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**What we want students to learn:** That they would understand, as best as they can, the concept of the Trinity and its importance to our faith.

**What we want students to do with what they've learned:** To consider how the truth of the Trinity changes or affects the way they interact with God.

**Scripture Focus:** Isaiah 45:5–6, Genesis 1:26-27, Matthew 3:16-17, Ephesians 4:4-6

**Overview:** As you no doubt already know, the actual word “trinity” isn’t found anywhere in Scripture, and yet it may very well be the most foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. While the word “trinity” was used by extra-biblical sources to describe God (it was first used by the Greek scholar Theophilus in the 2nd Century and its Latin form by Tertullian in the 3rd Century), the Bible is overflowing with references to a trinitarian God. The word “trinity” speaks to the “tri-” (three) unity of God. What we know from the Bible is that God exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each fully God, and each unique, yet without division. The Trinity is one of the aspects of our faith that can seem difficult to fully grasp, and that’s OK! A little holy mystery in our relationship with God is a good thing. The goal of the three lessons in this series is to help your students understand the Trinity and to learn to relate to God appropriately as a result.

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## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **Activate** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **Trinity** lesson 2 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 2, and click on the “Background” tab. You’ll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

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## BIBLE BACKGROUND

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you’ll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what’s happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What’s the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

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## THE DETAILS

### Genesis

- Author: While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- Timeframe: It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure) that would make the date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC
- Purpose: Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eves' fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people, but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

### Isaiah

- Author: Isaiah, son of Amoz wrote the book of Isaiah.
- Timeframe: The events of Isaiah occurred between 740 and 681 B.C., though some parts of the book would have been constructed at a later date.
- Purpose: The purpose of this book was to call the nation of Judah back to God, to warn of coming judgment, and to tell of God's ultimate salvation through the Messiah.

### Matthew

- Author: Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- Timeframe: Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- Purpose: Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

### Ephesians

- Author: The Apostle Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians. Of course, we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- Timeframe: Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.
- Purpose: Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was simply that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

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## THE MAIN POINT

This lesson is pretty in-depth, but also pretty straightforward. You're going to be making three main statements, or teaching points, each supported by Scripture. You'll start by showing students that the Bible teaches that there is only one, true God. You'll support this with Isaiah 45:5-6. Then, you'll help students see that God exists in three persons, each unique but still unified. You'll support this point with Genesis 1:26-27 and Matthew 3:16-17. Finally, you'll show students that the Trinity is a powerful, beautiful truth that is sometimes hard to grasp, but always awesome to consider. You'll support this with a sort of big-picture view of Ephesians 4:4-6.

## LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

## THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** That students would begin to consider how going more in-depth in their knowledge of God unlocks a richer faith experience.
- **Set-Up:** Preview the following YouTube clip and arrange to show it to your group: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHLrXMPBQ9s>. (You'll need a way to stop the video once during the activity and then resume playing it.) If the link is no longer active, find a video where you hear an NFL quarterback calling out a complex football play.

FIRST, ask your group if they can remember the last time they played backyard football or a similar pick-up game (unorganized) game of football. Then, ask them to describe how they call plays. When they've had a chance to share, say something like:

- **When we play pick-up football, play calling is relatively simple, isn't it? It may be that you know your friend has no chance of covering you in the deep ball, so you tell your quarterback to hit you deep in the corner of the end zone. Or, you may draw up a play in the dirt where the receivers all run downfield and then you throw to your running back underneath. Whatever, it looks like, the play calling is reasonably straightforward. This is not the case for an NFL play call.**

THEN, show the video where Chris Simms gives an example of an NFL play call. Stop the video at :43 seconds. Ask:

- **Raise your hand if you have ABSOLUTELY zero idea what Simms just said?**
- **Now, if you have maybe a rough idea of what he just said, raise your hand.**
- **Who wants to take a crack at explaining the play call?**

NEXT, allow the video to resume playing. Feel free to stop the video when Simms gives his explanation of the play (at the 1:25 mark). Ask students to raise their hands if this all made sense to them. Have students who are still completely confused raise their hands. Then, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **How many of you are fascinated by the depth and complexity of this play?**

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- Answers will vary.
- **How many of you are A-OK with keeping it simple and throwing the ball around the backyard?**
  - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, make the following point as you begin to transition to your time of Bible study. Say something like:

