



10

The Trinity

Key Theme

- The Godhead is triune: one God, three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Key Passages

- Genesis 1:1–2; John 1:1

Lesson Focus

- God is three Persons in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will play with play dough.



Circle Time

Prayer—Using the Prayer page of the Flip Chart, discuss prayer and give each child the opportunity to pray after determining what type of prayer you will offer today.

God's Word—The bible teaches that there is only one God, and that He is comprised of three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the Trinity. Each Person in the Trinity is different and has a unique job.

Song—Students will use hand motions as they sing the songs Oh Trinity and God Is Three in One!



Activity 1: Sorting

Students will sort various items into groups of three.



Activity 2: Coloring Three

Students will color in the number three in three different colors.



Memory Verse Review/Snack

Children will review the memory verse while enjoying the snack for the day. You may want to use the snack as incentive to recite and/or repeat the memory verse.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



FOR THE TEACHER

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

- Student Take Home Sheets



COME ON IN

- Gather an assortment of colors of play dough.

- Play dough



CIRCLE TIME

- Practice the “Oh, Trinity” and “God Is Three in One” songs. These can be found at the end of this Teacher Guide.

- Lesson Flip Chart
- Toy helicopter or picture of a helicopter



SORTING

- Gather six sets of three identical or classed items.

- 3 plastic spoons
- 3 bean bags
- 3 shoes
- 3 stuffed animals
- 3 books
- 3 balls



COLORING THREE

- Print one Coloring Three sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Coloring Three sheet for each student
- Crayons



MEMORY VERSE REVIEW/SNACK

- Prepare and bring snacks.

- Lesson Flip Chart for memory verse review
- Snacks



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 Unitar-

ians 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 . . .

- They will play with three different colors of play dough. Talk to the students about blending the three colors to make one color.

During this time you should be at the door welcoming the children as they come in and directing them to sit down at the tables and begin the activity. Have an aid/helper ready to engage the children with the activity.



REVIEW

Using the Flip Chart, quickly review the previous lessons with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class. Remember, children learn by repetition and review.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the lesson pages from the Flip Chart. Remind the children of each lesson's focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds, and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Circle Time

In an orderly manner, have the children assemble in a circle away from the tables—either on the floor or in their chairs.

Bring your stuffed animal, Bible, Flip Chart, toy helicopter or a picture of a helicopter, and any other props you brought or prepared for this lesson.

PRAYER

This prayer time is designed to get children to begin to understand some simple concepts about prayer and to get them to understand that they can pray. Use a special stuffed animal—prayer bear—or appropriate object to pass around the circle as each child gets his/her turn to pray. Only the child with the stuffed animal is allowed to pray or speak during this time. Using the same stuffed animal or other object all year will add continuity and structure to this time.

After the children are situated in the circle, say:

We start our Bible Study with prayer. Let's pray. *Turn to the Prayer page in the Flip Chart. Briefly review the different types of prayer presented there. Then determine which type you want the children to pray today.*

- I love you prayers—Adoration
- I'm sorry prayers—Confession
- Thank you prayers—Thanksgiving
- Please prayers—Supplication

Today Adoration is suggested. You might proceed this way.

Today let's say prayers of adoration—and tell God how much we love Him.

The prayers you begin with should be specific to your needs. This will model to the children that you believe God does care about all the details of your life and you pray to Him about these things. Your example will increase their confidence in praying to God.

I'll start. Dear God, your greatness is astounding! I want to praise you for
... *(insert personal prayer here).*

➤ Prior to making your transition to circle time, we suggest you take time for restroom breaks and hand washing.

➤ Preschoolers need to move. This is a good opportunity to get them to move. Make an orderly transition to the circle time. You can have carpet squares if you want to sit on the floor, or help them to move their chairs into the circle.

Pass the stuffed animal around the circle giving all the children an opportunity to say a prayer telling God they love Him.

