

trinity sunday: better together!

Too often we treat the subject of the Trinity as a sort of mathematical conundrum, says Debbie Peatman. Too hard to explore with adults, let alone children. This all-age service helps us refocus on love of Father, Son and Spirit as the source of our life together in God's image.

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.' (John 16:12-15)

Introductory activity

Invite three volunteers (children or adults) to the front, and give them two minutes to draw their 'picture of God' on a piece of flip chart paper. Make this a fun, 'Rolf Harris' style activity! Suggest the rest of the congregation think about what they'd be drawing if they were on the spot.

Look together at the pictures, and find something to praise in each. Some might depict God as Creator, immense and powerful; some might show Jesus; some might be more abstract, representing light or love. (You may wish also to prepare a few varied pictures that attempt to depict God – for example, Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam' or Rublev's Icon of the Trinity (above right) – or even show a blank sheet as a reminder of the impossibility of depicting God!)

It's no surprise that our pictures of God are so different. The Bible tells us that we can know God as not just one person but as three. See if the children can tell you who they are. How these three can all be one God together is the theme we'll be exploring today.

Alternatively, show some pictures of individual well-known football players – invite comments on who people think is the best.

Of course, no player can play a match alone. Show a picture of a particular team. We need different players playing

together. (You could use a band/orchestra as an alternative example.)

Today we'll be learning more about God as the perfect team – three persons working completely in harmony with one another. Father, Son and Holy Spirit aren't three different Gods, and none of them is God on their own. It's the relationship that they have with each other that makes them who they are: one God, together.

Bible reading – John 16:12-15

Talk outline

1. We are made to be, together, the image of Father, Son and Spirit in their love for one another.

This is what Jesus chose to talk about on the night before he died. He wanted his disciples to know that he was completely united with the Father God he'd taught them about. And he wanted them to know about the Holy Spirit, who was completely one with him and with the Father as well.

Father, Son and Spirit. Three, yet completely united as One. I wonder why was it so important to Jesus that his disciples should understand that this is what God is like?

Jesus was telling his them about how he wanted them to be. We are created to be like God. The Bible says we were made to be in his image – like a picture of him. And if God is three persons united as one, then we can't look like him all on our own. We're not meant to



be individuals in the image of an individual God. We're meant to be groups, families, communities, in the image of a God who is a group, a family, a community.

2. We're made to depend on one another. We often think doing things on our own is a sign of strength.

In the reading, Jesus tells us that apart from the Father he is nothing. He tells us we can't understand him without the Spirit, and we can't understand the Spirit without him. He tells us that the Father has trusted him with everything. It is the most amazing picture of each person completely open to and dependant on the other. In the glimpse Jesus gives us into the family life of God, the thing that makes you strong is being completely dependant on one another!

3. We're made to celebrate and love each other's differences.

Father, Son and Spirit are all very different from each other – but they are one because they love each other completely. Explore how our differences often divide us and make us afraid. If we are to be a picture of God, we need to learn how to enjoy and celebrate our differences.

4. We're invited into the love of the Trinity

This is the most amazing truth of all. We weren't just made to be one with each other. We're made to be one with the Trinity God himself. The Trinity isn't a private party (Father, Son and Spirit having a lovely time in heaven together with the door shut). Jesus says: 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them' (John 14:23). The Trinity is the family of which we were all made to be a part.

Some of us are blessed with wonderful human families. Some of us are not. But we are all invited in to the very heart of this family. We're invited to sit round the table with God himself. We are all honoured, beloved children.



Some active illustrations

1. Ask a child volunteer to put a king-sized duvet into a duvet cover. Let them struggle with it alone. Then ask for more volunteers, and organise them so that they can do the job together.

2. This adapted verse of scripture can easily be sung to the tune of Frère Jacques:

When each part works (x2)

As it should (x2)

The whole body grows (x2)

Built through love (x2)

Split the congregation to sing it first in two parts, then three, then four. Which sounded richer and more beautiful? The more different parts we can hold together, the better a reflection of our Trinity God we will be.

Ideas for prayer

The Father, Son and Spirit are all very different. But they are one because they love each other completely as themselves.

Invite everyone to think of a time when another person's difference from themselves has made them afraid, unkind and unloving. Allow time for them to say sorry, and to ask God's love to transform their fear. Invite them to hold that person in God's presence now, and ask him to show them something of himself.

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More ideas on the CL subscribers' website
www.church-leadership.org