

TEACHING GUIDE

TRINITY

Sample

OUTREACH

SERMON OVERVIEWS

TRINITY SERIES

Write Up: Who is God? How can God be described as both transcendent and intimate? At the core of the Christian faith is the belief that there is one God over all. However, there are places in the Bible that suggest this one God is actually three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How can both ideas be true? And if it is true, what impact does it have upon our lives? Join us as we dive into the mystery of the Trinity and discover all of the hopeful implications of a God who is three in one.

Week 1: God As Father

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:14 // 1 John 3:1 // Romans 2:4 // Proverbs 3:11-12

Write Up: God is transcendent. He, in many ways, is so far above us that we cannot fathom Him. However, God is also made more personal within the scriptures by referring to him as Father. If God is our Father, there are important implications for our lives. A good father loves. A good father disciplines. God our father offers us provision, sacrifice, and proximity.

Think: I have a heavenly father who wants what is best for me. He helps guide me with love and discipline.

Feel: The God of the universe loves me like a father loves his children. I am special to him.

Do: Receive God's love and live in obedience to him.

Week 2: Son

Scripture: John 1:14 // Hebrews 1:3 // 1 Corinthians 1:23-24,30 // John 1:1 // John 14:6

Write Up: Jesus is God in the flesh. If you want to know what God is like, look no further than the incarnation. Jesus is the glory of God. Jesus is the wisdom of God. Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the way to God. Jesus demonstrated what a full life with God looks like both in this life and the next. Ultimately, the reason Jesus came was to give himself as a sacrifice on the cross.

Think: Jesus came to earth to show us what God was like and how to live properly before him in this life and the next.

Feel: I am so loved by God that he sent his only son to rescue me.

Do: Put your faith, hope, and trust in Jesus's work on the cross.

Week 3: Holy Spirit

Scripture: John 14:16-17 // Romans 15:13 // Galatians 5:22-23

Write Up: God progressively comes closer and closer to his creation within the scriptures—first, the Father, then the Son, and finally, the personal presence of God's Spirit that takes up residence in the life of the believer. It is through the Spirit that we interact with the divine. It is through the Spirit that we are convicted, guided, and empowered for our daily lives.

Think: Through the Holy Spirit, God lives and dwells inside of me.

Feel: I am never alone because God is always with me through his Spirit.

Do: Invite the Spirit of God to guide me and lead me.

WEEK ONE

Week 1: God as Father

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:14 // 1 John 3:1 // Romans 2:4 // Proverbs 3:11-12

Write Up:

God is transcendent. He is, in many ways, so far above us that we cannot fathom him. However, God also becomes closer in the scriptures by the references to him as Father. If God is our Father, there are many important implications to our lives. A good father loves. A good father disciplines. God our father offers us provision, sacrifice, and proximity.

Think:

I have a heavenly father who wants what is best for me. He guides me with love and discipline.

Feel:

The God of the universe loves me as a father loves his children. I am special to him

Do:

Receive God's love and live in obedience to Him.

Sermon:

Hello, church. This morning we begin a new sermon series called Trinity. For the next three weeks, we will be looking at one of the most important doctrinal convictions of the Christian faith. We will explore the centuries-old belief that there is only one God, and he is **known** through three unique entities. The God of the universe is expressed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Diversity in unity. Multiple and yet singular. Three in one. Although it is so pivotal to our faith, few within the church spend their lives giving it much thought. I would argue that one of the reasons the Trinity takes the backseat is because, in the end, we don't really understand it or know how to apply it. The truth is there are many things in life that just don't make sense.

Illustration:

I have had a few things this week boggle my mind. I want to share them with you and see if you can help me make sense of them. Why do we park in driveways and drive in

parkways? Why is the man who invests all of your money called a broker? Why isn't the number 11 pronounced "onety-one"? Where do forest rangers go to "get away from it all"? Why, when you miss a call from someone and you call them right back, they don't answer? Why is a pizza box square when the pizza is round? Why do we turn the car radio down when we park? These are just a few of the more baffling things in life. I suggest many of us would place God, and the idea of the Trinity, on this list as well.

The reason for this sermon series is to help shed some light on the mystery of God. I know many who have found themselves profoundly frustrated by their inability to wrap their minds around this divine being. I want to say one thing before we dive in today: I find a good thing that God, in His trinitarian existence, is difficult to comprehend. The God of the universe, the creator and sustainer of all things, should not be contained in my feeble mind. If he could be, we would have bigger problems on our hands. This mystery is something the people of God have wrestled with from the beginning of time. So, to be clear, if this is a doctrine that has been debated and studied for centuries, I don't know if we will settle it in the next 30 minutes. But we will certainly give it a shot.

God is transcendent, so wholly other but at the same time immanent and close, and he dwells within us. What we read from Genesis to Revelation is the biblical authors' very best job of describing him. When you don't have adequate words to describe something, you must use the familiar to illustrate the unfamiliar. What the writers were doing was giving handles to their understanding of God. Each and every one of these illustrative efforts fall short and cannot contain the transcendent God; however, they are helpful.

POINT 1: GOD IS THREE AND ONE

There are different times from Genesis to Revelation where we see the distinct aspects of God present at one time and yet also functioning on their own. At creation, God spoke everything into being, and the Spirit was hovering over the waters. We also see the New Testament clarification that the Word who is Jesus was in the beginning and was with God and was God. We see at Jesus's baptism, God the Father spoke a word of approval over Jesus, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. The place I was really drawn to though, where the Trinity is on display, is at the very end of 2 Corinthians.