Very good! Now let's put our stuffed animal away and we'll get into God's Word.

GOD'S WORD

These first four questions will be repeated each week. The repetition of these questions will help to solidify these simple but foundational truths in the children's minds at a young age.

? Before we begin, what is this? *Hold up your Bible. The Bible!*

? What is in this Bible? *God's Holy Word!*

? What does the Bible tell us? *Everything we need to know!*

? And all God's words in this Bible are what? *True!*

Today we are going to learn something very important about God, something that is hard to understand, even for grown-ups! So listen carefully. I want you to understand this lesson as best you can.

? Is everybody ready? *Yes! Refer to the Flip Chart as you proceed.*

? Ok. What is this a picture of? *A triangle!*

? How many sides does a triangle have? *Count with the children. Three!*

? Right! What is this a picture of? *A tricycle!*

? How many wheels does a tricycle have? *Count with the children. Three!*

? Great job! What is this a picture of? *A dinosaur!*

? That's right. This is a type of dinosaur called "triceratops." How many horns does a triceratops have? *Count with the children. Three!*

Tri means three. A tri-angle has three sides. A tri-cycle has three wheels. And a tri-ceratops has three horns. *Count again as you review.*

? The word "Trinity" also has "tri" in it. Now, what do you think "Trinity" means? *Refer to the Trinity diagram. Allow the children time to answer.*

The Trinity is three Persons in one God! We call them the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

? Who is the Father? *God.*

? Who is the Son? *Jesus—God.*

? Who is the Spirit of God? *The Holy Spirit—God.*

Yes! Listen carefully. When we talk about God in heaven, we call Him God the Father; when we say that God came to earth to be born a man, we call Him Jesus; and when we say that God lives in the hearts of everyone who believes in Him, we call Him the Holy Spirit. Let's look more closely at the Trinity in the Bible. Listen as I read Genesis 1:1 and tell me what God was doing. *Read Genesis 1:1 out loud to the children, emphasizing "God created."*

? What did God do? *He created.*

► As you teach, refer often to the Flip Chart picture to keep the children engaged.

Genesis 1:1–2

? What did God create? *Everything!*

That's right. God created the whole universe—the earth, animals, plants, people. And He created it all in the beginning.

Good job! Now listen to verse 2! Who else was with God in the beginning?

Read Genesis 1:2 out loud to the children, emphasizing "the Spirit of God."

? Who was there at the beginning with God? *The Spirit of God.*

The Bible says that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the Spirit of God was there too! Well, that is two Persons from the Trinity—the Father and the Holy Spirit. *Refer to the Flip Chart.*

? Who did we say was the other Person of the Trinity? What do we call God when we talk about the man who came to earth and was born on Christmas? *Jesus.*

Yes! Jesus, the Son, is the other Person of the Trinity! We will see that He was at creation, too! Now listen as I read from John 1:1 in the New Testament. This is talking about Jesus. Listen and tell me what it is saying about Jesus. *Read John 1:1 out loud to the children.*

First, it says "In the beginning."

? What happened in the beginning? *God created.*

Creation is the beginning of everything! This is saying that someone else was there in the beginning. The Bible said, "In the beginning was the Word."

? Who was in the beginning? *Allow for answers. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and now the Word.*

? Who is the Word? *Allow answers. Jesus.*

Jesus is the Word. Jesus is God's Son. Jesus is God who became man and came to earth. Jesus is also one of the Persons of the Trinity.

Listen while I read John 1:1 again. *Read John 1:1 out loud to the students, emphasizing "the Word was God."*

? Who was the Word? *Jesus, God.*

Jesus is the Word; Jesus is the Son; Jesus is God, and was in the beginning with God and the Holy Spirit.

