to leave room for multiple conflicting theological concepts of the Trinity. One group of participants interpreted the Trinity as three components of one person while another group considered it as three people with three purposes, working together to achieve a common goal. This confusion becomes even more apparent when reading the participant responses to *Beliefs 3-5 – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit*, when a shift in previously voiced positions for *Belief 2 – The Trinity* seems to occur. Relevant findings relating to their conception of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit will also be individually discussed. This report concludes with aspects millennial young adults found beneficial regarding the Trinity belief and identifies problematic areas to address. It also raises several discussion topics that may be pertinent to Millennial young adults and assist them in understanding a Trinity belief.

# The Beyond Beliefs Study

The purpose of the Beyond Beliefs study was to comprehensively and empirically investigate qualitatively how Millennial young adults (aged 18-33) really felt about each and every one of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and to collect quantitative data relating to over 100 religious, social, and behavioral topics. Until now, it has only been anecdotally assumed that a Millennial young adult who identifies as a Seventh-day Adventist or is a baptized member, and/or attends an Adventist educational institution, has a comprehensive knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and endorses them fully. *Beyond Beliefs 1* and *Beyond Beliefs 2* collected data over five semesters from 679 participants in eight cohorts at Andrews University.

The purpose of this report is to specifically outline the findings related to *Belief 2 – The Trinity*, *Belief 3 – God the Father*, *Belief 4 – God the Son*, and *Belief 5 – God the Holy Spirit*. In the interests of brevity, a comprehensive overview of the *Beyond Beliefs* study and literature review can be found at [www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports](http://www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports). This report was presented at the 2016 Adventist Theological Society Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

## Method

### Participants in Brief

A comprehensive overview of the participants in the Beyond Beliefs study can be found at [www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports](http://www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports). Participants (Cohorts 1, 2, 5, 7, & 8) were sourced from the General Education class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith. Over 930 written responses were collected from Cohort 1 (also the *Beyond Beliefs 1* study) from a sample of 37 participants belonging to the North American Division. In *Beyond Beliefs 2*, responses from an additional 142 participants (Cohorts 2, 5, 7, 8) were collected, 17% of which identified as international students. All major ethnic groups were represented in both samples, as were male and female participants. The *Beyond Beliefs* study is a transparent study, thus, the 4,000+ responses of all 179 participants will be available in a two volume publication, *Beyond Beliefs 2 – Respond*. All 168 returned responses to *Belief 2 – The Trinity* are available as a free sample chapter on [www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports](http://www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports) for interested parties to read.

This study was undertaken with official approval from the Andrews University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and in compliance with the United States federal *Office for Human Research Protections* (OHRP) guidelines for research on human subjects. All the participants in the *Beyond Beliefs* study

gave their informed consent to participate and permission to have their submissions used in online, hard copy, or e-book publications related to the Beyond Beliefs study. Participant responses have not been altered, however, specific identifying information has been deleted and replaced with a description of the words removed to ensure the integrity of the context. Participants were given a candy bar or health bar as gratuity for their participation.

## Materials and Procedure in Brief

A comprehensive overview of the materials and procedure used in the Beyond Beliefs study can be found at [www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports](http://www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/reports). As a part of a larger study which included a 100-item quantitative and qualitative survey, 179 participants in specified cohorts (Cohorts 1, 2, 5, 7, & 8) were asked to write a 150+ word response to each of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism including *Belief 2 – The Trinity*. Participants were asked to describe what they liked/disliked about the belief, if they felt it was important/unimportant, and if they felt it was relevant/irrelevant.

With the exception of Cohorts 7 and 8, participants submitted each response after reading the belief statement and commentary as outlined in the publication *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*<sup>1</sup> but prior to undertaking a class related to the associated belief. This was to minimize peer and teacher influence. Cohorts 7 and 8 were asked to read the official belief statement and supporting biblical references in conjunction with the *Beyond Beliefs 1 – Results*<sup>2</sup> (Cohort 1 results) publication and provide an additional comment describing their personal response to what their peers had reported, namely, if they agreed or disagreed with their peers and why. This was to identify how consistently Millennial young adults agreed with or disagreed with their peers and enrich previously collected responses, as many Cohort 7 and 8 participants expanded on concepts raised by participants in Cohort 1.

For the purposes of this study, there were no “right” answers, views, or perspectives relating to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, as this study was undertaken to determine and describe the varying feelings and attitudes held by young adults towards the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. Allowing participants to broadly respond to each belief provided them the freedom to express their ideas and questions without feeling they needed to give the researcher the “right answer.” However, because of the open-ended nature of the research questions, just because a participant did not articulate a specific theme in their response to a certain belief, does not indicate that he/she would disagree or agree with that specific aspect of that belief if he/she was asked. That being said, what participants

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<sup>1</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Sigvartsen, Leanne M., Jan A. Sigvartsen, and Paul B. Petersen. *Beyond Beliefs 1 - Results: What Millennial young adults really think of the 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Berrien Springs, MI: ClergyEd.com, 2014.

do write is still salient because it denotes the issues that readily come to mind when responding to a certain belief and may indicate what is of most importance to them. Personally interviewing young adults may yield a more comprehensive answer, however, that method also has its shortcomings in that it affords too much potential for the interviewer to influence or lead the participant with the specificity of their questions. Also, when multiple people are emphasizing a certain theme, that theme is most likely something they feel is significant. Thus, it becomes relevant for the researchers to consider and is therefore inside the scope of the current report.

Participants were also asked to select one of the 28 belief statements and write a 1500-word commentary regarding this belief for young adults (18-30 years of age). There were 31 participants who elected to write their commentary on the beliefs related to the Trinity which included: *Belief 2 – The Trinity* (8 participants), *Belief 3 – God the Father* (7 participants), *Belief 4 – God the Son* (9 participants), and *Belief 5 – God the Holy Spirit* (7 participants).

More information about the *Beyond Beliefs* study and findings relating to all 28 Beliefs from the Spring 2013 cohort (*Beyond Beliefs 1*) can be found in the 452 page publication, *Beyond Beliefs – Full Report, Cohort 1* which is available through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [Logos, Logos SDA Gold Package or Higher](http://Logos, Logos SDA Gold Package or Higher), and [www.Beyond-Beliefs.com](http://www.Beyond-Beliefs.com). A free 252-page electronic version of this report is also available at [www.Beyond-Beliefs.com](http://www.Beyond-Beliefs.com).

## Results and Discussion

When analyzing the detailed responses written by the participants of the initial *Beyond Beliefs 1* study, saturation point occurred after 15-20 responses which is consistent with scholarly empirical qualitative studies of this nature<sup>3</sup>, providing support that Millennial young adult responses, while varied, were not infinitely diverse and the initial sample of 32 returned responses for *Belief 2 – The Trinity* was more than sufficient to identify the scope of themes associated with the Trinity Beliefs (see figure below). Analysis of the additional 136 returned responses for *Belief 2 – The Trinity* in *Beyond Beliefs 2*, revealed no new significant themes, suggesting the main perspectives held by Millennial young adults regarding the Trinity were captured in the initial study. Interestingly, what changed was their analogy or the examples they used to describe the Trinity, but even then, the same analogies and examples were often used across participants suggesting Millennials have a shared cultural experience that leads them to use the same narratives to describe a complex issue, or, they have heard/read the same narrative elsewhere and are merely repeating it. Given this, the addition of 136 responses may seem superfluous, given the thematic scope was identified in the initial 32 participant sample, however, these extra 136 voices are important because they provide a richness to the data and give a larger group of Millennials a real voice in describing their faith experience. This comprehensive description by so many Millennials can be of enormous benefit to leadership, theologians, clergy, laity, and strategic planners who often rely on their own anecdotal observations because there is a lack of relevant empirical data that captures Millennials own responses in their own words. This makes the *Beyond Beliefs* qualitative dataset an important strategic planning and historical document.

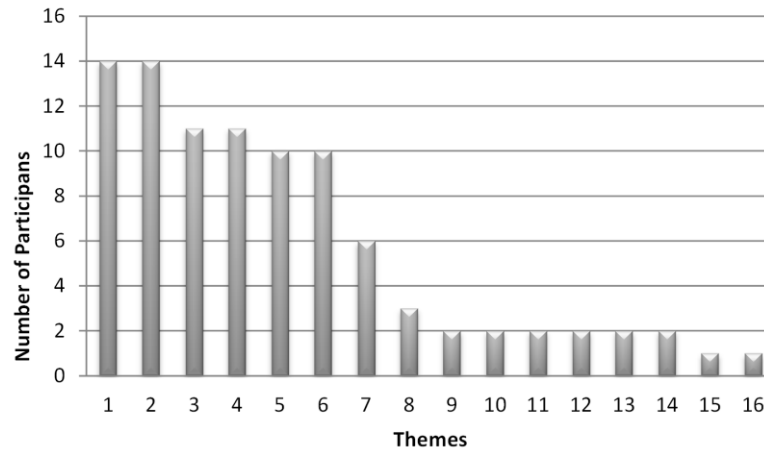
To this end, the following results and discussion will focus on the themes and results of the initial *Beyond Beliefs 1* study (Cohort 1) but will make reference to the additional 136 responses sourced in *Beyond Beliefs 2* and the 31 expanded 1,500 word commentary submissions.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Mason, "Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 11, no. 3 (September 2010): n.p. Cited 11 September 2016. Online: <http://www.qualitativeresearch.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3027>.

# The Trinity – Themes

(Cohort 1)



## THEMES

1	The belief is confusing and difficult to understand	44 %
2	The Trinity is one God of which there are three components	44 %
3	If God wants to be worshiped, we should be able to understand him	34 %
4	Creation or Nature or Scripture can be used to prove the existence of God	34 %
5	The Trinity is three separate Gods	31 %
6	God is so complex humans could never understand him	31 %
7	This belief is critical to Adventism	19 %
8	Faith precedes a decision to accept nature, creation or scripture as proof of God	9 %
9	Atheists have no grounds for their beliefs	6 %
10	This belief is irrelevant	6 %
11	Did not like this belief	6 %
12	This belief supports other beliefs	6 %
13	The Trinity provides an example of how Christians should work together	6 %
14	The Trinity makes it easy to understand God	6 %
15	If the Trinity is three separate Gods, is an assertion of monotheism accurate?	3 %
16	If the Trinity is a single deity then why open prayer to the Father and conclude it in the Son's name?	3 %

### *The Trinity is difficult to understand*

One of the presiding themes of this belief was that it was confusing and difficult to understand which was stated by 44% of participants.<sup>4</sup> One participant writes: "What I dislike is that it is one of the most difficult things to understand and it has a tendency to push individuals away from the religion" (participant 153), and another notes:

<sup>4</sup> Some of these participants still attempted to describe their understanding of the Trinity, but still expressed confusion, suggesting an uneasy understanding.

“What I dislike about this fundamental is that it is very hard concept to understand. I have been a Seventh-day Adventist all my life and I would still find it very difficult to explain it to someone who didn’t know what it was. I wish that there could be more sermons on the Trinity to explain it better and go into depth about how it actually works” (Participant 75).

When one reads the official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist church, it is not hard to understand why. The belief itself is potentially ambiguous (it states there is “one God” but also mentions “three co-eternal persons”) and seems to intentionally leave room for multiple, conflicting theological concepts of the Trinity. Predictably, two theological concepts were described with 44% of participants interpreting this statement as three components of one person and an additional 31% of participants who described the Trinity as three people with three purposes, working together to achieve a common goal, which only 13% of participants articulated as saving the lost.

### ***God is so complex we could never understand him***

While 31% of participants dismissed this uncertainty with a belief that God is so complex we could never understand him, 34% of participants suggested that if humans are expected to worship, adore and serve God, shouldn’t they be permitted to understand him. This is a good point, particularly if God provides instances of “self-revelation” as the belief states. While this may be a convenient way of side-stepping a complex issue, it is clearly problematic for many young adults. For them it raises more questions than it addresses and leads to enormous diversity and explanations of the Trinity – which may or may not be consistent with the official beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Participant 105 questions this attitude by noting:

“Stating that our God is beyond comprehension feels, like, lazy. I think that we should try to describe how the three aspects of God can join together since we have three fundamentals devoted to how they work alone. Though it is important to describe certain aspects of God, the wording could be a lot more succinct. These are our fundamentals, they should not be vague overviews with flowery language, they should be succinct explanations of what we believe. I get the feeling that the authors of the fundamentals went to a lot of trouble to keep the descriptions short but in doing so, they limited the amount of important information that they would include.”

### ***One guy or three?***

One participant also suggested that if there are in fact three separate individuals in the Trinity, can a religious group who endorses this concept call themselves monotheistic? Another participant also asked why, if Seventh-day Adventists believe in a single deity made up of three aspects, do they open their prayers with “Dear Heavenly Father” but conclude them with “in the name of Jesus.”



Interestingly, when responding to *Belief 2 – The Trinity*, 44% of Millennial young adult responses described God as one being who had three aspects, while only 31% described a separate three-person Trinity. This changed, however, when they responded to *Belief 3 – God the Father*, *Belief 4 – God the Son*, and *Belief 5 – God the Holy Spirit*. When considering God the Father as its own belief, separate to the Trinity belief, 37% of participants eluded to him being a different person to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Only 17% still alluded to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit being one person – this is a significant drop in the numbers who previously stated that they subscribed to this Trinity model. Only one participant stated that they were still unsure about the separation and unity concept relating to the Trinity. Many participants did not articulate any Trinity model, suggesting that perhaps they were still unsure, or identifying one way or the other was not a concern for them. It could even be they felt they had stated it in the previous belief or they had changed their mind since the previous chapter. We do not know, but given there was a majority shift in models endorsed by participants, further attention in articulating the nature of the Trinity may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

***Millennials do not readily articulate that a belief in God requires an initial faith assumption***

Participants also suggested that nature, creation and scripture could be used to prove God's existence. Two even suggested that in light of the above, atheists had no grounds for their beliefs. Again, only three participants acknowledged that a faith decision or assumption precedes a decision that nature, creation and scripture could be used to prove God's existence. Not realizing they have made a faith decision or assumption for their belief in God, may be problematic when trying to discuss their beliefs with others.

***Is there a ranking in the Trinity? If so, do we really need to rank one guy?***

Three participants used marriage as an analogy for the Trinity, which has been closely related to a headship model for marriage. Conversely, one participant expressed uncertainty regarding the ranking of the Trinity, and another stated that they are all equal. In *Beyond Beliefs 2*, one participant writes: "I do agree with the idea that people do think that there are rankings. People think that God the Father is on the top and the Holy Spirit on the bottom" (Participant 71). Another participant considers the terminology used to describe the members of the Trinity to be a complicating factor:

"With the concept of a family functioning as one and having family member terms associated with each role, it becomes a lot more difficult for the human mind to not think of the Trinity as being a hierarchy. God the Father is mainly perceived as being the head of the Trinity. The reason for this is simply related to our human understanding of the word "father." In my opinion, the fundamental should have

used a different choice of words to explain the different roles however, since scripture is what we are using as our foundation, we should follow the concepts listed in it. God the Father is how that specific role is labeled” (Participant commentary).

***What is a good analogy?***

As stated previously, more analogies or examples (used by those brave enough to try and describe the Trinity) were added in the larger *Beyond Beliefs 2* sample (n=136). However, these same new analogies and examples were often used across participants in the *Beyond Beliefs 2* sample, suggesting Millennials may have a shared cultural experience that leads them to use the same narratives to describe a complex issue like the Trinity, or, they have heard/read the same narrative elsewhere and are merely repeating it. This aspect is salient because if an adequate analogy can be formulated, it will be adopted, shared and repeated by Millennial young adults.

<b>Analogies used for the Trinity</b>	
<b>Marriage and the Family</b>	<p>Marriage/Family – The unity of husband and wife in marriage is considered a parallel to the Trinity consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, one participant states: “I don’t believe that the analogy with marriage works so well due to the fact that in marriage you have literally two people representing the idea of one solid idea or mentality that sort of works together.” (Participant 162)</p> <p>Another participant found this analogy mind boggling stating: “But what always puzzled me is this: how is Jesus the Son of God the Father if the Father never married and there is no woman involved? How does that work? They all are eternal, so they have no beginning and no end, but yet one of them in the son of another? That just always puzzled me. Also, to me it implies that Jesus is somehow less powerful than the Father, because He is the Son. I know it isn’t true, but at the same time my brain is tied up in knots about the whole concept.” (Participant 116)</p> <p>A third participant writes in the commentary: “The best way I could think of explaining this concept in modern language, is to propose the idea of a family. Each member of the family may have different roles, but they all carry the same last name. Even with this example, it still does not fully depict the functionality of the Trinity. Everyone in a family doesn’t have the same mind, purpose and goal.”</p>
<b>A Band</b>	<p>Each member makes up the band. One participant writes: “I learned it as though you have, say, the name of a band.” (Participant 66).</p>
<b>A Computer</b>	<p>Computer – “My brother gave me this example of the Godhead being like the computer. A computer has three individual parts. You have the keyboard and mouse, the monitor and the system unit. They are all separate pieces but together they make up a computer. Even after this analogy I am still very confused.” (Participant 128)</p>

<p><b>An Egg</b></p>	<p>The egg consists of three parts – shell, egg, and yoke. One participant modified this analogy noting: “The Godhead is not like the components of a single egg – egg shell, egg white, and egg yolk. Rather, it is like having three individual eggs working together to make an omelet” (Participant 123). Another participant noted in their Belief 2 commentary that this analogy was flawed since each part of the egg does not constitute the egg by itself, in contrast to each member of the Trinity, who are fully God.</p>
<p><b>Three-in-one Shampoo</b></p>	<p>“The problem with this [analogy] is that it can be broken down into each of the three agents and each of those agents performs a different function. Each agent can do its function, although each one is not shampoo by itself.” (Participant commentary)</p>
<p><b>Mathematical Equation</b></p>	<p>Algebraic: not <math>1+1+1=3</math> but <math>1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1</math> – “Three pieces, all input, but one sum equal to one and all of the factors.” (Participant 86)</p> <p>Sine wave. “Looking in two dimensions a sine wave crosses the x-axis at intervals of pi. If one were to look at this in one dimension on the x-axis one would see three separate points and only see those points. When in two dimensions those points can be seen as a part of a larger whole that is one, which would be like God. This too has a flaw in that a sine wave will go on infinitely so there would be infinitely many points on the line while there are only three parts to the Godhead” (Participant commentary).</p>

***They liked Belief 2 – The Trinity, but...***

The response to this belief was generally favorable, with only two participants stating that they disliked it. One suggested this was because it didn't provide enough detail to understand it, and the other disliked that no mention of God's eternal love is stated in the belief statement, something he/she felt should also be stated. Two participants indicated that this belief was irrelevant, because it didn't matter if there was one God or three because belief in either/or did not determine salvation. In favor of the Trinity, two participants suggested that the Trinity concept makes it easy to understand an incomprehensible God, however, neither articulated how, suggesting a rote learned response, rather than one that was the result of critical thought. Some felt it was crucial to Adventism (19%). Two participants felt it supported other beliefs, and two felt that the Trinity was an example of how Christians should work together to achieve a common goal.

***Belief 3 - God the Father***

The overall response to *Belief 3 – God the Father* was positive as many participants felt it described God the Father appropriately. Twenty-two participants suggested that this belief described and emphasized the positive traits of God the Father, traits that one participant said “made him worthy of worship.” However, there was still some remaining confusion as to what God the Father was and how he fit into the Trinity. When considering God the Father separate to the Trinity, 37% of

participants eluded to him being a different person to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Only 17% alluded to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit being one person – this is a significant drop in the numbers who previously stated they subscribed to this Trinity model. Only one participant stated that they were still unsure about the separation and unity concept relating to the Trinity. Many participants did not articulate any Trinity model, suggesting that perhaps they were still unsure, or identifying one way or the other was not a concern for them. It could even be they felt they had stated it in the previous belief or they had changed their mind since the previous chapter. We do not know, but given there was a majority shift in models endorsed by participants, further attention in articulating the nature of the Trinity may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church – particularly since more Trinity models, than those described by Millennials, do exist.

#### ***Belief 4 - God the Son***

Jesus is clearly the stand out favorite among the Trinity. There was an energy in the responses given in *Belief 4 – God the Son* that was not evident in responses regarding God the Father (*Belief 3*). One participant describes Jesus this way,

“It is easier to tell your friend about this guy who loves you so much that they would die for you than about this guy who killed thousands of people on a regular basis, or a guy who’s not really a guy but a spirit” (Participant 7).

The most popular theme, identified within the responses of 80% of the participants, was the view that Jesus is a savior who died for the sins of the world. Many participants who articulated this theme emphasized their appreciation of this gift. This suggests that when a deity is proactive in doing something significant, specifically for young adults, this deity is perceived more favorably. Thus, a religiosity/deity that emphasizes what significant benefits it/him/they can do for a young adult, rather than didactic requirements the young adult has to do for the religion/deity, may be an approach that the Seventh-day Adventist church could incorporate into their belief commentaries and ministries for young adults.

Additionally, 53% of participants also discussed Jesus as being a human with 43% also mentioning that because he was tempted he knows what they go through when they are tempted. Young adults in this study seem to identify with Jesus more than with other figures of the Trinity. Interestingly, only 10% stated that Christ was an important aspect of Adventism, but 37% stated that he was an important aspect of Christianity, giving Christ a larger relevancy than just Adventism. In this sample, 30% of participants stated that Christ was an example for living that should be followed and, surprisingly, only 20% mentioned the need to have a “relationship” with Christ.

There were different roles Jesus was perceived as fulfilling, and they are as follows: 27% stated that he was the forgiver of sins; 23% stated he was the means by which believers can know God the Father; 13% stated that a belief in Jesus was the path to eternal life.

In this belief, 23% of responses indicated that God the Father and God the Son were two different people. Only 10% alluded to God being one person. This is an interesting finding as it could indicate that young adults may perceive the Trinity as one person when presented with the concept of a Trinity. However, if presented separate conceptual information about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there may be more of a tendency to regard them as three separate people rather than just one. The next belief regarding the Holy Spirit may provide further insight into whether this is the case.

### ***Belief 5 - God the Holy Spirit***

Only two participants stated that they disliked this belief, otherwise it was well received. What they disliked was largely associated with continuing confusion between a one God with three components Trinity model, and a three separate persons Trinity model. No other Trinity models were expressed by the young adult participants. In this case, 52% alluded to the Trinity being three separate persons, but only 26% stated that the Trinity was one person with three components. Again, a three-separate person Trinity was more prevalent when Trinity members/components are described and discussed individually, as was the case in this belief which was about the Holy Spirit.

Two participants also stated that they were surprised that the Holy Spirit was described as a person in the belief's commentary, and two stated that if this was the case, "spirit" wasn't a good word to describe this person, because they wondered how a person was supposed to "fill you" in relation to being "filled with the spirit." Paradoxically, having Jesus "in their hearts," whom young adults also perceived as not only a person but also as human, was not questioned in the previous belief. Perhaps this dissonance may be due to unfamiliarity with the Holy Spirit or insufficient narratives associated with this member of the Trinity. Additionally, 11% of participants raised the issue of the Holy Spirit being female, presumably because they had learned/heard that in ancient Hebrew scripture, the Hebrew word for Holy Spirit is feminine. More research into how young adults perceive and relate specifically to the Holy Spirit may prove interesting and timely given the dissonance expressed above.

Despite this, many participants stated that the Holy Spirit was something that 63% of participants described they could be "filled by" or have in their life. They did not, however, articulate that they needed to have a relationship with this deity, as they had stated with God the Father and God the Son.

## Conclusion

The Trinity belief presents some benefits and problems for Millennial young adults as described below.

