

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Trinity Sunday
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 3:1-17

Background: We begin the season with two Feast days: Pentecost, followed by Trinity Sunday. Then we move on to the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others. Our theme for this lengthy season is “Blessed is the Ordinary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Learned leaders of the church struggle to communicate the concept of the "Trinity," our God who is three-in-one. A learned leader named Nicodemus went to Jesus in the night to struggle with the concept of "born again." We stretch for a deeper understanding of God's longing for us and with our call to respond, as John 3:16b says that eternal life is for those who believe in God.

Theme: The Trinity

Before Class: Look over the lesson and decide which activities will work for your group. If you want to share a trinity symbol with the children, you will need green chenille stems – at least one per child. You will need: A doll or two, a big tub of water if you can go outside or a smaller bowl of water and a bath towel if you are to remain inside. A *Book of Common Prayer*, opened to page 307, will help you with the prayer said at baptism.

Beginning: Greet the children. Be sure you know their names and that they know each other’s names. Tell the children that this Sunday has a name in our church: Trinity Sunday. Tell them that trinity means three all together in one. Ask the children to stand three together. (If you have more than three children in your group, take turns.) Hold your hands together way out in front of you, making a circle with your arms, as if wrapped around a big tree trunk.

Ask one of the children to do the same. Then ask a second child to stick one arm through the circle the first child made and then hold their own hands so their arms make a circle, linked to the first circle. Then ask the third child to loop one arm through the first child's arm and the other through the second child's arm and then hold their own hands together. Tell them they are acting out a trinity! Make sure each child has a chance to be part of a trinity. Participate in one of the circles yourself, if needed. Tell the children that for the church, Trinity also means: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for being God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit and for loving us. Amen.

The Story: There was a man who had heard Jesus. The man’s name was Nicodemus. Well, Nicodemus was a very important person. Nicodemus wanted to understand what Jesus was

saying, but he just couldn't get it. So one night, when it was dark, Nicodemus decided to go find Jesus and ask him to explain things so he could understand. Jesus told Nicodemus that he really needed to start over if he was going to understand. "But how CAN I start over?" Nicodemus asked.

"I cannot go and get born. I can't go get back inside my Mother!"

"No, of course you can't," Jesus told him. "But water can help you get started all over."

We help people get started all over here in our church with water. We call it Baptism.

Baptism: (If you can go outside, and the children are dressed so that water splashed on them will not be a problem, use a large tub of water. If you will remain inside, use a small bowl of water and a towel.)

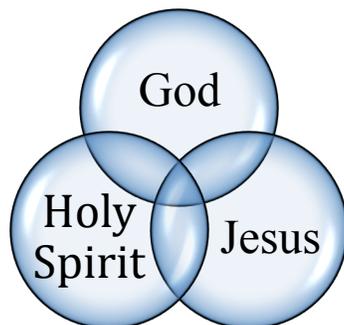
(Note. If you think the children will have seen a baptism recently, ask them about it. Otherwise, simply describe baptism, in your own words, using the following as a guide.)

When we are baptized, the priest puts water on our heads and says:

"I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Take one of the dolls, dip your fingers into the water, and then make a sign of the cross on its head and say, again, the words said at baptism. Invite each child to pretend to baptize its doll or one of the dolls you have available.

The Trinity: Tell the children we can make something to take home to tell our families about Trinity Sunday. Give each child three lengths of chenille stem. (If you have enough stems, cut each one in half; otherwise, cut each stem in thirds.) Show the children how to bend the stem into a circle and pinch the two ends together to secure the circle. (If you bend each end back over the other end and pinch it tightly, it will be secure.) Then, just as we looped our arms together earlier, take another stem and loop it through the first circle and secure the ends in a circle. Now you will have two circles linked together. Take the third stem piece and loop it through BOTH circles and secure it. Now we have a Trinity symbol for God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.



Activity: If you are combining this group with the older children, let the older children act out the story for the children. The younger children can show the older children how to make the trinity symbols. (You will need sufficient chenille stems for these children also.) And all can do the Baptism exercise together. In addition, the older children may be writing with chalk on the sidewalk and the younger children could draw their trinity symbols with chalk.

