



# 10

## The Trinity

### Key Themes

- The Godhead is triune: one God, three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- God reveals His nature in the Bible.

### Key Passages

- Genesis 1:1–3; John 1:1–5, 1:14; Isaiah 44:24; Matthew 3:16–17

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Name the three Persons of the Trinity.
- Recognize that all three Persons of the Trinity were present at creation.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

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Students will place bookmarks at Genesis 1, Isaiah 44, John 1, and Matthew 3. Students will practice placing all the books of the Bible in order.



### Activity 1: Trinity Worksheet

page 5

Students will fill out the Trinity worksheet as you study the lesson. Pass the worksheets out before you begin to teach.



### Studying God's Word

page 6

The Trinity refers to one God in three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three of these Persons of the Trinity were present at creation.



### Activity 2: Memory Verse Puzzle

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Students make their own Memory Verse puzzle to take home by cutting a copy of the verse into pieces. They can use the puzzles to practice the verse themselves and challenge their families at home this week.

# Lesson Preparation

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED



### COME ON IN

- Cut strips of paper for each student to mark Genesis 1, Isaiah 44, John 1, and Matthew 3 in their Bibles.
- Pass out the books of the Bible cards. See the template on the Resource DVD-ROM, Lesson 3.

- Strips of paper for each student
- Books of the Bible cards—one set for each group of 3–5 students
- Optional: minute timer or stopwatch



### TRINITY WORKSHEET

- Print one Trinity worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- Trinity worksheet for each student
- Trinity worksheet answer key
- Pencils or pens



### STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



### MEMORY VERSE PUZZLE

- Print one Memory Verse puzzle from the Resource DVD-ROM, preferably on cardstock, for each student.

- Memory Verse puzzle on cardstock for each student
- Scissors
- One envelope per student
- Pencils



## Memory Verse

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this week's lesson, read Genesis 1:1–3; Isaiah 44:24; John 1:1–5, 1:14; Matthew 3:13–17; Colossians 1:15–17.

The word *Trinity* is not found in Scripture but the concept of the Trinity is clear in its accounts. It is an important doctrine of the Christian faith, advocating that God eternally exists as three Persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God—but there is only one God. Because of our finite minds, this concept is impossible to fully understand and/or explain. Let's consider a few things.

There is only one God. "I am the Lord and there is no other; there is no God besides Me" (Isaiah 45:5). See also Isaiah 46:9; Galatians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 8:5–6.

All three Persons of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are called God. In *Christ* dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). The *Holy Spirit* and *God* are both referred to as God (Acts 5:3–4).

All three Persons of the Trinity are eternal. *God* is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2). The throne of *the Son* is forever and ever (Hebrews 1:8). *The Spirit*, too, is eternal (Hebrews 9:14).

All three Persons of the Trinity are Creator; let's expound a bit here using some of the background Scriptures listed above.

Genesis 1:1–3 clearly references that *God* and the *Spirit of God* were present at creation.

John 1:1–5 brings *Christ*—the second Person of the Trinity—into the picture at creation. He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through Him.

Colossians 1:15–17 again confirms that *Jesus Christ* is the firstborn over all of creation. And by Him all things were created. This passage also reiterates the eternity of Christ.

The Bible, while not using the term Trinity, plainly teaches that while there is one true God, He consists of three separate yet equal Persons—and all were present at creation.

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

How often do we hear people speak of God? God is good; God will answer our prayers; God is in control; God has a plan. Yet many of these same people seldom speak the name of Jesus Christ—and may not even believe that salvation comes through Him alone. They deny and fail to understand the important doctrine of the Trinity—three Persons in one God.

These people discount the significance of who Jesus is—that He is 100% fully God and 100% fully man. Specifically, there are many who claim that Jesus Christ was merely a man—a prophet, the first created being, a sinless, good person—but not God in human flesh. The significance of the doctrine of the Trinity eludes them.

And yet, the New Testament is abundantly clear that Jesus is God. Jesus claimed to be one with the Father (John 10:30–33); He used the title of "I AM" from the Old Testament (John 8:23, 58); He demonstrated His power over nature, disease, demons, and death (Matthew 8); and He forgave sins—something only God can do (Mark 2:1–11).