Beneficial Aspects of this Belief	Identified Problematic Areas to Address
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>THE TRINITY IS AN EXAMPLE FOR HOW CHRISTIANS CAN WORK TOGETHER</b> This is provided the Trinity is defined as three separate deities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOD</b> While this may be a convenient way of addressing a complex issue, it is problematic for some young adults. For them it raises more questions than it addresses and leads to enormous diversity and explanations of the Trinity.</li> <li>▪ <b>IS THERE ONE GOD OR THREE?</b> The current writing of the belief is ambiguous and confusing to young adults. The net effect is that young people are creating diverse and inconsistent perceptions about God in what could be an effort to make sense of this ambiguity. Such differences in beliefs may make it difficult to achieve overall cohesion within a religious organization, particularly with regard to a belief which some young people (19%) find crucial to their faith.</li> <li>▪ <b>IS THERE A RANKING WITHIN THE TRINITY?</b> Given the Trinity was used as an analogy for marriage, a ranking or egalitarian relationship within the Trinity may need to be defined - particularly if a religious organization endorses a marriage equality model, and the equality of women.</li> <li>▪ <b>A BELIEF IN GOD IS BASED ON FAITH</b> Again, only a few participants identified that a decision of faith was associated with using nature, scripture and creation to prove the existence of God.</li> </ul>

The wording of the Trinity belief seems to be problematic in its current form, as it leads to too many diverse outcomes and opinions by young adults (like the ranking issue) who seem to be grappling with and inconsistently defining this concept for themselves. There may be dissonance in advocating an incomprehensible God, who at the same time is known and provides “self-revelation”

- just not enough. Mention is given of the rewards God receives for being God, however, no mention is made in the belief or commentary regarding the rewards humans receive for revering God, like eternal love, which was suggested by one participant.

Millennial young adults do like this belief and make a faith decision assumption to believe in God, even though they do not seem to realize it. They do feel the Trinity provides an example for how Christians can work together, but again, this too is complicated by the noticeably inexplicit Trinity model described by *Belief 2 – The Trinity*.

### ***Presentation Discussion Topics***

The *Beyond Beliefs Study* is a solution focused study and based on the confusion expressed in many of the participants regarding the Trinity, the following discussion may be helpful. As a part of this presentation, the authors would like to seek the feedback from the scholarly community regarding the following discussion topics that may be pertinent to Millennial young adults:

- **Does God have both Masculine and Feminine Attributes?**
  - Father (m), Son (m), and Holy Spirit (f).
  - Is God male or is he both male and female?
- **Are analogies adequate?**
  - When using analogies, while no analogy is perfect, would mentioning its strength and weakness to Millennials be of benefit?
  - Should we understand God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as analogies?
    - Do we emphasize the function/role of these terms rather than their physical relationship?
    - Does this analogy assume a hierarchical relationship?
  - Are Marriage/Humankind/Body of Christ helpful analogies for Millennials in understanding the Trinity?
- **Would considering a triune God viewed in light of a Polytheistic Worldview be helpful?**
- **Why is the Trinity belief important in the first place? Does it really matter and what difference does it make in the spiritual life of a Millennial young adult?**

# BEYOND BELIEFS<sup>2</sup>

*Millennial Young Adults  
respond to the 28 Beliefs of  
Adventism in their own words*



**Leanne M. Sigvartsen  
Jan A. Sigvartsen  
Paul B. Petersen**



# 2

## The 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*

## Belief 2

# The Trinity

***Number of Responses for this Belief = 168***

Please note - typing, grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors have not been altered in this dataset. These responses were copied and pasted from electronic Moodle submissions/emails from participating young adults. Identifying remarks in the data have been removed, however, this has been indicated and described within the data in order to retain the integrity of the response.

Each participant in Cohorts 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8 was asked to describe what they liked/disliked about the belief, if they thought it was important/unimportant, and if it was relevant/irrelevant to young adults. Participants of Cohort 7 and 8 were also asked to read the responses of Cohort 1 and the Beyond Beliefs 1 - findings. These participants were asked to discuss if they agreed with their peers and the Beyond Beliefs findings, or not, and why they either agreed or disagreed.

**Participant 1:** What I like most about this fundamental is how it was said god has a hidden wisdom. He is the father, son, and Holy Spirit, and to me it is amazing to know that because of how we perceive who god is. I hear many individuals speak about theories that speak on god's creation, but that can't be true, because God gave humans a limit in wisdom, such as his creation. However, what we can do is read our bible because there are two major sources of evidence for his existence, and that is his creation and scripture. For David wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Even though the bible does not prove gods existence, it is a good way to know of his existence, and is said in Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This fundamental is important, because it shows that as much as humans may think they know who god is, but they don't. For God is the father, son, and Holy Spirit, and is the only one who's wisdom we cannot determine. In my life, there may be time I may think I have wisdom to understand how god made things, but I have to remember that he is the almighty god and wisdom is greater than that of mine, for he's the one that gave me the wisdom I have.

**Participant 2:** One thing that I dislike about this fundamental is how confusing it is. Many people say that the God head is a trinity between three different people but yet they are all the same person. I have been hearing this for years but for some reason I still cannot seem to fully understand what this means, even to this day. This fundamental is important because it describes to us the two sources of evidence which prove that God exists which is through creation and in scripture. These two sources however do not prove his existence indefinitely though. If you truly want to find the truth about God you must have faith first before you can believe what nature and the Bible show. This belief is relevant to my life because it teaches me different things that describe God and proves that he exists. I could use this to strengthen my faith or even to prove to any atheists that I meet that they are wrong in their beliefs.

**Participant 3:** I think the idea of the Trinity is really interesting but it has always been kind of confusing to me. I understand the whole, 'three in one' idea, but it is kind of frustrating to understand. Of course, God is beyond our human comprehension. It is nice way of splitting up God as the Father, Jesus as the Son, and the Holy Spirit. First off, it is important because the Bible teaches of the Trinity and the three separate, but one, Godhead. Therefore, if we as Adventists follow the Bible, it is important for us to follow the idea of the Trinity. Also, I know that today there are many SDA's who are unbelieving of the Trinity, which causes problems among the church. The idea of God being a Father is comforting to many people. He is not only this heavenly being who lives in the sky, he is a father

who wants to protect and comfort his children. When I think of it that way, it makes everything much more personal and relevant.

**Participant 4:** The focus of this response is doctrine number two which is focused on the Godhead. This doctrine zooms in on the questions about the knowledge of God and is God really a deity if there are three persons in that deity? I liked the fact that through the proof of scripture this book shows that even though God is mysterious, as He should be being God, we can still know Him and His heart if we search for Him. I also liked the fact that it broke down the fact that even though the Godhead is made up of three distinct beings what makes them God is the oneness. Not in personality but in purpose. I think that is what makes this doctrine so important. The fact that God is made up of three unique beings they each have a specific role in the Godhead. And their purpose is Creation and currently saving their children who have turned their backs on Him. This also brings relevance to my life in the way that it shows me that each part of the Godhead is interested in me and my life. Even more each being is asking that I choose life and a life in eternity with them.

**Participant 5:** From what I read, there are some things that I liked about the second fundamental belief. I like that the description talks about God as a whole as well as the three equal Beings that make up God. Each of the Beings within God have different tasks, yet they are all one in purpose, mind, and authority. I think that this second fundamental is important because not only should we know about the Holy Scriptures, but the divine power behind it. No one can prove that God definitely exists. We just have to believe that He does and that He wants to have a special relationship with His created beings. This fundamental is relevant in my life because of its emphasis on God. By reading the Bible, we can learn more about God, His character, and how He has related to humans. We can also study the world around us to learn more about Him.

**Participant 6:** I like this fundamental because it is very unique compared to other religions. Other religions believe in simply one or many gods. This fundamental is very specific in what the Trinity is and made of: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In a way, I don't like this fundamental because it confuses many people due to the lack of clarity of what it is. This fundamental is important because God made everything, including Christianity. Without knowing Him and His "co-eternal Persons," we don't know anything about what we believe in. This fundamental is also important because each counterpart shows a part of God and how powerful He is. Right now, my relationship with God is not as relevant as much as I would like it to be but it is still relevant. In my opinion, each part of the Trinity plays a specific role in each person's life. Right now, I feel like the Holy Spirit works the most in my daily life because it is like my conscience.

**Participant 7:** A discussion of God (for me) brings up more questions than answers. Mainly, how is it possible that there can be three people in one person? When I was a kid, I thought God was like a three headed monster. Of course now I know that notion was ridiculous but I'm still confused. I've been told that just like how two people are one in a marriage, God is three people in one. However, I still see those people as two people instead of one. Perhaps this is just a problem with me seeing things correctly instead of a question of what God is like. I also have the question of whether or not there is a ranking. In the New Testament, it seemed like Jesus asked God for permission to do things. This seems like there is a hierarchy in the Trinity of God as the highest, then Jesus, then the Holy Spirit. However I am told this is not true. Though there are many things I don't know about God, there are many things I do know. I know He's loving because He sent His Son to die for us and I know He's merciful because I'm so sinful He should've killed me a long time ago. It is important that we state the existence of God because that's what we ascribe our origins, present, purpose, and future to. The entire Bible talks about God. We would be foolish, if we believe the scripture to have the authority it does, to not believe in Him. Therefore, we need to know who this God is. We need to figure out why He's so special in our lives and His character. That is why this fundamental is so important. We need to let the world know who this guy is that we would entrust our lives and beings to him

**Participant 8:** I liked how the chapter talks about God. It explains the many different aspects of who we serve, that He is attainable, exists and how we can form a better relationship with Him by searching and understanding. I didn't really know how to take the statement on page 25, "God's revelation through creation is so powerful that there is no excuse for atheism..." But previously it states that the Bible doesn't show proof of God's existence, it just assumes it. I think understanding God (who He is, what He does, understanding His character) is very important. How can you serve someone and not who they are? You can't just follow blindly. In order to really commit yourself to God you have to develop a deeper understanding and relationship with Him. In order for our love to grow for Him we must cultivate it. Once that is done, being a Seventh-day Adventist won't see like a list of do's and don'ts.

**Participant 9:** This fundamental on the Godhead is interesting. I have been familiar with the concept of the Godhead since I was literally 5 years old. I like this concept because it adds a dimension to God that is difficult for people to understand. The reason that I like this is because I feel as though God should be difficult for humans to understand. This fundamental is important because it helps us try to understand the elements of God. It helps us understand how God is: Three parts of One God. With this concept in mind it helps us understand more about what happened when Jesus died for our sins. It helps us understand that since sin is separation from God, and Jesus, the Son took on our sin at the cross, how momentarily the three parts of God were separated. The concept of the trinity is important because it gives us humans a way to understand God in a way that we are capable of doing so—since we cannot fully understand him. This fundamental isn't very relevant in my day to day life. It doesn't affect how I sleep, eat, or live. To me, this fundamental is only important in reading, understanding, and interpreting the Bible. I don't feel as though understanding this principle would have any drastic effects such as determining the outcome of your salvation.

**Participant 10:** One thing I dislike about this fundamental is that there is only mention of God being all-powerful and ever-present and no mention of His eternal love. This is a key part of the Godhead, and so I believe it deems mention. However, I really like the part of the fundamental that explains the dynamics between the aspects of the Godhead. This is interesting and useful information, and it elucidates the fact that God is love, and explains why this is the case. This fundamental is important because it explains the nature of the object of our worship: the Godhead. Without this fundamental in place, one would not be able to pinpoint to importance of the rest of the fundamentals. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it reminds me why I worship the God I worship. I worship Him not only because he loves me, but also because He created everything and is therefore "forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation."

**Participant 11:** The Trinity is the Godhead; it is composed of the God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three eternal beings are what make up the unity of who God is in purpose and substance. The oneness of the purpose of God and the individuality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not contradict each other. The best example that is seen in the trinity is seen in the concept and typology of marriage. The husband is the antitype of Jesus Christ and the woman is the antitype of the Church who she waits for the second coming of Jesus Christ. The husband also takes his burdens and falls upon Jesus Christ for reassurance and to be used by Him to spread the message of the Gospel.

**Participant 12:** At Calvary almost everyone rejects Jesus" (Adventists Believe) that quote really stood out to me because knowing that at some point throughout our lives we will reject the calling of Christ. Jesus came to his people and his people did not recognize who he was. What I really liked was when the book explained that "depending on human wisdom alone to learn about God is like using a magnifying glass to study the constellations" (Adventist Believe) I thought that was a good analogy because it would be hard to do it depending on our wisdom alone but when God is helping us in the process it is better because then we can understand him better. Because it shows that we cannot love God if we do not get to know him and read his word the only way to is to reading his word and having a connection with him. The bible is also Gods revelation to us and the purpose to why we are here and

working towards getting in his kingdom. It also shows the love he has for us and what he has done just for us and to save us from sin and evil. This fundamental is important because we should get to know God personally ourselves because we cannot love him unless we have a good connection with him. And read his work so we can know what he has sacrificed for us and what he had gone through just so he can save us.

**Participant 13:** What I like about this doctrine is that it encompasses everything fundamental about God. God is a complex and incomprehensible being. This fundamental tells everything that we believe about God but in a way that doesn't make it sound like we have a clue about whom or what God really is. Like the Bible, faith in God is just as important a foundation because if we take God out of the equation, our whole belief system collapses. God is whom we worship and whom we believe in. If not for God, all of our actions are for nothing. A belief in God is paramount to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. It is relevant because I interact and see God working in my life every day. I believe that we have lost a sense of how powerful God can be. Thus, an understanding of how little we understand about Him is important to realizing how insignificant our lives truly are, but that God died for us anyway. What an amazing God we serve.

**Participant 14:** I love that this Fundamental is very crucial to our Adventist faith. It involves the Trinity, but more specifically it involves God. The interesting aspect about this 3-person "group" is that even though they are all separate: God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is cohesion between the three. God tells us that we need Jesus Christ to be our mediator between God and us. The Holy Spirit was given to us to guide us when Jesus physically departed from us. It is important because it shows, me at least, that not only is God the one I am praying to, but Jesus and the Holy Spirit are as well. It is important to know that we have God and His son. It is relevant because it creates a more sacred bond between God and I. I feel as though the Holy Spirit is with me, but yet God and Jesus are as well. It is something that is reassuring as well as sacred.

**Participant 15:** I really like that it directs a lot of focus on having a relationship with God and the importance of knowing him and understanding him and his word. I also love that it points out the two sources of evidence for the existence of God-the book of nature and the scriptures. I feel that the fundamental as a whole is really focused on knowing God, the dynamics of the Godhead, and most importantly focusing on salvation. I think that it is important because it is emphasizing one of the most important things we can do which is getting to know our God. It is explaining the dynamics of the Godhead and going in depth about his names, salvation, etc. The fundamental is relevant in my life because I have wondered so many times about the Godhead and the trinity. Although this fundamental is not completely about the trinity it certainly talks about it and the different types of elements such as; the oneness of God, the plurality within the Godhead, and the relationship within the Godhead.

**Participant 16:** What I like about this fundamental belief is that it is straight from the bible. Some choose to believe that the bible never mentions the trinity because that specific word isn't in the bible. I believe that the trinity is revealed throughout the entire bible starting with creation. What I don't like about this fundamental belief is that it confuses some people. They think that we believe in three Gods but we don't. We don't fully understand the physics behind this fundamental belief which causes people to not want to be a Christian because they can't understand the concept as well. I think this fundamental belief is important for the Seventh-day Adventist faith because it helps us know more about God's character. Throughout Christ's ministry he constantly would mention why he came on earth. He always mentioned doing things because of God. God sent his one and only son to save us and Jesus left earth so that the helper could come help us. This shows how they have a unity of goals in giving us salvation and life. This fundamental belief is relevant because it shows how we should have unity among other believers in spreading the gospel of truth and love. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together for us, we should work together for them in our day to day life.

**Participant 17:** The trinity is something that has always interested me. Since I was born, I've been taught that we serve one God, but within this one God, there are 3 entities - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Even in songs that I sang

in Kindergarten Sabbath School talked about a “God with 3 names” and that “each one is different but they’re really the same”. As simple human beings, this is a concept that is above our intellect and so we must simply have faith that these 3 heavenly beings exist within one God-head. It is comforting to know that we have a Holy Trinity as a God to help guide our path. They each seem to have different things they do but they all are all knowing, ever-present, and all-helping. I truly appreciate this belief and fully believe it myself. I believe that this belief is important because this is what is described to us in the Bible and through the writings of Ellen White. The trinity is our God, our Lord, and our Savior and as Christians, we must truly believe that God is there. This belief is also important because it lays out exactly what the trinity does and stands for (immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, etc) So we know exactly who the trinity and what they are in our lives. This belief also gives us the instructions that they are to be worshiped. God is our creator and we are to give him praise not only for life but for the plan of salvation for us all. This belief is relevant in my life simply because it gives me the picture of the God-head that I do believe in and worship. As a raised Seventh-Day Adventist, I continually want to learn more and research who the God-head is and this belief helps me to gain better knowledge of that. The workings and moving’s of the God-head and how they work together is so interesting.

**Participant 18:** This fundamental sets the Seventh-day Adventist church's stance on the identity of God and of the Trinity. I agree with the interpretation of the Trinity as three co-eternal beings yet He is one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This fundamental is very important, vital even, for obtaining a proper understanding of the Trinity. Without this fundamental, fundamentals 3, 4, and 5 would have no meaning. Establishing that the trinity exists, and how the three aspects relate to each other is the first step before getting to know and understand the three parts individually. I believe that understanding how the Trinity works is important to learning about, and getting to know, the three aspects of God. Without first understanding the Trinity, that God is three yet one, it is hard to see the different aspects of the three parts of God. Yet it is also sometimes difficult to comprehend how God can be three yet one, for the Lord our God is one God.

**Participant 19:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 20:** I like the Godhead fundamental because it teaches the reader that God is composed of three beings working together as one. By learning about each being, we gain an understanding of who God is. This fundamental goes along with the Bible. For example, in Genesis, it says that we were created in their image. This fundamental is important because people need to know how God works. The Father is the source, the Son is our mediator and the Holy Spirit is the applier. The Godhead fundamental is relevant in my life because I learned how the working relationship within the Godhead can save us through God's grace and love. This chapter gave me an overview about who God is as a whole.

**Participant 21:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 22:** I like that we believe in one God and that He is all powerful. To be honest, there are some things that I can't fully understand and that at the same time I know them to be right. Like, how is it that they are three? All I can say is that I've come to understand that they are not human, therefore is not three humans in one. It gives me hope to know that there is a God who knows everything I don't, and that He can do ANYTHING. It is very important because we establish that we believe in the Trinity. Not all denominations do, therefore is good to let other people what we have come to understand from the Bible. It is relevant. When we pray, we usually start by “Dear heavenly Father” and end with “in the name of Jesus, amen”. We ask for the Holy Spirit to guide us thru the day. We acknowledge them every day, especially when we pray.

**Participant 23:** I love this chapter because it briefly went in depth with the Godhead [Removed – Identifying Information – personal details of participant] because it is challenging and makes you want to search deeper because of all the mysteries within the Godhead. I liked the part on pg. 30 in A Working Relationship that said, “The

Father gave His Son, Christ gave Himself, and the Spirit gave Jesus birth...The Father giving encouragement, Christ giving Himself to be baptized as our example, and the spirit giving Himself to Jesus to empower Him. This little passage revealed to me how humble the Godhead is, God is humble to Himself; meaning that they all three submitted to each other's will, in a sense they all three denied self for each other. I didn't like how short this chapter and each point within the chapter was because this is the concept that many Adventist including Christians who believe in the trinity of God struggle with and, although it is a hard concept for humanity to grasp, there should have been more said because there is more to know. I believe this fundamental is important because we as Adventist need to know and understand the God we serve and all His attributes, which will continuously keep us in His service, because if we don't know the God we serve we cannot know what He stands for or what He likes and dislikes. This is relevant in my life because the loving relationship within the Godhead is the relationship we should have with one another as Adventist and humanity and with God. The trinity was in service to one another, which is how God wants us to be in service with each other and show love for one another. The more God reveals about Himself the more we'll understand what it means to love and be loved.

**Participant 24:** "God can be known..." writes SDAB on page 24 of chapter 2. For some reason I've always enjoyed listening to discussions involving the Trinity. What I like about this fundamental is the fact that it continues the Trinity discussion, except this time it classifies it as one: The Godhead. More so, for the non-believer who maybe reading this book (at least in my opinion), page 24 also points out a few ways or methods for obtaining a rudimental knowledge of whom God might be before proceeding with the Trinitarian discussion(s). There isn't really any point/writing in particular I found to my dislike in this chapter. I very much think that this fundamental is an important one. Talking about the Godhead, this chapter illustrates the existence of God after all using examples like the beauty of Nature and citing certain biblical characters as well such as David and Paul, two whom also adored it (nature). In order to discuss the greater form of any substance or being, the Godhead for example, properties which constitute the basic form (God in this case), have to be introduced. This fundamental is relevant in my life because the more I read into it, I felt as if I was beginning to pick on a few characteristics of God himself. I don't know about anybody else but for me, I feel as though in order to be an admirable leader of a home (which I hope to become), I must embody similar qualities/characteristics as did God himself, or the Godhead.

**Participant 25:** What I liked was how they mentioned how the Father, Son, Holy Spirit are equally self-existent and equal. That is true that all 3 parts of the Godhead are equal and each play their own role. The Holy Spirit I see is what drives and helps us to get to Christ and to continue his footsteps. How the Holy Spirit is from not just the Father but from the son also. This fundamental is what helps us; this is what Jesus left for us to be able to feel like they are near as they are in heaven. The Holy Spirit helps us and guides us and his mission to convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment is all true. The Holy Spirit is here to help and but also to show us where the way goes. It says if we ignore the Holy Spirit we are ignoring God the Father and the Son. We must follow the Holy Spirit because he is here for us.

**Participant 26:** To me, the Godhead always seemed to confuse me the most. There is only one God and that God is divine, loving, and all-powerful. When this doctrine is being explained, they present the different names of God—Elohim, Yahweh, Elyon, and El Shaddai. I liked this because it showed our God's different characteristics and attributes. These names are powerful and great and they try to describe God as the source of blessing and comfort, the almighty Ruler, the Creator, and the strong and mighty One. I like how the doctrine says the relationship with the three—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are "a unity of three co-eternal persons having a unique and mysterious relationship." It's something hard to understand; I believe that if you look deeper into it with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will be able to get an idea of what that unity is. This fundamental is very important and crucial to understand because as a Seventh - day Adventist, we are monotheistic. We should understand that the Godhead is three Persons, but is one God. There is no distance between the three. "While the Godhead is not one in person, God is one in purpose, mind, and character."

**Participant 27:** This fundamental belief is very important when it comes to Adventist belief or in many religious beliefs. To have this belief is the bases of this religious belief. You have to believe in a God to have a belief that there is something more to this life. This belief begins the bases to many religious beliefs. It is the start of believing there is something more out there, giving people a reason to have purpose in their lives. This fundamental is important because, like stated earlier, a basic of belief. When you start to have a belief that there is someone and this someone is the almighty Godhead that is always there helping you, catching you when you fall and always there to just be there is fundamentally important to a budding faith. This is relevant to my life because when I choose to start a relationship with God, not just the son, I needed to understand that God is three in one and he has a community that shows how to be with someone. He always cares and the Godhead is the beginning of showing how he is there for companionship and lovingness.

**Participant 28:** I like that face that is explains the Godhead in a succinct way that is easy to understand. I think it's important because people need to understand that the Godhead is the most important thing that we should be worshipping, and people also should know that He is worthy of all our praise and adoration. The fundamental is very relevant to my life, because it lets me know who is in charge and who I can go to for help. And even though He is beyond my comprehension, I can still understand Him by using the Bible and the words that He spoke in it.

**Participant 29:** I believe that The Godhead is probably one of the fundamentals that it is difficult to grasp. There is one God with the father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a unity of Persons. Yes that can get confusing to some. What I like about this fundamental is that God is everything. I mean obviously God would be everything because He is the ultimate creator, but what I mean is God is not a being sitting on His throne, He is Jesus who came down on to earth to die and the Holy Spirit who fulfills and inspires us Christians. This explains why God is almighty and powerful. This fundamental is important because of what I said before: God is everything. There are no other gods in heaven who rule over or do certain things, God is the only being and He is three persons in one. By knowing and understanding this we can have an idea of knowing the Creator of all. Knowing our God is important because how we can follow Him if we don't know Him? For my own personal Christian journey, The Godhead is relevant to my life. Reasons being is because of what I've read and learned. I have a relationship with God and I know that wouldn't be if His Son, Jesus Christ, did not die on the cross. Certain decisions that I have made could have been the wrong ones if the Holy Spirit did not intervene. What I am trying to say is that the Trinity makes up my understanding and relationship with the one true God.

