

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Trinity Sunday
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

When the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 313 C.E. he wanted the religion to have unity and consistency in beliefs and practices. There were many varying sects at the time. Constantine assembled all the great theologians and church leaders of the time at the Council of Nicaea. For the next four hundred years there was great conflict and debate over doctrines such as the Trinity and other councils were also convened when there were conflicts. The Apostle's and Nicene Creeds emerged from these councils. Trinity Sunday was incorporated into the church year in 1334. It is always the Sunday after Pentecost Sunday. The doctrine states that God is revealed to us in three distinct persons existing in a mutual relationship of love. The Trinity represents the total revelation of God: God the Father as Creator, God the Son as Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier and Comforter. This belief is supported in the Bible, creeds, and doctrines of the Church.

A Notation for This Week's Scripture

The natural world is the best place for children to observe and reflect on the awe, wonder and majesty of God. The first story from Genesis is chosen for the Trinity Sunday lectionary because it represents God the Father as Creator. Some translations refer to the Spirit of God moving over the face of the water. This reflects the creative energy and power of the Holy Spirit. Although this is the first story in the Bible it was written later by Priestly editors to show God at the center of an orderly and sequential creation in which mankind has been given stewardship responsibilities that put him in partnership with the Creator God.

Theme: Discovering God

Before Class

Find the Genesis Story to read in a Bible or Children's Bible. You will need an apple and a knife, a candle and a light, and a glass of water, ice, and a teakettle to make steam.

Beginning:

Children may be more willing to accept a simple explanation of the Trinity than adult theologians. Introduce the theme of Trinity Sunday and the creation story in this way: Some people think God is a very big idea to understand. God loves us. Because of that love, God shows God's self to us in different ways. When we hear the stories about Jesus we learn about God's love and kindness to everyone. Last week we learned how we can feel God's power and comfort in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. In today's story we hear about God as the creator of the world. Let's listen to the story as if we were detectives. Listen for clues that might tell us what God is like. Also listen for information about our relationship to God.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to know your love through Jesus, to feel your power in the Holy Spirit, and to praise your majesty in creation. Amen

The Story: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

The creation story is easy to find in any children's Bible or storybook on hand. Older students with an interest in science may challenge the truth of this story. This would be a good time to discuss the difference in purpose between a textbook and the Bible. These are not eyewitness accounts. The Bible uses the language of poetry and story to help us understand deep but intangible truths.

Point out the sequence of creation. The important concept to discuss for today's class is **dominion**. Some common definitions include: rule, authority, sphere of influence, area of control. What other words could we substitute here that retain the intent of the passage? (Stewardship, responsibility, caretaker?)

Reflection Questions:

- Genesis means the beginning or start.
- If this was the first story you ever heard about God what would be your image of God?
- How would you feel about God?
- Where are the places in nature where you feel closest to God?
- What kinds of things in nature give you an "Oh wow" feeling?

Today we also look at how God, our creator, is really one in three. God, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let's explore different ways of understanding how three can be one.

Activities: Student Teachers

They say the best way to learn something is to teach it. Students enjoy giving demonstrations. Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Assign one object lesson to each team to show a way of understanding the Trinity. Presented with thanks to the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut.

What's in a Name? Bible Object Lesson

How many names do you go by? I go by Susan, Mom, Daughter, Sister, Teacher.

Does this mean that I am more than one person? Of course not! In the same way God is one God, yet God's identity is defined through different names and specifically three persons - God, Our Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit.

An Apple - Bible Object Lesson

Have you ever eaten an apple? There are basically three parts - the skin, the flesh, and the core. All the parts are still one apple, yet they are all uniquely different.

H₂O = Water Bible Object Lesson

Scientists call the substance of water H₂O because it consists of super tiny particles called molecules which are made of two even smaller atoms of Hydrogen joined to a single atom of Oxygen.

However, water (H₂O) can take a liquid form – water, ice (a solid form), and a gas form (steam.) It remains H₂O though no matter what form it takes.

In the same way God is God whether God is in the person of - God the Creator, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit. He is still one God just as the substance we know as water is still H₂O.

Three in One using a candle

Light the candle. Use the candle to explain that it is like the Blessed Trinity.

There are three parts to a candle:

1. The Wax
2. The Flame
3. The Wick

Explain that the God is like the wax; the Son, Jesus Christ is the LIGHT or flame to show us God's light; and the Holy Spirit is like the wick that is in each of us, holding the light and showing us the flame.

Have the children explain or draw their belief about the Trinity for themselves.

Creation Caretakers

Divide the class into small groups either by days of creation or by area, such as land, sea, water, skies, air, plants, animals, and people. Tell the children that stewardship of the earth is an important Christian value. Have the groups discuss environmental concerns for their area and suggestions for improvement. Each group presents their ideas to the class. Decide if there is a suggestion that the children could carry out. End the activity with this prayer:

O heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(For Joy in God's Creation, Book of Common Prayer, p.814)

Closing Prayer: Dear God, we give you thanks for all the ways of knowing you. Put your Holy Spirit in our hearts so that we may love each other like Jesus did and help us to take care of your wonderful creation. Amen.

Lesson written by Trudy Ardizzone, 2011

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