- **Here's the great thing about football: you don't have to understand the complexities of NFL play-calling to enjoy playing. You can play in your backyard drawing plays in the dirt and have a ball. But, you do have to admit, if you want a deeper understanding of the game, it's there for you to discover. Did you know that God and football are nothing alike? (It's true . . .) The truth about God is that while there is an awesome simplicity to the Gospel, God Himself is a profound, complex being whom we are blessed to have a relationship with. The thing about God is that the more we know about Him, the closer we grow to Him, and the more our lives reflect His. What we're about to spend the next three weeks on is a super complex aspect of God's nature, WAY more complex than any NFL play. It's called the Trinity, and it's incredible. What we're going to see is that by learning more about God, we're going to fall more in love with Him. Let's jump in.**

## THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** For students to understand, as best as they can, the concept of the Trinity and its importance to our faith.
- **Set Up:** None

FIRST, make it a point to write this definition on the board, or display it in your presentation software of choice (you'll be doing this at the beginning of each lesson in this series):

- **God exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each fully God, and each unique, yet without division.**

Explain to students that the Trinity is one of those concepts of our faith that is tough for us humans to wrap our brains around, but this definition is a start. Ask them what they think are the critical parts of this definition. Allow them to engage in some discussion, maybe asking them why they think a particular word or phrase is important. Don't feel the need to answer any question concretely at this time. You'll be diving into this definition for the remainder of this lesson. When they've finished sharing any thoughts, consider saying something like this:

- **We know God exists. That's one of the main reasons God gave us the Bible. We know God. We know the history of His interactions with people, and we know that He continues to engage in our lives on a daily basis. This definition helps us understand a little more about WHO God is. There are unique but equal persons that make up God. The thing that's hard for us to wrap our brains around is that God is not divided; these three persons are unique, but they are not fully separate people. They are all united in what people call "the Godhead." Mind blown yet? It's OK if it is! That's just part of God's awesomeness. Let's spend the rest of our time together digging into the Bible to understand this concept a little more.**

THEN, have students find Isaiah 45:5-6 in their Bibles or their Bible apps. While they are finding it, provide some context for the book of Isaiah using the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read Isaiah 45:5-6. When they've finished, explain that you're going to help steer the lesson by using three teaching points. Explain that the first

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one is, "There is only one God." (You may choose to write that on the board or otherwise display it.) Once you've stated the teaching point, transition into a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **What statement does God make here about Himself?**
  - Answer: That there is only one God. There isn't another God.
- **In your opinion, why is this a significant claim? What is the importance of there only being one God?**
  - Answers will vary, but make sure students articulate that there being only one true God is the foundation of Christianity. God is positioned in Scripture as the Creator God, the one true God of Israel, and the Savior.
- **As we talk about this idea of the Trinity, that God exists in three persons, why is it important to state that there is only one God?**
  - Answer: It's important because it speaks to the unity of God. There aren't three Gods; there is one. He exists in three persons, each unique, but as one undivided God.

Explain to students that while this is kind of tricky to fully grasp, it's essential that we understand this is how we relate to God. He's one God. One, true God. This is foundational and sets up your second teaching point.

NEXT, transition to your second teaching point. Either say or display teaching point two, that God exists in three persons, each unique but still unified. Explain to students that the Bible is full to overflowing of references to this truth. Over and over again, there are references to God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. If you want, have students share any verses or stories that come to mind where you see each of these persons of the Trinity represented. Then, explain that though you could look at any variety of verses, you're going to look at two passages, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, to prove this point.

Have students turn to Genesis 1:26-27 in their Bibles. If you want, provide the context using the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read Genesis 1:26-27. When they've finished, ask:

- **This is from the creation account where God creates humankind. What do you notice about the way God refers to Himself here?**
  - Answer: God is pictured as using the word "we" and "our" to describe Himself.
- **Why is this significant?**
  - Answer: Because it supports the idea that the one, true God exists in three persons.

Now, immediately turn over to Matthew 3:16-17. (You're going to treat these two passages as supporting the same central idea). Read or have a student read the verses. Then, ask:

- **This is the account of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus to signify the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. What do you notice about how the Trinity is represented here?**
  - Answer: We see all three persons. Jesus, the Son, was baptized. We see the Spirit (in the form of a dove) descending on the Son. And we hear the voice of the Father, commending Jesus and authorizing His identity and ministry.
- **Why is this such an important event?**
  - Answer: Because Jesus is kind of coming onto the scene for the first time as an adult, being identified as the Son of God, and beginning what would be His three years of ministry. From a

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big-picture perspective, this is sort of the kick-off for why Jesus came to earth in the first place.

- **What do you sense about the “mood” or “tone” of what’s happening here? And why is that important?**
  - o Answer: There is the sense of agreement, or a real affirmative, positive mood. It’s important because it shows that the God-head is in tune with each other, authorizing this pretty awesome moment in salvation history.
- **How does this support what we just read in Genesis?**
  - o Answer: Again, just points to the idea that God is three-in-one.