**Participant 30:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 31:** There is really nothing to dislike about this fundamental belief. If you dislike this fundamental belief, then you cannot possibly believe in God. The Godhead can be a very simple and also a very complex perception. The one God consists of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. I like this fundamental belief because it displays the image of an all-powerful, immortal, all-knowing God, and I believe many people, including myself, forget how all-knowing and powerful our really is, and we bring God down to a human level of knowledge and power. This fundamental is extremely important. Without the Godhead, then what is Christianity? What do we believe in? Without God, we have no revelation and salvation through him. This fundamental is very relevant in my life because viewing God as almighty humbles me. If I try to learn about God depending on human wisdom alone, I know that it will be a never ending and pointless search. Like the book said, it's like using a magnifying glass to study the constellations. I also realize through this fundamental that Christianity isn't our quest for God, but God's purpose for me.

**Participant 32:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 33:** This belief I don't have must objection to because as far as I am concerned it doesn't do any harm to believe in just 3 in 1 or 1 God - although the concept is quite hard to understand. It's like saying we have three



people in the position of presidents but all of them answer your questions. However throughout the bible we never hear anything of the holy spirit until Jesus" leaves and then we are always being taught that the Father needs to be reminded by the son that we are worth saving. I can't see those 3 people sharing one job giving us the only the Answers YES, Wait, or No. It's important because we created it to explain why the bible mentions 3 different beings at different times in the bible, I don't understand it. This fundamental is not very relevant to my life because it really doesn't matter if its 3 or one. It only matter if I have a relationship with The Son and then if I make to heaven, if there is even a heaven, then I can really dissect the authority ladder in the heavenly courts.

**Participant 34:** What I like in the fundamental of the Godhead is that the knowledge of all three can be found in the Bible. It made me a little uneasy at first to know that the Bible doesn't actually say the "trinity", but I know see that that is implied without saying the actual word. I believe this fundamental is very important if we say that we believe exactly what the Bible says without changing it. We believe it provides evidence for each part of the Godhead. God the Father is shown in the Old Testament, and Jesus and the Holy Spirit are explained more in the New Testament. And like it says in the book, that God is not proven to exist, but it is assumed by saying in the beginning he created the world. It is very relevant to my life because I believe that the Old Testament is just as important as the New Testament. God the Father is shown in the NT but the main focus of the OT is on the Father. I believe in all three parts of the Godhead and they all display specific roles in my life today.

**Participant 35:** I like the fact that this chapter emphasizes that God revealed Himself to us in His mercy and that we need to be open to learning about Him; God is not a textbook, so we need to approach Him differently. We have to have faith. I think this fundamental is important because it starts to explain the qualities of God that He has revealed to us through the Bible. It also attempts to explain the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It explains that we are not polytheistic but we believe that all three are one God. This fundamental is relevant to me because it helped to explain the Trinity a bit more. I have always been a little confused about the belief because it seems so hard to wrap my mind around. I don't think that anyone can fully explain the mystery of the Trinity but this fundamental made it a little clearer.

**Participant 36:** I like this believe because it is interesting and unique. Adventists' belief in one God who is three persons together is very unusual and to me appealing. I like the idea of a God that has multiple parts but who all work together as one. I think it is important because the Bible clearly states that there is ONE true God. Yet it mentions three people. We need to understand and accept this relationship of the Trinity for the Bible to remain true. It is not a belief I personally spend much time thinking about. I accept it without thought because it has always been part of my understanding of God.

**Participant 37:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 38:** The Trinity is a difficult concept to understand why Seventh Day Adventist established it into their faith during the progression of their faith. The Trinity, states that there is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit all co-living in a person. A dear friend of mine left the church because of the Trinity concept. He quoted, the SDA's adopted this into their faith, since the U.S government would not acknowledge them as a denomination of Christianity. Thus, in order not to be entitled as a cult, they adopted the Trinity into their faith. My father who is [Removed – Identifying Information – religion], stated as well, that while learning the SDA faith, it was unclear to him as why the Trinity concept existed. I too, have a hard time understanding the Trinity concept. For the Trinity concept to be clear and versatile, it needs to be broken down with bible quotes proving the Trinity exists. Out of all the concepts in the bible, this is the one that I truly find interesting. I believe this concept is important since it's the belief of all Christianity denomination. Therefore, as Seventh day Adventist we believe it's important to truly understand God's faith. However, I do not believe it's the key component for salvation.

**Participant 39:** It takes faith to believe in a God that you cannot see. That's why God said without faith it is impossible to please him. I feel positive about this fundamental because God can be known. If a person really wants to know God all they have to do is search and they will find him. Some knowledge only comes from God. The knowledge of spiritual things only come from him our nature cannot understand spiritual things. There are many different things we can look at to see that God exist. We can look at creation, scripture, and nature. I think this fundamental is fine just the way it is. It helps us to understand there is God. The strengths are naming the names of God. We have to understand that God is concern with ever things in our lives. His name represents who his is. To one person he might be one thing and to someone else he can be something totally different. It talks about salvation. Salvation is very important. I think it is fine just the way it is for young adults. It talks about a lot of important stuff that young adults need to know like having an oneness with God and how important a relationship with him is.

**Participant 40:** I will be honest, learning and accepting this doctrine was rather challenging for me as I was going through baptismal classes. I just could not fathom the fact that God was three in one. Reading this fundamental was actually very interesting. It was very clear and straightforward. I feel as though I have gained a better understanding of this fundamental. One statement that really stood out to me while reading this fundamental stated, "unlike other knowledge, the knowledge of God is as much a matter of the heart as it is of the brain. It involves the whole person, not just the intellect. There must be openness to the Holy Spirit and a willingness to do God's will (John 7:17; cf. Matt. 11:27). Jesus said, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." I think this fundamental is extremely important to Christian believers. We must be willing to believe and accept God in his totality, not just parts of Him or the Godhead. As a believer in Christ, I must accept the Godhead and believe in its total power. I must consider all forms of God. I must practice and abide by all the philosophies and teachings of the Godhead. When I was going through baptismal classes, I was very uncertain on how I felt regarding the Godhead; however, with age, I have been able to better understand and accept the godhead.

**Participant 41:** I like this belief because of its statement of a God who is not only all knowing or all powerful but also reveres the existence of Jesus as son and the presence of the Holy spirit. I also like how it depicts a God who despite His grandeur and Holiness is willing to reveal Himself to humanity. However, most of these conclusions were deduced from the implicit messages of the belief rather than the explicit. The importance of this belief stems from its testament to the Trinity as an important part to the image of God. It creates an image of a God who is relationship oriented a God who is omnipotent yet loving and willing to create a connection with humanity through The son and the spirit. I guess I find relevance in this fundament as a person who claims to be a believer in the Adventist faith. The Trinity serves as a driving force in the image of God and our understanding of Him. Many sermons and scriptures even, utilize the picture of a Trinity to create the image of a God who is One yet many – whose omnipotence doesn't hinder the love He has or His desire to love. I guess I agree with many of the statements since I'm an Adventist and a millennial. I grew up discovering and being taught the image of a loving God who reveals Himself through the spirit and nature. The trinity allows God to become a more "human" being, easier to understand, and comprehend...as much as possible.

**Participant 42:** The Godhead is a hard fundamental to clarify and leaves many questions like the Trinity and the function of each part of the Godhead in question until later fundamentals. I liked the clarity and hopeful tone of this chapter although I think the information was too general to be of practical use. "We must subject ourselves to [the Bible's] principles and methods..." without explaining those principles and methods is of no practical use. I do love the part of this chapter that lists God's names and attempts to describe him. This is a useful compilation of what we know about God through his self-revelation. I think this fundamental is the second most important because without a belief in God, all of salvation and purpose is lost. The Bible tries its best to explain the unexplainable, God, and though it may be confusing and difficult at first, continued study will only illuminate, not cloud God's self revelation. God's true nature is perhaps the most fundamental and pivotal point of human history because not only is it the

cause of countless war crimes, violent uprisings, and genocides, it is the entire purpose of our struggle against sin. This fundamental is also a vital one to my spiritual and my physical life as well. Without God I truly believe that there is no purpose to our lives on this earth and in fact, there is no explanation for our lives at all. The nature of God is also very important as it determines the interaction I have with him. I believe that God is mostly kind and loving and gracious but that he also is a fair judge and is very protective as well as unafraid of going to any extremes in order to win back his children.

**Participant 43:** I like the fact that there is a God for us to worship. I also like the fact that they took the time to record the scripture passages that support the doctrine. But what I dislike is that they explain Him as three co-eternal persons but keep say he instead of they. Not only that there is no aspect of relationship in this doctrine. As one of the participants said "Mention is given of the rewards God receives for being God, however, no mention is made of the rewards humans receive for revering God." This seems to me to be a one-way relationship with God receiving and we getting nothing. The word just does not seem relational to me. I believe this fundamental belief is important because as I look around my neighborhood and even on the television it almost seems like anything goes in churches today. Church seems not to have any structure; no belief and they are preaching anything. I believe if preaching is taking place it should be structural and comes from the bible. I see this believe as being relevant in my life because there are so many teachings about God and who He is and sometimes I get confused. But as I study this I think I am becoming more and more clear as to who God is and I'm able to give an explanation of who He is to me. I must say that I can resonate with much of the report and I do understand where many of the participants are coming from but I do not agree with everything that is said. I don't see God as being impossible to understand I just believe we can't know everything about Him. But He affords us the privilege to know and understand enough to have a relationship. Also I have always view the Trinity as three persons within one unit. So when I pray they all hear at the same time. So I don't get confused as to who I am really praying to. I think the study was truly insightful.

**Participant 44:** I like that it states that it is possible to know God. Many people (including myself) believed at some point that knowing God and having a personal relationship is impossible. It is something that only really worthy people deserve or get the chance at. But the fundamental states how although we can never know God completely, He still wants us to search after Him and be Christians after His heart. We can know God on a personal level because He does exist and He desires it as well! This fundamental is important because it explains one of the most confusing aspects of God: His plurality. Many people do not fully understand what this means, including myself, and it is good to see that Adventists have a firm understanding of what they believe. It also helps the reader see that whatever God did was to show and explain how much He loves us. It is all pointed towards His love and desire for our salvation. This is extremely relevant to my life. First it explains that we can see God's existence not only through Scriptures but also through Nature. It is another builder of faith for myself. Also it shows God's desire to save us from sin and His undying love for us. How the Godhead plays a major role in each of our personal relationships.

**Participant 45:** I like the simple terms in which this fundamental explains the concept of the Trinity--three Gods in One. Furthermore, I appreciate this fundamental's description of God's attributes that demand our praise and service. I believe that an understanding of the nature of God is crucial to developing a relationship with our Creator. It is essential to the story of salvation that we understand the nature of Jesus Christ, as both God and man. I believe that this fundamental's call for service and obedience to God is important, just as it is important to understand the reasons for serving God. One of the most important aspects of this fundamental is the explanation that, while God is beyond human comprehension, He may still be known and served. My belief in this fundamental requires that I develop a relationship with each of the three co-eternal Persons that make up the Godhead. I must allow the Holy Spirit to guide my life and to conform me to the Father's will. I must recognize Jesus Christ, as well as His sacrifice, as the means by which I can be reconciled with my heavenly Father. Finally, I must recognize that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is a divine sacrifice, not simply the sacrifice of a human life.

**Participant 46:** I like that the book breaks down what the God is, what it represents, and what kind of relationship each one has within the Godhead. I felt it was a good thing to explain to the reader that it you must also believe to be true. There is a small chance that if you base the existence of God on facts alone, you may be led astray. I also like that it helps you understand that the relationship that the Trinity have with each other is a very loving one. It also points out that they love that the trinity has for us is something that we cannot comprehend, but it suggests to us that we should only focus on salvation, and that God will guard our hearts. What I did not like is that, in my opinion, the book did not give concrete evidence that the Godhead exists. We live in a world of proof, so is it too farfetched to hope that the Bible could show a little bit more evidence so that we can prove his existence? If people claim that God is a god of science, then it cannot seem wrong to think that we, as Christians, would be able to prove the trinity's existence through his word. I think that this fundamental is important because it helps people have a better understanding of what they believe in and who they believe in. It explains the type of relationship that the Godhead has with each other, and in some ways we should try to strive to have something similar. I also think that it may not be as important to have as a fundamental because regardless of your denomination, you should believe in the Trinity if you consider yourself as a Christian. I think this fundamental is irrelevant to my life because although I have been an Adventist my whole life, I never paid too much attention to their Fundamentals. I believed what I was taught from my family, and what I learned from studying the word on my own. I believe that is what it comes down to, you get into heaven based on the relationship you have with God, not the beliefs that we created for our Religion.

**Participant 47:** I like the description of the trinity that is in the fundamental. I am just still really confused about the idea overall. I believe in the trinity, but my brain has a hard time wrapping itself around the whole 3 people in one thing. I believe that this fundamental is important because it begins to set the tone of what God is to us as a church. I have a hard time answering this question because I have a hard time wrapping my mind around the trinity. I like having three people to go to... but at the same time, I only have one God. Its hard to figure out. I agree with the reading. It is confusing. I believe that the trinity is important and all three equal, but its still confusing.

**Participant 48:** What I do like about the fundamental of Trinity is the fact that there seems to be an order of Holy reign. Yes I believe God does everything and IS everything, but it is nice to see that there is a distribution of "tasks" of the mighty three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yes I do have some confusion of the Trinity nut the most important thing about it is that it is there to love us, to care for us, and to meet them soon. I think this fundamental is important because having the three components gives us an authority to look upon. For us to recognize this trinity as something that interacts with us every day and looks over us. It is important to know that this is God, for He is always and he is time, thus believing the fact that he is three in one. The Trinity is something I still have to think hard about cause I don't quite understand it, but I believe in it and see it is God's love in different ways that He sends out to make me feel like His. I do agree and disagree with each of the young adult responses. As do I, I have to agree with these responses with the fact that I am also confused and not so certain on what the details are about the trinity. Yes I understand who/what it is, but the minor details are what I want to know.

**Participant 49:** The topic related to The Trinity is very complex and it takes some thought process and deep study time to grasp the concept of the three deities. First of all, I dislike how it is still confusing to people and even to me because the churches now don't clarify what exactly the concept is. Therefore, there are people in our society that don't know and have different ideologies about the Trinity. I like the idea that we humans should be able to understand God more so we can worship and adore him adequately without any doubts. This Fundamental is very important in this case, because it is a belief that we accept and supposedly practice as we worship God in our daily lives. In fact, because of the Trinity there are three divine beings that we already know about, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As Christians we recognize all three, but if someone from a different religious group wonders what the Trinity means and we don't know exactly what the concept is and what it means, how then are we supposed to fulfill the purpose of God in this earth and explain this to others? The Trinity fundamental is essential

for us to be able to have a visual concept and to share it with others. The Trinity is relevant in my life and probably in other people's lives because it gives us a definition of who God is alongside the Son and Holy Spirit, and the role they have in our salvation. In essence, we know what and who to worship to, and when we do worship we know who to count on and place our faith in. By all means I agree with the statement which says "the trinity is a complex and difficult topic to explain." I agree that people have trouble in trying to comprehend the subject but get confused trying to figure it out. It is difficult to come to one conclusion when there are so many different perspectives about it. If people can't find evidence or a verse that explains this ideology because of lack of knowledge, it is likely that the confusion won't go away. That's why I disagree with the 2 theories it provides because there's no definite answer.

**Participant 50:** I like how the fundamental starts by clearly stating that there is one God. I like very much how it talks about God's character: he is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. I also like how it doesn't use those terms. Without explanation, those are confusing and most people reading it would not understand what is meant by it. I feel like it is vastly important to point out that humans cannot comprehend God and I like how this fact is pointed out. We will never fully understand Him. It is humanly impossible. However, God chooses to tell us about His character and I like how this too is pointed out. I don't like how vague the explanation of the trinity is though. This is a very confusing topic and I feel like it could be worded a little better. One of the most important things that we believe as Adventists is that there is one God, three in one. This is one thing that makes us unique from other religions, specifically eastern religions. Without this fundamental, many of our underlying beliefs would not have grounds to stand on. This fundamental is also very important because it points out that we are less than God. He is so much greater and powerful than we as humans will ever be able to imagine. In this fundamental, probably the most relevant thing to my life is the character of God. He is always with me, and can do anything. As life presents me with challenges, I know that I can count on Him because of this.

**Participant 51:** This belief is a very hard one to grasp. I think the belief is important to have but maybe it should be reworded. I think it should say more on the 3 person aspect. If you don't grow up Adventist and even if you did grow up in it. It is very confusing. It makes it sound like there are multiple God's which there isn't. If there was a little bit more clarification it would help. But the description of the power of the trinity was said nicely. It is important to understand that they are separate yet together, because in the bible they interact differently with people so they each give us a different understanding of who God is. This is relevant because it explains the power, glory and incomprehensibility of God. The worship of God is an important aspect of my life. This reminds me of who I am worship through the talents he has given me. I agree with the 44% that are confused by this belief. It needs to be reworded. I also like how it can be compared with how humans and interact with each other. Something that I didn't agree with though was that we need to fully understand him to worship him. There are plenty of other descriptions of who God is. I think it is more important to understand what his character is, rather than understand the little details.

**Participant 52:** The Trinity has been a concept that always confuses me a little. The thing I like is that while we do believe that there is only one God, the Trinity is an idea that God meets us where we are, and these parts of Him are present because of His will. Although I don't like that some people may misunderstand this idea and call us polytheistic, it really is hard to explain it. The Bible doesn't mention Trinity anywhere, but I do believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are representative of His plan and His works. I think it's important to realize and understand that while this is a belief, it's very possible that we have it wrong. All we know so far is because God allows us to know, so our idea of the Trinity could change. The relevance of this to my life lies in the fact that while I do not fully comprehend what this fundamental is, having three ways to look at God shows me a more full picture of His love and grace, but still very incomplete.

**Participant 53:** I liked that people were actually talking seriously about this topic. It can be quite confusing thinking God is 3 separate beings or 3 parts that make one God. I would probably fit into the category that says "The Trinity is one God that has 3 components" however I also believe that it's not just components but rather 3 distinct entities that make up what we know as God. It sounds a little confusing but I find it understandable. This fundamental is important because there is a lot of confusion about it. According to the reading, there were a lot of diverse responses. This means that that this fundamental should be looked over to try to find things to clear up the unknown. However, I agree with the person that stated that whether you think the Trinity is three separate beings or 3 beings making up one, it doesn't matter because that's not going to bring salvation. Honestly I wasn't surprised at the findings. I have struggled trying to figure just what is the Trinity but I have learned to not worry about it. I agree with the statement about God being 3 separate beings and the statement that God is one.

**Participant 54:** I value this fundamental because it reminds us that God is the center of everything. It is so easy to forget this even though it is so obvious. We often look straight at the works like eating according to the dietary laws, not shopping on Sabbath etc. and think we are doing what it means to be a Christian. However, the focus should be on the presence of the Godhead (the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit). If we recognize He exists in our lives, then our faith will grow and our works will settle into place. I think this fundamental should be put first, before the Word of God. I see it as this: if a man wrote a book with all the answers to life, how could we put the book before the man when the man already has the things in the book and more? Shouldn't we go to the man and look for more information directly from the source? The Bible works to glorify the Godhead, yet how does it make sense that we put the lesser before the greater? I believe that the recognition of God's almightiness and existence in three forms is very important. Many times I get frustrated with God because there are questions that people on earth can't answer. For example, if God is all knowing and all-powerful, how could he allow innocent people to die? Especially little children to brutal diseases like cancer. Although I know the typical answer is "we shouldn't try to make sense of God's plan from a human perspective because He is God and He can do things that we do not know." But I want to know a more concrete solution to this problem. God is praised to be El Shaddai, God Almighty, yet this is the very reason why I doubt and feel lost. My younger brother turned away from Christianity when he started to deal with this same question and I always felt powerless that I had no solution to give him.

**Participant 55:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 56:** I don't like how we pretty much know nothing about God (other than what he "tells" us) yet "He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation." Why? Because he supposedly created us? That seems like a low level of reasoning and critical thinking to me. It is important for those who believe in God because it defines him as and makes him exactly that—a god. Immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. Those are all common characteristics of gods from every religion. Every group of people for some reason wants to believe in and worship someone like that. But why? Why the need? It makes him infallible and immortal, and thus, the penultimate point of worship. I believe that knowledge is the only thing that is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. I agree with a lot of what was said. It is difficult to understand. Can SDAs call themselves monotheists if they believe in three separate parts of God? Some of it just doesn't make sense.

**Participant 57:** One thing that I did not care for when looking at this fundamental belief was that there was not a larger explanation regarding the concept of three-in-one. I find this to be a very deep concept and one which needs a greater explanation than simply saying that the God-head is a unity of three coeternal beings. What type of unity are they? How are they one GOD when there are three of them? These are all questions which I think the belief should give a greater account for. I also didn't find that they gave many verses that talked about anything outside of providing biblical basis for the separation of the God head. There should be more references to the powers/nature of GOD provided. This fundamental belief is incredibly important as it discusses the nature and basis of the first

fundamental belief. As our entire religion is founded around the bible, which is founded around the concept and person of God this belief is really the basis of all of Christianity. This belief is needed in order to establish the importance of Jesus as it clarifies him as wholly GOD, which protects against the Arian view of Jesus as someone who is begot by GOD but not GOD. This idea is problematic as it would mean that anyone could have been used to bring us salvation, and doesn't fully reveal the love of GOD's character as he simply passed the responsibility onto someone else. This fundamental belief is relevant in my life as it affirms my belief that there are three parts of the GOD head. It also describes that GOD is beyond human comprehension. This is especially relevant to my life as a Christian because there will be times when I will struggle with the concept of GOD. This belief lets me know that these struggles and questions are okay, it lets me know that even though GOD is impossible, that doesn't make him any less real. And that is very relevant. I agree with much of what was said in the report, specifically the discussion about how the belief is slightly ambiguous. I do not necessarily agree with the argument that proof for GOD can be found in nature. I do think that looking into nature can provide evidence that there was some form of intelligent design, but this would be a guess at best, and no real indication about the nature of GOD could be arrived at. I did not agree with the conclusion that if GOD wants to be worshiped we should be allowed to understand him completely. As humans live within a closed environment, there is only so much that we can relate to, so if GOD is much greater and vast than anything that this world has to offer there is nothing that we could liken it to, therefore preventing understanding.

**Participant 58:** In this fundamental, I love the fact that it states that God is all-powerful and that nothing is impossible with Him. In addition, I like the statement that God is all-knowing. What an assurance of peace knowing that God knows everything about ME and has a perfect plan for my life. Just as comforting is the fact that He is ever present. We cannot hide from God. Even when it seems that God has forgotten about us, He is there because He is ever present. I believe this fundamental is important because it shows us who God is. He is one God, yet a unity of three co-eternal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It shows that God is infinite, and we are finite; thus, we cannot fully understand Him because He is infinite. However, He wants us to know Him despite our limited, finite view of Him. This fundamental is relevant in my life because it shows my life purpose. I am to give worship, adoration, and service to God because He is my creator. He is the reason I live and move and have my being (Acts 17:28). I agree with the summary report that the belief is ambiguous about three in one and the room for conflict. I think part of the conflict lies within using the prefixes Mono- and Tri- to define our beliefs of Monotheism and the Trinity. How can a prefix meaning one and a prefix meaning three refer to the same thing? The Bible uses the word Godhead to describe the trinity (Acts 17:29; Rom 1:0; Col 2:9). Also, E.G. White uses the word Godhead to describe the trinity (DA 671.2, DA 663.5, CH 222.1, EV 614.2-615.1). This switch of terminology might possibly limit the confusion caused by the prefixes.

