

Breathe

Module: The Person of Jesus

Lesson 3: “The Trinity and Jesus”

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- express a biblical idea of the concept of the Trinity
- use a metaphor to describe something that is analogous to the Trinity

Materials Needed:

- Bibles
- Paper and pens for opening activity
- Copy of Rublev’s painting of the trinity (<http://artmight.com/albums/2011-02-07/art-upload/50GB/Old-unknown/Russian-artists/Rublev,-Andrei/rublev-the-holy-trinity-1411.jpg>), either a printout, or could be embedded in a PowerPoint
- Glass of water, ice cube, steam (if possible, consider boiling a kettle)
- optional: small candies as prizes for Minds On activity

Pre-lesson preparation:

- Have a copy of Rublev’s painting to display.
- Prepare the water, ice cube and steam.

Minds On: (10 minutes)

Game: TriBond

Read the following groups of three to your students. Have them guess what the three items have in common. If you want, you can add more puzzles before the last one.

- Alanis Morissette, Avril Lavigne, Angela Desveaux (Canadian female singers/
- Nurse, lemon, tiger (Types of sharks)
- Bagels, buttons, blue whales (They all have holes.)
- Palm, Christmas, Family (Types of trees)
- Tak, grazie, go sum dah (“Thank you” in different languages)
- A vote, a lure, a broken leg (Things you cast)
- Father God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit (They are each part of the Trinity.)

Prompt:

We have been working through a series of lessons focused on answering the question “who is Jesus.” In this lesson we are going to wrestle with one of the most-difficult concepts to explain: the concept of the Trinity.

Action: (45 minutes)

Prompt:

Trinity is defined as three persons in one. This concept of God comes from several passages in the Bible. However, these passages do not use the term “trinity” but rather they refer to the three persons in the Trinity.

Have volunteers read the following passages:

- Matthew 28:19
- Deuteronomy 6:4
- 2 Corinthians 13:14

Prompt:

So we have this Biblical picture of three persons (spirits) existing as one. But, how does this work? What does the Trinity look like?

Show the picture of Pavlev's painting (see the link in the Materials Needed list). Solicit responses from the students based on the following progression of questions:

1. What do you think when you first see this picture?
2. What is happening in this picture?
3. If you had to write a caption for the painting, what would it be?
4. Who are the three people sitting at the table? What clues are given to help you identify them?
5. How is Pavlev describing the Trinity in this painting?
6. How would you describe the Trinity to your friend at school?

Example of a metaphor for the Trinity

Using the water, ice and steam, conduct the following object lesson:

Prompt:

While this is not the perfect way to explain the Trinity, we can get an idea of how it works. Water exists as a liquid, a solid and a gas. All three are water, regardless of their form. The three have different properties and do different things to us. But, regardless of how you look at them, they are still water.

In the same way this is a basic understanding of the Trinity. God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all part of the Trinity. They do different things but they are the same.

In Groups: Creating a Metaphor for the Trinity

Tell the students in a moment they are going to create or discover their own metaphor to describe the concept of the Trinity. A metaphor is figure of speech that says that one thing, is in some way like an unrelated thing. e.g. "I am a bear until I get my coffee". I

am not literally a bear, but I am grouchy and dangerous (and a little bit furry) until I get my coffee. Another metaphor is the hymn “A mighty fortress is our God”. God is not literally a fortress made of stones, but God is a safe place when enemies are attacking you. Their job is to come up with a metaphor for the trinity, which they will share with the entire group. Tell the students they will have 5 minutes (or however much time you want to allot) to develop their metaphor and then allow the students to self-select groups of 3-4, saying “Go”. Toward the end of the 5 minutes, warn the students that time is almost up, checking if any groups need more time. Then, have each group present their ideas to the larger group. There are no perfect answers: this is merely an opportunity for students to wrestle with the concept of the Trinity in a creative way, and will create deeper learning and understanding. Some groups might use a simile instead of a metaphor... but don't panic, this is not a language arts lesson. Give as much time for this as you see fit.

Note on Teacher Practice: Keeping Students on Task

The great pedagogy teacher Barry Bennett said teachers should FLAB and STAB, or Float like a Butterfly, Sting like A Bee. This means to walk among your students, paying attention to what is going on, and being available for questions, but addressing any misbehaviour the instant you see it. When students are working in groups, some kids will tend to goof off, some will be on task, and others will be too self-absorbed to allow anyone else to speak. This is pretty normal. As you walk among the groups, gently listen beside a group, and if one student seems to be hogging the spotlight, ask a quieter student if they would add anything, or say something different. Deal with any misbehaviour quietly or invisibly and encourage the students to invite everyone's ideas.

Consolidate/Debrief: Approximately 5 minutes

Prompt:

At its core, the debate about Jesus being a part of the trinity is centred on whether or not his death really did lead to the forgiveness of our sins. There comes a time where you

have to let faith, the belief in something you haven't seen, guide you. It takes faith to believe that Jesus is God.

Breathe In

Have students spend some time considering the following questions:

- What does it mean to you that Jesus is part of the Trinity?
- How does this shape your view of Jesus?

Breathe Out

Give students time to consider how they would explain the Trinity to a friend. They can use the example from their group, something they heard another group say, or a new idea of their own. Have students work in pairs and practice sharing their view of the Trinity with their partner.

Close in Prayer

Pray to each member of the trinity, Father, Spirit and Son, thanking God for this mystery, and how each part nurtures, guides and befriends us.