

GLORIOUS (TRINITY)

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper; a small container
- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: STRANGE PLANET

For this game, the teens pretend to be aliens who, after visiting our planet and returning to their own, must give a description – with words only – of various things they encountered in terms their own people will understand. Ahead of time, write out “assignments” (see below) on pieces of paper, folded and placed in a container. One at a time, teens select a piece of paper and begin a verbal description with the words, *“I’ve just returned from a strange planet where they have...”*. The person giving the description must not use any words that their own people wouldn’t know. So for example, if they picked “cat/animals” then words like “cat” and “animal” cannot be used, but neither can words like “feline” or “dog”. The other teens must try to guess what is being described.

- Describe a tulip for a planet that has no plants.
- Describe a song for a planet that has no music.
- Describe a book for a planet that has no written language.
- Describe a cat for a planet that has no animals.
- Describe ice cream for a planet that has no food.
- Describe snoring for a planet where no one sleeps.
- Describe a door for a planet that has no houses.

FOR GROUPS OF FOUR OR MORE, TRY DIVIDING THE TEENS INTO TEAMS. THE “HOME” TEAM GETS TO GUESS AND THE OPPOSING TEAM GETS TO SEE THE PIECE OF PAPER AND KEEP THE DESCRIBER ACCOUNTABLE FOR NOT USING OFF-LIMITS WORDS.

THE LITANY: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the Litany, leaving off the Grace (which can be said at the close of the lesson).

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: BEYOND COMPREHENSION

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- In school, what is the subject you find the most challenging?
- What is it about that subject that makes it difficult for you?
- How do you handle subjects and assignments when you think you might be in over your head?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Your teens may come up with a range of subjects and reasons. If you find that they are responding with sentiments*
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GLORIOUS (TRINITY)

such as “Math is challenging because I’m stupid”, then take a moment to remind your teens that everyone has strengths and weaknesses and that God has given us all different gifts that are ours to discover and use to his glory. You may want to give them a brief example from your own life.

- Allow your teens to respond authentically, even if that means accepting responses like, “I just don’t bother trying”. If none of your teens come up with more positive suggestions, you may want to suggest a few yourself, like asking for help or approaching it from the perspective of something they are good at. Remind them that we all face limitations of different sorts, and that there are some things that are “beyond comprehension” for all of us.

THE LESSON: REVELATION 1 + 4

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God: have mercy upon us.

Many of the prayers in our Book of Common Prayer, including the Litany, acknowledge in clear terms the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Christians believe in one God who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Sound confusing? That’s because it is! The Trinity is a divine mystery, something that it’s difficult for us to fully wrap our human minds around.

Scripture contains a number of accounts through which we are given a glimpse of God’s glory. It is often in these moments, that we find evidence of the three-in-oneness of God. For example, when Jesus was baptized, St. Matthew’s Gospel tells us that “immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (3:16-17). So we have a picture of Jesus the Son, the Spirit of God, and the voice of the Father at one amazing moment where something monumental is happening.

Even before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem revealed the Son to us, there were indications in scripture pointing to the three-in-oneness of God. Consider the creation account in Genesis. We have this image of God the Creator, whose Word goes forth to call everything into being, and the “Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (1:2). St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, is more precise about the role of the Word, that is Jesus Christ the Son, when he explains that “by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (1:16).

In the same way that the doctrine of the Trinity is hard for us to fully grasp, the glory of God’s nature poses a challenge for the human imagination. Scripture records for us a number of divine visions, often given to prophets who struggled to describe the experience of God’s glory within the limitations of human language. In the book of Revelation, St. John’s heavenly vision is recorded, giving us another glimpse of our “holy, blessed, and glorious” God.

Refer to Revelation 1: 12-18, 4:1-3, 6-11.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: REV 1:12-20, 4:1-11.)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What are some of the things in this passage that are challenging to envision or that suggest the author is trying to describe something that is beyond comprehension? (If you have time, ask the teens to count up the number of instances in the passage where the writer uses the term “like”.)

GLORIOUS (TRINITY)

- In chapter one, we are given a description of “one who died, but is alive forevermore”. Who is this? What sort of impression does St. John’s description of him make on you?
- Take a moment to note the presence of the three Persons of the Trinity in this passage.
- What sort of response to God’s glory do we see happening in this passage?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *The writer uses the term “like” 11 times in his efforts to describe what is going on in front of him! This is often an indication that what is taking place is really hard to put into human words. The passage is rich with unusual images. Your teens may point out the description of Christ, the throne, and the living creatures as things that all seem quite beyond what we have first-hand knowledge of.*
- *In chapter one we meet Jesus like we’ve never met him before. St. John’s vision is of the resurrected Christ, who has overcome death and hell and has ascended into heaven, to sit at the right hand of the throne of God (Ephesians 1:20). When we think about Jesus in the Gospel narratives, we think of one who is humble and whose appearance is not remarkable, and yet this is the same Jesus, but with his glory revealed!*
- *In the first chapter we have this amazing description of Jesus, then in chapter 4 verse 4 we have John’s statement that he was “in the Spirit”, and then he is taken to the throne of God.*
- *When St. John encounters the risen Christ, he is overwhelmed and responds in awe and fear. It’s interesting to note that St. John was close to Jesus during his earthly ministry, present at the Transfiguration and Ascension, yet these experiences did not prepare him for the glory of the risen Lord! All of the creatures and elders around the throne of God are also overwhelmed and find expression of their awe in worship. The praises of heaven, recorded here, have found their way into many of the songs and prayers of the Church as well, reminding us that when we worship and when we pray, we are joining a chorus that doesn’t just span time and space on earth, but in heaven as well!*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer).)

Spend some time reflecting on the glory of God and joining with the praises of heaven: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! ... Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created”.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech thee, that this holy faith may evermore be our defence against all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR TRINITY SUNDAY, BCP PAGE 214)

GLORIOUS (TRINITY)

CLOSING PRAYERS

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", printed at the end of the Litany booklet.

REVELATION 1 + 4: **HOLY, BLESSED, GLORIOUS**

1 ¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash round his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades..."

4 ¹After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald...

And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."