**Participant 59:** -What I enjoy most about reading and learning about the Godhead is that it is eventually one common theme. The Godhead may have three separate compartments (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) but all of them perform diligently together and for the same cause: the salvation for all. The fact that we choose to talk too and mention all three separately, accordingly to their "jobs" is another feature that can accommodate for our human understanding. For example, when one wants to be enriched, and flourished with the burning passion for Christ, we often refer that to the acceptance and giving of the Holy Spirit; though when it all boils down, it is not the Holy Spirit alone, but also God the Father and God the Son. As humans we take many things quite literal, so to mention three beings in one, it is a hard concept to take hold of. That is the reason why we mention the three separately in certain situations, but understand that they are eventually one all together. It is important because this triune is not only divine, but also they share everything equally. As humans, we are used to only one person having high power (kings, presidents, dictators, etc....) but the Godhead, together, as final authority without unbalance. Each part of the Godhead has certain qualities and specific jobs they all perform but it's all in unison with each other. Which means they can provide for all people, no matter what they need whether

it is the asking of the God the Father, God the Son, or the Holy Spirit, because asking for one is asking for all. "God is one in purpose, mind, and character." As described earlier, I feel as though it's relevant because we face many obstacles in our daily lives, and need different "parts" of the Godhead. Some days I feel the need to ask for God the Father, and God the Son before I ask for help from the Holy Spirit. It's not that they are all different (because they are one of the same) but it's because I grew up believing that they all have separate jobs in which they are there for. In my opinion, though they are the same, there is a certain hierarchy. I believe that before getting to know God the Father, and God the Son, one needs the enlightenment and realization of the Holy Spirit. Even now, growing up in the SDA life, I still cannot grasp the idea of three separate beings being One, but I do believe that they are in one likeness and goal for the goal of humanity, its salvation, and that one day we will be able to go back to our real home, heaven.

**Participant 60:** I like this fundamental discuss the unity of Godhead. It's always been a perplexing topic to me. But when I choose to take it simply, it makes much more sense. I like the idea of a united entity working to bring us (humans) home where we belong. I also like that there are many instances in the Bible where the oneness of the Godhead is emphasized or just mentioned. I read scriptures in this chapter that reaffirmed the existence of the 3-part-entity we serve as God. I believe this fundamental is important because it describes the surface of who God is and are. It's weird saying, "Who God... are?" However, it makes the most sense. As Christians who choose to live a Christ like life, we have to be fully aware of the God that we have decided to serve. It's important that this fundamental belief does not get misinterpreted as meaning that we serve three Gods. The authors of this book are clear in stating that the God we serve is split in three, serving three purposes with only one goal in mind. This fact, though it can be difficult to understand, is one of the most necessary beliefs of Christianity. This fundamental is relevant to my life because I, as a Christian, have to know who I'm serving and what benefits I get from it. I feel the Holy Spirit stirring in my heart, reminding me of my decision to accept Jesus' sacrifice for the winning of my soul so that I can live eternally with God the Father and all His children. That three-part Godhead is designed to give me the fullest joys out of life.

**Participant 61:** I like the idea of having the conversation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I feel that this is a topic that isn't fully explained to young people as we are growing up and many/most of us are confused about what these terms mean and how it all works. I think it is important to understand how there can be three separate entities that all work in connection with one another. I believe it is relevant because as a Christian I need to understand how this works. I think understanding this concept can allow me to have a better relationship with God. God must really be this awesome being to function in this way. I believe the findings are in keeping with how many young people view this concept. It is confusing. We human beings have some very human ways of comprehending things. How can we comprehend eternity when all we've known all our lives are beginnings and ends. To try and comprehend a universe that goes on and on and doesn't come up to a wall that signifies the end is hard for us to comprehend. Therefore, trying to understand three unique individuals, with three unique missions that form one cohesive unit is more than difficult to understand. Once again, our church needs to do a better job of conveying this concept. It is a wonderful concept. I think one that shows how organized and focused God is on reaching all of His creation.

**Participant 62:** The idea of a Trinity is something that we, as humans, can not fully comprehend. How would we understand how three Persons are the same God? I do not like how this fundamental is confusing and difficult to grasp. But I do believe that there is a Trinity. There is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so this idea of a Trinity clearly associates them with one another. In my opinion, it shows that they are all equally really important and that they perfectly complement each other. This fundamental is really important because the Trinity makes them equally central to our lives. It does not set one of them as higher than another or more powerful than another. This fundamental is relevant in our lives because all three are the God who loves us and cares for us. It may be difficult this understand this concept of a Trinity, but we can be rest assured that God is always with us. I agree with



how participants thought that this belief is confusing and difficult to understand and that God is so complex that humans can not understand him while we are on this earth. I also agree with the Trinity being one God with three components. We, of course, do not exactly know how that works but I think that it makes much more sense than the Trinity being three separate Gods. The Bible specifically states that there is only one God. I also disagree that we need to understand God in order to worship Him. It is true that we need to know who God is but since He is eternal and all-powerful, I think that there is no way we can understand all of who he is.

**Participant 63:** This fundamental is complex. It is almost frightening trying to comprehend how God is one, but also three. It's like I can't get my human mind to wrap around the fact that those three operate together creating the trinity. I suppose that's what makes God so awesome. He can be all three, He is the only thing in this universe that can consist of a trinity making Him that much mightier. I like the idea of having three looking out for me. There's an overwhelming sense of love that comes from the trinity working together to save me. I think this fundamental is important because it acknowledges that we believe in all three. A lot of religions, if they even believe in Jesus, they believe he was just a nice man. But the Adventist church accepts all three as the God head. I kind of mentioned it above, but this fundamental is important to me because it serves as a reminder of such power God is and makes me feel almost unworthy that something so complex is worried about my salvation. I think the fundamental is almost irrelevant in my life in a way though just because growing up as an Adventist, I knew nothing else. I suppose I always knew yes, there is the trinity, but never truly comprehended it?

**Participant 64:** The fundamental about the Trinity is one of my puzzling fundamentals to talk about, because even though I understand the fact that there is one God, I still don't understand how are there three persons. This part is what confuses me. Since I was a little kid I always thought of one God, and as I kept on growing up the points of three people, who think like one, make powerful decisions like one, are the God. I think this fundamental has to be most important one because this tells you what we believe in. Many other religions have many gods while we have one, and if we don't study and memorize this fundamental, others can use it against us saying that we have three gods. We have to have knowledge on this fundamental to be able to back up the information that we are talking. This is a relevant fundamental in my life because this to me actually explains my question of why God hasn't appeared to people now a days. In the Bible, in the Old Testament, says that the God the father was with the people. He appeared to them. In the New Testament He send His son Jesus Christ to be among us. Finally after Jesus's resurrection the Holy Spirit is what stayed with us until now. The final point is in the chapter mentions about how the people in Jesus times did not understand the scriptures and that is why they crucified Him. I believed that we have had plenty of time to understand what is what and who is who to believe.

**Participant 65:** For this fundamental although I like it and what it represents, which I think is the complexities of God. I'm a little confused on the matter. The idea that it represents marriage is what confuses me. Although I could see how it represents unity, but immediately that wasn't my thought when I think of the Trinity. I like this fundamental because I feel it represents who God is. And in understanding the Trinity you can understand the many sides of our God. To me the Trinity represents the many different sides of God in 3 forms that we as humans could identify with. When I think of God, I think of the creator the all-powerful and a God of order. When I think of Jesus I think of grace, and salvation, and mercy and understanding. And when I think of the Holy Spirit I think of a small voice that guides us and gives signs of what God intends for us to do according to his will. I think this fundamental is important to our faith because it represents Who we believe in. It tells others of our God and how he is not bound by one definition or a single concept. I think this fundamental will always be relevant in my life because God is relevant. Although I feel there are 3 different individuals, its all under one God. And I feel to be baptized in the Seventh Day Adventist faith, this is one belief that has to be accepted in order to consider yourself a Seventh-Day Adventist. In reading the responses I agree with most of them about it being confusing to understand the concept that the Trinity is under one Godhead. But I also feel that for us as humans this should be expected. I feel its impossible to fully understand who God is , because there are many, many aspects of him that no one knows-one

being who created Him? That idea that our God is that great, that he didn't need to be created and something can stand outside of time is mind blowing to us as humans because we dwell in time and to us things must have a beginning and end. Also I agree with this fundamental being very important to our faith because most of our beliefs come straight from the bible, and the bible refers several times to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Yet He also makes it known, that there is only one God and there is to be no other God before Him.

**Participant 66:** The second fundamental about The Trinity was very interesting in my opinion because of how simple, yet complex it is to the human mind. God is one. Yet there is 3 in 1. I learned it as though you have say the name of a band. Then you have each member that makes up the band. This is a very hard thing because we as sinners are so corrupted that we cannot comprehend what majesty we serve and know. The best part is how it ties into the first fundamental belief of the Holy Scripture because through that, we know God and have an understanding of the fact that such a big God is personally acceptable for each of us. The verse that stood out to me was 2 Cor. 13:14. It was talking about how God is with us. All three are with us in communion, love, and grace. What more could we ask. I feel this is so beneficial to my generation because when we get it, we don't want to lose it. But we want to pass it on. However, to do that, we must read because God makes the trinity available to us all. That is mind-blowing!

**Participant 67:** I like the attention that is paid to the fact that God is triune, yet one. I believe that it's an important thing to talk about, especially today when so many question whether God is one, or whether He is at all. Also that we can never know everything about God, because He is so much more than we could ever comprehend, but that it is because of His great love for us that He chooses to reveal Himself to us in various ways. Yes, it's extremely important! Without the concept of the Godhead, what meaning would Calvary have for us? What point would there be to our existence? It's also important because we live in a age of such doubt and skepticism, where people demand evidence for God's existence. When we make demands of God, without having faith in the first place, and delving into the search with hearts open, we certainly will not be able to discover God, or even have a chance at it. This fundamental needs to be at the forefront of what we believe. Even though we're Christians, many Christians are beginning to question even this. My belief in the fact that there is a God is what gives meaning to my every day life, it is the reason that I am alive, breathing, why I pray, and in Whom I have faith.

**Participant 68:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 69:** What I like about this fundamental in specifically is because this belief reminds me of when I was young. My father would always tell me that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all together as one. Why I like this is because it is comforting to know that God can play more than one role in our lives, if we decide to look at the trinity in a different perspective. What I dislike about this fundamental belief is that it sometimes is confusing. What I mean by this is not necessarily accepting God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but whenever I talk about God to someone not of the faith, God's identity becomes a blur not only to them, but also to me. I believe that this fundamental belief is important because if we are praying to a God, we as Seventh Day Adventists must know not only the roles of Him, but also His identity, itself. But to be honest with you, there is this part of me that thinks that this fundamental belief is not as important as the other fundamental beliefs because it's not really showing us how to live our lives. All it is doing is informing us who God is. This fundamental belief is not all that relevant in my life because I don't find it necessary, or more so that important to know about the trinity as a whole. I feel as if we as humans should get to know God in whichever way we want. Me getting to know God by understanding the trinity does not do much for me. I agree with some of these findings for the simple fact that the trinity can help better your understanding of God and the different roles He plays, whether it is the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit. But then again depending on who you are the whole concept of the trinity may just end up confusing the mess out of you. I just do not find it important for young adults to really be that aware of it.

**Participant 70:** This fundamental creates a sense of pure holiness as it speaks about the wonder of God. He is regarded to the highest standard and the wording of this fundamental creates a sense of wonder and power in the readers mind, and that is why I like it. The last sentence states that, "He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation and this gives a general sense of what we as Christians should do in our daily walk with God- worship Him, adore Him, and serve Him. This fundamental is important because all things come from God, and without him we are nothing. The wording of this fundamental helps us to know as Christians what kind of person God is and how he will always be there till the end of time and how he has always been there since the beginning of time. He is beyond human comprehension and no one can fathom how he can be made up of three people but without the Godhead, our spiritual lives would not be complete and this fundamental outlines the importance of having all three persons. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it allows me to appreciate God more for the person that He is. He is all-powerful, all knowing, and all present. He never changes from day to day and I know that he will always be there for me come what may. Because of this he is worthy of all praise and adoration, and this fundamental simply strengthens my belief in Him.

**Participant 71:** This fundamental can become very confusing. The whole concept of one god yet "three co eternal persons" can make little to no sense. This is especially true when you can try to teach and educate people about your own faith and they ask you about the God we believe in. It is not something that can be grasped so easily. I think this fundamental is the second one on the list for a reason. It sets the tone for the others because everything about our religion wraps around our God and the love that he has for us and what he has done for us. Understating the three co-eternal persons that we worship and love sets the foundation for understanding everything else that we do as a result of what we believe. As a person who is currently trying to find himself, his way in life and what he believe I think this is a very important aspect that I have to consider. If I cannot accept this then there is little to no point of me continuing down this path. But for the most part I do accept and believe in this concept but I do wonder if this is because of some sort of manipulation by my community which turned into an ingrained habitual way of thinking. I do not necessarily agree that the Trinity shows us how people can work together. They are beings that are omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-knowing. For them not be able to work together would make them lose character. It would humanize them if they couldn't work together. I do agree with the idea that people do think that there are rankings. People think that God the Father is on the top and the Holy Spirit on the bottom.

**Participant 72:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 73:** This belief about the trinity is very important. I like this belief and the way it was articulated. There is one God. We are not a polytheistic group. The way it was explained was good too. I like how it says a "Unity of three co-eternal Persons." I think this fundamental is important because Knowing and understanding who the God the seventh day Adventist serve is very important to people who are intrigued or interested in the denomination. This fundamental is very relevant to my life. When I was going to be baptized and I was learning more about God, at first I didn't really know why people said, "God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." But after understanding the different roles, the relevancy increased. My reaction to the Beyond Belief summary was kind of mixed. Maybe for me the concept of the Trinity was pretty much straight forward. The analogy of the Trinity in relation to marriage was what I agreed with. I agreed with the findings overall because the 44% who had the theological concept of "three co-eternal persons" but "One job" was what I understood and accepted when I was in my learning phase of the Trinity

**Participant 74:** I never really thought of the idea of people thinking that the three sides of the trinity had three different personalities. The idea of that could possibly make sense in a way but not at the same time since they are one. The fundamental of the trinity is an important part in the Adventist community. The Trinity is also something that shapes who we are as Adventist community since we believe in God. It almost seems like the trinity is almost a "requirement". I personally feel that this fundamental isn't that big in my religious life. In church I was are taught

that there are three parts of God but I actually never knew that it was called, "The Trinity." Or if I did they didn't really use its "official" name. I feel that the church really don't "stress" upon this topic. I agreed and slightly disagreed with the summary graph on the trinity. I agree that it is confusing on how there are three separate parts to the trinity, and etc. I didn't exactly agree that the trinity makes it easy to understand God. I was surprised that some people thought that they didn't like this belief and that it is irrelevant. But I've never really asked anyone's opinion on the topic.

**Participant 75:** What I dislike about this fundamental is that it is very hard concept to understand. I have been a seventh day Adventist all my life and I would still find it very difficult to explain it to someone who didn't know what it was. I wish that there could be more sermons on the trinity to explain it better and go into depth about how it actually works. I do think that in a sense it is important. It describes that each part of the trinity has a different role to play in someone's life. Each part of the trinity has a different role and it needs to work together. In my opinion I find it somewhat irrelevant in my life. Once I find something that is too hard for me to understand and when I seek help to try to understand and no one can give me a clear answer I tend to give up on it. I do think that in some way it is important. But I don't really care about going into too much depth about. I do believe in it but it stops there. I don't give it further thought. My reaction to the beyond belief summary is that it was very accurate and I felt like I wasn't alone when it came to this concept of the trinity. The findings in the text stated that 44% of the people interviewed thought the belief is confusing and difficult to understand. One of the concepts that I read that I really liked was that, "The trinity is an example for how Christians can work together." In a way this statement can somewhat help people understand what the trinity is. We should follow this example and work together as Christians to lead more people to Christ.

**Participant 76:** I guess something that I like about this fundamental is that it sets the stage for the next three fundamentals that will follow. I personally like this particular fundamental because it describes our belief in the three in one term. Which is one that not many people understand fully. I think this is something that is important because I feel like the Trinity is one particular aspect of our religion that makes us different compared to all the other religions. Most religions differ from the Advent just purely on the basis that we believe that there is a three in one, three beings entities that are also one. Which even to me is difficult to completely understand. I think that this fundamental is personally relevant to me because it is basically a comforting thought to have, that there are three parts or people of God that have my back basically. It sounds weird, but it is kind of like having a father, the son and then the security blanket (guard). Though we don't see the father or the son everyday physically, we always have that security guard with us, which is like having the father and son. Its awkward to put into words but it makes sense to me. Which is why I guess it's relevant to me.

**Participant 77:** I liked the fact that it describes God as in the trinity but the text is a little vague in the description of the trinity itself, it does state that there is one God though it doesn't clarify the trinity as being three separate beings in the perfect unity as One. Which is what I believe. I also like the fact that it speaks about how God is all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, above human comprehension, and worthy of worship. This fundamental belief is important because you would miss out on certain texts that refer to the trinity and not know what to think when it comes to these texts if you believe that God has only one embodied form. This belief is relevant because it gives me some insight into how God is and that there is more than just a single bodied God in heaven ruling over us. I agree that this topic is confusing that and I also agree that the trinity is one God in which there are three components though it can be confusing. I also don't believe that this belief is irrelevant. The statistics just show that there are some things that need to be clarified.

**Participant 78:** What I like about this fundamental is the fascination of knowing that three beings are "one." It makes me think how that could be, how is that possible, how can three individual beings can be considered one. It makes me want to dig deeper into the word and try to dissect each one of them individually, Father, Son and Holy

Spirit. I also ready a book titled "The Shack" which is about a story of a man who lost his daughter tragically. In that book, the Father is described as mother because of the motherly unconditional love, the Son is described as a man of compassion and a giver, and the Holy Spirit is described as a woman as well for its spirit of patience and calmness. I believe as an Adventist this fundamental is important because it tells us who each of them are in one. The Father was the creator of this world, the Son Jesus came to this world as a man of compassion and as a giver, and the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts for us to change are characters and be more like Jesus. It is kind of the way it is described in the book I mentioned above. This fundamental is relevant to my life because I can personally testify about the changes in my character that were done by the Holy Spirit to build my character closer to Jesus and follow the commandments that God Himself wrote for us. I find it hard to explain in paper or in writing but I am thankful of it. I agree in some way when they mention that the Trinity is a somewhat difficult to understand. How can we make sense of three beings, three people be one? It is a little bit hard to put into thought and perspective. I also agree with finding this fundamental to be fascinating and intriguing to research and study.

**Participant 79:** What I enjoy about this fundamental is how they prove the existence of Godhead. I love how the book uses evidence from creation and scripture to back up and prove the existence of the trinity. Yes, I think it is important because God is the creator. If one can't believe the existence of God, through physical evidence like scripture and creation, then they will have a hard time understanding the Fundamentals. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it proves the sovereignty of God, through His love, worship, and overall attributes. It helps break down the cross, and revealing more and more the journey of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion.

**Participant 80:** I don't dislike anything about this fundamental belief, I just feel like the Godhead is a complicated topic to understand, because I don't understand fully the true concept behind the Godhead. I know that it is because are human mind is limited by the things that we are capable of understanding. But this belief breaks down what exactly the Godhead is and the purpose each part services when discussing the Godhead as one. I really like how the text says the human behavior you see through the life of non-Christians, is still a revelation of God through the way they are living there life. This fundamental belief is important because this is a concept that comes with allot of controversy as well. People can easily get confused when we say we believe in the power of one God, but he has 3 parts that serve a purpose in the entire scheme of things. Until we can somewhat understand the 3 in one existence of God, we won't really understand him. And through understanding God we can better understand ourselves. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it helps me better understand Jesus and when I understand Jesus I can then understand God. I know that God has an ultimate plan for my life since the very beginning. He knew me before I was born and has been there during every moment of my life, even when I felt as though he wasn't near. I want to know what God has planned for me, and to do that I think a step of the process is understanding the Godhead.

**Participant 81:** I liked that this fundamental was the second fundamental in the book. I feel like this is a fundamental that can be confusing to people outside our religion or who are not religious at all. I like this fundamental because I feel this fundamental is very important to Seventh-day Adventists. This fundamental was one that I struggled to understand even though I was born Adventist. I think this fundamental is important because like I mentioned in the earlier question, it's an important fundamental for our religion. This fundamental explains how there is only one God but he is three different aspects/people. This fundamental is important because I feel like while this fundamental may be hard idea to grasp, it's a fundamental we should all know. This fundamental is both relevant and irrelevant in my life. I said it's relevant in my life because I am a Seventh-day Adventist and it's one of the fundamentals I believe in. It's part of my life; when people ask me questions about this fundamental, I feel it's partly my responsibility to answer their questions. I also said it was irrelevant because this fundamental is not one that is part of my everyday life like how Holy Scriptures is. I don't think about this fundamental everyday. I agreed with many of the things that the Beyond Beliefs summary report had. To be honest, even though I grew up Seventh-day Adventist, the Trinity is something I struggle to understand fully. I think I understand parts of it but if someone were to ask me, I don't think I can explain to them perfectly. I really like how this book includes the data tables

where they explain what young adults felt was beneficial and what they thought were problematic areas. I agreed with everything that were in the charts and which chart they were in.

**Participant 82:** I like that there are three entities that make up the Trinity. The idea of three means group cooperation and not isolated from the others. For all three to be ever-present gives me peace of mind that what humanity does is closely watched. Since there is only one God there is only one Creator and that something to glorify and praise. I think it's important to know in detail of the role of the Trinity, which is what makes the topic important. You need to know that whoever is in control over the universe isn't a lonely being isolated from their creation. They are three entities with one purpose and each entity gives us a different perspective of what God is like. God is the creator, the one who is and was and will always be. Christ the Son of God became human to live a life to save His creation. The Holy Spirit was given to us to move our hearts towards the Son and change our hearts and minds to be more spiritually connected. I can see the act of Love and Fellowship that God wants through the Trinity. If it were only God the Father then the acts of His loving Son would never reflect the true nature of the Father. It's relevant to me because I'm like my earthly dad in many ways and it always make me teary eyed when I say I'm my father's son. I get to follow in his footsteps and it makes me happy to continue his work with my own perspective on it but with the same goal. It does seem to be less detailed on the Meaning of Trinity when considering there is only one God and when God has a Son who is also God. When regarding the Trinity as a group I would give "them" more detailed roles instead of switching in the middle of the fundamental belief to a singular "God is" statement. From the Beyond Belief study, the 44% had thought of God being three components to one person, which is fine but doesn't stand to reason when God would leave heaven and become Jesus on Earth. God would be in heavenly form and Jesus would be in Human form together in heaven, which are two different bodies already. The 31% who said that the Trinity is three persons with three purposes I think are mostly correct. There are three but they share the same purpose.

**Participant 83:** I like that it is clear that we believe in one God but that we believe that he is three in one. I like that it says in the statement that the trinity "beyond human comprehension" because trying to describe the trinity is extremely difficult because we can not understand how there can be three co-eternal person in one. I think if we can ever comprehend more extensively what this mean I think it would be beneficial to increase the clarity on what the trinity means. Right now it can seem far-fetched idea. I think this fundamental is so important because its describing the physical aspects of our God. Until one accepts who he is than you can better understand the Bible. Because the Bible there are many times where God is referred too in three distant persons. Its very relevant in my life because I believe that the Holy Spirit is my spiritual mentor on earth that is stays with me and helps guide me. That the Son is my ultimate example of sacrifice, love and how to live life. God as my father who I call upon to talk to for advice within in my life. Understanding the trinity is extremely important. I agree with the fact that its very hard to try to understand fully who God is by just reading this statement. I was surprised that so many thought that we should be able to understand God fully if we are called to worship and serve him. Because with my own walk with God I was always very comfortable with the fact that I will never be understand God in his entirety. I think a lot of who God's character is shown through the Bible.

