

The Triune God

STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Answer the question “What is God like?”
- Discuss why our concept of God is important.
 - ☐ Paper
 - ☐ Pencils or pens

STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Examine the teaching of God as unified and triune in Scripture.
 - ☐ Bibles
 - ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*
 - ☐ Paper, pencils or pens, whiteboard and markers

STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Use a *Blueprint* page to study more Scripture dealing with the Trinity.
 - ☐ Bibles
 - ☐ Pencils or pens
 - ☐ “What Is God Like?” from *Blueprint*

STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Discuss ways students can continue to learn more about God.
 - ☐ Bibles
 - ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*
 - ☐ Paper
 - ☐ Pencils or pens

Memory Verse

“Before me no god was formed,
nor will there be one after me.
I, even I, am the LORD, and apart
from me there is no savior.”

—Isaiah 43:10b-11

Bible Basis:

The unity of the one God (Deut. 6:4-5) in three persons (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Bible Truth:

There is one God who manifests Himself in three persons.

Lesson Aim:

That your students begin to understand why the doctrine of the Trinity is important.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

After the Lord delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage, Moses declared to the Israelites that the Lord their God is one (Deut. 6:4). What makes this proclamation extraordinary is that the people of Israel had lived among the Egyptians for over four centuries in a culture that had exalted many gods and goddesses. In addition, all the people they were exposed to following their departure from Egypt also boasted of their many gods. Thus, to say that there is only one God went against the religious beliefs of the surrounding cultures Israel intermingled with at that time.

The New Testament reaffirms that there is only one God (Matt. 19:17; 1 Cor. 8:6; Jas. 2:19). However, in the very first line of writing (chronologically) in the New Testament, “the Lord Jesus Christ” is assumed to be on par with “God the Father” (1 Thess. 1:1). Jesus is called “God” (John 1:1; 20:28), so the nature of God is further clarified.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commissioned His disciples to baptize all nations “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In referring to the singular name, He was speaking of the one God, comprised of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In short, there is one God, revealed in three persons.

Continued on next page

 indicates items you will need to prepare before class

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE —cont'd

In 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul expanded on the identity of the three persons in the one God when he spoke from the perspective of Christian experience. The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit can best be experienced through a personal relationship with the three persons who form the Holy Trinity, that is the one true God.

TIPS

CLASSROOM

The goal of this lesson is that your students understand the importance of the Trinity doctrine, not necessarily that they will understand it. Be very open with them about the mysterious nature of this doctrine. Even Solomon admitted, “He [God] has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (Eccl. 3:11). We will never understand all that God has done, so don’t feel intimidated if you don’t completely understand this doctrine before you present it to your students. Humility is a teacher’s greatest asset.

PRESESSION ACTIVITY



Objective: That your students will point out one unique thing about themselves.

Before beginning today’s lesson, have the students pick some object on their person to explain something unique about themselves. For example, a student might point to a ring that represents a significant relationship in his or her life, or an article of clothing that reflects something about his or her personality. Make sure each student says at least one thing about himself or herself.

Understanding Your Students

Many teens, between the ages of 15-18, are in a transition period in their theology. They are coming to own what they believe. Up to this point, many have simply accepted the beliefs of their parents. For many reasons, ranging from rebellion to cultural acceptability, many young people reject their parents’ beliefs.

One of the hardest theological concepts for teens to “own” is that of the triune God. The

doctrine of the Trinity has kept many people from Christianity; they simply see the concept as too complex to believe. Many cults reject the doctrine outright, claiming it to be a human invention. Some of those groups who reject the concept of the Trinity end up denying the deity of Christ. The importance of the doctrine of the three persons of God cannot be underestimated.



STEP 1

Life Need
(5–10 minutes)

Lesson Aim:

That your students begin to understand why the doctrine of the Trinity is important.

Objective: That your students talk about what God is like and why it matters what we believe about Him.

Materials:

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens

The studies in this unit focus on the nature of God. Use the following activity to introduce the topic. Before class, write this opened-ended sentence at the top of a piece of notebook paper: “God is . . .”