? In Genesis 1, we read that two Persons were at creation. Do you remember who they were? *Reread Genesis 1:1–2 if necessary. God and the Holy Spirit.*

? We just read in the book of John that another Person was at creation. Who was that? *Jesus, the Son, the Word.*

? Who were the three Persons at creation? *Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

? Now, how many God's are there? *One God.*

? Yes. There is only one God. And how many Persons are in that one God? *Three!*

? Who are the three Persons? *God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit!*
Refer to Flip Chart illustration.

There is one God, but three Persons in God. All three were at creation. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God! And each Person, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is different. So the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. This is the Trinity!

SONG

Let's sing some fun and new songs about the Trinity to help us remember that **God is Three in One!** Sing "Oh, Trinity" and "God Is Three in One." The lyrics to these songs can be found on the Song Sheet at the end of this Teacher Guide.



Sorting

We are going to do some organizing now! There are a lot of things in my bag, and I need you to help me sort them into groups of three.

MATERIALS

- 3 plastic spoons
- 3 bean bags
- 3 shoes
- 3 stuffed animals
- 3 books
- 3 balls

INSTRUCTIONS

Pour the contents of your bag onto the floor or table.

Do you see three spoons?

Let's put three of the same or similar items in a group together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

This should help us remember that there are three Persons in the Trinity. They are different Persons—but the same God! When we talk about the Trinity, we mean one God in three Persons.



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



Coloring Three

It was fun sorting all of the objects into groups of three! Now we are going to get creative with colors to remind us that the Trinity is three different Persons in one.

MATERIALS

- Coloring Three sheet for each student
- Crayons

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose three colors from the crayon box. Use all three colors to make a colorful three!



What are three of your favorite colors?

Use your favorite three colors to color in the big three.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The Trinity means three Persons in one God. When you look at your picture, you can remember that you used three different colors to color in one number, just like there are three Persons in one God.



Memory Verse/Snack

Psalms 119:89 Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven.

After thanking God for your snack, review the memory verse with the children while enjoying the snack for the day. You may want to use the snack as incentive to recite and/or repeat the memory verse.

Use the Memory Verse page in the Flip Chart. Explain the verse to the children as you go over the verse together. Say the verse and point at each picture several times. Ask the children if anyone wants to try to say it on their own.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Before the world was created, God was the only being in existence. But He wasn't alone! God the Father was always with the Son and the Holy Spirit. We call this the Trinity, which means one God in three Persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all a part of creation. They are all God. There are three Persons in one God! That is the Trinity.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Some things are very hard to understand about God. The Trinity is one of those things. And this is where faith comes in. God gives us faith to believe what the Bible tells us—even when we can't figure it all out! But God wants us to keep studying His Word so we can learn more of it as we grow older!

Now we will end our time together today in prayer.

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



Group Prayer Time

- Ask God for a clear understanding of His Word.
- Praise God for the Father, Spirit, and Son.
- Pray the Lord will give the children faith as they grow to believe His truth.

Do you still have more time? Review the past lessons using the Flip Chart, add another coloring page, recite and review the current and past memory verses, sing more songs, bring out play dough. Keep the children occupied with intentional, God-centered activities until their parents come to pick them up.

Song Sheet

OH, TRINITY

(To the tune of "Oh, Christmas Tree")

Oh, Trin-i-ty, Oh, Trin-i-ty,
(Oh, Christmas Tree, Oh, Christmas Tree,)

God does exist as three in one.
(Thy leaves are so unchanging.)
Hold up three fingers, then one

Oh, Trin-i-ty, Oh, Trin-i-ty
(Oh, Christmas Tree oh, Christmas Tree,)

The Father, Spirit, and the Son.
(Thy leaves are so unchanging.)
Hold up one, then two, then three fingers

GOD IS THREE IN ONE

(To the tune "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Fa-ther, Spi-rit, Son,
(Row, Row, Row your boat,)

God is three in one.
(Gently down the stream.)

Trin-i-ty, Trin-i-ty, Trin-i-ty, Trin-i-ty,
(Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,)

Father, Spirit, Son.
(Life is but a dream.)