**Participant 84:** I know there are other religions that do not understand the 3-in-1 God, in fact we do not fully understand it, but it's the only way we can make sense of the evidence presented to us in the Bible of them being separate. This is one of the things that add to the "Mysterious God" factor that causes disbelief in the community. We can only rely on faith. It is important because we need to make sure everyone knows that they are all equal. Many people may think Jesus or The Father is much more powerful than the Holy Spirit or is more important. Each of them have a role they fulfill. It tells me that we cannot understand everything about God. Some things we have to just take by faith. Because I profess to being a Christian I need to understand just who I am worshipping. I think the Trinity does cause more problems than they fix. When you say they are three separate beings than you would

think there are three Gods, but they are all a part of the same God but there is no hierarchy. Sometimes I think it's best not to think about it too hard.

**Participant 85:** There is absolutely nothing to dislike about this fundamental. We're talking about the Godhead! Near the beginning of the chapter, the writer gives us a disclaimer that is very key to our understanding of the Godhead: "The Bible does not prove God's existence. It assumes it." It doesn't just tell us details about God like He's a new refrigerator or a car, the words paint a picture of the dynamics of the Godhead. It's funny because it's paradoxical in nature. Our words simply cannot describe the Godhead. I suppose we can try though. This fundamental is also very key to our religion. The concept of the Godhead or the Trinity (which is described more in subsequent fundamentals) is something that makes the Seventh-day Adventist church unique. Another key aspect of this concept is the idea that we can view the Godhead very much as a person. When being described, words like "plurality" and "relationship" are used to define the parameters of the flow within the Godhead. These words can also be used in our interaction with the Godhead. These things need to be studied and known to the members of this church. Simple. It's important because it's about my God. And in order to love my God, I must know my God.

**Participant 86:** I, much like essentially every other twenty-something year old, do not love the idea of things I cannot understand. I believe in the God-head, but it's so difficult for me to fathom. So many questions are brought up that have no earthly answer. I try to think of it mathematically. Most people try to do  $1+1+1=3$  which leaves most of us confused and a bit off. The trinity in my mind is more of  $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ . Three pieces, all input, but one sum equal to one and all of the factors. I believe it is important to give us a slightly clearer picture of the Trinity, which brings us closer to each piece of it. It's relevant because if I claim that my relationship with God is the most important thing to me, I should also be thirsty to drink in all the knowledge I can have about Him. I believe it is relevant in my life because it can remind me that all Christians can and should work together no matter what their spiritual gifts are. They can group together and try their best to understand little bits of this incomprehensible God. I agree with the findings, but I think it could emphasize more on the different elements of each piece and how they all work together not only with each other, but with each human being as well. I believe that their differences are just as important as their common goals, and both should be equally represented. Participant sixteen mentioned that this belief is straight from the bible. I like their way of thinking that the trinity is revealed throughout the entire bible starting at the very beginning, all the way to the end.

**Participant 87:** I liked how the chapter opened up with the fact that we cannot fully comprehend God. Being a [Removed – Identifying Information – major] major, I am used to being presented with such detailed information on [Removed – Identifying Information – major] processes and systems. It is still hard to fully grasp that God is just too powerful and too majestic for me to fully understand. I also liked how the chapter broke down how God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can be considered different beings and also the same. I think it did a great job of helping me to understand the idea of the Trinity being one. I believe this fundamental is important because it has to do with whom we believe in. Depending on how the Trinity is viewed, Seventh-Day Adventism can be considered a polytheistic religion or a monotheistic religion. This fundamental is relevant to me because each member of the Trinity has a different role when it comes to my salvation. For example, the book mentioned that each member of the Trinity had a different role in the salvation plan. The Father gave His Son, Jesus gave Himself, and the Holy Spirit gave Jesus to Mary. If the relationship did not work out as stated, or if there was a non-existent member of the Trinity, this salvation plan could have unfolded drastically different. In the same way that each had a specific role in the salvation plan, I am sure there are many other things in my life that each individual plays. For example, I wake up and pray to God the Father. This is followed by a devotional time with Jesus (or as I like to imagine). During my devotional time, it is the Holy Spirit that allows me to gain deeper understandings of my relationship with God.

**Participant 88:** I like this belief. To many people, it would seem confusing that this belief would be called "the trinity" – which would signify more than one person – but is then followed by the four words, "there is one God".

This would catch the eye of the reader; allow them to formulate questions. Questions are usually good when it comes to God, especially because He knows all of the answers. One suggestion would be to amend the explanation of the belief. [e.g. "There is one God, He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self – revelation. God is a unity of three co – eternal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation". ] My reason for changing it like this would be, to express the way I think the Trinity should be explained. First, one should name Him – God – then inform the reader that the information coming up next will be difficult to accept, only because of our finite mind. Then you expose the Trinity – unity of 3 co – eternal persons. Finally the last statement would represent what is expected of us -- both believers and non-believers (all creation). I think that this belief is very important. Because it is one of the beliefs that differentiate us (SDA's) from any other religion. It makes our religion a lot more unique and special. It practically defines us and is one of the fundamentals. I think that before a new believer converts they should fully understand this belief. It is a very complex topic, but is also very important. Because this belief is so complex, I believe it's very important. It reminds me of how amazing God is, how his mentality is totally different from mine. It keeps me questioning and wondering things, which is good for my spiritual life. It also gives me zeal when trying to explain this concept to another person, because of all the different analogies people come up with. This concept is essential; it should not be taken lightly, and should be accepted wholeheartedly. One participant mentioned or restated that although God is 3 persons, they are all equal. "The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally self – existent and equal", all three parts of the Godhead are equal and play their own role. I like the way equality was emphasized. I believe this person has the same philosophy as I do.

**Participant 89:** I like how it gave more insight about God, Jesus and Holy Spirit. It was easy to understand. But some of it sounds like it can be assumptions. How do we know anything about predestination and the way God sees it if we don't have anything in the bible to really explain it? This fundamental is important because it explains that God, Holy Spirit and Jesus are one God. We are not worshiping three gods. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it tells Father is the source, Son as mediator, and Holy Spirit as actualizer or applier.

**Participant 90:** I don't fully understand the concept of the trinity. Is it three separate beings? I guess no one will really know until the second coming and we commune with them face to face. I do like that each member of the trinity has been there to provide for humanity in different capacities when they have been needed. God the Father created humanity, God the Son gave His life to save humanity, and the Holy Spirit provides help and comfort for humanity today. This fundamental is important, because it shows that we worship one God, but that there are multiple roles the trinity plays in the world. It also tells us that how we can know God even though He is beyond human comprehension. This fundamental is relevant in my life because it lets me know that there is an all-powerful and all-knowing God that takes care of me. It's also relevant because I believe that I worship one God. I don't think there are hundreds of gods that human beings need to please, and God being immortal, I know that He will last forever.

**Participant 91:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 92:** I appreciated the approach this chapter took. To me, it focused on the kind, loving, powerful, and understanding God we know. It showed how the Godhead worked as one but we still separate. The chapter gave examples how to obtain knowledge of God and showed evidence from scriptures. But my favorite part of all was the names of God. El, Elohim, El Shaddai etc. that was absolutely beautiful. The question of "Is there a God and what is God like?" is the largest mystery for mankind. This chapter covers the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The books give clear examples of the character of the Godhead, based on the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. I think it's a great start to understanding the God of the bible first. Two prime examples would be experiencing God in Nature and through the scriptures. It wouldn't make much sense not to talk about a key concept such as the God we believe in. If there isn't any examples or description about a source of power we put our faith in, we would



be lost. We want to connect with who ever created us and find our purpose as a human race. So this is a great starting point to understand some part of our God.

**Participant 93:** I like that this fundamental specifies that there is only one God even there are three different aspects of him. This explains that even though we believe there are three separate entities of God, we are still a monotheistic religion. It explains that we are a monotheistic religion, but that we believe there are three different co-eternal persons. That there are different parts to God that do different things and that they still come together to make a single God. It is relevant because we do not pray to many different Gods. We do not even pray to the three aspects of God separately. We pray to a single God. We also don't have to worry about offending one God and not the other or worry about the Gods fighting each other and we being in danger of the repercussions of these fights. Co-eternal persons mean that they are always in agreement with each other. I think people find this fundamental hard to understand because we as humans have difficulty understanding how three different "persons" can be just on "person". God is beyond human comprehension which means some things about him we won't understand on earth.

**Participant 94:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 95:** I liked that they talked about the knowledge of God as a head and heart thing, not just something to think about but something you also feel. I liked that they talked about how we can know God through scriptures (obviously) but also through nature. Not only can we see God through nature, but also human behavior. We were, after all, created in God's image, therefore it is logical that our actions would sometimes reflect a behavior similar to what God may be like. I liked the phrase "Faith in God is not blind" (p. 25). I agree that we as Adventists should believe that God is God, but that we should not simply accept this as a fact based solely on belief. There are evidences which support our faith. I liked the discussion of how the names of God reveal his character, mainly because I had a Bible class in my Adventist High school that studied the names of God for a few weeks. This time taken to acknowledge the names of God helped me learn that God is very diverse, and can be seen as loving or strong or many other things throughout the scriptures. This encourages me that God can meet my needs in any given moment. It's merely a wording issue, but I dislike how the sentence before the heading "Predestination and human freedom" talks about Paul and James's comments regarding God's sovereignty that we should say "if the Lord wills". The use of the words "while James admonished" made me originally think that James was admonishing Paul. Although re-reading clarified this for me, I'm not sure how clear this would be to a non-believer, even though the texts are clearly referenced after the fact. I like how they talked about the fact that we have learned more about the Trinity from Jesus than from anywhere else. I have found this statement to be true on my own. The Trinity makes much more sense when you read what Jesus has to say about it. This fundamental is important because out of the things that differentiate religions the God or gods they serve tend to have the biggest distinction. By establishing our view of the Trinity and then of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are saying in no uncertain terms just who we believe in. More than that, explaining how we believe in 3 in 1, in regards to the Godhead, can be a very important step. People struggle with the notion of 3 in 1 because to us it doesn't logically make sense. There are no set of 3 in one people, but I felt that the book managed to explain it in a way that communicated to the reader how the Godhead could interact together. This is relevant to me because I am a Seventh-Day Adventist and a firm establishment of what kind of God I believe in is important to the rest of my faith. This chapter told how we know who God is, which is an important question non-believers may ask us. I've always liked the saying that even if we didn't have the Bible we would know there is a God because of how we see His work in Nature. For some reason, man learns quickly that there is something about accepting a God that fills in a lot of the unanswered questions. Knowing what kind of a God I believe in allows me to live my life in a way that I feel He would find appropriate and good.

**Participant 96:** What stood out to me the most was when it started to talk about how the Godhead have a working and loving relationship between the three. Within that what stood out to me was that, "Order is the first law of heaven, and God works in orderly ways. This orderliness issues from and preserves the union within the Godhead." The reason why I like it is because I know that the God I believe in has order and runs on order. It's important because we need to know how the Godhead in itself is. We need to be able to understand the relationship that the Godhead have and share between each other, to show us that He abides by what He says. This fundamental is relevant in my life because it proves to me that God doesn't just tells us to do something and Him just not do it, but He abides by it Himself, and truly lives but what He says.

**Participant 97:** I like the idea that there is God. God is imminent so He put a void in us to seek a higher power. He is God all by himself. So many times we question where God comes from or who He is and what He does. I believe that when it comes to God, it must be a decision we make to have undoubting faith in His word and who he said he is and who He has shown Himself to be in the past. I believe that this fundamental is important to know that God is real and there is a trinity that acts separately but is a unit. Each character has a different role that is as vital as the other. No one takes precedence. Without Jesus there would no salvation, without the Holy Spirit we would be alone and without guidance; and without God there would be no Father and no resurrection. We all have a void that God has put in us. Some people fill that void with education, other with a family, others with money. But that place is supposed to be filled with the Godhead. Nothing is to take the place of God in our lives. It is relevant in my life because I have tried to fill that void with many earthly things and I still felt empty. Now, I can say that my cup is filling and will continue to get filled because I know who I should allow to fill my cup.

**Participant 98:** I'm glad that the Godhead is up towards the top of the fundamental's list because it's that important. Although I will never fully understand the Trinity, I do think of God first. I don't like that I can't know everything about God, but that part is obvious. No one can! But I love that God gives us enough to be in a saving relationship with Him. Of course the Godhead is important! The Bible says God is love. He is all-knowing. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end! Just that right there shows us that if God did not exist, nothing would exist. What could be more important than the One who created us all? God is extremely relevant in my life. I talk to Him every day and I try to live my life out for Him. Nothing is impossible for Him which means that whatever He purpose will come to be. And He has said that He works out all things for good and that He knows the plans He has for me. So that gives me assurance that He will fulfill that good in my life.

**Participant 99:** What I like about this fundamental is that it describes in better detail the nature of who God is. I like that it begins with the most complicated aspect, the idea of three in one, and states it simply to later be expounded on. I also like that it adds that God is worthy of eternal adoration and etc because it puts God on the high level that he deserves. I also really like that it makes sure to add that God is known only through self-revelation but I kind of wish it listed what ways he reveals himself. These are expounded on later though. This fundamental is vitally important because it speaks about the character of God. Without knowing about the trinity God's character and the way that He works in our lives is changed. This concept is important for when we introduce people to God because it tells how God has worked and continues to work in our lives. It also speaks to His character of love and desire to be in community. This fundamental is important in my life concerning how I relate to God. Growing up I knew about the Trinity but it wasn't until recently that I more fully understood it. This understanding has affected my prayer life and personal journey. My prayer life was affected because I understood why we pray "In Jesus Name" and why we ask for the Holy Spirit to be with us. It affected my personal because it helped me realize in a fuller light the role of the Holy Spirit and also Jesus' role and the sacrifice that it was.

**Participant 100:** I like the fact that we are able to have a God that is so unique. One God that's exists in three beings at the same time. It's still hard for me to grasp this idea, but I each have their own important row to play. This fundamental is important because its about the God who we believe and worship. I actually think that this is the

most important fundamental because, with out God, their would be no holy scripture for us to study from. This fundamental is relevant in my life because I want a relationship with the God I serve. The Holy Spirit who comfort me when I'm down, the son who died for me on the cross, and the Father who loves me so much that, there isn't an equal.

**Participant 101:** No Journal Entry Submitted.

**Participant 102:** Not many people can grasp the concept of the Godhead. It is important for us to understand that God is one but exists in three persons. It's hard to comprehend what this means without developing a relationship with God. The book stated something that drew my attention significantly. "One of the most basic commandments of Scripture is to love God with all your heart, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. We cannot love someone we know nothing about." We can't ever understand the complete meaning of the Godhead if we don't open our hearts and mind to God. Without having a relationship with Him we can't and won't fully understand who He is. This fundamental is important because it reveals that without developing a true relationship with God we won't ever understand who He really is. I always was confused at the Godhead concept. For a long time I always felt as if we worshipped three gods and not just one. It took a lot of prayer and research in the bible for me to understand that God is one but exists in three persons. He is God the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. He reveals himself to us in different ways to make the connection we have with him stronger.

**Participant 103:** I love that God choses to reveal himself to his people through so many sources. There is evidence and we can come to know God through our study of the Bible, His personal letter to us, and through nature, His glorious creation. Despite God's infinite power and knowledge, He still wants a personal relationship with each and every one of His children. I personally do not dislike anything about this fundamental, but I can see how the concept of three beings in one can be confusing to many people, and is often disliked. I think that the fundamental of the Godhead is incredibly important because it the belief of who we believe in. Every religion needs a leader, and the Godhead is our sovereign creator and ruler. Without this fundamental, we have being to base our belief off of. We have no beginning or any purpose or greater goal. I think it's also important to know that God is ever present, all knowing, and all powerful because in my mind it makes God so much more amazing. This fundamental is relevant to my life in that as I have grown in my understanding of God, I have come to love Him and desire His presence in my life. God is an ever-present guide and comforter in my life and I cannot imagine life without Him. It makes me very happy to know that God desires a personal relationship with me as well, and seeks to establish a relationship with me.

**Participant 104:** Similar to what I see mentioned in the summary, I do not like the ambiguity or the possible contention found in the wording of the second fundamental belief. However, I do like the message behind the fundamental belief and it is one I have known and grew up to believe in, even with my numerous questions on whether it is entirely possible. I think this fundamental belief is important for various reasons. The most important reason for me stems from this idea that not believing in one whether it is the Father, Son or Holy Spirit might mean that you inadvertently don't believe in God at all. And if that is the case, then there is no point in religion, there was no point in Jesus Christ dying on a cross for our sins and ultimately there is no real truth in human existence. Therefore the Trinity is a central and important aspect to not just Adventism but other protestant denominations as well. Growing up in an Adventist family and one who regularly attends church, I was brought up to believe in God, the Father, God, the Son and God, the Holy Spirit. In fact it was easy for me to understand God, the Father, and God, the Son simply by learning about Jesus Christ and his life. However it was very hard to understand the role and importance of the Holy Spirit. But when I thought about questioning it but I always reverted back to something that I heard often which was also mentioned in the summary. "God is so complex humans could never understand him." And so instead of questioning, I just chose and to a certain extent still choose to just believe. After reading the content summary, I find myself agreeing with the findings , more specifically those problematic areas to address.

For the most part, those problematic areas are what I too struggle with understanding and in certain ways can see from the point of view of those who don't understand the importance of this belief. Specifically, the idea of an incomprehensible God, is an idea that I settled with for years and this idea has not settled my curiosity nor my misunderstanding of the Trinity. I feel the church needs to address this problem holistically.

**Participant 105:** I like that the fundamental mentions that there are three aspects to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but I really thing that there should be more clarification in the description of the fundamental. This is easily one of the most confusing parts of Christianity and the most difficult to explain in a clear and thought out way. This fundamental is incredibly important. The distinction that there are three parts of one God is central to our faith. We believe that while God was in heaven, He was also on earth as Jesus, providing humanity with salvation. This fundamental is relevant to everyone who accepts Jesus as a personal savior because if Jesus wasn't God, he wouldn't be perfect and without perfection, we would not be saved. I agree with the overall summary that the wording of this belief needs to be changed. I disagree with the few participants that found this fundamental to be irrelevant as it is such a staple to our faith. I also disagree with the belief that in order to be worshiped, God should help us to understand him. We can't fully understand anything if we don't have all the facts about it, which we never will. We will never know the full story of an eternal being. I really like this fundamental being so early in the list because if a person can't get passed this one, if it is too difficult for them to accept, they will have difficulties accepting almost everything else. I really do believe that the wording of this fundamental needs to be changed. Even if it becomes a long read, it is important that people understand this fundamental and that they are able to grasp the concept around it. I feel like the fundamental gives precedence to stating that we believe in a higher power and a loving being that we will never understand than explaining exactly what the three aspects of that God mean. Stating that our God is beyond comprehension feels like lazy. I think that we should try to describe how the three aspects of God can join together since we have three fundamentals devoted to how they work alone. Though it is important to describe certain aspects of God, the wording could be a lot more succinct. These are our fundamentals, they should not be vague overviews with flowery language, they should be succinct explanations of what we believe. I get the feeling that the authors of the fundamentals went to a lot of trouble to keep the descriptions short but in doing so, they limited the amount of important information that they would include.

**Participant 106:** The confusion underlying the trinity, and how the holy spirit works, has always left me quite frustrated because no one seems to agree on just one idea of how it all works and I who do not have much knowledge, am left with more questions than answers. It's very important because this is identifying the deity we are worshipping, as a whole we should not worship what we do not understand. Basically I want to know who I'm putting all my faith in. I'm always told that the holy spirit guides me in my everyday life but i don't understand how that correlates with Jesus and the father. In order to fully accept God and or the trinity I need to truly have at least an opinion on the trinity instead of the confusion I feel. This is relevant because it's a part of everyday life being a Christian is not a part time hobby. It's a way of life that you dedicate your self fully to. I agree with the report that the book gives, like many other Christians I too still have questions on how the trinity works and if there are checks and balances how they work within that relationship. I think for now I understand that the trinity is one living entity with three different facets that take part in three different ways in your life. Jesus who's blood is the one that pardoned our lives for sin. God who will asses if we deserve to go to heaven and the holy spirit a force that reminds us to be good or good Christians. I'm still honestly confused with the holy spirit and the job it(he?) has. I however disagree that God is the being in charge of the trinity because you can't be in charge of something that is already you. It's like saying my heart is in charge of my body, no my heart is not in charge it's just a part of my body that has a job that help my body run.

**Participant 107:** More than simply "liking" this fundamental belief, I approve of its placement in the list of 28. I think it is incredibly important that we as young people recognize and understand what the Godhead is and that it is not one God, but a unified body of three equally divine beings with three differing roles and titles. This belief is

such a controversial one, I have known it to be the one belief that one of my family's close friends struggled with and eventually left the church because of it. Arguments have been raised and fought between church members; rifts and barriers have been made. It is important as growing Adventists to make sure we know the God that we are worshiping. It is important for us to understand how the Godhead works, how there are three equally divine beings with three different roles. It is through this belief that we understand how God can work in our lives in such an intimate way. As mentioned above, this belief is key to knowing how God can work in our lives, effecting a change so great we can't explain it. It is relevant because God is not only a God of the past or of the future, but He is a God of the present, continuing to bring us into a closer relationship with Him.

**Participant 108:** "Christianity is not a record of man's quest for God; it is the product of God's revelation of himself and his purposes to man. This self revelation is designed to bridge the gulf between a rebellious world and a caring God." I appreciate that this is apart of the fundamental beliefs SDA's hold about God-that he is a caring God, a God that wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives. I am an [Removed – Identifying Information – personal details of participant]; I study and do [Removed – Identifying Information – area of study]. I care about all the work I produce and it isn't alive. I can't imagine that a God with any integrity wouldn't love his creations. I appreciate how the first doctrine is a basis for those to follow. Now we have scriptural support for a trinity Godhead. And the scripture points to three in one-three entities working together as one. I like the definition of God that our doctrines use-that God "not one in person, [but] God is one purpose, mind and character (p. 30)." Through my own studies, this is how I've come to understand God. He is three persons united in purpose and love. Love is the most fundamental part of who God is. Overall, I feel this doctrine holds true to what I have come to believe about God and who he is.

**Participant 109:** I like the fact that this fundamental belief is one that is unique; the idea of God being a multifaceted being is difficult to understand but at the same time explains the way He works and how He can be relevant in each person's life. I dislike the confusing wording of this belief because it can be misunderstood to suggest polytheistic views. However, because we are a faith based religion, we should understand that there are aspects of God that we simply must have faith in versus being able to fully explain them. We are lesser beings than our Heavenly Father so it is only natural that there be aspects of Him that we will not fully grasp. We are not on the level of understanding that He and so we must accept that. This fundamental is important because it outlines our God; based upon this fundamental we can learn a bit more about the God that we serve. As believers, outlining and explaining to others what exactly we believe in is of vital importance and that is what this fundamental does. This belief is relevant to my life because as a Christian, I am a firm believer in the Trinity. The fact that my God is one of three different aspects comforts me. I am comforted because I know that God the Father cares for me and loves me in a way that even surpasses my earthly parents' love for me. At the same time, I know that God the Holy Spirit will always be there to lead me on the path of righteousness and guide me through life. Lastly, the God the Son loves me so much that He was willing to leave His heavenly kingdom to come and die for me. When I read the Beyond Beliefs summary for this fundamental I was conflicted; I couldn't decide on whether or not I agreed them on the fact that young people are, in general, confused about the Trinity. It is my opinion that the Trinity is the aspect of God that requires the most faith on our behalf. I don't think young people are wrong in defining God for themselves. Since the Trinity is such a difficult concept and we are only humans, it is only natural that young people would define it for themselves and have their own opinions of what it means. Could it be worded better? Perhaps, it could but this flawless definition will only be in our hearing when we get to heaven and are able to ask God Himself.

