

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: TRINITY SUNDAY

LESSON 26
22 May 2016

Focus Scripture Passage: John 16:12–15

Lesson Focus: God, Christ, Holy Spirit

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the idea and mystery of the Trinity.
- learn about the eternal community of God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 16:12–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bibles
- Plain paper, crayons or markers, pens or pencils
- Pre-cut disks with holes (*see instructions for Trinity Twirlers*), string, permanent markers
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Can three be one or one be three? Give children the three definitions to these words and see if they can guess the word that represents them all:

Club

- wooden stick used to hit objects
- suit in a deck of playing cards
- group that meets

Deck

- to hit something
- a porch on the side of a building
- planks of a boat where people walk

Fair

- lovely, beautiful
- light complected
- equitable, reasonable

Kid

- a baby goat
- a child
- to tease someone

Match

- wooden fire starter
- to go together
- a part of a game such as in tennis

Mug

- a drinking cup
- to attack
- a snapshot of a person’s face

Range

- cooking stove
- large area of grassy land
- line of mountains

Seal

- a fur-coated mammal
- to close something tightly
- a stamp that makes something official

Spell

- mythical words with mystical powers
- put letters together to make word
- a measurement of time

Trinity

- God
- Jesus Christ
- Holy Spirit

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read the focus scripture passage from John 16:12–15 (adapted from *The Message*):

“I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t handle them now. But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. The Spirit won’t draw attention, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. The Spirit will honor me; he will take from me and deliver to you. Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I’ve said, ‘He take from me and delivers to you.’”

Remind the class of the events that took place during Pentecost. Because they have already talked about the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples and followers, this will read like a flashback. Put the scripture passage in perspective. Jesus said this to the disciples before he went up into heaven. Use it as an introduction to the idea of Trinity.

The word Trinity is never mentioned in the Bible; however, God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit are used interchangeably. Can you find reference to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit all within this scripture passage? But how can three be one and one be three? This idea can be confusing for adults and children alike.

We believe in one Living God who is revealed in Jesus Christ and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons.

As adults we recognize this as the Trinity. Most important for the children to remember is that no matter which name they use, the eternal community of God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit will always be with them.

Using scripture references listed below, challenge children to create a list of names or descriptions for God, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit.

Start with the scripture reading for today then let the children look for more (see examples).

- John 16:12–15 (friend, Spirit of Truth, guide, interpreter, honorable, Father, deliverer)
- John 6:35 (bread of life)
- John 3:16 (son of God)
- John 10:11 (shepherd)
- John 14:25–26 (advocate, teacher)

- Genesis 1:1 (creator)
- Isaiah 66:13 (comforting mother)
- Deuteronomy 32:11–12 (eagle, protector, guide)
- Isaiah 9:6 (counselor)
- John 15:26 (Holy Spirit)
- Matthew 1:21 (Jesus)
- John 8:12 (light of the world)
- 1 John 4:8 (love)
- John 4:25 (Messiah)
- Luke 2:11 (Savior)
- John 13:13 (teacher)
- John 1:1 (word)
- Matthew 11:19 (friend)
- Revelations 22:13 (alpha and omega)
- Ephesians 2:14 (peace)

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

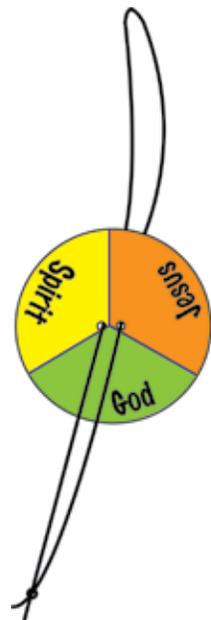
Unraveling the Mystery of You

Understanding who we are can also be a mystery. Like God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, no single word can describe everything about us. Give each person a piece of paper and crayon or marker. Have them trace around their hands. Then ask them to write different descriptions of who they are and how they are known by other people on the fingers. (*sister, brother, piano player, soccer player, student, reader, happy, singer*) Let the children help one another if someone struggles with ideas.

Trinity Spinner

Follow directions to make Trinity spinners found on the next page. As children work, review the concept of Trinity.

To work the spinner, hold the string in each hand with the disk in the middle. Twirl the string like a jump rope. When the string is wound fairly tight, stretch hands outward to make the disk spin. Pull strings apart hard, then relax and repeat. This will keep disk spinning. Notice how the three sections of the disk—God, Jesus, Spirit—blend into one.