Getting Closure: Gather the children into a circle, holding hands. Tell the children you are glad they could be here today and that we will end this time together with a prayer.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for our circle here, holding hands. Thank you for your circles: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Trinity Sunday
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 3:1-17

Background: We begin the season with two Feast days: Pentecost, followed by Trinity Sunday. Then we move on to the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others. Our theme for this lengthy season is “Blessed is the Ordinary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Learned leaders of the church struggle to communicate the concept of the "Trinity," our God who is three-in-one. A learned leader named Nicodemus went to Jesus in the night to struggle with the concept of "born again." We stretch for a deeper understanding of God's longing for us and with our call to respond, as John 3:16b says that eternal life is for those who believe in God.

Theme: The Trinity

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible or of the scripture passage for the children. If you are going to read the poem (in the Beginning section) you will need a napkin, shamrock, ice and water. If you will be combining with the younger children, look at their lesson plan and decide which elements you want to include. If you have exclusively older children, check if you can go outside and write with chalk on the sidewalk. If that is not possible, be sure to have calculator tape and markers or crayons. A long scarf would be a good prop.

Beginning: Be sure to know the name of each child present and that the children all know each other's names. Tell the children that this Sunday has a name in our church and the name is Trinity Sunday. Ask if anyone knows what “trinity” is. If they need help, offer that it means three and that we, the church, think of God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is a concept difficult for many to grasp. You may choose to read this poem to the class as a way of looking at the concept: (it would be good to have things to illustrate this as you read)

Three folds of the cloth, yet only one napkin is there,
Three joints in the finger, but still only one finger fair,
Three leaves of the shamrock, yet no more than one shamrock to wear.
Frost, snow-flake and ice, all in water their origin share,
Three Persons in God; to one God alone we make prayer.
- traditional Gaelic poem

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for being our Father, our Jesus, and our Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Story: John 3:1-17 Ask for volunteers to read the passage or you read the passage to the children, with them following along. Tell the children they will be acting out the passage after you read it and discuss it. (If you are combining ages, tell the older children they will be "presenting" their play to the younger children.) There is a script below.

Questions:

- What is a Pharisee? (A very devout man who was leader of many Jewish priests and very respected)
- I wonder why Nicodemus came to talk to Jesus?
- I wonder why he came in the middle of the night?
- What does Nicodemus understand when Jesus says he must be "born from above"?
- What do we understand Jesus to be saying? (Baptism is the way to start over.) In verse 16 we have what has been called "The Gospel in miniature." (Be sure the children understand all the words and the concept.)

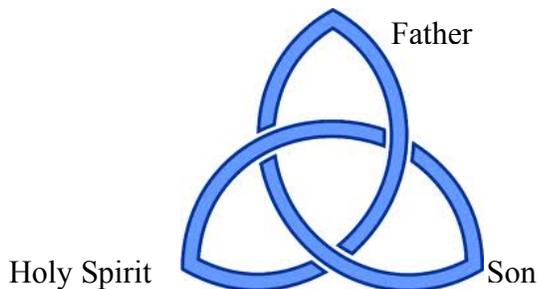
Acting it Out: Ask the children to turn this passage into a short play. Let them decide who plays each part and how to paraphrase the words. Then invite them to act out the parts. A long scarf could help Nicodemus sneak through the night to Jesus.

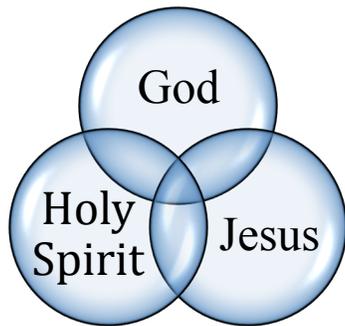
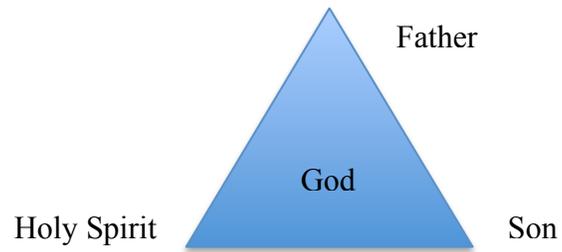
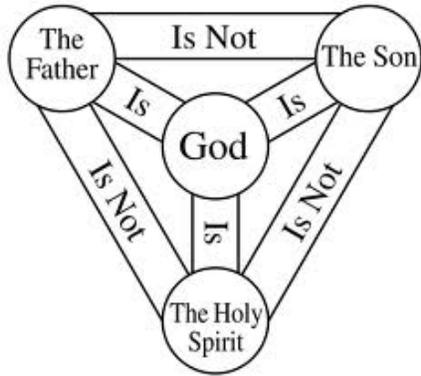
If you are combining groups, invite the younger children to watch the play.