Upon seeing the resurrected Christ, Thomas declared, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28), and Jesus did not rebuke him but affirmed him for saying so. And finally, the Jewish leaders recognized Jesus's claims to deity and tried to stone Him for it (John 5:18, 8:59); ultimately they had Him crucified for blasphemy.

Why is it important to believe Trinitarian doctrine and specifically that Jesus is both God and man? Our very salvation requires it. The death of a mere man (no matter how noble) could not provide the purchase price required to redeem other men from their sins against an infinite God. But because Jesus is God, is eternal, and is infinite, He alone is able to satisfy the penalty for sins by His death.

In addition, Jesus had to be fully human in order to redeem Adam's fallen race. The substitutionary atonement required that Jesus Christ must die as a man to bear judgment for the sins of men. Only the God-man could bridge the gap and bring both God and man together. As a man, He lived a perfect life and is qualified to be our High Priest and Savior (Hebrews 2:17, 7:24–28).

Praise God for His eternal, triune nature, and thank Him that He has provided the way for sinful man to be reconciled with a holy God, through the sacrifice of the perfect God-man, Jesus Christ!

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As stated above, the word Trinity does not appear in the inspired Word of God. It did not become a formal doctrine of the Church, by name, until the fourth century. This fact has led to numerous debates over the origin of this word and its validity as a doctrine of Scripture.

Many teachers in the history of Christianity have twisted the concept of the Trinity. To misunderstand the nature and character of God is a serious problem.

When this misunderstanding leads to a compromise in the true understanding of the gospel, the mistake can rightly be called a heresy—a doctrine that leads to damnation.

A brief look at some of the historical heresies follows. In all cases they deny either the oneness of God, the distinction between the Persons of the Trinity, or the full deity of one or more Persons of the Godhead.

- **Modalism:** This idea suggests that God acts in three different “modes” but is only one Person. God appeared as the “Father” in the Old Testament, as “Jesus” in the earthly ministry, and as the “Spirit” in the present age. Presently, some Pentecostal groups hold to Modalism.
- **Arianism:** Named for the fourth-century teacher Arius, this view teaches that Jesus and the Holy Spirit were created by God the Father. This idea was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.
- **Adoptionism:** This view teaches that Jesus was an ordinary man until, at His baptism, He was adopted by the Father and given supernatural powers and the status of “Son of God.” Some Unitarians hold this view today.
- **Unitarianism:** This view holds that there is a single God with no distinct Persons. Whether Jesus or the Father is God varies, but many present-day Unitarians reject the pre-existence of Jesus, insisting that He began to exist at the virgin birth.

These various heresies deny the essence of the gospel by corrupting the biblical understanding of atonement, justice, and the effect of Christ’s work on the Cross. Church councils were called to deal with mutations of the truth that were being spread in the

early church. As a result, the doctrine of the Trinity was codified in the Nicene Creed in 325, and later in the Athanasian Creed. Both of these creeds are the basis of an orthodox understanding of the relationships within the Trinity.

The Trinity is yet another reminder of the immensity of God and our inability to fully understand His awesome nature.

You can find more resources to help you understand the history and importance of this doctrine on the Online Resource Page.



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Holy God, I humbly come before you acknowledging your majesty and my insignificance. I know that you have created everything, that you are sovereign over all, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Father, I thank you that you sent your Son to take the punishment that I deserve and that you have given me the Holy Spirit as a sign of your salvation. Help me to recognize the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so I can praise you in a way that honors your true nature. I pray that you would help me to walk worthy of the calling you have given me. Give me wisdom, Father, to present the Trinity in such a way that the children in my class will grow in their understanding of who you are. Lead them to a knowledge that will bring them to worship you as only you deserve.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Provide strips of paper to mark Genesis 1:1–3; John 1:1–5, 1:14; Isaiah 44:24; Matthew 3:16–17.
- Provide envelopes containing cards with the names of the books of the Bible for groups of three to five students. Students are to place the books in the proper order. They can use the Books of the Bible poster or their own Bibles to confirm the right order. If time allows, have them do it a second time without looking at the poster or their Bible. You may want to time them and determine who finishes first.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



## REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



## Trinity Worksheet

### MATERIALS

- Trinity worksheet for each student
- Trinity worksheet answer key
- Pencils

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Pass out the Trinity worksheets and pencils to each student.*

We will be filling these worksheets in as the class continues. Don't fill in anything right now. Wait until we get to it—even if you think you know the answers now. OK?