**Participant 110:** The adventist belief of the Godhead is one which I find a little hard to fully understand but also one that gives a wonderful perception of the God that we serve. The idea of a God "three in one" is such an amazing concept to me. Even though it is ultimately hard to wrap my mind around that aspect of God—it also reveals to me more of His character and definitely of His infinite love. I like that there are separate parts of the Godhead and yet they are all fully unified by an eternal love. I also like that there are many different names throughout the bible that

are different names for God. This is a way that humans in our finite language can try to best portray a diverse picture of God's character. I think it is important that as Adventists, we understand how the Godhead is three in one—that there is only one God, but that it is as much three as it is one because of the unity that is shared between the Godhead. This fundamental is relevant to me in how I understand/view God and the different roles of the Godhead. I know that I need the redemption that Jesus offers by his sacrifice on the cross. I also know that I need the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in my life. And definitely I know that I need God's love, the love that only He can give.

**Participant 111:** For this fundamental I like and agree with the entire thing. I like the way that the commentary explained the trinity. It helped me better to think that the Godhead is three personalities that are all of one focus, and one mind. I also like that this fundamental explains that God is all-powerful, all knowing, and ever present. I also liked the way that the commentary explained the separation that Christ had with the Father and how that separation affected not just him but the whole trinity. It was very eye opening. I believe that the second fundamental is important for a number of reasons. First it is important to believe in a God that is all-powerful, all knowing and ever present. Believing in a God like that gives a person the ability to live worry free because there is a God that offers his protection. This Fundamental is also important because it shows the unique relationship that is the trinity. Also without believe in the Godhead it is hard to believe that Jesus was God the Son, and that he was able to die in our place. This fundamental is very relevant to my life. My belief in the trinity is very important to my identity as a Seventh-day Adventist. Also for me, belief in the trinity allows me to connect with God in different ways. I can connect to God as a father, a friend, a brother, a savior, a guiding light, a still small voice, and many more. Each of these characteristics can be found in a part of the trinity.

**Participant 112:** What I like about the trinity is the unity that it represents. It is important because it depicts an example of the unity that we should have with others here on earth. I believe that God intended for us to serve three deities in one being to also show us the meaning of service in numbers. God can use you as an individual, but a group of His disciples spreading the gospel together is more effective in my opinion. The idea of the Trinity also sets a good example of why we should be united as a church family as well. This fundamental is relevant in my life because it helps me better understand as well as practice the meaning of loving your neighbor, mentioned in Mark 12:31. The only way that I can deepen my understanding of the trinity is by loving others, even my enemies. As far as the beyond belief's study I do agree with the participants in saying that it's difficult to comprehend the meaning of the Trinity. One thing I found interesting was the participant's statement that said "if Seventh-Day Adventists believe in a single deity made up of three aspects, why do they open their prayers with dear Heavenly Father, but conclude with in the name of Jesus." It states in the Bible that God did everything for us through His Son Jesus Christ. So I believe when we conclude with "in the name of Jesus," it's simply to remind us that what we prayed for comes from Him. As hard as the Trinity is to understand, it may just be one of those questions we won't figure out until we get to Heaven.

**Participant 113:** I like how the chapter explained that 'the Bible does not specifically prove God's existence but assumes it.' I thought that point was very interesting because the Bible does not prove but gives evidence. I also liked the explanation of the Godhead as one and as three, such as, 'let Us make man' and that simultaneously there is only one god. I liked how it went on to explain how Their purpose was the same and a loving and working relationship. This fundamental is important because it explains the basis of our Faith. It is important it is exactly what and who we believe in, without out the head everything else would lack true foundation and completely fall apart. It is important because the Godhead is to our salvation and ultimate example of unconditional love. This fundamental is relevant because God is who I put my trust and faith in every single day.

**Participant 114:** I think the summary of this belief did a good job of clearly explaining the Trinity as one entity. This concept can be very confusing because we believe that there is one God, but also three distinct entities that have specific roles. Even for me, someone who has been an Adventist there entire life I still don't completely know how

to explain this, I just believe it because that's all that I've known, so I try not to think about the logistics of how it works. I just know that it does somehow. This fundamental is important because the trinity is present all throughout the bible. As stated in the first fundamental, the bible is the main source of our beliefs, and not to believe in the trinity would mean not to believe in many parts of the bible. And this would be contradiction. Personally, I find this fundamental to be a little challenging to have daily relevance in my life because it's not something that I think about all of the time. So I guess that this fundamental is not particularly relevant in my life even though I do agree with it and believe it. I think that I fit right into the summary of the young people responses. The summary described my thoughts about this fundamental very well. I agree that the way the fundamental is worded is very confusing; I had to read it twice. I guess that because the concept is also confusing, the only way to word it is vague. I think I fall into the 31% of participants who described the Trinity as three people with three purposes and work together to achieve a common goal and those that dismissed this uncertainty with a belief that God is so complex we could never understand him.

**Participant 115:** In this fundamental it talks about the Godhead and how the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit work together as one perfectly unified Being. In the Seventh-Day Adventist Church there is this belief in the Godhead and the belief that They all work together to help everyone to come to the knowledge of God and have a chance at spending eternity with Them. I like this fundamental and how it tells about how God shows Himself to us and has a personal connection with us. I think sometimes people see the example of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the bible and they think that God is the one who is sort of the "Judge" or "Executioner" and that He seems far away and not as personal of a God. But in this fundamental it talks about God and His mercy and Goodness and it helps to show that the Godhead is all part of this loving relationship and that each Member is working together to help us all reach the knowledge of their love and to feel their love and spread that love to those around us. Another thing I appreciated about this fundamental is that it mentions the relationship between the Godhead and how they have this perfect love and it really helps show what kind of a sacrifice it must have been for Jesus to come here and for the first time ever to be separated from the loving relationship of God. I can't imagine and I know no one else can know how excruciating that must have been. I think people think a lot about how Jesus came and lived on earth and suffered as we do but maybe not so much how He got ripped from His Father and how devastating that must have been. I like that in this fundamental it talked about humanity's free will and God's divine knowledge. God knows what will happen in the future and I agree that that does not mean that He takes away our free will, I believe that He just uses this knowledge to help impress others to reach out to us in times when it will make a difference in our lives, He provides insight into the knowledge of the Godhead and their love for us. I do think the section where they talk about that could go be expounded on further because people, especially young people enjoy their free will. This fundamental is relevant to my life because I do believe in what it talks about. I believe God is merciful and loving, all-knowing and fair. I believe that the Godhead exists and their relationship is in perfect synchrony to help us come to the knowledge of their love and grace. I believe that God gave us free will, I believe in the sacrifice of Jesus when He came to this earth and died for all of us. I believe in what this fundamental has to say about the Godhead and how They work in our lives.

**Participant 116:** What I like about the fundamental is that there are three parts to God. One who eternally in human form (Jesus), one who speaks for the Father and Jesus, and one eternal Father. They work together to maintain order in the universe, yet they are one. They are all equal and no one has more power than another. It's kind of mind boggling, actually. But what always puzzled me is this: how is Jesus the Son of God the Father if the Father never married and there is no woman involved? How does that work? They all are eternal, so they have no beginning and no end, but yet one of them is the son of another? That just always puzzled me. Also, to me it implies that Jesus is somehow less powerful than the Father, because He is the Son. I know it isn't true, but at the same time my brain is tie up in knots about the whole concept. Anyway, that is what I don't like, and another thing I do like is that they all work together to reach us, the little humans on this little earth. It never ceases to amaze me how much they love

us. I think this fundamental is very important because it is important to understand, or try to anyway, the God that we worship and to know more about Him/Them. It is important to understand that there are three parts to God because each part acts in a different way. For instance, the Holy Spirit talks to us for the Father. The Father doesn't talk to us directly, but speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Savior for human beings. The Father didn't die, and the Holy Spirit didn't die (although, if you think about it, part of God did die when Jesus died because He is part of the Holy Trinity, but that just gets complicated). I don't understand how this fundamental could not be important because it tells us so much about the physical aspects of God. He is everywhere, sees everything, hears everything, and never forgets anything. I feel kind of sad that I never will be able to fully understand Him, but then I guess that just increases the mystery and wonder of God. He is never going to go away, and that thought is very comforting. It means that I have a constant in my life that will never go away, no matter how hard anyone tries. This fundamental is very relevant to my life because I am ever in awe of God. He is all powerful, all seeing, all knowing, hearing, ever present, and never is going to die. It's very comforting to know that I have someone that is immovable in this world of hectic activity and distrust. He is the one thing that I can depend on when I am in trouble or when I just need to talk, and it's nice to know that He is never going to go away, unlike a lot of things in my life. I have had friends who have walked away, just like everybody else, and I love the thought that He will never go away. I also like that He is beyond human comprehension. It keeps me constantly discovering who He is and how big He is and how much He loves me. Sometimes it gets into my mind that I am too small for God to pay attention to, but He sees everything and everyone, and He cares about me, therefore I am never out of God's sight and I have nothing to worry about. I also like that He is eternal, so that I can keep discovering Him and His creation throughout all eternity. I agree with some statements. I can understand the confusion as to why we as Christians call ourselves monotheistic if there are three "Gods". I myself have wondered that as well. But now I know that they are three in one and don't consider themselves three separate Gods, but one God. I do not, however believe that God isn't beyond human comprehension. If people just look at the created universe that in itself is huge beyond comprehension, God is even bigger than that. Do you have any idea how big that is? Huge! And we don't even know if there are other universes out there. What if there is? God created those too! I also do not believe that there is any marriage between any two or even all three of the Holy Trinity. That just doesn't make sense to me. Why would they be married? I picture them as being related, like siblings, but I know they're not. But they certainly aren't married. I think that if they were, the Bible would be very specific about that, but as far as I know, there is nothing in the Bible that implies that they are married. But I do agree that nature and scripture can be used to prove God's existence.

**Participant 117:** These truths that the Holy Bible revealed to us are not be discussed as if these were changeable. These beliefs are the truth revealed to us from God. No alteration is needed, and if disliked it is a matter of personal choice, to live or to die. I like this fundamental, because it clearly defines what God is, and is not. God is not an idol, worshipped by bowing down. God is not a bird in the sky that can become god with the shard of divinity, as believed by the Hindus. God is not a divine being that was created by the universe, like other gods that mystics and other pagan religions state. God for me, and written in the Bible is a being of unimaginable beauty, glory and above all power. His powers are absolute, for example His willpower. The point being that this fundamental is valuable, without this basic information about God it would be hard for people to understand who God really is, and importantly His emotions towards us. Well, all religions do explicitly express their god(s) or their imagined source of power, like demons etc. If we as Christians omit this important confession of allegiance to God, then it would mark us as unfaithful soldiers. In the history of warfare no general, king or commander had given his/her standard (emblem) to unfaithful soldiers to bear, likewise the great Commander needs our confession of allegiance. This fundamental is one of those truths that must be protected and defended at all cost. If the very meaning of the word god is altered by. This fundamental helps to know the workings of God, how He operates and why He does certain things. Even though this fundamental does not emphatically state the order of things, it does point out that God created order and that disorder or chaos is a product of sin, and not God. This is especially true if one considers the



pagan mystic though about life and its source in the universe. They believe that creation is the product of the will, they call it "true will." Thoughts like this is both limiting and dangerous for humans. For we as a race are degraded to the point of no-return physically, mentally and spiritually speaking. To know God becomes more important and the urgency is becoming strongly felt. As the days of Noah approaches this fundamental about the Trinity can surely help those whose minds are confused. This doctrine about God could bring relief to those who desire the truth, like me.

**Participant 118:** In the fundamental The Godhead, I liked the fact that they started off the chapter by talking about how we as humans can get in a closer relationship with God. When I first heard the word Godhead, it sounded so powerful and intimidating but the beginning of this chapter highlights how although God may be strong and powerful, we are able to reach out to Him and have a real relationship with Him, He doesn't have to be a stranger. God wants to reveal "...Himself and His purposes to man...and bridge the gulf between a rebellious world and a caring God." The fundamental of the Godhead is important because it defines who makes up the Godhead and gives an introduction to how the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and God the Son work together. The fundamental first explains how even though there is a Trinity that is made up of three parts, there is in the end a sort of unity that makes up one God. In the Bible, Israel believed that there was only one God, and in the New Testament they also emphasize on the unity of God. Many misinterpret the Trinity by thinking that we are worshiping three separate Gods, but that is not the case. They are simply a "unity of three co-eternal persons having a unique and mysterious relationship." This fundamental describes this unity as both a loving relationship and a working relationship. There is a loving relationship between these entities because even though they are unified, that does not exclude the fact that they are three distinct personalities. Christ suffered separation from God the Father that deeply wounded Him, and in taking our sin he was not only separated from the Father but He died as well. The working relationship between the Trinity is displayed because God the Father gave His Son to the sinful earth, God the Son gave of Himself to die for our sins, and the Holy Spirit gave a natural human birth on this earth. God also gave encouragement to Christ before His baptism, Christ gave of Himself to be baptized as our example, and the Spirit gave Himself to Jesus to empower Him. It is important to see that all these different members of the Godhead perform distinct roles throughout Scripture in trying to save this fallen race, but at the same time it is also important to realize that even though there are separate personalities it does not obliterate the monotheistic belief of ONE God. The fundamental of the Godhead was relevant in my life because as a child who grew up in the SDA church, I always had a difficult time understanding why people at church would talk about 3 different Gods and describe their very different roles in the Bible and in our lives, but yet they would always emphasize how we can't worship other Gods and how we must remember that there is only one true God. I was baffled by this concept and even though when I got older I realized that there is really only one God, I still was not clear as to how these different entities worked together. Now I realize that in my life the Holy Spirit is the one who inspires me, or touches my heart whenever I read the Bible or hear a message. God the Father is amazing to me because He gave up His only Son, which I know I could never do, just to save us humans and give us a chance to enter the kingdom of heaven. To Christ, I will be forever grateful because He actually came down from His perfect kingdom, in the flesh and surrounded by sin and endured the pain and shame to die for me.

**Participant 119:** What I dislike about this reading is the fact that many of the people that they talked to tried to analyze the belief of the Trinity. The belief of the Trinity is simply what it is called, a belief. Once you tried to understand the Trinity I believe the devil will start to plant the seed of doubt in the believer's heart. Most of the participant acknowledged that they thought that the belief of the trinity was confusing and difficult to understand. I believe that this fundamental is important because it showcase how powerful God is. It shows that there is one God: The father, the son and the Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. This belief show that God is infinite and beyond comprehension. That why one should not try to understand God, but just worship Him forever. This fundamental is relevant to my life because I believe in the trinity. When I Pray, I pray to God, but I ask for the Holy

Spirit, and I pray in Jesus' name. Even though God reveals Himself to the people, He is an incomprehensible God. I disagree with participants that stated that the Trinity belief is irrelevant. I think that the belief of the Trinity is relevant to those who believe in it. I also agree with the participants who suggested that the Trinity provides an example of how Christians should work together. That's a totally new perspective.

**Participant 120:** An aspect I like about the Trinity is how they have different roles and different images. For example, God has the image of being the all-powerful creator of the universe. He is indescribable and fearful. Then there is the Holy Spirit, which to me seems like a navigation system for your life. It tells you what you need to do at each checkpoint in your life and whether or not to make the right turn or wrong turn. Finally, there's Jesus who represents love and compassion. He's the one who I feel most comfortable talking to in prayer, because he personally came down to save the Earth and all its inhabitants. I think it is crucial to understand this fundamental well, so that you don't get confused between multiple deities and multiple units of one being. It was hard for me to accept that one being could be three separate beings, while still being able to be that one being. I can see why many non-Adventists can perceive Adventism to be polytheistic. I think the Trinity is important in my life because it helps me see the different characteristics of God. Every being in the Trinity is different and reflects an aspect of the nature of God. For example, reading about Jesus and his ministry and mission to save the Earth shows me the loving nature of God. I don't agree with the idea that one part of the Trinity is better than the other. I think that in order for the components of the Trinity to be one being they need to be equal and of equal importance.

**Participant 121:** The second fundamental belief is talking about the trinity. The trinity consist of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I liked this chapter because it explained God's entirety . Another thing I like was the explanation of God. God is the trinity, and they worked together for the better of their child. God sent down his Son, Jesus Christ to be the physical example of who we are to be. The Holy Ghost is said to be our conscience that speaks to us on the daily and is willing to help when we call on him. The actions of the three shows how they are God. The fundamental is that there is one God and they consist of the three parts. And do we believe in this one God. This too is a very important fundamental, to be a SDA believe in God is the biggest part. You have to repent and ask him to be in your life salvation. To say that it's not important would be a joke, the church is based on God. This fundamental is relevant in life because I know that without the guidance of God in life, I'd be worse off. God has time and time again protected me, guided me and bought me through many things I couldn't have done on my own. God is my best friend because in moments where i have no one to talk to he's there to listen and help me.

**Participant 122:** I never fully understood what the Trinity meant until I attended Andrews University. I must admit the religion classes here do end up putting more information in your head about God than I would have thought. Matthew 28:19 says, "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." I honestly thought God, or the Lord, was split into three different people. How wrong I have been most of my teenage years. When I got baptized I do remember hearing those words, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." God is all. He is the most powerful, and through these names we can acknowledge just how great he is. I do worship God, and although I got baptized at the wrong time, and wrong age, I can see now just how much God can do in one person's life. We pray to God, who takes care of each one of us like a Father. The Lord came down to this Earth to show us the word of God, and through His Holy Spirit, we can choose to be guided by that shining light to do more of what God wishes to do with us. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one," Deuteronomy 6:4. Do not put any other idols in front of the all-powerful God. In the end, it'll get you nowhere.

**Participant 123:** What interests me about the Trinity is that three eternal Persons in a "family" could work together to design the whole universe and to personally design us as human beings. Creation, protection, redemption, and love were all part of a special family business. I think that it is really cool. There is nothing that I really dislike about

this concept honestly. I think that it is important because there are many people who don't fully understand. The Godhead is not like the components of a single egg—egg shell, egg white, and egg yolk. Rather, it is like having three individual eggs working together to make an omelet. That's what makes it so powerful. It is relevant to me in a sense that it makes me feel like a special individual. It took three willing Beings to form me after THEIR OWN IMAGE. And, on top of that, they had a plan of freedom and redemption created to save me.

**Participant 124:** This one of the most important aspect in the bible because we can find this doctrine as we as adventis believe from the book of genesis to the book of revelation. This has been important because depending of what I believe on this topic will be my insights about the plan of salvation. Because it is the foundation of the Christian faith it is crucial for properly understanding what God is like and how he relate it to us and how should we relate to him. and that he exists in three distinct persons who are not identical with each other. I also think it's important that we understand Christ to be one person with two natures. It is relevant because it help me understand and emphasis that God is very different from human beings, It reveals that God can be seen only as a spiritual experience whose mystery inspires awe and cannot be understood logically, teaches vital truths about relationships and community and because it is a central element of Christian identity.

**Participant 125:** One of the things I liked about this fundamental is the way it describes the relationship that occurs within the Godhead. Even though they are three persons, they are unified in purpose. Similar to how a man and a woman become one through marriage [even though they are two persons (Genesis 2:24)], we can understand how the Godhead is one while being three. I do not dislike anything about this fundamental, but it is one of my favorites because I find it fascinating how the Trinity interacts within itself. This fundamental is important because it directly affects how we view God. If we don't understand the belief of the Godhead and Trinity, we won't be able to fully understand how God has acted throughout history. The Trinity is key to understanding the first Advent of Jesus and what it meant for our world. It is also important because it can help us try to make sense of some of the misunderstandings about God in the Old Testament. This fundamental is relevant in my life because I think that the way the Godhead interacts with each other can teach us valuable lessons. A lot of times we don't think about the Persons of the Godhead interacting with each other. However, I believe that understanding their relationship can be very insightful about how we are to interact with other people.

**Participant 126:** I like this fundamental because we worship God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and always call out to them in prayer. Also, I do believe that God is the high and Almighty. This fundamental is quite important in our Adventist faith because in our religion we believe in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and treat it as one entity making our religion monotheistic. They all work as one being giving us the message he wants us to hear and learn from. Also, even if we did not have any Bible or scriptures to refer to, we will know that there is some kind of entity out there that created us, and it seems that humans were born with the thought that some sort of creator created us, which will always curious us, because we can't always believe the facts of evolution. With God being the high and almighty, it is hard for us to comprehend who he really is and we can get a better understanding by learning from his Son who explains who the Father is and let it fill in us with the Holy Spirit. This fundamental can be very relevant in my life because throughout my life, I had grown up with the trinity and was unable to understand why there were three. As I grew up, I began to understand a little more about the Trinity and how it works in my religion that these 3 entities are actually one and it was hard to comprehend because it feels like I am studying in polytheism but I am not, which can be confusing. Thank goodness that Andrews University's religion classes were able to help explain to me how the Trinity worked because that boggled me for the longest time.

**Participant 127:** I liked the description of the God head; they are three different persons but with one purpose, mind and character. I also liked the precaution given that when interpereting the bible "we should not place ourselves above God and treat Him as an object to be analyzed and quantified". I disliked the discussion on predestination, I

did not think ideas were complete and I couldn't follow the logic of the writer. I think this fundamental is important because it shows how powerful God is. This fundamental is relevant in my life because it helps me to know the character of the God I serve in detail.

**Participant 128:** This fundamental is very confusing. We say that we have one God but there are three persons to him. My brother gave me this example of the Godhead being like the computer. A computer has three individual parts. You have the keyboard and mouse, the monitor and the systems unit. They are all separate pieces but together they make up a computer. Even after this analogy I am still very confuse. When I think about it, I do see talk to him in different ways. When I want to something or I have something on my chest and I need guidance, I talk to him like he is my father. When I am excited or want to tell him about my day I talk to him as a friend. When I need to hear an answer I wait for the Holy Spirit or for an answer from the Father. So in a way I do apply the concept to my life but grasping the concept is what is hard. I am neutral on how important this fundamental is. I believe the Godhead is based on your personal relationship with God. I think it is based on your view. As I described above this fundamental is relevant in my way through the different relationships I have with Him.

**Participant 129:** I liked how it talked about getting to know God in several different ways. It is said that human wisdom cannot penetrate the divine. And depending on us alone to learn about God was like to study the stars with a magnifying glass. I think this whole chapter was important. It says that there is existence of God and that you can find evidence of Him from creation and scripture. Though the Bible doesn't say 100% that there is a God it just assumes that there is. Because it says that He was the Creator and Ruler and everything else. And God reveals Himself through Creation. If we look to find proof of God we will end up doubting it. That is why faith plays such a major role in our relationship with Him. Also God has many names and attributes, He is all-sovereign. Though God is who He is He has a special relationship within the Godhead, loving and working relationship all focused on salvation. That is why the Godhead works so well. I feel like this is very relevant in my life because sometimes it is hard to understand the Godhead and how they all three work together.

**Participant 130:** I like that the book describes not only the facts that we believe in the trinity, but also discusses the importance of having a relationship with God. The part that mentions that our mission isn't to be perfect Christians, but it is for god to reveal himself in us, and for us to let him love us. I think this is a very important part of being a Christian, yet it's also left out a lot. It's something I wish I had been taught long before learning about the rules and regulations of being an Adventist. I believe that the most important part of this belief is that we know how deeply God wants a relationship with us. It is important to know the difference and significance of all three parts of the trinity. It's important to know why they are separated. Jesus is separate because he became a human for us. The Holy Spirit is separate because it's what fills our hearts, and fills our conscience. This is relevant in my life because I relate with Jesus having walked on this earth and experienced things that I experience. The Holy Spirit works on my heart every day, and is always with me. He is a part of me.