The Trinity:

Option 1: Ask the children to write verse 16 on a piece of paper if you are going to write that verse on the sidewalk outside church. If that is not a possibility, ask each child to copy the verse – in one long line – on the calculator tape and post their strips where people will be able to see them when they come out of church.

Option 2: Have the children decorate the sidewalks or paper with triangles (or shamrocks or other 3-sided objects they can think of) and then write "God" "Jesus" "Spirit" on the three sides.





Getting Closure: Invite the children to wonder with you: If you were to go to Jesus by night, what might you ask him?

Closing Prayer. Thank you, God, for showing us that by believing in Jesus we will have eternal life. Help us to see you in the world around us and to live faithfully. Amen.

John 3:1-17

Narrator: Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him,

Nicodemus: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”

Jesus: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus: “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus: “How can these things be?”

Jesus: “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

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**Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Trinity Sunday
Lesson Plans for Adults**

Scripture: John 3:1-17

Background: We begin the season with two Feast days: Pentecost, followed by Trinity Sunday. Then we move on to the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others. Our theme for this lengthy season is “Blessed is the Ordinary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Learned leaders of the church struggle to communicate the concept of the "Trinity," our God who is three-in-one. A learned leader named Nicodemus went to Jesus in the night to struggle with the concept of "born again." We stretch for a deeper understanding of God's longing for us and with our call to respond, as John 3:16b says that eternal life is for those who believe in God.

Theme: The Trinity

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible or of the scripture for each person. If you are going to read the scripture as a dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, there is a script at the end of the lesson.

Beginning. Today is Trinity Sunday, and the Trinity is a concept difficult for many to grasp. You may choose to read this poem to the class as a way of looking at the concept: (it would be good to have things to illustrate this as you read)

Three folds of the cloth, yet only one napkin is there,
Three joints in the finger, but still only one finger fair,
Three leaves of the shamrock, yet no more than one shamrock to wear.
Frost, snow-flake and ice, all in water their origin share,
Three Persons in God; to one God alone we make prayer.
- traditional Gaelic poem

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for continuing to stretch our minds and our hearts to become the people you know us to be. Amen.

The Scripture: John 3:1-17 You may ask one person to read the passage or you can invite three people (Narrator, Jesus, and Nicodemus) to read the passage as a dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. See below for script.

Before the passage is read, be sure people are using the same working definition of a Pharisee (a devout leader of the Jewish people, a member of a court with scores of priests, scribes, and other leaders responsible for keeping the Jewish faith pure.)

After the entire passage is read, allow a moment or two and then have the person who read Jesus' part read verses 5 through 8 again.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night?” (He probably wanted to check out Jesus' message and did not want those to whom he reported to know he was doing this.)
- How did Nicodemus understand Jesus' telling him that he had to be "born from above"? (Nicodemus was either taking Jesus at his word: that he must literally crawl back into his mother's womb, or else he was indulging in a common practice – hyperbole.)
- What do we think Jesus was calling Nicodemus to do? (Be born of the Spirit through baptism.)
- Jesus speaks of the wind in verse 8. This conversation occurred, of course, before the crucifixion. What might our hindsight add to the concept of the Spirit as wind in light of Pentecost?
- Martin Luther is reported to have called verse 16 "The Gospel in miniature." Ask someone to read just that verse again. To what extent would we agree with Martin Luther? Why? Why not?

Getting Closure: Those of us who were baptized before 1979 may not have had the prayer in the liturgy of Holy Baptism at the top of page 308, *Book of Common Prayer* said for us. To bring all of us under this prayer, we will close today with this prayer, changing the pronoun "them" to "us."

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon us your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.

John 3:1-17

Narrator: Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him,

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