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

When we finish this worksheet, we'll see a little more clearly what we mean when we say Trinity.



# Studying God's Word

## READ THE WORD

Let's get started! Last week we talked a lot about the attributes of God. How He is merciful, gracious, loving. These are the things that make God who He is. *Refer to the Attributes of God poster.*

Today, we are going to learn something else about God. Something that is very difficult for even the smartest people to understand.

? Do you know what I mean by Trinity? *Allow children to answer.*

The Trinity refers to three Persons in one God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I like to think of it like this. Holy God in Heaven is our Father. Look at your worksheets under the heading "God." Write "Father" next to the words "In Heaven."

When God came to earth, He was Jesus, the Son. Look at your worksheets. Next to the words "On Earth" write "Jesus, the Son."

And when Jesus left the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit. He helps us to obey God. Next to the words "Helps Us Obey" write "Holy Spirit."

? So, who are the three Persons that make up our one God, according to what we just wrote in? *God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*

Great! Let's take a look at God's Word. We have read these verses before—Genesis 1:1–3. *After everyone has found the verse, assign readers to read the passage.*

Genesis 1:1–3

## EXAMINE THE WORD

This passage tells us a little about the Trinity, so let's examine the passage using some of the questions and tools we have been talking about.

### Observe the Text

*Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.*

? There are two individuals in this verse. Who are they? You can find them in verses 1 and 2. *God and the Spirit of God.*

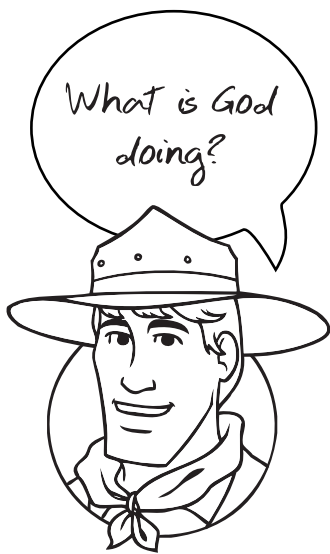
? What is God doing in verse 1? *Creating the heavens and the earth.*

? What is the Holy Spirit doing in verse 2? *Hovering over the face of the waters.*

? When did this take place? *On Day One of creation.*

? Who is responsible for creation? *God.*

? And how did God begin creation? Look in verse 3. How did God create? *He spoke it into existence—He created by the power of His Word.*



- ? So this tells us two things about God. What are they? *God is the Creator and there is a Spirit of God.*

## Discover the Truth

Now we are going to fill in part of our diagram. In the center circle, write “God—Creator” and in the circle right down from that write “The Holy Spirit—Creator.”

- ? So, according to Genesis 1:1–3, who was present at creation? You just filled in your worksheets with the answer. *God and the Holy Spirit.*

Yes. Two Persons of the Trinity so far. But let’s move on and see who else was a part of it.



## READ THE WORD

Turn in your Bibles to John 1. We will start by reading verses 1–5. *Assign readers.*

John 1:1–5, 14

## EXAMINE THE WORD

Let me ask you some questions about this verse. It gives us a little more information about creation and the Trinity.