**Participant 131:** So given the introduction to the chapter, the trinity is referring to the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the book this chapter is called The Godhead, but on moodle it's called the Trinity, so after thinking on it a little bit, I went with what it said on moodle, since that's what I'm going to be turning it in to. Anyway, This chapter deals with a lot of things, mostly dealing with knowledge of God, evidence to his existence, what that God does for us, and how we may be saved by that very God. Again, a lot of the issues I had with the first chapter arise here, but I feel that it would simply be a rehashed argument, so I'll simply leave that subject alone, however there is another aspect to this text I want to discuss in this brief paper. Early on, there's a small paragraph on giving the reason as to why non-believers can't understand or believe in God – it's because they lack the ability to open their heart up and do God's will. Someone like myself, who claims there is no God, am unable to argue with this because 'God's will' as it were, is undefined and doesn't exist. I can't argue with someone who believes so much that they are doing God's work that they believe in something that to me, just doesn't exist. This is the big issue with faith that I have –

there's no reason to it, they simply believe it because they've been told either through a thousand year old text, or through their parents that it's there. Other than that, I have no real troubles with the chapter. It's a very in-depth look into what exactly God is, which is a combination or unity of the Trinity. I can imagine that if you're an Adventist, or even simply a Christian, this text would be a helpful reference, especially since it quotes so many lines from the bible itself.

**Participant 132:** I like this fundamental because it directly correlates with what the Bible says about God and the trinity. It also describes the known characteristics of God and I really like how it takes these characteristics from what the Bible says. One thing that I don't really like about this fundamental uses the word predestined to describe that we are God's child and his people. But I don't really understand how we are predestined and also have free will. I don't believe the word predestined is the right word to describe this concept. This is an important fundamental because it is one of the things that Adventists believe in that is different than other religions. It is also important because it explains who Jesus really is. This helps us set a bases of understanding some of the actions that Jesus took when he was on earth. This fundamental is also important because it tells of our views of God in how he is all powerful and all knowing. This fundamental for me is a little hard to comprehend. The fact the God is 3 people but yet still one is hard for me to understand but it should be very relevant to people's lives. Me personally I follow this every time I pray in that I pray to God, our Father, but in the name of Jesus.

**Participant 133:** I love how this chapter breaks down into different parts to help readers understand why the Seventh-Day Adventists believe in the existence of the Godhead. God gave us the Bible, His own Son Jesus, and stunning nature revealing His character, and those are enough proofs for His ever-presence. I think a lot of people; especially Christians sometime misunderstand about the oneness of God, plurality within the Godhead, and the relationship within the Godhead. It is important for believers to know about Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Understanding how there can be three persons in One Being might not be easy. Evidences are only found in verses, however. Last but not least, between all three of them, there is a loving and working relationship going on according for our salvation. This fundamental made me think about something deep: I know so little about God, yet, I still love Him as if I have been known Him for my whole life. Although, with limited amount of knowledge I have, I can still serve Him with all my heart because He loved me first. After reading this section of the book, I came to a realization of His desire for all of His creation to recognize their own Creator. Because He cares about each and every one of us, He will never ever give up on showing true love. God equals love. We ought to be aware of that.

**Participant 134:** This fundamental is important because it allows us to better understand God and who He is. It shows us that God may be one being, but he is divided up into three different concepts. As humans, this may be hard to grasp but I feel as though it helps us see the different roles that God can play in our lives. I also think it's important to see God as multiple beings because some people have a hard time grasping how Jesus was God yet prayed to God in the garden before His crucifixion. This fundamental is relevant to my life because I am constantly trying to seek and understand God and the idea of the holy trinity helps me to understand God's three different parts. His authority is God, His grace and sacrifice is Jesus, and His everlasting presence with us, is the Holy Ghost. I agree with some of the comments from beyond belief, but I strongly disagree with the 34% that said we need to understand God to worship him. I feel like the beauty and amazement of our relationship with God, comes from the fact that we know almost nothing of the true extent of His divine being. I feel as we should continually be on a journey to understanding and finding God. And thus I also agree that we can try to understand Him through the beauty and amazement in nature and creation.

**Participant 135:** In this fundamental I liked how the Godhead or Trinity was summarized into one chapter, it made sense because they are all in one but separate at the same time. If a suggestion could be made, this chapter could be made a little longer, in explaining about each of the Trinity and then the individual chapters about each can be taken out. I liked how they mentioned that everyone can learn about God and through different ways. I strongly

believe that different people come across God through different ways. One way that they talked about in the chapter was through Nature. It says that David wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork." I really like that verse. A good job was done describing how the Trinity is not three separate individuals, people reading this for the first time would get a good understanding of this. The concept of, and the Godhead itself is crucially important because God is who we worship. Our religion isn't much really, if we don't have a God. He created us in His image and we are His children. It is important that we know there are 3 beings, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each does something different but at the same they are all one. It is very complicated concept to understand but we are human. All we need to know is that we are loved and cared for all the time and whenever we need anything all we need to do is ask. This fundamental of the Godhead is very relevant in my life because I find comfort and solace in them all the time. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are who I go to when I'm happy, sad, hopeful, worried and any other emotion I feel. Not only can I go to them with my petitions and praises, but I feel the love from them through my daily life. Knowing that God is looking down on me and loving me and caring for me is great, but to know that there are two others, Jesus, my best friend as well as the Holy Spirit giving me guidance through life makes it all the better.

**Participant 136:** I surprisingly disliked this chapter in the book. I was looking forward to reading it because I was as confused as a non-Adventist about the Godhead. The reading spoke a lot about who God is according to the scripture, the importance of His name, the description of His activities, and His sovereignty. These topics were enlightening but I still was not any closer to understanding how there were three distinct parts yet still one God. The last part of the reading tried to explain the Godhead by discussing their plurality and relationship. I still cannot grasp the understanding of how this can be. I do believe it, but I think some things are too hard for the human mind to understand. I think this fundamental is important because it is literally getting us to understand the God who loves us and wants to save us. If we can understand the Godhead, we can build a much better relationship with it. The Godhead is the center of everything we know to be true therefore, this fundamental should be of the uttermost importance. I think this fundamental is relevant in my life because I have encounters with people who ask me to explain the Trinity. The problem is that I do not understand it myself so its relevance in my life has a bad impact. If I was more knowledgeable on the subject I would be more confident speaking about it.

**Participant 137:** The fundamental belief of the Godhead attempts to explain the idea of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit being one God but also separate entities. We are first introduced to this idea through the concept of God and who he is. I like the way it is approached, by first showing God and that he exists by looking at evidence in scripture and nature. When it begins to address the idea of predestination and human freedom, I do not understand the example of Jacob, Esau and Pharaoh. The idea expressed about human freedom is not clear and needs to be explained in greater detail, this will help the reader understand. On page 29 one reads about the plurality within the Godhead, this section is very clear. It shows that God is three in one, and that each part plays a role in our salvation. To make understanding this belief easier I would use illustrations or pictures to bring the points to life. The pictures can show the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for example when Jesus got baptized. The Godhead is not an easy belief to explain endeavors to clarify this belief is a challenge that the Adventist church has accepted.

**Participant 138:** I like how it talks about the Godhead being three beings who work so closely together that they are considered one. The writers of this commentary and fundamental did a good job of explaining a difficult concept. I think this fundamental is more important to Seventh Day Adventists or Christians because it validates that Jesus is God. Which means he had the authority to come and die for us and have it mean something. To people who are not Christians it just sounds like we are contradicting ourselves. We have one God but he is three people? This fundamental is important to our understanding, but I don't think it should be the first or even the second thing we tell people about. I think this should be something we tell people when they ask. So if someone is reading their Bible and studying and gets confused about this we know enough to tell them. I think this fundamental is mildly

irrelevant in my daily life; most of the time I just think of God as one person and leave it at that. But this becomes very important when you read certain parts of the Bible. Without the trinity those parts would not make sense.

**Participant 139:** I like the part that says we cannot love someone we know nothing about but on the other hand God can be known and we can love him with all our heart. God reaches out to us through the bible so we can learn of his ideals and learn to love him for who he is. And learning about God is not just a thing of intellect it also needs the whole hearts input. I think this is important because in our faith it is needed to know and love the God you are worshiping. Knowing God and loving God is part of our ticket to the Promised Land where we can live forever with him our father. It's also very relevant because of the creations we see on a daily basis that gives us reoccurring thoughts of a creator and grand architect. It is imperative to know the different forms or names that God has since we need to create a close nit relationship with the lord our God. It's also very relevant because of creations we see daily which give us continuous thoughts of a great being which is God our father. Another vital reason this is relevant because this is going to help in the long run to focus on salvation. We need the father who is our source, the son who is a mediator, and the Holy Spirit who is the applier of the things we do in life on a daily basis.

**Participant 140:** I have always been a bit uncertain about the complexities of the Trinity. I have heard several sermons concerning the Trinity, but few go into the actual dynamics of the Trinity. Most focus primarily on the "marvel of the Trinity", without deeply explaining it. Like many of the contributors to the Beyond Beliefs study, I am also confused about the Trinity and dislike the general vague explanations offered about the Trinity. Although I don't fully understand this fundamental, I believe it is quite important since it defines what Adventists believe to be God. I would like a better explanation of it. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it helps define what I believe about God. It is a central part of my religion, and therefore is quite important. I interpreted the Beyond Beliefs summary to consider the Trinity to be blindsiding part of our belief in God. The summary seemed to characterize this fundamental as confusing other young believers, and I fully agree with that perspective, both in reference to the data, and because I am confused by this fundamental as well. Because of the obvious confusion that appears when dealing with the Trinity, I believe it should be subject to curriculum that is more widespread among younger Adventist believers.

**Participant 141:** This is a fundamental that has always been a little hard for me to explain. I have grown up with the concept, so it is easy for me to reconcile the apparent contradiction of one God being three Persons. But talking with people who are not of the Adventist faith or who haven't heard of the Trinity before is very difficult, since they are unable to grasp the concept of three in one. I like that there is a discussion about this question of why there are three Persons, but found that the book didn't cover it as well or unambiguously as they maybe could have done. I like that in the discussion following the statement of the fundamental, there is a part included about how God, in fact, can be known. I find this pertinent to myself, as sometimes I feel like I can't get through and wonder if God really is there. It was encouraging to read that section and it was worded well and in an uplifting way. Even though we can never fully understand Him, God has condescended to be involved with His creation and to care for the needs of His children. I also like that in the discussion they went through the evidences for the existence of God. This could be important for someone not of the Adventist faith who is reading the book. This fundamental is important to establish that there is only one God and that there aren't various deities etc. However, it is a very hard concept for a lot of people to grasp – the fact that there are three "co-eternal Persons." This fundamental is relevant to me and to my personal relationship with God. I find the fact that there is only one God to be a substantial part of my faith. I pray to Jesus and God as if they were one, which is what this fundamental states. I also believe that the Holy Spirit has a huge role on enlightenment and conscience.

**Participant 142:** What I like about the Godhead is that there are many facets to it. This makes it so that God cannot be put into a box. Each facet of the Godhead serves a different purpose. These different aspects make it so that God cannot be explained. While I wish I could understand God fully, if I could, then I would be him. So I both like & dislike

God's complexity. The Godhead having three aspects is vastly important. Since each facet serves a different purpose, it means that there is an unexplainable complexity to God. This unexplainability is what makes God what he is and not just an ordinary human; thus making him more trustworthy and reliable. His divinity is why he should be worshipped. No other God has these facets as an intricate part of their nature. Other gods are god of just one thing, but there is no other God that is god of everything. This fundamental is absolutely relevant to my life. If the Seventh-day Adventist church did not believe in the Godhead, I would not take any part in it. The Godhead is one of the most basic tenants of Christianity. If the Seventh-day Adventist does not believe in the Godhead, then the Adventist church would not be considered Christian in any way, shape or form.

**Participant 143:** I like that this fundamental gives us and understanding about who God is. Because God is the center of our life and our church, it is important to go into who he is and what his roles are. The trinity is a big part of who God is. This fundamental is extremely important because it is the basis of our salvation. The three persons of the trinity each serve a different role but they are one person. It also gives us a description on who we believe God is. We believe that he is immortal, powerful, and beyond comprehension. As a Seventh-Day Adventist Christian, I believe that there is One God and I believe in what he has done and what he is doing for me. I can see why this fundamental is troubling for millennial young adults and even people in other generations. Its difficult to grasp that there are three persons in one. And when people have trouble understanding God, its easy for them to throw that belief away and even leave the faith because of their misunderstanding of who God is.

**Participant 144:** I like the statement that truthfully we will not fully understand the Trinity but highlights what we know for sure in terms of the qualities of the Godhead noted in scripture. I dislike the fact that there is no concrete scripture as mentioned by Jesus himself concerning the nature of the Godhead and his relation to the Godhead to clear up some of the confusion. This is a pivotal belief, because this is where we differ from other Christians and if we can't get clear on this we may as well join other churches. Though I recently became a little more clearer on this topic, I believe it helps me to understand how to relate to the Godhead comprehensively and separately as I understand what unites them and their role towards my salvation. It is relevant to me because I want to know what I believe and pursue an intimate relationship with the Godhead and understanding their character and purpose in my life helps me to appreciate their efforts and respond accordingly. I am not surprised that there's a lot of confusion in terms of how the Trinity works and how we should relate to them. I believe it is something our church should invest time in teaching instead of skating by it with the "God is incomprehensible" excuse. God has revealed himself in a way that what is important to our salvation is not left in the dark. This understanding that we will need will require a systematic approach. The bible I learned, especially in the Torah section of the bible, was written as a polemic against the polytheists of the time. Moses wrote trying to avoid the confusion, but unfortunately it has left a lot of us and even the Jews confused and Jesus himself struggled in explaining this to his contemporaries. Because Jesus came we have proof that the Trinity is true and explainable. I believe also my generation needs to spend time and search the scriptures for themselves and stop depending on all the knowledge to come on a platter from our churches. We are told in the bible that if "we seek, we shall find." Unfortunately, we don't take the responsibility to search.

**Participant 145:** I believe this fundamental is great in explaining what the Trinity actually is, and why it is such a central part of our faith. Most likely those outside of the faith will see the trinity as three seperate beings, or Gods, that we follow. When in fact it is just one God that we follow that has come to us and that we see in three forms. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They all can be seen as seperate when in fact they are three in one. It is important becuase it establishes what the trinity is. That it is in fact just one single God that influences and that we follow. Not three seperate Gods. That each of these are each in a way a personification of the one true God. We have God the Father, which is the creator of all things, he who is our sustainer and our source. Then there is God the Son as seen in Jesus Christ. Where we see the character of God exemplefied, and how God himself came down to us so that he may better understand us and lead us to salvation from this world of sin we his creation has



made. There is finally God the Holy spirit, The source of our spiritual inspiration, the way for God to speak to us and listen to us when we seek him in our everyday lives. All three separate ways for the one God to connect and commune with us, his creations. This helps bring all things together for me because before I was baptised I always saw these as three separate people. I believed that there is the one Single God who rules over all of us. Who then sent his only son, a personification of himself, to us so that he may save us from the world of sin we had created. Who was also helped by the Holy Spirit, whom I saw as just another helper of God, that set about spreading his will to all the people. After learning and being baptised I now understand that these are all one, that Jesus was as much God himself and that the Holy Spirit that is with us always is also another part of the single God that we serve and worship.

**Participant 146:** The fact that God is triune tells us that He wants to reveal himself to us in as many ways as possible. I like this fundamental because it backs up the passage that God will never leave us nor forsake us. He sent his son to die for us and sent the Holy Spirit as a comforter for us when we are in time of distress. He is omnipresent and omnipotent. These are attributes that only God can possess. His power never ceases to amaze me. This fundamental is important because as we travel on this spiritual journey we need constant encouragement. We need the Holy Spirit on earth to live amongst us so we can feel his presence. With the Holy Spirit in us we can face the evil in the world having the faith that we can feel his presence like a shield, guiding us through the darkness. Jesus came to us from his heavenly kingdom in this sinful world and died a humiliating death. This reflects God's love for us. This fundamental is important to me because there are some days in which my spirituality is at an all time low. When I go to church or when I'm listening to some uplifting music I can feel the Holy Spirit working. When I read the gospels I see God's attributes reflected through Jesus. Jesus is an example of how I should live my life. God being triune is just another reason that he is worthy of praise.

**Participant 147:** I really love the fact that God is this all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present being that is so great that we cannot even comprehend it. It is so comforting to know by heart, that someone so much greater is always watching over me and protecting me, giving me grace, showing me love, and forgiving me because of his love. This fundamental is important because The Trinity is who we have all our faith in. To know for sure who God is, is impossible, but just to describe him so much with words just lets us know how incomprehensible God is to us. To me, The Trinity is so amazing. I literally cannot grasp the concept in my head still after being an Adventist all of my life. To know that someone that high cares and loves me gives me comfort in times of trouble. He assures me that he cares and loves for me constantly no matter what. I disagree with some of the examples that the participants used to try to relate The Trinity to worldly concepts. I believe that no matter what we do, there is no way to understand the Trinity. He is so great that we just have to believe and have faith in who he is.

**Participant 148:** What I like about this fundamental is that it is unique to our religion. There is no other religion that believes that God exists and three being but as one at the same time. This makes me believe that my religion is the correct one, the one that I should be following. This is one of the main beliefs that set us apart from all other religions around the world. The only thing I dislike about this fundamental belief is that it is extremely hard to comprehend and even harder to explain to someone who knows nothing about our religion. I believe that this fundamental is important because it sets this religion apart from all the other religions in the world. Many religions have a lot of things in common even this religion but this is the one thing that is different from the rest of the other religions. This fundamental is very important and should never be considered unimportant. This fundamental is relevant to my life because it had made me realize that my religion is the one that I should be following and be a part of. This fundamental has brought me to the realization that my religion is a part of the remnant.

**Participant 149:** I liked that it had a section dedicated to the fact that we can know God, and how we can learn more about him. This is an important aspect of the Christian life in my opinion and I am glad that there was space in the chapter dedicated to it. I also like that it said that the Bible does not prove God it assumes it. I think this is

important for us to remember because we like to just assume that we can use the Bible to prove God when that is not enough. What I found to be confusing is how we can say that we have one God, but our one God is three separated beings. That logically seems like there is more than one. I wish they had explained that better. This fundamental is important because it's saying that we believe in a God. We are assuming the Bible correct because of the last fundamental now we are placing our faith into the hands of a God who loves us. The fact that we can know God is something very important, and the ability to begin to understand him is critical for us. This is relevant to our life because it is intimately tied to the plan of salvation. We are placing our hope and faith into a God that exist, cares for us, and died for us. We also have the ability to start to understand him which is an important step in the Christian walk.

**Participant 150:** What I dislike about this belief is that not only is it hard to completely understand yourself, but it's hard to explain to anyone else who may be curious about what it means. And maybe we aren't meant to understand it completely, but there is so much room to have your own opinions about how it works and explaining it can make you sound even more confused. Something that isn't human is just difficult to grasp. I think that this it is important that we keep this fundamental because it is supported by the Bible. In Jesus' time on earth there are many times where He mentions having a Father in heaven and various occasions where the Father sends out the Holy Spirit. So to believe the Bible is important is to believe that the trinity is important. I would argue that this fundamental isn't that relevant in my life. And I say that not because I don't believe in it, but because it seems that, not only I, but we use them interchangeably. We pray to God and Jesus and refer to them as "equal" but above the Holy Spirit. In today's day and age, the Holy Spirit isn't really used or recognized very much.

# International Participants

**Participant 151:** I like how this fundamental belief talks about how we humans can connect with God. There is nothing I dislike about it. It gave me an understanding of who each of the members of the Godhead are, what they represent, and in essence, their function within the Godhead and in our lives. It reminded me of the crucifixion and how painful it must have been to see Jesus die and be rejected by very people He came to save. I had always had questions about God knowing the future and how that was relevant to us being saved. Does He know whether or not I will be saved? How does that affect how He relates to me when I am going through life's struggles? I like how it explains the principles of predestination, human freedom, and foreknowledge. I see how despite God understanding our nature and where we prone to end up, we still have the freedom to change things in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe knowing about the Godhead is important because it can help us have a better understanding on how they operate. We serve one God, who though is not one in person, is one in purpose, mind, and character. Knowing about His numerous names and their definitions is also meaningful, because through that we are enabled to learn more about his character, and about who He has always been to us. I feel that simply being aware of all these attributes of the Godhead is important in our Christian walk. This information is relevant to me because now I know that knowledge of God is not revealed to those who are wise according to the world's standards, but to those who seek God with both their brain and heart. The failure of humans recognizing the true God took place during Jesus' time, when rulers crucified Him not realizing that He was their Savior. I have to commit my whole self to learning about God through the scriptures, while being willing to submit myself to the Holy Spirit's guidance. I cannot merely read God's word from an analytical standpoint and receive the blessing of knowledge and acquire the spiritual wisdom that God intends for me to gain.

**Participant 152:** What I like about this fundamental is what it says in bold, There is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. This shows that God exists in one and is also exists in three entities. This fundamental is important because it describes what God is or what in our human knowledge describes it as, since knowing God is by knowing what the Scriptures says about it. This fundamental is important to my life because it helps me understand who God is and how he is described to be.

**Participant 153:** The topic of the Godhead is usually a very touchy one indeed. This is really one of the few determining factors between Adventism and other denominations. Some people find it very hard to believe in something such as the triune, Trinity or three-in-one. What I like about this fundamental is the complexity yet simplicity of it in it's entirety. It may seem difficult at first to understand or even believe but with persistent digging into the word and divine help you can be on your path to enlightenment. What I dislike is that it is one of the most difficult things to understand and it has a tendency to push individuals away from the religion. I believe this is very important because it is in God that we believe in and for us to believe in Someone you have to understand them. The Godhead consists of three people God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are three different being in one entity. It was hard at first to understand but with further digging I was convinced. Also pastors or just reading would state certain analogies to increase understanding. For example the analogy of the egg is used where the shell egg and yolk are illustrated. According to the Bible God created us in the beginning of time(Gen1:1) and there we can see the Godhead in it's plural form where it states "Let us make man in Our own image"(Gen. 1:26) It is important for an individual to understand who he/she worships and adores. This fundamental is relevant to me because accordingly my religion God is the Savior of my religion. In order for me to effectively praise my God I have to genuinely love know Him. It is also relevant because in this God I exercise faith to makes my desires come to fruition according to His will.

**Participant 154:** I like how the book says the bible assumes that God exists. I feel like this statement is very helpful, because I feel like we often find ourselves trying to prove God's existence with the bible, and in the bible, since verse

1 of genesis it says "In the beginning, God..." God doesn't need an introduction because we assume that He exists. I think this chapter explains very well about the Godhead/Trinity, and how they are three in one. They all have 'different duties,' but they all complement each other. Along with the scriptures, the Godhead is another base for our beliefs. I think it is important because if we don't understand and believe in the trinity, then there is no purpose on the bible. I think I have often misunderstood what the Trinity is, the purpose of the trinity, and the whole concept of three-in-one, having different names and functions, but all working together as one. This fundamental is very relevant because I helped me understand more about the trinity, and affirmed my belief that this is true, the Godhead exists.

**Participant 155:** I Dislike the fact that humans are very limited in a sense that we cannot comprehend the fact that there is one God but yet there is a Trinity in which all are one. I do not think that we fully understand the concept. This fundamental reminds me that as of now God is not fully known because we cannot fully understand Him. I think this is important to keep us from being equal from God. Keeps me safe from being too full of myself because the fact that we cannot comprehend God just humbles me.

**Participant 156:** What I like about this belief is that it describes God the Father in detail. His powers are described and it lets us know that no human will fully understand God. I can accept that truth. The concept of the trinity is not something every common person will understand and I believe the day someone will completely understand God is the day we can ask Him in person. I definitely don't understand the concept of a trinity. The more I think about it, the more it doesn't make sense. I suppose my lack of understanding is something I dislike about this belief. Like I mentioned earlier, this belief tells us what the extends of God's power are. It is important to know what the God you serve can do. If what we're worshipping is worth the praise. Also, through this fundamental we know who we're praising and we get a brief description of how He operates – through three aspects of Him. This fundamental is relevant to every believer. Because of it, I know who or what I'm worshipping. I can read related verses and know who I am praying to, who is ultimately in power, and who is constantly trying to guide me in the right direction. I am not surprised at the very split view on the trinity. Majority agrees that the Trinity is confusing. There is a large percentage that believes that the Trinity are three separate gods, with which I disagree with. Another percentage of the same amount on the other hand straight up declares that this belief is too difficult to understand for any human.