Read 2 Corinthians 13:14

After Paul wrote this letter to the church in Corinth, at the very end of his communication, he gave his final blessing and he decided to leave them with a reminder of the trinitarian nature of God. He said, "I leave you with the grace of Jesus the Son, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." It is as if Paul was wanting to emphasize the intimate involvement of God in the lives of those who were reading and hearing his letter. Without the doctrine of the Trinity, God can simply be seen as a critical spectator. We may interpret God only through the lens of one of the three expressions. We may see him as an angry and frustrated father, who stands far off and shakes his head at the sins we commit and the mistakes we make. But with the Trinity in full view, we

can see God is the ultimate participant. He enters our world and actively initiates the redemption of all things and partners with us in humanity.

It might be helpful to think of it like this. Time is made up of past, present, and future. Without all three parts of this equation, you cannot have time; however, time is not fully expressed by just one. You have to have all three to have the one, but the one is somehow made up of all three. It is all time but different aspects of it. Space is height, width, and depth. Without all three parts of this equation, you cannot have space; however, space is not fully expressed by just one. You have to have all three to have the one, but the one is somehow made up of all three.

As we look at how God has revealed himself, we refer to him as the Holy Trinity—the mystery of God’s threeness and oneness—however, the word Trinity is never penned within the Bible. Rather, it was a doctrine that has developed over time as people wrestled with the scriptures. It was formally written by an early Christian theologian named Tertullian, who was the first to use it in relation to describing God as he was understood in the historical writings. It became common Christian language when there was a gathering of church leaders called the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The reason for the council was to discuss orthodox Christian belief as a response to heretical teaching that was creeping into the church. The church wanted to make sure to preserve this distinct understanding of God because it was foundational to Christian theology.

So why is it so important to protect this idea of a trinitarian God, then and today? In short, it is because humans, by nature, want to live by the law of twos—opposing sides. Maybe now more than ever, we live in a world of extremes—black and white, republican and democrat, rich and poor. You name it, and we can polarize our positions. But within the doctrine of the Trinity, we find the law of three. It moves from being a tug of war to a divine dance.

Story:

Author and speaker Max Lucado tells a story called “Music for The Dance” that speaks to this. He says to imagine you want to learn to dance. You want to impress your spouse, so, like many things, you decide you can learn it best from a book. After all, a book taught you calculus and English. Surely a book can help you learn to shuffle your feet. You go home with the book immanent and begin to do exactly what it says, and you study it thoroughly. When it says sway, you sway. When it says shuffle, you shuffle. When it says Charlie Brown, you do whatever that is. You work up a sweat doing everything and cut out paper patterns for your feet to follow. Finally, you get it and you bring your spouse in to witness. You hold the book up in front of you and follow the detailed instructions once more. You even read the words aloud so your spouse knows you have done your homework. You read and you dance until, exhausted, you fall to the couch and look to your spouse for approval. You say, “I executed it perfectly.” She responds, “You got it in technique, but you missed it in its essence. You forgot the most important part. You had no music.” You forgot the music; you remembered the book. You learned the rules. You learned the patterns, but you forgot the music.

Faith in the Trinity is not about knowing everything. Faith is not about passing the test. Faith is about staying in step with God in the divine dance. The Trinity is the way we enter into the movement of grace, love, and fellowship. The first aspect of the Trinity we will look at today is God as Father.

POINT 2: OUR GOD IS A FATHER

I want to look at the first person of the Trinity and capture the essence of the Father God who is expressed within the scriptures. One of the clearest places we receive this form of God communicated is through Jesus himself. It was when Jesus was teaching his disciples how to pray. It is a part of many churches' worship services every Sunday morning. Jesus said, "Here is how you should pray: "Our father..."

What Jesus was doing was earth-shattering because it redefined what it means to know God. First, Jesus was claiming to be God's son. This by itself was revolutionary. Second, he was claiming that God was not just *his* father but *our* father. Jesus took this transcendent deity and made the case for a familial relationship with God. God is our father. This is a picture of God that the early Church writers really grabbed a hold of. It is used often within their letters and writings to one another. One letter is written by John the apostle. He wrote the following to the church.

Read 1 John 3:1

John was putting an exclamation point on this familial relationship that Jesus invites us into. Jesus's invitation to pray to our father, and John's invitation to see the love of the Father, are both invitations to see God in a new way. Up until this point, any other god in a middle-eastern setting was terrifying. Angry. Vengeful. Irritated. Disappointed. But Jesus and John said, "Look, this God! He is like a father who lavishes love upon his children."

Now I want to be clear. I know there may be many in the room this morning who hear about this first part of the Trinity and think, "Wow! If God is anything like my father, I want nothing to do with Him because my father was or is terrifying, angry, vengeful, irritated, and disappointed." Maybe, that has been a roadblock to your faith for years. The fact is children learn theology through their relationships with their parents. It can either help or harm the shaping of their faith. Because of this, we may need to have things reframed a bit. I believe it is important to understand that just because we have had a poor example of an earthly father, it does not limit the reality of our familial relationship to our heavenly Father and what the love of a father was always meant to be.

POINT 3: THE FATHER LOVES AND DISCIPLINES

The actual word used here is the word *agape*. This Greek word for love means a self-sacrificing and self-giving love, and the Father is in an ever-giving and ever-receiving relationship of *agape* love in partnership with the Son and the Spirit. That love is also