### Observe the Text

- ? Who wrote this book of the Bible? *John.*

- ? Who was John? *Allow children to answer.*

This John was not John the Baptist. This John was one of Jesus’s very best friends and one of His apostles. God inspired John to write about Jesus’s life in this book. And this book was written not long after Jesus died—about 50 years later. *Refer to the timeline to help the children understand that this book was written not long after Jesus’s Resurrection, and that John was an eyewitness.*

- ? There are two persons mentioned in verse 1. Take a look. Who are they? *God and the Word.*

- ? John is talking about something that happened at a certain time. When did this happen? *In the beginning.*

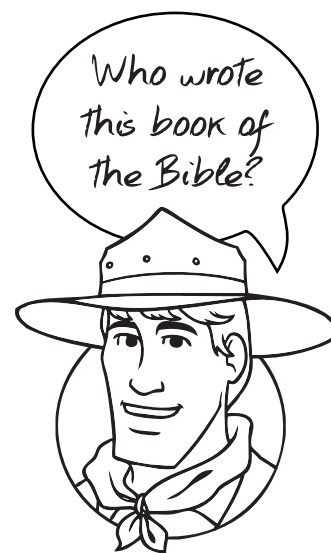
- ? What did John mean by “in the beginning”? Go back to Genesis 1:1. What is John talking about here? It is the same thing in Genesis and John. *In the beginning means at creation.*

- ? OK. Back to John 1:1. Who was there, “in the beginning?” *The Word.*

- ? What else? *The Word was with God. (Add this under “The Word”, number 1 on the worksheet.)*

- ? But what else does verse 1 say about the Word? *The Word was God. (Add this under “The Word”, number 2 on the worksheet.)*

- ? The Word was God? Hmmm. Let’s keep reading.



Verses 3–5 in John 1 tell us something about this Person called “the Word.” He was with God and He was God. What else? Listen carefully. *Read the verses emphasizing the things noted about the Word.*

- ? **What is John telling us about the Word in verse 3?** *All things were made through Him. Have children fill in number 3 on the worksheet.*
- ? **Yes. Verse 4 tells us something else. What was in the Word?** *Reread the verse if necessary. Life. Add this to number 4 on the worksheet.*
- ? **What was the life?** *The life was the light of men. Add this to number 5 on the worksheet.*
- ? **And where did this light shine?** *The light shines in the darkness. Add this to number 6 on the worksheet.*
- ? **Let’s see. Who is the Word? Does anyone know? Who created all things? Who brings life? Who is the light of men who shines in the darkness?** *Allow children to answer. Jesus, the Son of God.*

**Yes! Jesus, the Son of God. Look forward just a bit in your Bibles—to John 1:14. It tells us more about the Word.** *When everyone gets to the verse, assign someone to read it.*

- ? **So what did the Word do?** *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Add this to number 7 on the worksheet.*
- ? **What does that mean?** *He was born a man and lived on earth.*
- ? **And who does verse 14 tell us the Word is?** *The Word is the only begotten of the Father. Add this to number 8 on the worksheet.*
- ? **That’s right. The only begotten—or the Son—of the Father. Who is that Son?** *Jesus Christ. Add this to number 9 on the worksheet.*
- ? **Discover the Truth**
- ? **In the beginning was the Word. What did John mean by the beginning?** *Creation.*
- ? **Good. In Genesis 1:1–3 we read that two persons were present in the beginning. Who were they?** *God and the Spirit of God.*
- ? **In John 1 we just read that someone else was present at creation. Who was that?** *The Word; Jesus Christ; the Son.*

We also read that the Word—Jesus—is God.

- ? **So who were the three Persons present at creation?** *God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus.*

Right! Now we are going to fill in more on the diagram on your worksheet. In the circle on the top left put The Father—Creator. And in the last circle put The Son—Creator.



Even though these verses don't say the word Trinity, we see that there were three different Persons involved in creation—God the Father, the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, the Son.

But wait . . . three Persons at creation? We know that God created the heavens and the earth. I think we may be onto something very interesting about the Trinity. Turn to Isaiah 44:24. I'm going to read that to you. *When the children find it, read the verse, emphasizing that God spread the earth "by Myself"—at the end of the verse.*

Isaiah 44:24

- ? Who is responsible for creation? *God.*
- ? How many Gods are there? Who can tell me? *One.*
- ? And yet there were three Persons present at creation? Who were they? *God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus.*

### Discover the Truth

Do you see? There is only one God—we know that. But there are three Persons who make up God. And each Person was there at creation.

