

Spring two: Trinity

Main point: Our Creed and our lives affirm a three-in-one God, in relationship with Himself and also with us.

Memory verse: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. Colossians 1:15-16*

Welcome back to your ACTS group. You might start with some 'group business':

1. **Review the Definition:** "An **ACTS group** is a small group of up to 12-15 people meeting weekly, living out an experience of adventure, community, transformation, and sending." Take a couple of minutes to brainstorm on how your group might intentionally integrate the values of "Sending" and "Adventure" into your group life over the next few weeks. Is there a project/ need/ opportunity that God is presenting to you?
2. **Covenant:** Review your group's expectations and common understandings: 1.) *the commitment to meet weekly for six weeks;* 2.) *a pledge of confidentiality;* 3.) *a commitment to not 'talk politics' ;* and 4.) *any other commitments that have been decided upon by the group.*
3. **Memory verse:** If members of your group committed to memorize last week's passage (Colossians 1:6), this might be a good time for sharing that verse.

Get into a discussion group (3- 5 people) and share:

1. **Peaks and Valleys:** Allow a couple of minutes for each person to share their "peak" (high) and "valley" (low) for the week. This is a good time to listen, to try to understand, without trying to fix anyone or solve their problems! Just BE there for each other!
2. Try to wrap your brain around God "taking on flesh and dwelling among us" (John 1:14). When you think about Jesus coming into our world to share our human existence, what do you imagine might have been some of his biggest 'peaks'? What do you envision to be the biggest 'valleys' of living 33 years on this earth? Take a few minutes to share thoughts.
3. The night that Jesus was betrayed and arrested, he promised his disciples to send them the Holy Spirit. Read John 14:25-27. Notice not only the promise of the Spirit, but also the promise of comfort and peace. This night could be described as the biggest "valley" of Jesus' life, and yet he was focused not on himself, but on his followers! How did Jesus do it? What factors or attitudes or truths can you identify that allowed Jesus to turn his own deepest Valley into the highest Peak that humans have ever known (the sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation)?

How did Jesus do it? Who was he, *really*? Read aloud Colossians 1:15-23

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Discuss:

1. If you were telling someone about who the Scriptures claim Jesus to be, what are some of the details you could share with them, based upon the theology of the opening paragraph above (1:15-20)? For instance, what is the relationship between Jesus and God the Father? What role did Jesus play in creation? How long has Jesus been around? What is his relationship with the church? What is his purpose within Creation?
2. If Jesus truly came "to reconcile all things... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (verse 20), how do you think a clear understanding of his own Mission might have propelled Jesus to make it through his deepest Valley: the agony of his betrayal, suffering, and death? What difficulties are you currently facing that are made easier by an understanding of your own important calling or purpose?
3. Jesus is at the center of the Scriptures (John 5:39-40), and most of our attention in our churches and in our preaching is rightly focused on him. Even the early apostles clearly taught: "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). However, in the teaching of Jesus we clearly see a connection between himself and "the Father" and also "the Holy Spirit." If you had to take your first shot at explaining to someone the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, what would you tell them?
4. Look up Jesus' own words for additional insight into his relationship between himself and the other two Persons of the Trinity. Read John 14:15-21 and John 17:1-5. What might you change about (or add to) your answer to question 3, above?
5. "Listen in" once again on Jesus' prayer to his Father, the night of his arrest: Read John 17:20-26 and point out specific phrases where you can sense the importance of the *relationship* between Jesus and his Father; and between Jesus and his followers.
6. Eugene Peterson writes:

"Here's the thing: every part of the revelation (about the Trinity), every aspect, every form is *personal* - God is relational at the core - and so whatever is said, whatever is revealed, whatever is received is also personal and relational. There is nothing impersonal, nothing merely *functional*..." (Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book, p. 27).

- Share reactions. What might be surprising to someone who learns for the first time that God is personal and relational?
7. Close this section by going back one more time to Colossians 1:21-23. Notice how a personal and relational God reaches out to draw *you* into a relationship with himself, through his Son, Jesus. What is the key to establishing and enjoying that relationship (verse 23)?

Dig deeper (optional):

In her book, The Making of the Creeds, Frances Young makes this excellent observation:

"Christianity is the only major religion to set such store by creeds and doctrines... Other religions have hymns and prayers, they have festivals, they have popular myths, stories of saints and heroes, they have art forms, and have moulded whole societies and cultures. But they have no 'orthodoxy', a sense of right belief which is doctrinally sound and from which deviation means heresy." (p. 1).

Young goes on to point out that the earliest Creeds of the Christian faith contained a three-part summary of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, an understanding of the Trinity has always been central to a development and profession of 'orthodox' Christian faith.

- In your own experience, how have the Creeds been important in teaching/ sharing/ affirming the Triune God? Have you ever memorized the Christian Creeds? Have you used them to teach your kids? Have you declared your faith in God by using the Creeds in a Worship Gathering? Discuss the importance and/or blessing of this.
- In what ways do the "I believe" statements of Christians help to explain the roles of each Person of the Trinity? What do you know about the work of the Holy Spirit, for instance, because of the summary that is contained in the Creeds? (You might have to Google "Apostles' Creed" for some help on this one, if it is not bouncing around somewhere in your memory).

Jump into action:

1. Read aloud the memory verse one more time. Then pray together, thanking God the Father for rescuing *you* through his Son Jesus, and granting you faith by the Spirit's power!
2. Plan to participate in the coming weekend's Worship Gathering, where you will learn about "Spring three: Rescue." Or, if you are going to be traveling, check out the Message Podcast on our ACTS website (actschurchlakeway.com/media).