

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

Trinity Sunday (B)

New Testament: John 3:1-17

BACKGROUND

This is the first Sunday after Pentecost. The day we celebrate and look at the Trinity as we move into the long season after Pentecost. In these summer months we hear the history of God's people, called by God, striving for right relationship, often failing and trying again. We hear of personal relationships with God, and the call to serve and lead God's people. And we consider how we might be called by God to listen, to serve, to repent and try again.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

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)



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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.

REFLECTION 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.”