Look at your worksheets again. Inside each of the three spaces leading to the word "God" I want you to write the word "Is." Because I want you to remember that even though there are three Persons in the Trinity, they are all the one true God. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. And all three of these Persons who make up one God were present at creation.

And that is the Trinity! But there is just a little bit more.



### READ THE WORD

Let's read Matthew 3:16–17 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Matthew 3:16–17

### EXAMINE THE WORD

I wanted to read this because it will help us see one more thing about these three Persons who make up the Trinity—all part of the one true God.

### Observe the Text

- ? What did Jesus do in this verse? *He had been baptized.*
- ? Who came like a dove on Jesus? *The Spirit of God.*
- ? And whose voice was heard from heaven? *God, the Father.*

That's right. In these two verses we see again the three Persons of the Trinity. The Son—Jesus—is being baptized, the Father is the voice from heaven, and the Spirit appears in the form of a dove.

## Discover the Truth

In these verses in Matthew, we see Jesus, the Son being baptized. And we see the Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus in the form of a dove. And we hear God's voice saying "This is my beloved Son."

These are the three Persons of the Trinity. And it is clear that they are different Persons. They are each unique. You see, the Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not the Father.

To help you remember this, I want you to fill in the last spaces on your Trinity worksheet. Along the outside of the triangle—on all three sides—write "Is Not."

? Who are the three Persons of the Trinity? *The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.*

Yes. And yet they are all God. Look back on your worksheet under the word "God." I want you to remember that when we talk about God in heaven we mean God the Father. When we talk about God on earth, we mean Jesus, the Son. And when we talk about the one sent by Jesus to help us obey, we mean God, the Holy Spirit.



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

You did a great job today. Let's review quickly.

? There are three Persons in one God. Who are those three Persons? *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

? And what do we call this idea of three Persons in one God? Look on your worksheet for a clue. *The Trinity.*

? Did we see the word Trinity in any of the verses we read today? *No.*

That's right. The word Trinity is not used in God's Word. But, we did see clearly that all three Persons are mentioned in God's Word.

? What is the Bible talking about in Genesis 1? *Creation.*

? Yes. And who was present at creation? *God the Father, the Spirit of God, and Jesus, the Son of God.*

? How many Gods are there? *Only one.*

? Who is God? Look at your worksheets. *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

Yes. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all God.

? But are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit the same? Look at your worksheet. What did we put there? *No.*

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

The Trinity is not an easy thing to understand. It can't really be explained because God is not like anything in the world. People like us can't begin to understand how great He is.

But I think we saw today that God's Word makes it very clear that God is three Persons in one—even if we don't fully understand that. Those three Persons are God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.

Some people might wonder about the Trinity because it is hard to understand. It doesn't make sense if you don't believe God's Word and if you don't trust Him. But we do trust God and His Word. We know His Word is true—God cannot lie. And we have faith that God is three Persons in one great God—just as His Word teaches.

► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



## Memory Verse Puzzle

### MATERIALS

- Memory Verse puzzle on cardstock for each student
- Scissors
- One envelope per student
- Pencils

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Pass out one envelope and a copy of the Memory Verse puzzle to each student. Have the students cut the verse into pieces according to the template.*

We are going to make some puzzles today that I want you to take home and use to practice the memory verse. You can even use it to test your brothers, sisters, or parents to see if they know the verse yet!

First, write your name and the memory verse reference, Psalm 119:89–90, on the front of your envelope.

Next, cut this sheet into pieces by cutting along the dotted lines. Then mix up the pieces and put the puzzle back in order.

*Allow time for students to work. If they finish quickly, you can use the timer and challenge them to put the verse together quicker and quicker.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Our Holy God created the earth and everything in it. He is beyond our thoughts, just like the Trinity is beyond our thoughts and understanding. Yet we know that His Word is settled forever in heaven. His Word is true. God cannot lie. And even if things may be hard to understand, we can trust His Word. We can trust Him forever.





## MEMORY VERSE

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.



## GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God that He exists as our all-powerful God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- Thank God that He created the world through His great power.
- Pray that as the children learn more of God and His Word they will come to a better understanding of the wonder of God and the salvation that is freely offered to them through Jesus Christ.