THEN, pause and have a moment where you try to help students understand this concept a little better. Explain that through the years, people have tried to come up with metaphors or examples to help understand the Trinity. Explain that one of these examples is water. Say something like:

- **Think about water. There is the liquid form. There is the frozen form (ice). And there is the gas form (water vapor). You’ll sometimes hear people use this as an example to help understand the Trinity better. The three different forms of water represent the three different persons of the Trinity. Can you think of some other examples that might help us understand God’s nature?**

Allow students to brainstorm a bit. You may want to mention that an apple works similarly: peel, fruit, and core. C.S. Lewis famously used a cube as an example: the individual sides were unique, but still part of a cube. If you have an example, share it now. Then, say something like:

- **These examples are helpful, they are. But even the best example falls short of truly capturing the essence of the Trinity. Think about the water example we used. When water is in its frozen state, it’s definitely NOT liquid or gas. When it’s a vapor, it’s not frozen. So, while we can look at water and see it in its three different states, it’s not UNIFIED in the way that God is. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the SAME TIME! If this blows our mind a bit, it’s OK! It’s a part of what makes God so worthy of our worship. And it leads us to our last point.**

Display or share the final teaching point: The Trinity is a powerful, wonderful truth that is sometimes hard to grasp, but awesome to consider. Inform students that you’ll be using Ephesians 4:4-6 to flesh this out. Allow them to find the passage, giving them the context for the book using the Bible Background if you choose. Read or have a student read the passage. Then, ask:

- **This is the Apostle Paul giving an overarching definition of sorts of our faith. Where do you see the Trinity represented?**
  - o Answer: “one Spirit,” “one Savior,” and “one God and Father of all.”
- **Do you know what a denomination is? Can you think of some different ones in our town?**
  - o Answers will vary. Help your students fill in the gaps here by providing some help if needed.
- **How many different Christian churches are there in our community? In our State? In our country? In the world?**
  - o Answer: You’re not looking for solid answers here; you’re almost asking this rhetorically to help them think about the number of Christian churches there are all around us.

FINALLY, transition out of this line of questioning by saying something like this:

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- **Think about this:** The triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—is the God of EVERY Believer, is the Head of the Church (both the global church and every local congregation) and is at work in the lives of EVERY Christian. We tend to think about our faith and God in general in very small terms. We “shrink” God so we can understand Him. It’s part of what it means to be a human being; we can’t comprehend the depth and complexity of God, so we try to make Him easier for us to understand. I hope what we’ve done today is broaden our understanding of God a bit, opening up our minds to catch just the tiniest glimpse of how AMAZING God is in all His ways. As we begin to wrap up our time together, let’s take a moment to see how this impacts our relationship with God.

If students don’t have any more thoughts or questions, transition to The Last Word.

## THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To consider how the truth of the Trinity impacts the way they interact with God.
- **Set-Up:** There are two ways to facilitate this activity. One is to do it as a discussion. The other is to make it a little more creative. If you want to take the more creative route, provide a poster board or something like a big sheet of butcher paper, and some different colored markers. Before your group meets, write the following prompt on the top of the sheet as a heard of sorts: “Knowing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit impacts my relationship with God \_\_\_\_\_.”

FIRST, explain to students that whenever we learn something like you’ve learned today, the question is always, “How does this impact my faith”? Explain to them that this is a situation where you could take a shot at telling them how this impacts their faith, or even better, they could think about it and come up with the answer themselves (it’s their faith, after all).

THEN, lead them to consider the following question: “**Knowing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit impacts my relationship with God \_\_\_\_\_.**” You may choose to write it on a dry-erase board and have students take turns answering it in a group. Or, if you choose to go the more creative route, have students take turns coming up to the sheet of paper and writing their responses using the markers you’ve provided.

Regardless of how you facilitate the activity, engage students by helping them process their responses. For younger students, this may be about them considering what it means that God is as complex and deep as He is. For older students, it may be guiding them to see how they interact with the different Persons of the Trinity in different ways. Whatever the case, allow them to share their thoughts.

FINALLY, explain to students that the purpose of this lesson was to lay the groundwork for the next two weeks of looking deeper at exactly who God is. Remind them that the beauty of this lesson is that while it’s amazing that we can know God, God can never be fully known. He’s simply too far beyond anything we can completely comprehend. This should bring us great joy and also help remind us of our place in comparison to God. Encourage students to continue to contemplate these things as they go throughout the week.

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- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).