**Participant 157:** I found this subject very interesting, but also difficult to completely grasp. I think many believers, including me have difficult time in having a clear picture of what it really means that God is one, but at same time three. This confusion has lead some people to come to the conclusion which presents Jesus as the first creature and the Holy Spirit to simply be God's power. This theory is known today as Arianism, and even people not having this knowledge, they assume that is how trinity works. I think like many other people, that it's so easy to conclude that God is mysterious anyways. It seems also as if is easy to put this fundament away. But the truth is when we study what the bible really says on this topic, we find the truth and we will gain understanding of it. That's how studying the Bible and the book called "Seventh-day Adventists Believe" made me realize that God the father, God the spirit and God the son have been in each others presence since creation, and they are still collaborating in fulfilling the salvation plan. They can do this, because they have such a unique relationship with each other. If God the father had not sent his son, we wouldn't have Jesus to come down to save us. Even after Jesus went back to heaven after his resurrection, we wouldn't fully understand and know the things about God, or we would not be able to keep our lives in tact with God's. So I believe taking one individual of the trinity's for granted will result with a loss of fully coming to having God in our lives. The fundamental of trinity is relevant, especially when I read this verse: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in US so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as WE are one. I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have

loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20-23. "I know God himself wants us believers to have the same unity as they are one. That doesn't mean that God wants us to melt to one body, because that will be impossible. But he wants us to have the same purpose and spirit as we worship God. Again, that won't be possible if we rely on ourselves or on any other human capacity, but even what seems like mysterious and hard to grasp can be revealed through the holy spirit of God."

**Participant 158:** I like where it says, in page 32, that when we go to the Cross, to ask for God's forgiveness, we are ascended towards His presence. At the Cross, that's where the Trinity really revealed itself, as a "team" that worked for our salvation / benefit. It's important, at least for us Adventists, because it shows the different abilities / powers that God has. For example, the fact that He's able to foresee the future but still allows us to exercise our free will shows how selfless He is. When it comes to the salvation of this world, especially me, I'm sure that the Godhead must have been incredibly patient, patient in the sense that they must've been waiting for me to make the right decisions in my life. They reach out to me through the Holy Spirit every day and it's up to me whether I heed to His call.

**Participant 159:** The fundamental about the Trinity is one that is very confusing to me. My interpretation of it is that it states that there are three components of one person rather than vice versa. I do not particularly like that the Trinity fundamental leaves so much room for confusion. I think that this fundamental is of lesser importance than the other fundamentals and understanding it is not necessary for salvation. It is a very complex concept and may never be completely clear to us. This fundamental has never had any direct relevance to my life. However, after reading the passage in the book, I realized that it could teach you that there are many parts that complete a whole, and if a part is missing, you will be incomplete. I appreciated reading the input of other young people as I was reading this portion of the book. As I observed the findings of this study, I agreed with most of the opinions of the participants because I too feel that this fundamental leaves room for too many opinions and is a very difficult concept to grasp.

**Participant 160:** I like the fact that in this fundamental, it supports the previous fundamental stating that regardless of what we do or think, it is impossible to try and understand the divine nature of God – we only get a partial understanding. It makes me think that if that partial understanding is so great, it is unmanageable to be able to imagine how amazing it would be to fully understand the Godhead's divinity in its entirety. I admire the fact that this fundamental explained the God's, Son's, and Holy Spirit's role in the Godhead and there are various places in which we can see and find evidence of their unity and work; for example, in creation and in scripture. The fundamental also explains the importance of God's names, which reveal His characteristics, how God truly cares for us, His priorities, and His intentions. I feel reassured that because of the way God's actions and deeds have been recorded, I now understand that I can form a relationship with Him because He is a personal, loving, and forgiving God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal – meaning that He sees and knows everything, He is powerful, He has been and always will be there, forever. I like that despite the fact that God knows everything that will transpire, He still gives us a choice to make the right decision so that we have the opportunity to choose Him. I always knew that God, the Son, and the Spirit had an unbreakable relationship, but I never really understood how it worked. I had always viewed the Godhead has three separate beings but I never knew that they made one God. I now see God as the ultimate ruler and controller of everything, Jesus as the being that helps us to talk to God, and the Spirit as the being that helps us to understand what God wants to tell us. I believe the most important aspect of this fundamental is how it explains the different roles that God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit play in the Godhead and how it relates to us, human beings. It shows how complex God really is and that as a human, it is impossible to fully understand how/what someone, who is so divine, is trying to tell us. I believe that this fundamental is relevant because it shows the three aspects of our lives. I think the Godhead provides us with a fatherly figure that we can look up to and want to be like. A brotherly/friendly figure who, whilst He was on earth, went through the trials and burdens that we go through on a daily basis, and was a living example of what the father

wants us to be like and how we should live. A comforter (the Holy Spirit), who reassures us when we have doubts or when times are tough, helps to encourage us when our faith is weakened, and a version of God who can truly be with us (without killing us by revealing His full divinity).

**Participant 161:** The concept of the trinity seems logical and reasonable to me, as there is distinct mention of three divine entities in the Bible, and have all been tangeable experienced. God the Father spoke to the Isrealites, Jesus lived on the earth for 33 years and the Holy Spirit was seen at pentacost in the form of flames. Taken into account with the Shemah (God is one), it is logical to say that God is a three-part being. This fundamental is important because a firm understanding of the attributes of God is a key part of the mission of christianity. Not understanding the nature of God negates all other efforts to show his character. This is relevant to my life because I can encorporate God into various elements of my life; the Father into my prayer life, Jesus as my Reedemer, and the Holy Spirit as my constant Comforter. I agree with the summary including the trinity as an example for how we ought to work together. Whether or not God intended the trinity to set an example is beyond me, but without reading too much between the lines, it is evident that multiple beings with perfect love ultimately have one mind and purpose.

**Participant 162:** I liked the questions that were brought up by the study. I still feel like this topic of a Trinity is confusing and sometimes difficult to explain. I don't believe that the analogy with marriage works so well due to the fact that in marriage you have literally two people representing the idea of one solid idea or mentality that sort of works together. In the case of the Trinity we still not sure (or at least I feel) if this beings are like three different persons, or it is just the ideas that one being is all of this things, so there is still a conflict on trying to figure out how the Trinity works. And I agree that this shouldn't be an issue of so much debate since it may not be the primary reason for our salvation, yet I think that it is important for us to study it and understand how the system of God works. We believe in a God, and we should be able to know how this God operates. Or at least start to know how God's systems works. As Adventists we formulate ideas and conclusions on how heaven is like based on the Bible's descriptions. Since our goal is to eventually go to heaven and experience all this things, I think it is important for us to start wondering how our God is. All this systems through which he operates are a very interesting topic for us to study to get to know God better. This fundamental is very relevant. I think that at a certain point we should be able to accept that we cannot draw definite conclusions from what we study. We don't know everything, and we accept that we have a limit to our understanding, but actually wondering about this things makes our faith more powerful, and makes our hopes of the second coming of Jesus more relevant to us. It makes me want Jesus to come sooner, so I can be able to understand better the mysteries of God that we still don't know or that we are confused about. I accept that everyone has doubts and try to understand God. I feel like we have to keep in mind that we should be careful not to draw wrong conclusions that take our focus away from what it's important. As humans, we want answers, and sometimes we fear on what we don't know, but we may not be ready to know exactly how the Trinity works, or they might be a greater purpose to it and we have not yet being enlightened by its meaning. We should be able to wait for an answer, and to go to God and accept his will of keeping this a not so clear topic.

**Participant 163:** We can know the specific way to through both the Old and New Testament He disclosed Himself to us in a specific way. And through both the Old and New Testament, the God breaks our bad mental, mortal, and communicating His eagerness to save us. The Old Testament sets forth the son of God as the Messiah, the world's redeemer, and the New Testament appear Him as Jesus Christ, the savior. In the book, He was dead for us. Because, the person can't live without believe. Believe someone, or believe Him, the belief is must need to us. And mostly to people who believe God, they can overcome to something. Because, the God can listen. We always ready to pray to Him, and the God always ready to listen to us. And we live from the bible and God. The testaments are important to belief, but I think, the mind of believe God is more important to us. I already explain in the question 2. Believing God is makes our mind safety, make can clean thinking, and give to us to look around by us. Even when we have some problems or something happen to us, when we pray to Him, the God give to us the solutions and make us to

do wise thinking. The people need to care from the God and need His hand. Because we and world, everything are born from the God.

**Participant 164:** I like how this fundamental is worded, almost to reveal the fact that God knew there would be dispute about the functionality of the trinity. The belief clearly indicates that the essence of God is beyond human comprehension. I also like the next part which expresses the fact that we only know God through His self-revelation. I also like the fact that God is described as being worthy but not demanding of worship, adoration and service of mankind. This fundamental is extremely important to help establish the foundation and basis of our beliefs. If we acknowledge that there is a God, we must be able to describe and assign appropriate attributes to our description of Him. Understanding the 3 in one concept helps us to try and understand God and how He functions. How can we pray to a God that we don't know? This fundamental is important to me because it directly relates to my prayer life. Understanding the trinity and how much God is willing to go through just for my sake, reminds me of how important I am to Him. The Holy Spirit dwells amongst us and keeps us company to say the least, Jesus died for my sins and God the father keeps the world spinning. It's amazing to me and humbles me each time I reflect. I agree with the belief that God may just simply be too complex for our intellectually limited minds to fully comprehend. I did disagree with the person who expressed that the belief was irrelevant since believing in one God or a Trinity wasn't related to salvation. I feel that understanding or accepting that concept is important to our salvation and belief in God. The story of Jesus is our salvation, and if one cannot acknowledge his existence or inclusion in the Trinity, then what salvation story could they believe in?

**Participant 165:** I like the fact that we explain this idea of the Trinity existing even though we may not fully understand how it works. I think this fundamental is important because not everyone believes that there are three beings forming one God. It is an idea that is shared amongst many Christians but no one truly understands it, making people believe that the God we worship is not a monotheistic One. Through Scriptures we can show why we as Adventists have come to the conclusion that the Trinity is real. I most obviously in the type of prayers I say. Because I believe God to be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I find that I mention all the names in my prayer and fully believe that I am talking to the same Person. It is a belief I strongly grew up with and has been ingrained in my life. When I teach younger family members (specifically my very young cousins) about God, the Trinity always comes up in some form, big or small. If I did not believe in the Trinity, I know my prayers for sure would be much different compared to how they are now. I agree strongly with the fact that this teaching is quite confusing and left to many interpretations based on how the fundamental is written. However, I did not really think about this until I read what my peers had to say about the matter. Maybe it is because I did not ever really think hard about the matter at all before. I disagree with those who found it irrelevant. While I don't think this is the most important fundamental, it is still an important one explaining what we believe about God. I do think though that rewording this fundamental to make it more clear and leave less room for interpretation (or confusion amongst believers and people interested in understanding the Bible better) would be a great idea.

**Participant 166:** I like the part that this fundamental states the different opinions of trinity and the broad types of participants. The fundamental gives a very clear idea what certain percentage of participants think about Trinity and why they agreed or disagreed on the subjects. This fundamental went through a broad field to get participant's ideas. I think it is important. As an atheist, sometimes I think people worship God but yet they can't really tell why they worship or they don't understand somethings. Knowing what Trinity is will help me, an atheist, to at least understand what people are worshipping. Studying in an Adventism campus and not being an Adventist seems unfitted. But I think wether I'm an adventist or not, it's important to understand what my friends believe in and why they serve the God they worship. It might helps me to change my view of Adventism and my view of belief and worshipping. I think this fundamental is interesting, mainly because of the reactions people have toward the subject. Even the people who believe in adventism doesn't understand everything about trinity, I think it's important to understand the touch bases about the religion one firmly believes. I really like what the participant 5 said, because

he explained the definition of trinity and the importance of understanding what trinity is. I agree to his point, we might not completely understand what trinity is at the beginning, but if we read the bible with open heart and faith, we will understand better from the words and the events that were recorded in the Bible.

**Participant 167:** I like this fundamental belief because it states the very thing that everyone wants to hear about something they believe, God is omnipresent, all-powerful, all knowing, immortal etc. I like this fundamental because it gives God's believers the assurance that he will never leave them. I think this fundamental is important because it explains or it sheds a little light on one of the most interesting or one would say controversial topics in the Christian world. So many people are confused about God's actual state of being so I think the fundamental helps to better clarify everything that is not clear. This fundamental is relevant in my life in that it lets me know what I believe in and it keeps me believing in the second coming of Jesus Christ. I believe this keeps me motivated because as a person I would know that God will always be as I go through temptations and trials. I agree with the findings which are based on Millennial Young adult responses, of course we pray to our heavenly Father and we close by the name of Jesus and I also take into consideration that in the prayer we invite the Holy Spirit. Although we worship and adore the Lord we can only understand as much about Him as we understand the people around us, we will never know everything in our sinful nature.

**Participant 168:** There is not much I like or dislike about this fundamental. The phenomenon of the Trinity is simply something that is. I do not necessarily prefer it to be this way than any other way such as one God or multiple separate Gods. One thing that I do not like is that it is a bit confusing to understand God's nature as three individuals but one. We humans cannot comprehend what that really is. This fundamental is very important as it explains the deity that we worship. To have a religion there must be a focus of attention or there is nothing else to base customs and lifestyle around. It is not necessarily important to explain that the three figures are one, but it is a key point that fulfills curiosity and lets us better understand His physical nature. The explanation in this book is important because it explains His caring and loving nature. This fundamental is important in my life because it explains to me who the God I worship is. I agree with the Seventh Day Adventist belief about God. It seems to be what the Bible describes to us. Without it I would be confused and think that I am worshipping three separate Gods.

**Participant 169:** What I really like about this fundamental, is how it helps to give a clearer understanding of who we believe in – God. However a major characteristic of the Adventist belief is that we only worship one God, yet we believe that he is a unity of three co-eternal persons – trinity. He is a loving and personal God, who wants a close personal relationship with all of us. However this type of relationship can only be reached through our faith in God. The problem in our world today is that humanity's knowledge of God is deficient. A close relationship with God can only be obtained if we open our hearts and our minds. I believe this fundamental is important to mention, because in contrary to many other religions and beliefs, we believe in the trinity. In other words, we believe that God is the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. I believe that it is very relevant to explain this concept, because it can be hard to understand the meaning of it. Not only can an explanation of this concept in the book Seventh-day Adventists Believe, help other people to understand more about what we believe, but it can also give us a clearer understanding about the meaning of Trinity. As an Adventist, this fundamental is very relevant in my life – the belief that God is one, but still three. God is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. What I find very interesting about God is that not only do we have evidence of a creator in the Bible, but we can also see a reflection of him in the nature, and through other human beings.

**Participant 170:** Human wisdom is imperfect and this is the reason we can't understand God. This is why we need to believe in the Bible because it is through the Bible that we can get to know God, and then share this knowledge with others. It is in the Bible where we can find the life of Jesus in earth and through His actions He revealed God's character to us. We will understand everything we read in the Bible when we open ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and believe what the Bible said. The Bible assumes God's existence and we have plenty of proof. Our



faith isn't blind, we can see God in the Bible and in nature. I believe in God, just one God. But this God is a unity of three persons. This unity consists in God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In some verses God is referred to with plural pronouns. After reading this chapter I realized that if our faith isn't strong and sincere it can be difficult to understand God-three different persons. When I searched the word Godhead in the English dictionary I found this: divine nature or essence. When I searched in the Spanish dictionary it says: divinity, essence and characteristics of one God. I think this last definition is clearer because it adds "one God". This is the Redhead, is the relationship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is a perfect and loving relationship. All this defines Godhead.

**Participant 171:** I like how the trinity teaches us the meaning of God's immense love for us as well as the meaning of salvation. I also like thinking about how the three deities perform a different role in every human being's life but comes together for a specific purpose. Understanding the trinity is essentially important for knowing who God is. Since Christianity is not about following the rules but having a close and intimate relationship with God then it is very important to know who He is. It also lets us understand the meaning of God's love towards us and the meaning of salvation for he sent his son Jesus to die for us on a cross. Like the book says, God's love and purpose for us was shown through Jesus. For me, understanding the trinity is relevant in my life because not only does it let me understand who God is, it is the unity of three deities that serve a different purpose but come together to help me try to follow Jesus' example (the mediator between God and me), to let the Holy Spirit work in my life and make me a better person in my everyday life, and to accept God as the source of everything and his creation the way it already is to look forward for his promise of salvation and eternal life.

**Participant 172:** I like the fact that God is only one being that rules the entire universe- it is three. Although they are all classified as God, I like how they are split into three and have certain jobs in which to maintain in order to stay the same but at the same time different. The Holy Spirit is the one that is down here on Earth with us, Jesus is the one pleading on our behalf to get into Heaven, and God is the one who makes the ultimate decision and answers our prayers. God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one, even though it's hard to understand. I just see it as God being an egg. An egg has a yolk, white and shell, but they are all part of one egg. And that is the same with our God. This fundamental is important because it reveals the deity of our religion. Since every religion has a being it which it believes created the world and watches over us, through this fundamental, Adventists reveal who we believe is watching over us, created us, and is wanting to bring us to heaven after the end of the earth. It is relevant in my life because it reveals to me the fact that God is not only in heaven, but He is on Earth too, with me each and every step of the way. So I should never fear because God is always with me.

**Participant 173:** What I liked about this chapter was how we were getting to know God for who He really is. At the beginning of the chapter it was talking about the knowledge of God and how you can't use only wisdom but you have to use your heart as well to fully understand God for who He is. Having fundamentals is great, because it helps us understand the basis of our religion, but if we don't know who God is there is no reason to have fundamentals at all. The reason why we worship, the reason why we're here is to serve him and if we don't get to know Him as our personal savior, the fundamentals don't mean anything. It is relevant to my life, because God is the reason why I am here. Without Him, life for me wouldn't be the same. In this fundamental, explaining who God is very important. Getting into the existence of God and all His wonder should be everyone's goal as a Christian. Nothing is irrelevant when it comes to God.

**Participant 174:** I like that it shows the unity of three Persons of one Godhead instead of just 1 God. I think this belief is important because it explains the equality of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Most people think of God only in context of God the Father this fundamental belief sets us apart from other religions showing that we believe in the Trinity and Their equality. This fundamental belief is relevant in my life because each part of the Godhead plays a significant role in my life and does Their own thing on my behalf. God the Father is the

Father figure and takes care of us humans, Jesus is pleading on our behalf, and the Holy Spirit guides us. I get to treat the Godhead as figures that take care of me. One thing that I agree with is that for the average person, it can be difficult to comprehend how three Beings are one God. It sounds contradictory and can be very difficult to explain to someone who is new or interested in the faith. I also find it strange that in our prayers we only mention two members of the God head. However, due to trying to keep the wording short, I think that it was stated in the best way possible that will evoke questions for people to ask.

**Participant 175:** I liked this fundamental because it is about the Godhead who we serve. It reveals to us who the Godhead is and what they have done in our lives. It is through the Godhead we exist in the world today. The Godhead consists of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are not one person but rather are three distinct personalities. But each personality still forms one whole. It is a bit confusing to explain, but that is who the Godhead is. This fundamental is important because it speaks of who we worship as a religion. Our purpose as humans is to worship God because of what He has done for us. We need to understand who they are and their purpose in our lives in order to truly worship properly. This fundamental is important in my life because without having the Godhead, I would feel like there is not purpose to my life. It is like I just live each day, just to live. But when there is a God who has created us, I feel more thankful for each day that I live.

**Participant 176:** The second fundamental speaks about the Godhead. This fundamental belief explains the unity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. One of the aspects that I like about this fundamental is the fact that it explains how they are all one, and are of equal importance within ones spiritual life. I also like that it explains the existence of God in many different ways. For example, within the text it speaks about the evidence of God in scripture. However it clearly outlines that the Bible doesn't prove his existence but instead assumes it. This shows that the Bible is a helpful tool to learn about God but one must first have faith in him since the Bible does not prove his existence. There are also some shortcomings when reading this belief. For new believers, the concept of The Godhead could be quite confusing. To fix this issue there should be a further explanation as to how the Godhead came to be or how it even exists. In regards to young adults, many find comfort in believing in the Son component of the Godhead due to the fact that Jesus revealed God to us in a personal way. To strengthen the belief of how the Godhead works together one should include instances in which the Holy Spirit reveals a personal God to those in need of that connection. The second fundamental is very important mainly because it describes who the God that we believe in is. And clarifies how his existence is shown in many ways such as creation and scripture. The second fundamental is relevant to my life because it allows me to understand how I am connected with God and how I am able to gain a relationship with the Father through the son and the Holy Spirit. There are many instances in which this understanding is important for example, in prayer.

**Participant 177:** What I liked about this fundamental was it really talked about the amazing love between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I feel this is right as the second doctrine because I believe it is the most important thing. Only through love is someone truly changed. First, to just prove that there is a God and then second explain what He is about. The way this has been written so far has impressed me. Another thing I liked about this fundamental was some of the explanations. One was explaining how the only way to know God is through both the heart and the brain. Second, was explaining why it was so hard when Jesus died. How the Trinity has been together bounded by love forever. It really made me realize in a way I've never been able to imagine why it was so hard. A third explanation I liked was the explanation of the importance of God's name. I've never understood why it was bad to take God's name in vain. I understood it could be offensive but to see the value people, especially in the Near East and Orient, put on names, really opened my eyes. I think this fundamental is very important because as I said before, the thing that changes people is love. If we want people to believe, the first thing we need to do is prove God is real and exists, which was done in the first chapter, and then the second thing is to give these people as reason to believe in Him. A very good reason is to see the type of person that God is—A loving God. It seems these days everyone is trying to appoint someone as leader that can be good to everyone but the fact is, that person

is God. If we want people to believe in Him, we need them to realize that God already loves them so much. I think this fundamental is important in my life because it reminds me that I need to love more. If I want to be a good Christian, I need to reflect the God I worship and the way to do that is to love. I feel sometimes this is what I am lacking most in my life. It's hard when things can so easily make me angry, upset, annoyed, but this fundamental reminds me of how unselfish God was, and what He did for me. It in a way reminds and encourages me to love more.

**Participant 178:** I like the fact that our God can be known through reading scriptures. This fundamental explains that it is not the humanity who is in the search of God, but that God is the one revealing Himself and His revelation to us. The Bible also manifests of God's love by sending His own Son to this earth so that through Jesus, we may come closer and know Him better. I think this fundamental is very important because it gives us a better understanding of God we serve. God's existence as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit being one is shown to us as well as being immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. This fundamental helps us to see that we have a mighty God who is wanting to communicate with us. It is hard to make friends with people who are not real. God wanted His people to know who He really is by revealing Himself in the Bible. God personally introduced Himself in the Bible so that we may know and understand Him better. I am glad to have God in my life who is willing to come to our level and commune with us.

**Participant 179:** What I like about the fundamental is that I realize that God is an omnipotent existence and offers eternal and unconditional love to us. He is the Creator who can fill our hearts and minds with love. Even though we cannot completely understand God or the Trinity, there are many materials, such as the Scriptures in the Bible, that present us with deep and practical knowledge of Him. The more we try to know the Godhead, the more we can develop our relationship with Him. The Trinity is definitely important for us. His omnipotence allows us to always believe that he will provide answers to our life's questions. Since God created the universe and us, he knows infinitely more about us and our world. God the Trinity makes our plans, predictions, and promises. Additionally, He is the only God who can forgive our sins and deserve our worship. People who believe in the Trinity truly need God to live better lives in the world. We often face various difficult situations that we cannot overcome; putting my faith in an all-knowing and all-powerful God helps prevail in these moments. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit help put my mind and soul at ease during hard situations. Also, the knowledge that God's Son died at the cross for me reminds me how much he loves me when I am feeling troubled. In order to have more improved lives, we should accept the Trinity and God's infinite love that guards our hearts and minds.