



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 1:1–3, 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

page 5

Students will practice placing all the books of the New Testament in order.



Studying God's Word

page 5

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 1: Trinity Diagram

page 8

Students will fill in the Trinity diagram.



Activity 2: The Baptism of Jesus

page 10

Students will fill in and color the Baptism of Jesus coloring sheet, showing all three Persons of the Godhead at the same event.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- If you did not do this last week, print and cut out the Books of the New Testament cards for every 3–5 students from the Resource DVD-ROM, Lesson 2. Store in envelopes or other container.

- Books of the New Testament cards—one set for each group of 3–5 students
- Optional: minute timer or stopwatch



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

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

- Student Take Home Sheets



TRINITY DIAGRAM

- Print one Trinity diagram from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- You will use the Lesson Theme poster to help the children know how to complete the diagram.

- Trinity diagram for each student
- Lesson Theme poster
- Pencils



THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

- Print one Baptism of Jesus coloring sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Baptism of Jesus coloring sheet for each student
- Crayons and 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 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 but one true God, He consists of three separate yet equal Persons—and all were present at creation.

Many discussions surround this important doctrine, and can cause division in the church. Remember that the primary truths of the Trinity are presented in God's Word. And be willing to allow that there are secret things that belong to the Lord our God, which have not been revealed (Deuteronomy 29:29).

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

How often 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, 8:58); 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 those 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.

For more information on this topic, see 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. 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 envelopes containing Books of the New Testament cards for groups of 3–5 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.



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.



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. You could give them hints if they don't know by explaining that "tri" means three and use examples such as "tricycle" or "triangle."*

The Trinity refers to three Persons in one God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- ? **So, who are the three Persons that make up our one God?** *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. Listen while I read them. *Allow children time to find Genesis 1:1–3 in their Bibles. Then read it to them.*

Genesis 1:1–3

EXAMINE THE WORD

This passage is telling us about the Trinity.

Observe the Text

? When is this verse happening? Look at the very beginning of Genesis 1:1. *In the beginning.*

? There are two individuals in these verses. Who are they? Look carefully at verses 1 and 2. *If the children can't answer, read the verse to them again. Allow them to answer from the text. God and the Spirit of God.*

? What did God do in verse 1? *Created the heavens and the earth.*

? What is the Spirit of God doing in verse 2? *He was hovering over the face of the waters.*

? Does anyone know what hovering means? *Listen for answers.*

Hover means to be in the air and stay above something, like a helicopter does when it is in the air staying in one spot. The Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit was over the waters of the newly created earth.

? What day of creation is this? Remember it says "In the beginning." What day would that be? *The first day.*

? Who is creating? The answer is in Genesis 1:1. *God.*

So we see in this verse that two persons of the Trinity were both present at creation. They were God the Creator and the Spirit of God. *Reread Genesis 1:1-2 again to allow the children to hear the answers in the text.*

We've named two Persons of the Trinity so far, God and the Holy Spirit. They were both present at creation. But let's move on and see who else was a part of it.

? Who is the last person of the Trinity? *Allow for answers. Jesus.*

Turn in your Bibles to John 1. We will start by reading verses 1-3. *Assign readers or read the verses to the children after they have found them.*

? This verse starts just like Genesis 1:1. What does John 1:1 say? *In the beginning.*

Yes. Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 are both talking about the same time. They both say "In the beginning." In the beginning means at creation. Creation is the beginning of everything in the universe.

? What was in the beginning? The answer is in John 1:1. *Reread the first part of the verse if the students don't get the answer. The Word.*

And it says the Word was with God in the beginning and the Word also was God. The Word is a person!

? What is John telling us about the Word in verse 3? What was made through Him? *All things were made through Him.*

Yes. So everything in the entire universe was made by this Person who is The Word. The Word created everything.



John 1:1-3



Let's see if we can tell who the Word is. Listen while I read John 1:14. *Read the verse to the students.*

? It says the Word became flesh. What does that mean? *Allow students to answer.*

Became flesh means He became a man. He was born on the earth and he lived with other men.

? Now. See if you can figure this out. Who is the Person who was God and who came to earth as a man? Who is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us? *Listen for answers. It was Jesus Christ!*

That's right. The Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God was Jesus Christ! And all things were made through Him. If all things were made through Him, He must have been present at creation with God and the Holy Spirit!

Discover the Truth

? In Genesis 1:1–3 we read that two persons were present in the beginning. Who were they? *Reread the verse for the children so they can answer the question. 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.*

The Bible says that the Word—Jesus—is God.

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

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. I'm going to read Isaiah 44:24 to you. *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.*

We read in Genesis that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But we learned that all three Persons were present at creation.

? Who were they? *God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus.*

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.

And that is the Trinity!





Trinity Diagram

MATERIALS

- Trinity diagram for each student
- Lesson Theme poster
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the Trinity diagrams and pencils to each student.

? Let's look at this picture. It is an interesting shape, isn't it? Whose name is in the middle? *God.*

? And whose names are in the circles around the outside? *The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.*

We learn from the Bible that the Father is God; the Son, Jesus, is God; and the Holy Spirit is God. Can you write "IS" in the spaces that connect those things? *Help the children write "IS" according to the Lesson Theme poster.*

All three of these Persons are God, and they were all present at creation, but they are all also separate Persons.

Look at the outside lines. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. Can you write "IS NOT" in the spaces connecting the outside circles? *Help the children write "IS NOT" according to the Lesson Theme poster.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

When we talk about God in heaven we mean God the Father. When we talk about God who lived 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. There is only one God—we know that. But there are three unique Persons who make up God. And each Person was there at creation.



READ THE WORD

Matthew 3:16–17

Let's read Matthew 3:16–17 together. *Assign readers or read the passage aloud.*

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.

Observe the Text

- ? What is Jesus doing in these verses? Look in Matthew 3:16. *He was being baptized.*
- ? It says that Jesus saw the Spirit of God. How did the Spirit of God come? Look again in Matthew 3:16. *Like a dove.*
- ? 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.

In Genesis we saw the three Persons of God all doing the same thing, creating the earth. But here we see them all doing something different.

Where is the Father? *In heaven.*

And what is he doing in these verses? *Watching Jesus's baptism. Speaking from heaven.*

Where is the Son, Jesus, in these verses? *Getting baptized.*

Where is the Holy Spirit in these verses? *Landing on Jesus 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 from heaven 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.

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

Yes. And yet there is only one 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.





The Baptism of Jesus

MATERIALS

- Baptism of Jesus coloring sheet for each student
- Crayons and pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out Baptism of Jesus coloring sheets to students.
Explain the picture to them as follows:

This is a picture of Jesus being baptized. Jesus is God the Son. Write that on the line next to Jesus. Have the students write God the "Son" on the line next to Jesus.

From the sky are words said by God the Father. Have the children write God the "Father" next to the words of the Father.

- ? What did God say? "This is my beloved Son."

- ? Landing on Jesus is a dove. Who is the dove? God the Holy Spirit. Have the children write God the "Holy Spirit" on the line next to the dove.

Have the students color the picture if there is time.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

You see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all different Persons, but they are all God! And there is only one God.

The Trinity is a little hard to understand. God is sometimes beyond our understanding. But we know that there is only one God. And we know that the Father is God in heaven, the Son is God who came to earth, and the Holy Spirit is God who helps us obey. They are separate, but one God.



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 diagram for a clue. *The Trinity.*
- ? 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 Trinity picture. *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? *No.*
They are very different and have very different jobs!

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.

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

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.

Review the verse by using the Memory Verse strips from Lesson 9 to help the children say the verse.



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.