4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Ask children to discuss today's lesson. Did they have any "aha" moments? What is one idea they will take with them from the lesson? Challenge children to use their spinners to talk with friends and family about the eternal community of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

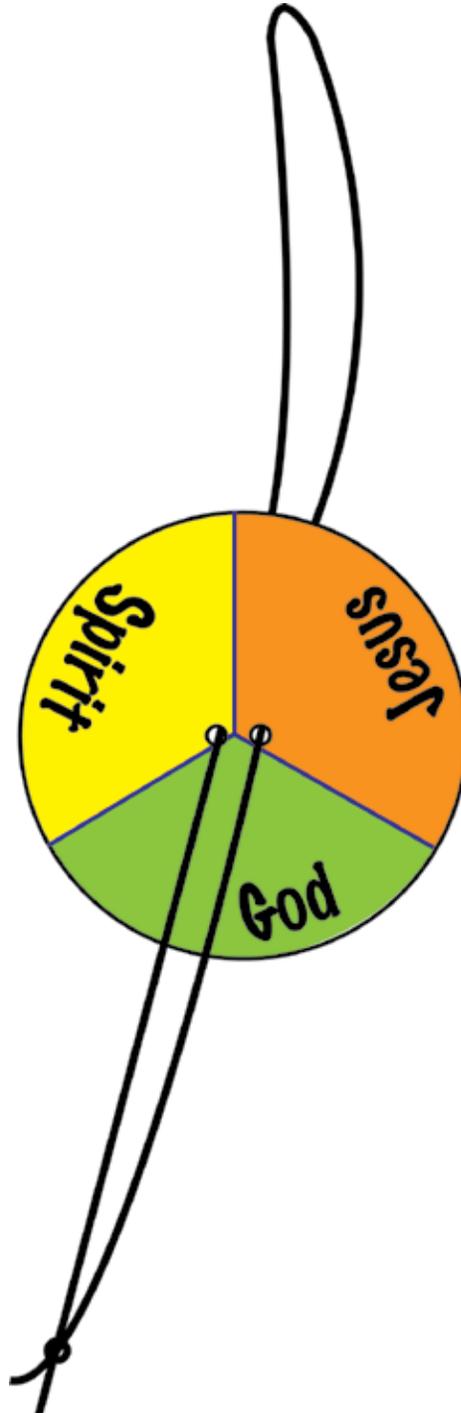
Instructions for Trinity Spinners

1. Each child will need one circle (about 3 in/7.62 cm in diameter) cut from heavy poster board, foam core board, sturdy cardboard, wood, plastic lids, or empty milk cartons.
2. Punch two small holes in the center of each disk. A button can be glued to the center to reinforce the holes.
3. Using markers, divide the circle into three equal sections.
4. Have children write God in one section, Jesus in one, and Spirit in the third section.
5. Fill in each section a different color.
6. Thread a string (about 3 ft/1 m long) through one hole and back through the other, creating a loop with the disk in the middle. Tie together.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Sing the song "We Are One in the Spirit" CCS 359. This song is often sung in camp and youth settings so children may already know it. Make sure the fourth verse is sung, even if other verses are skipped. This verse highlights the Trinity. Alternate song: "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" CCS 53.



FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: TRINITY SUNDAY

LESSON 26
22 May 2016

Focus Scripture Passage: John 16:12–15

Lesson Focus: Guided by the Spirit

Objectives

The learners will...

- better understand the Trinity.
- discuss their understandings of God.
- explore the continued presence of the Holy Spirit.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Knife and cutting board

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 16:12–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Three in One

As the group gathers, challenge them to come up with words that have more than two meanings. To make it more challenging, form the group into two teams and see which team can come up with more words in a given amount of time. Some examples are provided.

Kid

- A baby goat
- A child
- To tease someone

Seal

- A fur-coated mammal
- To close something tightly
- A stamp that makes something official

Match

- Wooden fire starter
- To go together
- A game or competition (such as a tennis match)

Today the group will discuss the Trinity and Community of Christ’s belief in one living God who is a community of three persons.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Remind the class of the events that took place during Pentecost. Because they have already read and discussed the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples and followers, this passage will be like a flashback. Jesus said this to the disciples before he ascended into heaven. Use the scripture passage to introduce the Trinity.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

—John 16: 12–15 NRSV

This passage is a promise of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and a comfort both to the disciples and to us today. Jesus tells us that he will continue to communicate; the Holy Spirit will come and speak what is heard from Jesus. Jesus reminds us that everything that belongs to the Father belongs to Jesus, and the Spirit will declare that which belongs to Jesus. This passage expresses the closeness of the Trinity. Discuss the following questions to help the class understand the Trinity and what it means for our understanding of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

- Who are the “three persons” of the Trinity?
- What is your understanding of the Trinity?
- What questions do you have about the Trinity? (This question should be used to help guide the lesson and following discussion.)

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Trinity

The Trinity wasn’t something that people understood during the time of Jesus; it has developed as people tried to understand the interrelation between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The word Trinity is never mentioned in the Bible; however, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are used interchangeably. But how can these three be one and one be all three?

