



### Is the Trinity ranked in a hierarchy? Are men and women?

**NO, absolutely not!** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, perfect in every way, do NOT differ in levels of authority, power, or will. The Trinity is NOT a ranked hierarchy. Instead, the Triune Godhead shares mutually and perfectly in attributes and actions. See John 14:16, 23, and 26.

Key Term

*perichoresis*

*“I will ask the **Father**, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth...Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and **we will come to them and make our home with them...**But the Advocate, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

#### The Arian heresy resurfaces in modern times

In the 4th century, Arius a priest of Alexandria, Egypt promoted the belief that God the Father *created* Jesus the Son. Arius stated, “There was a time when he (Jesus) was not.” To ensure this poor theology did not pollute the Christian faith, the church gathered in the Council of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381) to clarify Trinitarian doctrine.\* Today some evangelical theologians and leaders have partially slipped into Arius’ belief system. While they correctly believe Jesus is eternal, they promote that *the Father and Son have differing levels of authority*. “The Father commands, the Son obeys,” they say. This view parallels Arius’ focus on the supremacy of the Father. They mistakenly take the limitations of Jesus’ incarnation and read them back into the eternal Trinity. This poor theology of the Trinity then leads many of them to justify a fixed hierarchy between men and women - “equal but different.”

### PERICHORESIS = ROTATING AROUND or MUTUAL INDWELLING

#### What does this crazy word mean?

One word the early Church used to battle the Arian heresy and clarify Trinitarian relationships was *perichoresis* (*peri* = around, *choresis* = rotating, also *mutual indwelling*). *Perichoresis* means *no Person of the Trinity works independently from the other Persons*. When the Son acts, the Father and the Spirit act as well. When the Father acts, Jesus and the Spirit act. When the Spirit acts, the Father and Jesus act. Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” Jesus described Pentecost as when the Spirit came to indwell believers. At that same time, the Father and Son also come to “*make our home with them.*” Every divine action including Creation, the Cross, and Pentecost involves all three Persons of the Trinity.

*Perichoresis* also means that any character trait or attitude we see in one Person of the Trinity must be true for the other Persons. So if we see Jesus loving, healing, or forgiving; we know the same is true of the Father and Spirit. **Like-wise, when Jesus humbly yields and submits, then we know that the Father and Spirit also humbly submit and yield.**

#### Conclusion

**The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit eternally share power and authority, with “none greater or lesser.” God is NOT ranked in a fixed, eternal hierarchy. Neither should men and women be ranked in a fixed hierarchy.**

#### \* Early Church Creeds and the Trinity

**Nicaean-Constantinopolitan** - “*Begotten of the Father before all ages...Very God of Very God...one essence with the Father*”

**Athanasian** “*None before or after, none greater or lesser*”

Also research further - Cappadocian Fathers

#### 4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?