Suppose someone unfamiliar with Christianity asked you, “Who is this God you worship? What makes Him different from the gods of other religions?” How would you explain who God is to this person?

Think of a one-sentence definition of God’s nature that completes the phrase: “God is . . .”

Hand the piece of paper and a pencil to one student and have him or her complete the “God is . . .” sentence at the top of the page. He or she should then fold the paper toward the back so the answer doesn’t show, and pass the paper to the next person until all have written their sentences. Read all the definitions aloud.

 **Does it matter what our concept of God is? Why?** *At this point, accept any reasonable answer. You’ll be able to clear up any misconceptions as you go through the lesson.*

You may have heard that it is more important to know God than to just know about Him. There is some truth to this: It is definitely more important to experience God than it is to be able to describe Him. However, your relationship with God is similar to that which develops with a friend. The more you learn about your friend’s personality, ideas, and background, the closer your relationship can become.

There are many different, often conflicting ideas of God floating about these days. How are you going to know which to follow? Just avoiding the topic leaves you open to errors, not only in your thinking, but in every area of your life. The way we think about God determines how we behave toward our friends (and enemies), how we think of ourselves, how we pray, and how we relate to the world around us. It will, in short, determine the kind of people we become.

It will be helpful, then, to get as clear an idea as we can of what God is like.

STEP 2

Bible Learning

(15–20 minutes)

Bible Basis:

The unity of the one God (Deut. 6:4-5) in three persons (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Objective: That your students examine the mystery of God as triune and unified.

Materials:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers

Today we will study a mystery that can't be totally mastered. Scripture points to God in three persons; let's examine what it says.

Distribute pencils and pens and have teens turn to page 29 of *Blueprint*. Read the introduction aloud. It is printed here for your convenience.

■ FROM *Blueprint*—The One True God

Three of the world's major religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—all believe in one God. One of the major reasons why Orthodox Jews and Muslims reject Christianity is that Christians believe there are three distinct personalities within that "oneness."

The Bible clearly describes God as one—but it also describes Jesus and the Holy Spirit as divine. Since the Bible is God's Word, there must be a way to reconcile these two ideas. They can be reconciled in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Divide students into two groups to work on the first Bible study exercise. Assign the first five references to the first group; give the last five references to the second group.

Look up the following references.

Place a check next to the verses that describe the oneness of God. Describe what they saw about the oneness of God.

Place a star next to the verses that imply that there is more than one person in the Godhead. What is said about the personalities in the Godhead.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (*This call of Israel declares the oneness of God.*)

Galatians 2:20 (*Paul places his faith in a divine being, the Lord Jesus Christ.*)

Hebrews 1:3 (*The Son is described as a perfect reflection of God.*)

John 1:1; 5:23; 14:8-9, 26 (*In John 1:1 the Word of God is described as equal with God, but distinct; in chapter 5:23 the Son is honored equally with the Father; chapter 14:8-9 says that if one has seen Jesus, one has seen God; in chapter 14:26 the Holy Spirit is described as distinct.*)

Mark 12:29 (*Jesus quotes Deut. 6:4, affirming the oneness of God.*)

Philippians 2:5-6 (*Jesus is described as equal with God.*)

Acts 5:3-4 (*The Holy Spirit is equated with God.*)

1 Corinthians 8:4 (*Paul affirms the oneness of God.*)

Matthew 28:19 (*Jesus gives the "trinitarian formula" in the Great Commission.*)

2 Corinthians 13:14 (*All three members of the Godhead are named.*)

One God (Unity)

Israel was surrounded by nations who believed in a lot of gods. The people of Israel were tempted to follow these gods.

- ▶ How could Deuteronomy 6:4-5 counteract this temptation to worship many gods? (*This declares that God is one; He alone is worthy of worship.*)



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Matthew 28:19

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

▶ **How do you think God's unity separates Him from other gods?** *Make certain students see that God's oneness is a quality as well as quantity. That is, because God is one, He is reliable. He will not contradict Himself or act against His own desires.*

▶ **How does Isaiah 43:10b-11 support this view?** *(This is the memory verse for today. Call on someone to look it up and read it aloud. These verses bring the message that the Lord is the one true God. There was never a true God before Him, and there never will be another true God.)*

Three in One (Trinity)

▶ **The word Jesus used for *name* in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) is singular, but then He gives three names. How does this verse support the idea of the Trinity?** *(It supports the idea that God has one nature, which is manifested in three persons.)*

In Hebrew thought, *name* referred to a person's character as well as being a label. Thus all three share the same character—they are God.