Read the Community of Christ basic belief statement on God:

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity— God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship

—*Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition

A common metaphor of the Triune God is *thought-word-breath*. Think of a word or idea—a thought. Now hold your hands in front of your mouth and speak the word aloud. The *thought* is like God, where the idea begins. The *spoken word* is Jesus Christ, who was described as the Word (John 1). The *breath* you feel on your hands is like the Holy Spirit, the breath that carries the spoken word out, the action that puts in the idea into practice.

God speaks, God’s Word acts, and God’s Spirit moves over creation.

- In what ways does describing God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as a community in loving relationship expand your understanding?

Give each youth a Bible and have them identify ways God is depicted.

- Whom does the passage identify? (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit)
- What metaphor is used when describing them?
- Which qualities are present in the depiction?

Examples of passages are: John 14:25–26, Isaiah 66:13, Genesis 1:1, Matthew 3:16, and John 10:11.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Take-away Question

Challenge the class to think about this during the week:

The continued presence of the Holy Spirit was promised to us. Throughout the week, pay attention to the moments when you feel the Holy Spirit’s presence. Take note of moments you were surprised to be aware of the Spirit.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close with “We Are One in the Spirit” CCS 359. Pay special attention to the fourth verse which emphasizes the Trinity.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: TRINITY SUNDAY

LESSON 26

22 May 2016

Focus Scripture Passage: John 16:12–15

Lesson Focus: We are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on different descriptions of the Triune God.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the significance of the Trinity.
- explore Community of Christ understanding of Trinity through hymns.
- write a prayer addressing the Triune God.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 16:12–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

In the Christian liturgical calendar, today is the first Sunday after Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. It invites us to reflect on what it means to believe in the Trinity or Triune God.

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and

moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship (“We Share Basic Beliefs,” *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 14).

Share your response to one of the following questions in a large group or in small groups of two or three. **Note to instructor:** the Trinity is a complex theological idea. Encourage all to respond however they are comfortable. Accept all responses without discussion.

The following have been used to describe the Trinity or Triune God:

Father, Son, Holy Spirit
God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
Lover, Beloved, Power of Love
Giver, Gift, Giving

- With which description do you most closely connect? Why?
- How would you describe the Trinity to a new disciple? How has it been described to you?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read John 16:12–15 as a practice of Dwelling in the Word. Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God; it is to Christ that scripture points. After the passage is read the first time, pause for a moment allowing the words to fill your mind. After the passage is read the second time, pay attention to the invitation you hear through the text. Circle the words or phrases to which your mind is drawn. Share these with another or with the larger group.

In this passage we hear again Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to guide his disciples. While there is more he wanted to teach them, he showed compassion for them knowing they were overwhelmed by what he had already revealed about his departure. The author of John's Gospel uses *Spirit of truth* and the verb *guide* (meaning *lead in the way*) to highlight Christ's promise of continuing revelation for all generations of disciples. The author also affirms that the Spirit of truth comes from the Father and the Son and expresses the nature of God as loving relationship.

Discuss the following questions as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- What was the message of hope in this passage for Jesus' disciples? What is the message of hope for disciples today?
- How does the Triune God reveal both unity and diversity?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Many Christians use the term *Trinity* to describe God. Early Christian ministers and scholars developed the idea of Trinity. They studied, discussed, and wrote during

the first 500 years after Christ's resurrection. During this time people had different ideas about God's nature, some of which were not compatible with each other. The primary question had to do with the relationships among God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Many volumes have been written on this question. Finally, God is "mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination" (Basic Beliefs of Community of Christ). However, it is helpful to speak of God as *Trinity* or *Triune God*. When we use these terms we mean that God is a community of three persons and one eternal being. When we use the word *person*, we do not mean *individual* like we do when we talk about humans. We mean the ways in which God's being or self is revealed. God is revealed as God the Father (Eternal, Heavenly Parent), God the Son (Jesus Christ—God's being in the flesh), and God the Holy Spirit (God's personal, enduring presence) (*Of Water and Spirit*).

The following hymns from *Community of Christ Sings* express the nature of God as Trinity. Discuss how each hymn expresses the triune nature of God and connects with the focus scripture passage. You may choose to do this as a full group or in small groups of two or three. Pay attention to rare insights and discoveries within the group.

"God of Dawn, Each Day's Renewal" CCS 51

"The Play of the Godhead" CCS 56

"Praise with Joy the World's Creator" CCS 57

"God of Still Waiting" CCS 58

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Write a brief prayer reflecting your understanding of the Trinity. You may use descriptions from the Gather section, from one of the hymns, or your own choice of metaphor. **Note to instructor:** the following example is the fourth verse of CCS 58. You may choose to create your own example before this lesson to share with the group.

Word true and faithful, hope-bringing Spirit, God of enfolding love: come in your fullness and grace; work through our lives for your praise.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Invite someone to close with the prayer he or she has written, or read a verse from one of the above hymns to close this time of learning and sharing.