▶ **Look at the benediction of Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:14. How does this verse support the idea that each member of the Godhead is unique?** *(It hints that each member has a different role.)*

▶ **What are some different roles of each member of the Godhead?**
 Father *(Provider, protector, parent, covenant-maker.)*
 Son *(Mediator, redeemer, Savior.)*
 Spirit *(Counselor, teacher, comforter, convicter.)*

You will answer the last question in the Bible study in the Bible Application section.

We've learned several things about the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Let's summarize what we've learned so far.

1. All are equal in divinity.
2. They communicate with each other.
3. They each have different functions and distinct personalities.
4. They are united in action and purpose.

STEP 3

Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

Objective: That your students can explain some of the main truths about the Trinity.

Materials:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ “What Is God Like?” from *Blueprint*

Refer your students to the last question in the *Blueprint* Bible study.



FROM *Blueprint*—The One True God

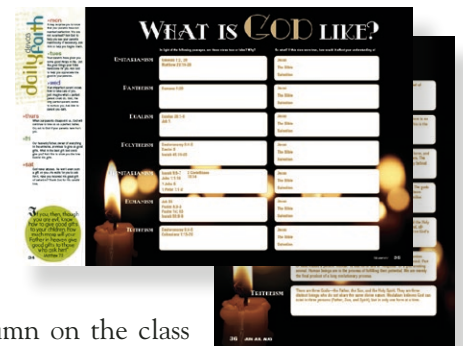
- ▶ Suppose you had to describe the doctrine of the Trinity to a young person who had never heard of it before. What picture would you draw for him or her to explain it? (*Water provides a partial illustration of what the Trinity is like. Water can exist in three states: solid, liquid, or gas, and still retain its “water nature.”*)

Help your students understand why it is important to know what they believe about God. Use “What Is God Like?” from *Blueprint* pages 34–35. This study allows students to go deeper into the different parts of the Trinity by studying more Scripture.

Divide your class into pairs or small groups and let them work through the Scripture references on the poster, answering what these characteristics mean to them. Then, as a class, fill in that column on the class chart.

The list of Scripture references, of course, is incomplete. Allow students to draw on their general knowledge of Scripture to give reasons for their answers, but make sure that the reasons come from Scripture and are not just based on personal opinion.

Next divide your students into pairs and have them take turns explaining the Trinity to each other. You might walk around and listen so students who are having trouble feel they can ask you questions or if you hear someone who has the wrong idea, you can gently correct their definition. This is a difficult subject, and the idea will solidify in their minds as they mature in their relationship with God. Just make sure they have the basic idea.



STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

There is one God who manifests Himself in three persons.

Objective: That your students examine why it is important to them to have a correct understanding of who God is.

Materials:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens

▶ **What are some ways we can learn more about God?** *Some possible answers: Reading the Bible, not because we have to, but to let God speak to us through His Word; daily devotions in which we meditate on God's character and our relationship with Him; communicating with Him in prayer; considering carefully what others have written or said about God in books, Sunday school class, at home with family, or in sermons. Students may think of other ways. Encourage them to give personal examples of how they learn more about God.*

▶ **Why do you think it is important to know these kinds of things about God?** *Some responses might be: What we learn about God will enhance our personal relationship with Him. We want to be able to tell others about Him.*

Encourage students to plan a daily devotional time to deepen their personal relationship with God. Encourage them, during this time, to read a short passage of the Bible and to think about what it says about God. Then they can record what they discover and meditate on what God is like, praying about those things that concern them. Point out to them the Daily Faith section on page 34 of *Blueprint*. They can use these verses to prepare for next week's lesson.

Close the class in prayer. Thank God for the way He has revealed Himself to humankind.

